Walking through **Graham Bennett's Reasons for Voyaging**

Entrance Sculpture, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

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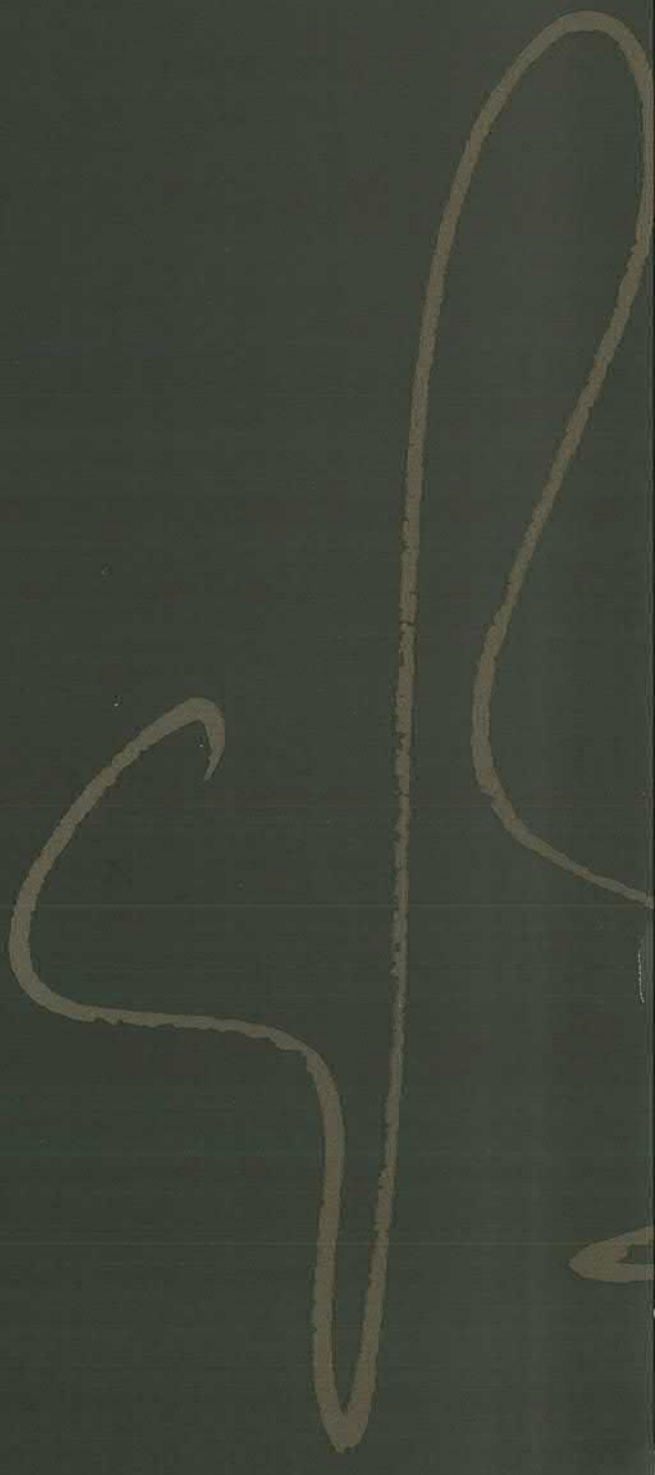

Walking through **Graham Bennett's Reasons for Voyaging**

Edited by John Freeman-Moir

Entrance Sculpture, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

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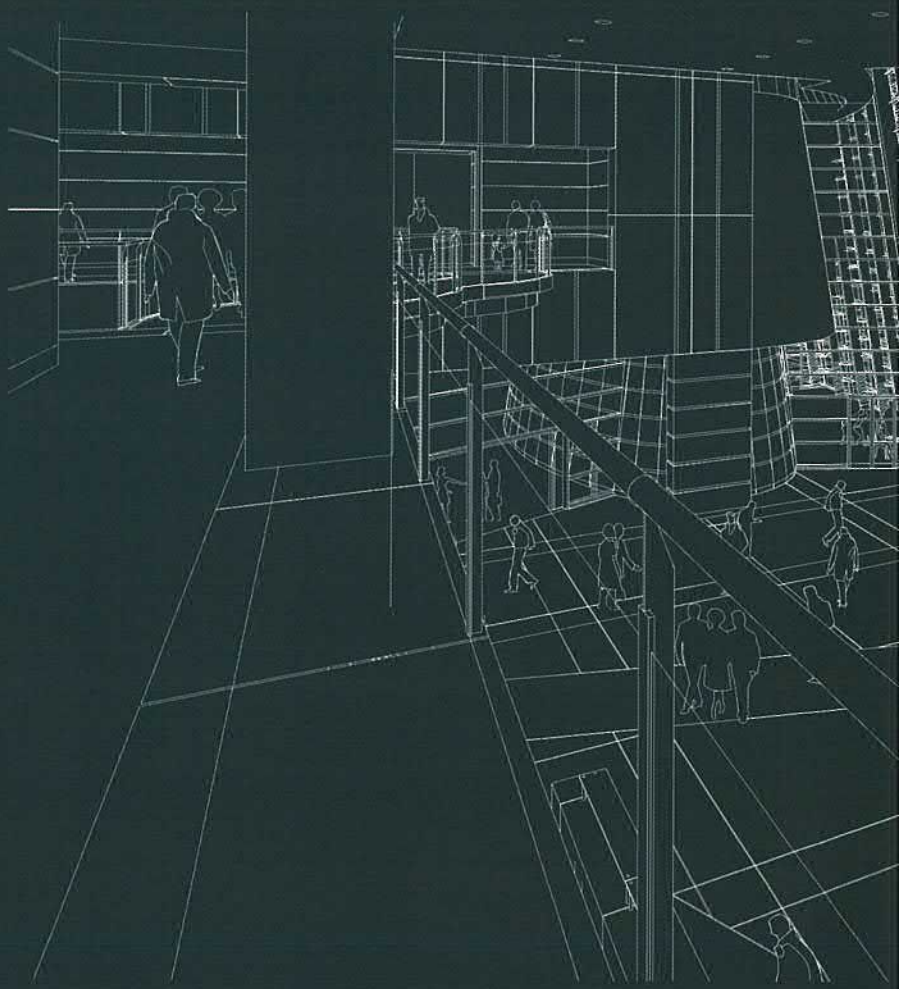

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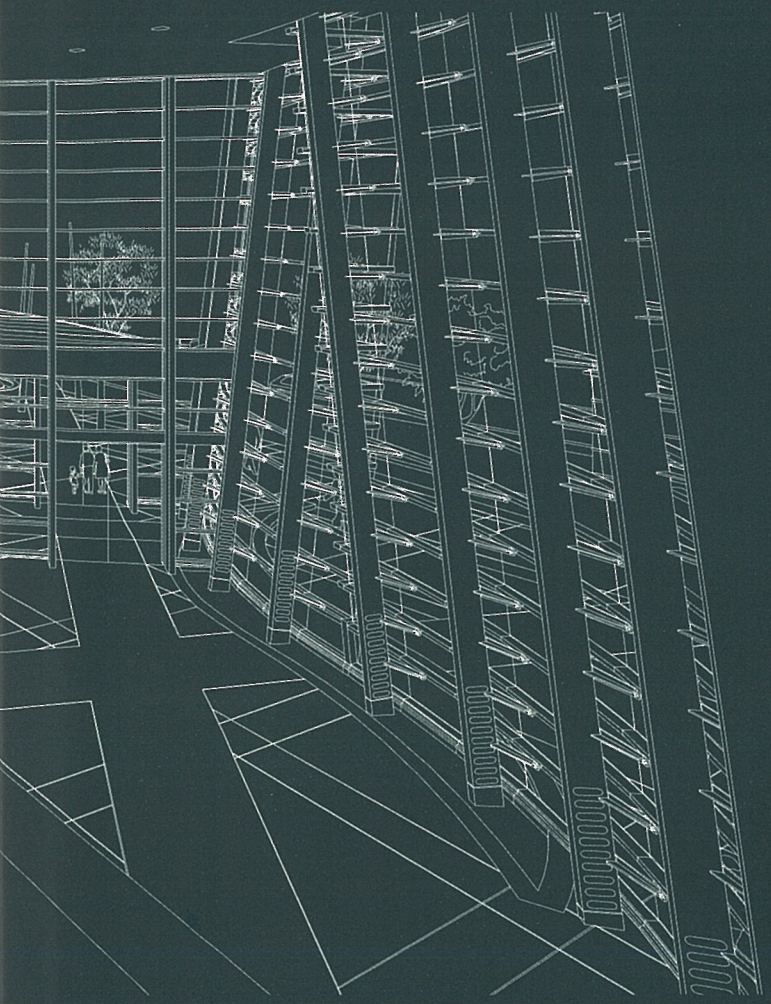


Foreword

P. Anthony Preston, Director
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

The opening of the new Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū in May 2003 comes after over thirty years of community debate, consultation and fundraising. I consider it particularly fitting that such a cultural milestone has been marked by the commissioning of a major public sculpture, conceived by the artist to be both point and counterpoint to the Gallery design, and realised through a rare and innovative collaboration between artist and architect.

The spectacular outcome of this dialogue between the Buchan Group's Melbourne-based architect David Cole, and Christchurch-based artist, Graham Bennett is the new Gallery's gate-way sculpture, *Reasons for Voyaging*. An integral element of the Gallery design since its earliest stages, the resulting work presents visitors with a dramatic sense of arrival, but also invites us all to consider our geographic location and cultural identity within the Pacific region.

It is also fitting that this whole story has been documented in a comprehensive publication that offers readers an insight to the creative process, and the many challenges met in bringing such a major work to fruition. *Walking Through* is a lively discussion of *Reasons for Voyaging* (the project, and the work) and will provide visitors with enriched appreciation, as well as a lasting memento of their encounter with the sculpture.

I am delighted to take this opportunity to congratulate Graham Bennett on his most remarkable work to date, to acknowledge Jeff Golding's precision engineering of the intricate mechanisms and stainless steel, and to commend all those who have made this handsome publication possible. In particular, may I thank John Freeman-Moir (who was the original force behind this book), Cassandra Fusco, Christopher McDonald, Brendan Lee and Felicity Milburn for their illuminating essays, and Hamish Meikle for his fine design.

Funding for a sculptural project of this scale is always a challenge, but generous contributions from Rosemary and Cam Greenwood and Sir Miles Warren ensured completion of *Reasons for Voyaging* in its entirety, and we are indebted to them.

In an early statement of intention, the artist expressed the hope that his sculpture would lead visitors to explore – both literally and metaphorically – their own reasons for voyaging. I believe all who have seen the work or read these essays give his hope every chance of being realised.

Photographs: Brendan Lee

Reasons for Voyaging

Grouped on a south-west north-east trajectory, and suggesting the possibility of various paths to the entrance, the seven sculptural elements introduce visitors to the Gallery. The overall dimensions of the sculpture are 19 x 16 x 38 metres.

The tapering steel poles are of varying heights (from 8 to 13.2 metres) and angles (from the vertical to 9° of inclination).

The principal interior structure of each of the five tallest poles is a 325 mm diameter steel tube. This structure is 220 mm for the two shorter poles. Each tube is reinforced by four 16 mm fins welded along its complete length.

The poles are faced with grit-blasted and hand-finished stainless steel on the north, east and west sides. 50 mm thick inserted wood panels of varying sizes are fitted on the south side of each pole. These panels were milled from an 800 year-old totara log (Podocarpus totara) donated by Ngāi Tahu.

Topping each pole is a curved and polished stainless steel frame (five fabricated from 80 x 80 mm square section, two from 50 x 50 mm square section). These frames range in length from 8 to 12 metres and increase the work's total height to 19 metres. The curved elements, linked to a motor inside each pole, rotate monthly according to a sequence programmed with reference to lunar cycles.

The sculpture was constructed between April 2001 and February 2003.

Study Towards Sculpture
1999, Graham Bennett
pencil on paper
220 x 310 mm
Collection of the artist

Architecture is sometimes described as "the mother of all arts". If this is true, sculpture in the forecourt of a building can be the child that never leaves home. In the worst examples of creative co-dependency, architects design not only the constructed setting but the sculpture itself. Taking the aphorism literally, they place an over-sized tectonic detail in front of their building and present it as public art.

As New Zealanders become more discerning patrons of art and design, they are less likely to confuse the roles of architect and sculptor. However, there is another trap for the sponsors of public art, and this mistake is easily made by even the most experienced purchasers. Public agencies often

Mappings

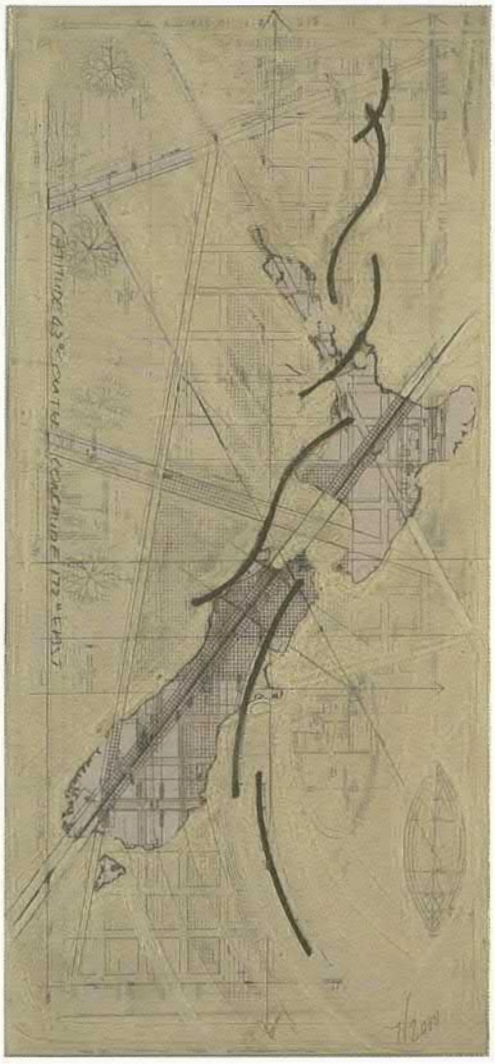
Christopher McDonald

enter a commissioning process with fixed expectations about the content and character of creative work. Aiming to unify a site or project a coherent corporate image, they produce a straightjacket of specifications for major public installations. If the prescriptions are too specific, the client's brief can be a more insidious threat to creativity than the dead hand of the architect-sculptor.

Under either of these circumstances, art and architecture can be forced into an unwilling embrace. The limitations of such a relationship are usually felt more acutely by artists, who often enter the collaboration after the building has been envisaged. The situation is particularly fraught for sculptors when the architect, also a form-maker and a manipulator of space, has already prefigured something very like a sculptural work in early sketch designs.

The Christchurch Art Gallery avoided these pitfalls when it commissioned a new home for itself on Worcester Boulevard. Yet the potential for conflict and constraint existed right from the project's inception. David Cole, the building's architect, included clusters of inclined poles at either end of the gallery's public plaza. In the first drawings and models, these were simple abstract gestures which helped to define the outdoor space. Yet they bore a direct resemblance to structural elements within the undulating glass curtain which dominates the gallery's west elevation.

Were the sticks merely "indicative", as Gallery Director Tony Preston contended? Or, could some of them have been architectural elements, fragments of the west wall (an idea that Cole admits he once entertained)? Cole's commitment to the poles was never put to the test. Preston skillfully prevented any possibility of a demarcation dispute between artist and architect by introducing Cole to Graham Bennett, a Canterbury sculptor who was already well-known for balancing things on stilts.



Concept Study, Trajectories
2000. Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
380 x 180 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Without realising it, Bennett and Cole shared another interest as well. Both artist and architect were intrigued by interactions between two distinctive features of Christchurch's urban form: the rigorous street grid and the sinuous curve of the Avon River.

For Bennett, this was part of a sustained investigation into relationships between natural and constructed forms. Most of Bennett's larger works are conceived for natural landscapes. These include frames, corners, doors and other assemblies of horizontals and verticals which the artist describes as being "architectural" in character. He uses these elements to provide a deliberate contrast to the informal, yet infinitely more complex shapes found in nature.

In the gallery project, Bennett saw an opportunity to reverse the conventional relationships in his work. On the central city site, rectangular forms provide the dominant context for his installation. His response was to work exclusively with diagonals and arcs, and to introduce a greater level of intricacy than he brings to natural settings.

The grids and curves of Christchurch's plan also provide a starting point for Cole's design. In compositional terms, the building can be reduced to a simple juxtaposition between the prismatic form of the bluestone box and the fluid undulations of the glazed west wall. In this highly abstract reading of urban context, references to local identity are rational rather than emotional. They focus on the big picture rather than the detail. Moreover, they enable Cole to make comparisons between Christchurch and his own city, Melbourne, where rivers also disregard the rectilinear logic of the street grid.

Cole readily admits that his design deals with elemental themes that occur in almost any culture and almost any country. He looks to Bennett's sculpture to introduce a unique local flavour which is grounded in New Zealand and the Pacific. However, the two men's ideas cannot be easily separated into local and global contexts. Artist and architect acknowledge several settings simultaneously, including the gallery's immediate physical surroundings. As references to the city's map demonstrate, Christchurch's urban fabric provides a common frame for both creative works.

Conceptually, the gallery's site extends well beyond the corner of Worcester Boulevard and Montreal Street. The building occupies an interface where built forms meet natural elements. Here, the continuous street wall of densely built-up city blocks gives way to a collection of free-standing structures set in a matrix of foliage. Cole's architecture condenses these two conditions into a direct opposition. While the gallery's massive southern elevation provides an emphatic coda to the façades of Worcester Boulevard, the serpentine glass wall anticipates the looser pattern of development west of Montreal Street.

Bennett's installation also exploits this contrast. The sculpture occupies an extended open space which includes not just the public plaza but adjacent streets, gardens and building forecourts. According to the direction of view, *Reasons for Voyaging* becomes part of two quite different settings. Seen from the west, it crowns the serrated silhouette of central city buildings. From the east, it rises above the trees and floats in the big Canterbury sky. In this location, the sculpture signals not just the entrance to the gallery but a threshold to the heart of Christchurch.

Although Cole's design was inspired by the interplay of geometries within the plan of Christchurch, the contrast between rectangles and curves equally reflects the dichotomous nature of a modern art gallery: part extroverted event space, part introverted container. The monolithic bluestone box deals unequivocally with the need to hang "flat art" in a flexible climatically controlled environment. This simple volume is divided internally, to produce a series of smaller chambers suited to the predominantly domestic scale of the Gallery's collection. In places, the sides of the box are penetrated by balconies or windows. These help to orient the visitor, and reduce the risk of "museum fatigue". But the exhibition spaces themselves are kept resolutely low-key, in deference to the art they contain.

There is nothing understated about the other main element in Cole's design. A three-storey high undulating steel and glass curtain stretches 75 metres along the gallery's west elevation. It is based on a series of cones; simple tapering forms which combine to suggest a complex non-Euclidian geometry. The individual shells are inclined, inverted, sectioned and reversed. Concavity follows convexity, and the elements meet in a sequence of laps, folds and gussets. The result is an intricate, agitated surface which ripples against the side of the inert bluestone box.

Like its metaphorical source, the Avon River, the west wall is all about movement. It flashes a message at passing traffic on Montreal Street. It quickens the steps of pedestrians approaching the building. Most of all, it helps to shape the gallery's main circulation space: a lofty ground-floor foyer which connects the gallery's public facilities, and spans between the two generative forms in Cole's design.

The whole building is organised with diagrammatic clarity around this space. The glass curtain peels back to admit visitors. The bluestone block is split. Its two halves are drawn apart then turned at right angles to create major and minor axes within the plan. These simple transformations neatly divide public, commercial and back-of-house facilities. They also create a well-defined centre where the grand staircase meets the main foyer. After the challenging geometry of the west elevation, the logical orthogonal layout of the interior is reassuringly simple.

People complete the picture. Their movement and sightlines stitch the building's two geometries together with a web of diagonals. These momentary oblique connections introduce complexity and subtlety to the otherwise straightforward confrontation between grid and curve. In its own way, *Reasons for Voyaging* helps to knit Cole's binary composition together. From vantage points deep within the building, the sculpture draws the eye out through layers of bluestone, steel and glass towards a field of skewed lines and crescents.

Reasons for Voyaging and Gallery frontage
2003 (detail)
Photography: Brendan Lee

Reasons for Voyaging
Maquette 5
2000, Graham Bennett
card, wood, paint
150 x 290 x 410 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Maquette 3
2000, Graham Bennett
card, wood, paint
120 x 200 x 340 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Maquette 4
2000, Graham Bennett
card, wood, paint
130 x 270 x 380 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Cole's design is strikingly modern and intentionally different from anything else in Christchurch. However, the building's most surprising feature is not its appearance but its orientation. Worcester Boulevard is the city's principal axis. It links Cathedral Square with Hagley Park, and it is home to the Arts Centre and other well-known institutions. So, it is surprising to find that the gallery's forecourt, main entrance and most celebrated architectural feature all face Montreal Street rather than Canterbury's pre-eminent culture strip. The gallery pulls the city's main creative precinct one block closer to the centre of town, but the new building seems to snub the east-west thoroughfare which connects these two important nodes, Cathedral Square and Hagley Park.

Cole justifies the site layout in terms of sun. For much of the year, the Worcester Boulevard frontage is in deep shadow. It is no place for a public open space. Moreover, if the all-important curtain wall was given a southern aspect it would lose what the architect calls its "gossamer-like" character: a combination of reflectivity and transparency which responds to subtle changes in natural illumination. So, Cole turns his building towards the light, ensuring that the undulating glass screen is bathed in afternoon sun.

Sunlight is only half the story. The gallery's unconventional position can also be interpreted as a deliberate challenge to the city's orthogonal plan. By turning his building away from the Worcester axis, Cole frees the "gossamer" curtain from the street grid and allows the glass to fully express its distinctive curvilinear character. In doing so, the architect seems to encourage a more equal contest between the two geometries which shape Christchurch's urban fabric.

As a consequence, Worcester Boulevard plainly gets a side elevation. Some of the gallery's main exhibition spaces flank this street and, to his credit, the architect makes no attempt to conceal their size or simplicity. The big bluestone box dominates the south wall. It matches the height and bulk of neighbouring buildings, and its surface is articulated with penetrations and projecting stainless steel blades. But the considered relationship between verticals and horizontals found in adjacent façades is reduced to a few bold strokes. In this treatment, there is a trace of Melbourne's particular brand of modernist minimalism: confident, refined and metropolitan in scale.

In some places, Cole's planning calls for an intermediary between the gallery and the street. Because the building retreats from the edge of Montreal Street, the corners of the block need to be marked and the forecourt needs a clear western boundary. At one stage in the design, the architect invited the sculptor to supply the missing spatial definition. Cole proposed a thicket of uprights at either end of the public plaza, effectively using the artist's poles to peg out the unoccupied portion of the site. Bennett resisted, concerned about the duplication of forms and the potential for his installation to appropriate the whole outdoor area. As a result, two sides of the forecourt are delineated with more neutral landscape features which create a receptive space for the gallery's sculpture garden. However, Bennett stakes out a strong claim on the south-west corner of the site. Ignoring property lines, he plants one of the sculpture's seven elements within the corridor of Worcester Boulevard. This wayward element becomes a sign. It compensates for the ambivalent stance of Cole's building, and telegraphs the gallery's presence to either end of the city's main axis.

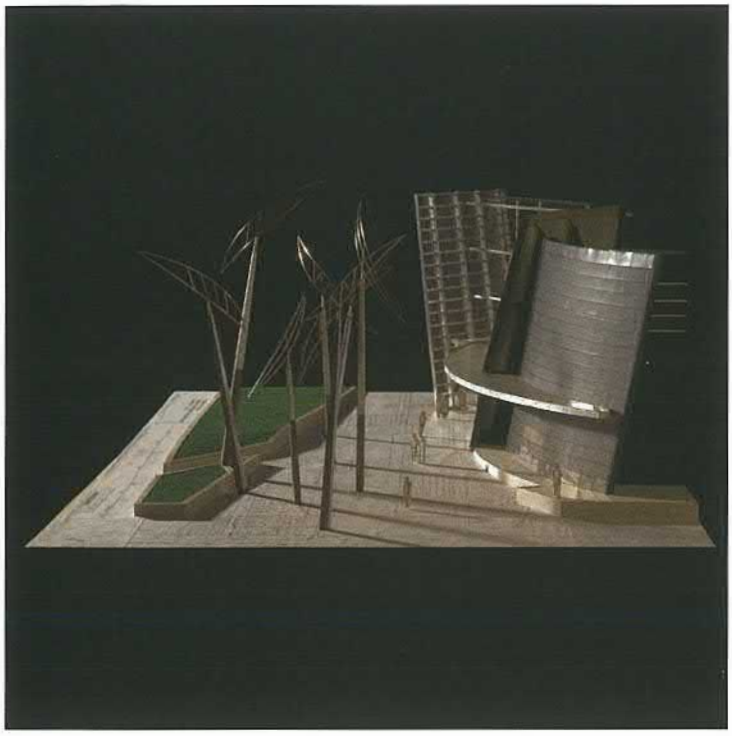
Study Towards Sculpture
(Markings No 1)
2000, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
1060 x 600 mm
Private collection, Christchurch
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Reasons for Voyaging
Presentation model
2000–01, Graham Bennett
wood, stainless steel,
card, plastic
310 x 540 x 900 mm
Collection of the
Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Despite these adjustments, there is a remarkable agreement between Bennett's finished installation and the clusters of sticks which appear in Cole's early sketches. For some, the congruence between art and architecture may be too great, although Bennett's investigation of uprights and elevated forms began long before the gallery was designed.

While much of the resemblance between the two men's work is fortuitous, some common features are consciously planned. Bennett is adamant that *Reasons for Voyaging* must belong to its site. Not surprisingly, he treats Cole's building as an important part of the sculpture's context. So, the installation deliberately "echoes" the architecture, particularly the gallery's undulating west elevation. In places, the angles of Bennett's poles match the inclination of Cole's conical glass screens. The seven "masts" are positioned along a complex set of arcs and diagonals which link elements of the building with key paths and sightlines in the surrounding open space. Circles animate the art as well as the architecture. As Bennett describes it, the great bowed frames atop his sculpture look as though they might have "stamped" the curtain wall with their characteristic curved geometry.

Although he takes the measure of Cole's building, the sculptor bristles at the suggestion that *Reasons for Voyaging* is in any way derived from the architect's concepts. Bennett's curves do have a superficial resemblance to elements of the serpentine glass screen. However, these forms make no direct reference to Cole's Avon analogy. Instead, the elevated crescents are segments from the globe of the earth. They provide the "map" on which Bennett explores themes of navigation and voyaging.

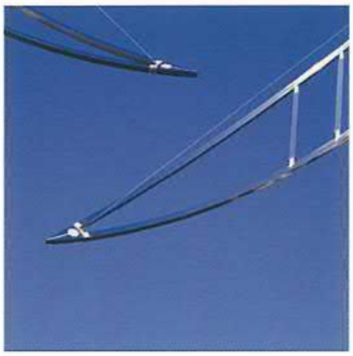


Other, more subtle exchanges between the sculpture and the architecture depend on the active participation of the observer. Seen from the gallery's main foyer, *Reasons for Voyaging* is framed within the west wall's serpentine screen. Pausing on the first-floor balcony, observers can enter the domain of Bennett's floating stainless steel frames. From this direction, distinctions between the unique forms of the artwork and the repetitive components of the building become fully apparent. The gleaming crescents appear caught in a net of steel.

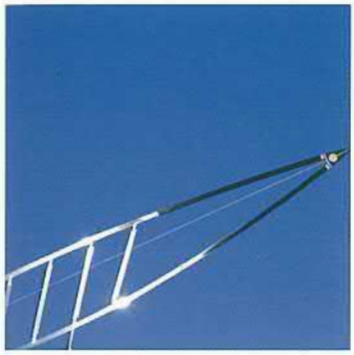
Outside, the view is entirely different. The seven masts of *Reasons for Voyaging* are reflected, multiplied and divided by the building's faceted glass skin. Bennett calls these images "vignettes", because the glimpses are fleeting, selective and change unpredictably as the observer walks towards the gallery's main entrance.

From other vantage points, the installation has greater autonomy. Cole reserved the most prominent part of his site for the public artwork. In distant views, the sculpture is more conspicuous than the building, which either retreats from the street edge or merges with the neighbouring façades. This allows *Reasons for Voyaging* to introduce visitors to the gallery. Bennett's work takes on special importance in diagonal views from the Arts Centre. Along this critical sightline, the sculpture towers above the gallery, usurps the role of the undulating west wall and becomes the dominant foil to the building's two large bluestone boxes. One entity is grounded, massive and static; the other is aerial, insubstantial and dynamic.





Reasons for Voyaging
2003 (details)
Photographs: *Hedwig Photography*



These relationships express the resonance between Bennett's sculpture and Cole's building. The interweaving arcs and diagonals create obvious physical similarities between the two works. However, these superficial likenesses merely hint at the common purpose which links artist and architect. Cole's building invites first-time gallery visitors to enter a space unlike any they have previously encountered, and Bennett's sculpture prepares them for the experience.

This is the real function of the folded, fractured surface which sweeps along the gallery's west elevation. And this is the primary effect of the carefully balanced stainless steel crescents which welcome people onto the site and wave them towards the gallery's main entrance. As visitors cross the forecourt and penetrate the glass curtain, conventional forms and expectations are confronted by unconventional ones, just as the familiar geometry of the right angle is confronted by an unresolvable collection of pleats, curves and diagonals. Some people may feel uncomfortable passing beneath the pivoting blades of Bennett's installation or standing between the two sides of Cole's argumentative binary composition. However, these strange fluctuating spaces are a fitting precursor to the gallery's exhibition areas. Together, sculpture and architecture unsettle visitors just enough to trigger a heightened state of awareness and a critical appreciation of difference. People enter the gallery with their senses primed.

41°12.2' S/173°19.7' E

1989. Graham Bennett

lithograph/chine collé

800 x 600 mm

Collection of the

Christchurch Art Gallery

Te Puna o Waiwhetū

Photograph: Christchurch Art Gallery

Ocean Memories
The Origins of Reasons for Voyaging

Felicity Milburn

The Japanese are described as 'the most nostalgic people on earth', but I think possibly the remark applies to all island people, who have the spirit of adventure, but also the feeling of being secure on a small place among the waters.

Robyn Hyde, *I Travel Alone*, 1938

New Zealand has been called a country where all roads lead to the sea, and in over thirty years of artistic practice Graham Bennett has never cut his ties with the ocean. From monumental outdoor installations to intimate, small-scale sculptures, his highly distinctive work has continued to draw on his childhood memories of growing up in Nelson, on the edge of the Tasman Sea, at the geographic centre of New Zealand. A constant element in Bennett's multi-faceted practice is the development of a creative language anchored in this unique location; a vocabulary that allows him both to communicate a sense of place and to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the outside world. Working with personal and collective histories, Bennett has continued to position the land as a site where the memories and aspirations of all voyagers to this place intersect: an arena for discovery, identity and exchange.

As for many New Zealanders, it was the time Bennett spent away from home, during a four-year-long trip to Europe, that helped define his sense of personal identity. His return in 1980 heralded a major change in his work, which was now driven by the desire to express and explore the distinct physical and cultural character of his native land. In his sightline was not some amorphous national identity, but rather a sense of personal location. To speak with an authentically Pacific voice, though it would be one of many, he had to honestly investigate the place from which he was speaking. These explorations would eventually culminate in *Reasons for Voyaging*, an acknowledgement and celebration of past and future journeys to this land and Bennett's most ambitious work to date.

Sea/Sky/Stone
1991, Graham Bennett
steel, reflective glass
2200 x 2200 mm x 40 metres
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Murray Hedwig

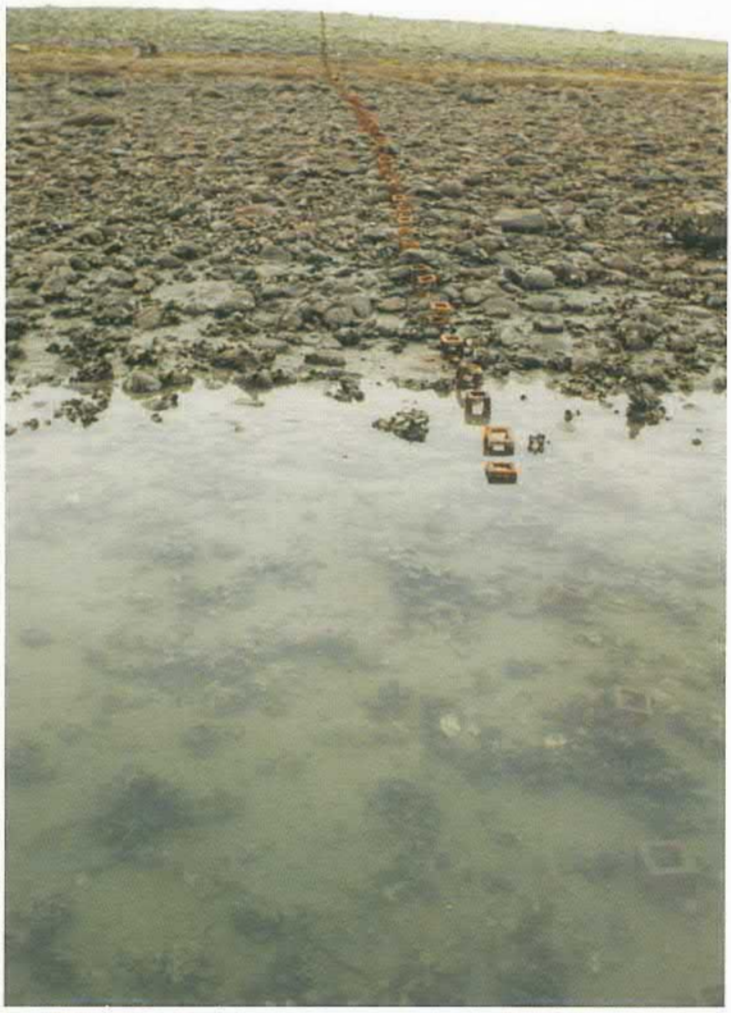
Demarcation
1996, Graham Bennett
cast iron (300 components)
86 x 86 x 86 mm
(each component)
Various collections,
partially washed away

Upon his return to New Zealand, Bennett developed a series of artistic devices, both drawn and sculptural, which attempted to unravel the complex relationship between the land and its inhabitants. Grounding his enquiry within a specific location – "I am working with the 'South', I am working with the Pacific, I am working with 41°/173°" – he began to consider notions of place and their power to construct identity.[1] This exploration took many forms, from the precise geographical references with which he annotated abstracted drawings of the landscape to major environmental interventions such as *Sea/Sky/Stone* (1991) and *Demarcation* (1996). Both of these works laid out temporary structures on the land, isolating it as a point from which to consider the world beyond. In an early workbook, Bennett stated clearly: "The site is an aid and helps in clarifying a sense of self and place."[2]

The chosen site for Bennett's initial scrutiny was one imbued with considerable personal significance. The Boulder Bank is a spectacular natural seawall that stretches for over thirteen kilometres, protecting Nelson Haven from the full force of the ocean and providing safe anchorage for fishing boats and pleasure craft. It is composed of boulders, cobbles and pebbles of Cable Granodiorite. One end of the Bank adjoins the hillside, while at the other end a severe, man-made cut forms the entrance to Nelson harbour. Of considerable geological importance – there are just four similar sites throughout the world – the Boulder Bank (Tāhuna o Te Māia) was also significant for early Māori, who used its hard rocks in their tool-making processes. According to Māori legend, it was formed by the karakia (prayer) of Kereopa, who called up the rocks in order to escape the pursuing Kupe, whose wife and daughter Kereopa had stolen. Kereopa's karakia caused rocks and boulders to be pushed up from the floor to form a barrier between the chaser and the chased. This unusual and dramatic natural feature was clearly visible from Bennett's childhood bedroom window, so it is perhaps not surprising that he came to regard it in a symbolic way, likening its presence in the Tasman Bay to that of New Zealand in the Pacific.

In 1989, Bennett utilised the unique physical qualities of the Boulder Bank in a series of mixed media sculptures and drawings that considered human interaction with the landscape. His interest in these themes had expanded during his time as Artist in Residence at the Nelson Polytechnic in 1988. This residency resulted in a series of collaborative experiments with silversmith Gavin Hitchings. Employing geometric forms – the square and the triangle – to suggest human constructions, drawings like 41°12.2' S/173°19.7' E (1989) presented the bank as an almost corporeal structure, with rib-like sections spreading off a vertical spine. Though Bennett was clearly exploring the allusive potential of these forms, he was careful to qualify his subject in place and time by incorporating geographical co-ordinates into each work's title. The result was a series of highly evocative visions, each directly linked to the artist's spontaneous reaction to the land. Metaphorically, the inclusion of minutes of arc in the geographical co-ordinates, and Bennett's consequent acknowledgement of the fourth dimension (time), made the suggestion that *when* we see is as important as *what* we see, a concern he would return to again and again in his later work. It is an essential element in *Reasons for Voyaging*, in which the sky elements (triggered by digital controls) move in a sequence that relates to lunar cycles.

1. Graham Bennett, Artist's Notebook, B2, p.120.
2. Ibid.



Demarcation
(detail, recovered component)
1996, Graham Bennett
cast iron
86 x 86 x 86 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Gavin Hitchings

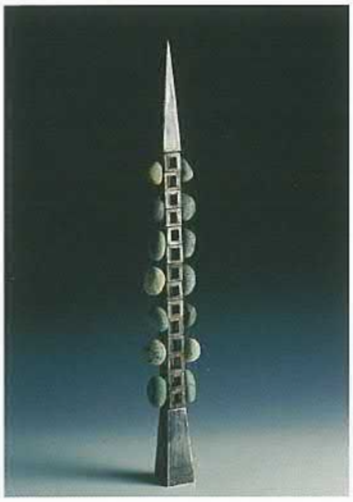
Demarcation
1996, Graham Bennett
cast iron (300 components)
86 x 86 x 86 mm
(each component)
Various collections,
partially washed away

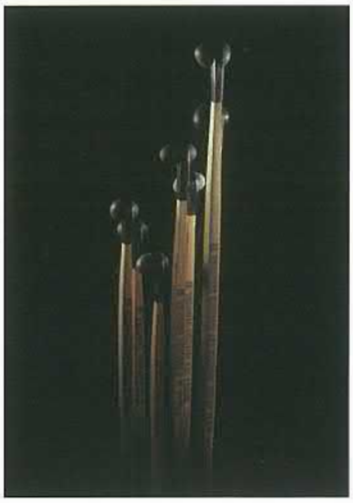
The Boulder Bank and Nelson Haven

Bennett's growing interest in the Boulder Bank as a living framework for his ideas found new expression in 1991, when he embarked on an ambitious project to site a major glass and steel sculpture directly on the landform. *Sea/Sky/Stone* consisted of twenty angled steel panels, each 2.1 metres square and glazed with a triangular sheet of bronze or grey glass. Set out in a forty-metre line on heavy steel rails, the work echoed the long natural mass of the Boulder Bank but, in its form and materials, also implied connections with New Zealand's architectural and industrial heritage. The steel frames were deliberately unnatural, making a conscious imposition on the landscape. They implied the human impulse to alter, build upon and exploit natural resources, but also sought to isolate sections of the land, ocean and sky for contemplation. In doing this, they emphasised the fact that the land itself has no inherent identity; but rather that its character is founded in human experience. It is our behaviour, our memories and the history of our interaction with the site that lend any place meaning.

As the sculpture's title suggests, the framed panels brought together the three essential environmental elements of the site, while the reflective nature of the glass also added a human dimension, literally bringing viewers "into the picture". The isolation of the Boulder Bank and the constant presence of the sea on either side, not only emphasised the efforts and fears associated with traditional ocean voyaging (access to the work was by boat), but also ensured that viewers were directly confronted by the land and, in the process, were made aware of their own presence within it. The alternating panels of glass offered different viewpoints, suggesting the different path each viewer might take towards understanding and communicating with the work.

With *Sea/Sky/Stone*, Bennett discovered that the placement of temporary structures within specific, familiar landforms was a useful device that allowed him to focus on more abstract qualities, such as time, location and alignment. From this point, the work could lead into a consideration of our own history and the need to come to terms with it. His next major project on the Boulder Bank, *Demarcation* (1996), would further extend these ideas.





Connections and Differences
1997, Graham Bennett
bronze, stone
600 x 200 x 200 mm
Collection of the artist

Seeking Directions
1999, Graham Bennett
wood, bronze, stone
1500 x 400 x 400 mm
Private collection, Wellington
Photograph: Lloyd Park

Defining Positions
2000, Graham Bennett
stainless steel, wood, stone
220 x 200 x 200 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Murray Irwin

Questions of Identity
2000, Graham Bennett
stone, bronze, painted iron
650 x 250 x 250 mm
Private collection, Christchurch
Photograph: Julia Brooke-White

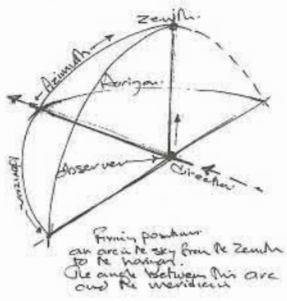
Eleven Times
1999, Graham Bennett
powder-coated cast aluminium
2000 x 500 x 500 mm
Collection of John and Jo Gow, Waiheke Island
Photograph: Lloyd Park

Compared to the monumental proportions of *Sea/Sky/Stone*, the individual components of *Demarcation* were modest indeed: 86 x 86 x 86 mm hand cast, iron open-sided cubes. However, the actual scale of Bennett's endeavour was far greater than it appeared; he would place 300 of these objects in a continuous line across the width of the Boulder Bank, stretching beyond the shoreline. Like determined footfalls, the diminutive frames would mark out a line of occupation across the very heart of New Zealand. In their precisely ordered file, they resembled the marking pegs on a building site, a reminder (or warning) that such surveying often leads to possession and control. Spaced at regular intervals, the boxes also echoed the construction of roads across previously inaccessible territory and recalled the widespread use of vertical stones by Māori to delineate areas of tribal significance. Bennett encouraged these associations, but was also testing the idea of measurement as a device for understanding. By spanning the width of the Boulder Bank, he had effected a kind of scaffolding for meaning, a frame through which to reconsider the fragility of our interdependence with the land. As robust as they appeared, the iron cubes were no match for the Pacific currents of Tasman Bay. Those on the edge were gradually pried from their footholds and carried under the water or along the beach, some washing up years later, packed with pebbles.

The ease with which the natural elements reclaimed their territory and dislodged this man-made monument seemed to echo the last, sobering lines of Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem, *Ozymandias*: "Nothing beside remains. Round the decay [ ] boundless and bare the lone and level sands stretch far away."

As in previous works, Bennett's choice of material revealed a desire to juxtapose human industry with the unspoilt landscape, but the cast iron offered other, more subtle, benefits. Its tendency to rust whenever it came into contact with water (rain, salt-spray, waves), tracing a delicate orange line across the profile of the bank, allowed Bennett to explore a further layer in our relationship with the land; the inevitable traces we leave behind. Throughout New Zealand, in forests, mines and oceans, the progress of humanity is memorialised through environmental scars and conspicuous absences. Fortunately, however, our influence is not confined to the destruction of the natural world and Bennett's rusty residue also suggested the cross-fertilisation and transfer of ideas that occurs between cultures, on the shorelines between our worlds.

Japanese-owned squid boats were a regular presence in Tasman Bay during Bennett's childhood and he recalls them being regarded with mild suspicion by the local inhabitants. A more vivid memory, however, is that of wandering along the shoreline and discovering Japanese writing on the sides of tins that had washed ashore. He described this experience as provoking an awakening of awareness, both of distance and of difference. A similar ambivalence seems to colour many of our memories of encounter, the fear of the unknown, the possibility for exchange. In a country of islands, we are used to regarding our shorelines as thresholds between visitor and inhabitant, the strange and the familiar, separation and return. As Allen Curnow once observed, "Always to islanders danger/is what comes over the sea/Over the yellow sands and the clear/Shallows..."[3] For Bennett, the coastline is a point of competing histories, a place where conquest, submission and dialogue all seem possible. Historically, encounters often revolved around the agenda of exchange and some of the earliest Polynesian artefacts held in New Zealand collections are objects designed for trade. In Bennett's work, however, the object of exchange is not a material possession, but rather a sense of identity and a starting point for dialogue. Although his recent *Pacific Dialogue* (1997–2000) sculptures have spoken principally of communication, he is also conscious of the need to safeguard difference, to protect the qualities from which we construct a distinct identity.



3. Allen Curnow, *Landfall in Unknown Seas; on the three-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of New Zealand by Abel Janzoon Tasman, 13 December, 1642* (1942).

A Pacific Dialogue
1999, Graham Bennett
painted wood, painted steel, stone
630 x 250 x 250 mm
On loan to the Judith Anderson Gallery, Auckland
Photograph: Lloyd Park

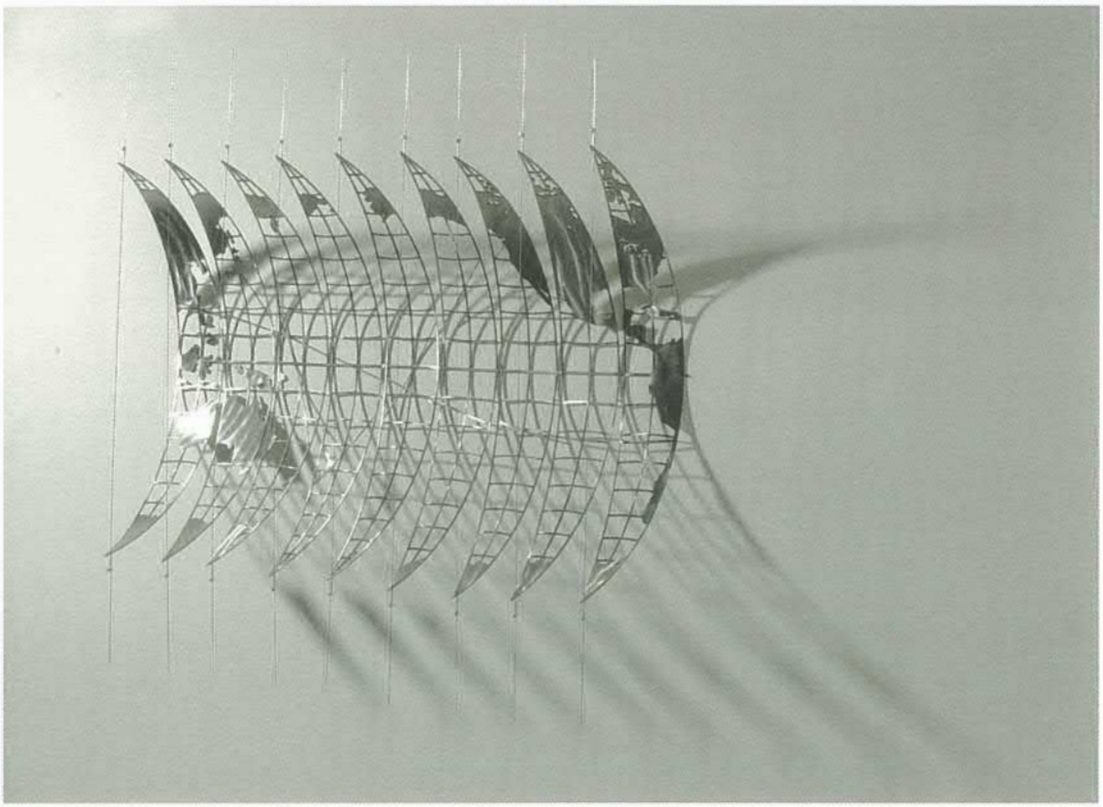
Connections and Differences No 3
1997, Graham Bennett
cast iron, stone
400 x 180 x 50 mm
Private collection, Auckland

Finding a Balance No 1
1998, Graham Bennett
painted cast iron, stone, steel, bronze
700 x 300 x 250 mm
Collection of Keiji Sugiura, Japan
Photograph: Lloyd Park

Lines Extending
2000, Graham Bennett
stainless steel
760 x 660 x 190 mm
Collection of
J. and R. Scott, Blenheim
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

In *Reasons for Voyaging*, as in *Sea/Sky/Stone*, the point of encounter and contact (with ourselves, each other, the world, our future, our past) is signified through reflection. The mirror-like stainless steel of the sky elements, coupled with semi-reflective gestural markings on the poles, fragment the landscape and people beneath, deconstructing the certainty of where (and who) we are. With each set at a different angle and marked with a slightly different pattern, they suggest the varied peoples that have come to these shores and their individual motivations. Thus, the informal gateway Bennett has created represents a point of connection between all cultures, a "declaration of inclusion."[4] Designed to welcome, they are also a form of challenge: how can we find common roots and values without eliminating difference and encouraging homogeneity? In a world of "one sky/one ocean/many lands," geographical demarcation becomes less about possession and more about dialogue; in "claiming the edge" we are really securing a place from which to speak.[5]

As an island nation, we are perhaps especially conscious of the trajectories travelled to reach this place. In *Reasons for Voyaging*, Bennett has created a monument in tribute to both the navigational skills and the personal qualities required to survive an early ocean voyage. Gently arcing sky-elements suggest the wind-filled sails of Polynesian and European vessels. But they could also take their shape from the stick charts believed to have been used by some Polynesian navigators during their extensive oceanic voyages or, alternatively, the octants employed by early European sailors. In a further abstraction, they relate to the segments of a sphere, or scissions of the Earth, an idea Bennett took to its natural conclusion in *Lines Extending* (2000), in which nine curved sections of the globe were rendered in stainless steel and exhibited side by side. Positioned in a formation that refers to New Zealand's orientation in the Pacific, the seven poles of *Reasons for Voyaging* lean in different directions, as if suggesting the seven seas and multiple co-ordinates from which visitors have come. For Bennett, all of these journeys are an integral element of our identity, woven into our history from its very beginning: "In thinking about the fabric of place, my thoughts extend to ocean memories, ripples, waves, shorelines, ocean going, voyages, migration of cultures, colonial trade, the spirit of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, the Pacific Ocean, our portion of the globe."[6]



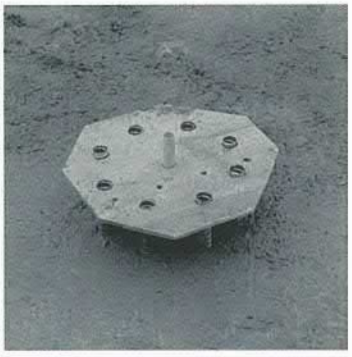
In the ongoing *Pacific Dialogue* series, stones encased in wood and iron containers suggest that Bennett perceives journeys and voyaging craft not only as devices to carry people from place to place, but as receptacles for more abstract qualities, such as memory, belief and whakapapa. The French social anthropologist Lévi-Strauss expressed a similar sentiment in *Tristes Tropiques*, describing journeys as "...those magical caskets full of dreamlike promises."[7] In works such as *Connections and Differences* (1997) and *Finding A Balance* (1998) Bennett combines this general concept with the idea of balance by hinting, perhaps, at the outriggers of Polynesian craft and the keels and ballast of European sailing ships. Crucial to the success of any journey, the question of balance is manifold, encompassing our relationships with the land, other cultures, even the weightings we confer upon our hopes and fears.

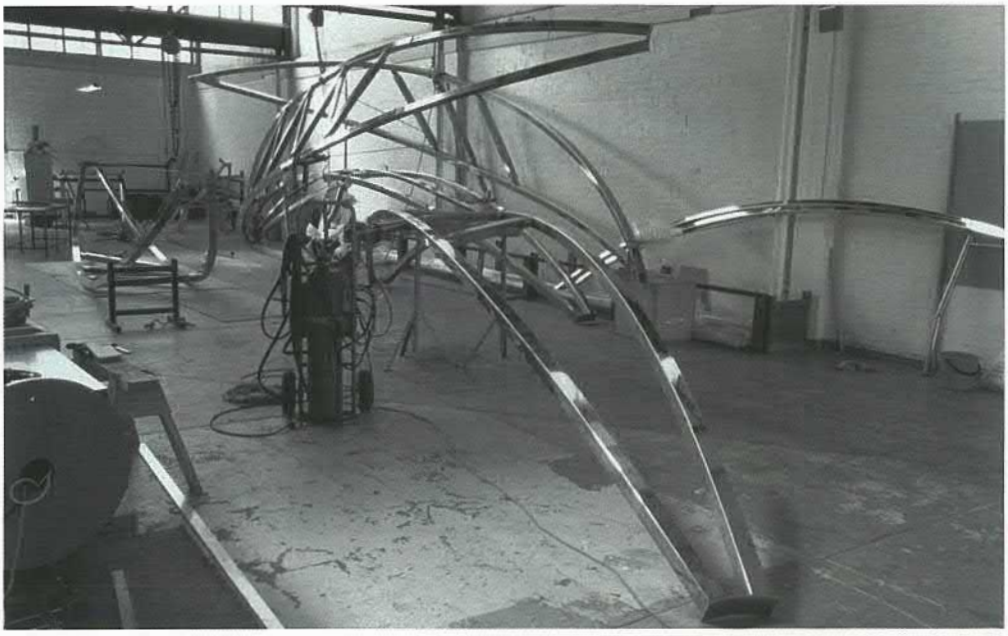
While the angled poles of *Reasons for Voyaging* mark out specific, fixed points on the Gallery forecourt and, by extension, on the globe, the delicate sky elements are capable of subtle movement. Unlimited by preconceived notions of past/present, here/there, them/us – they are aligned according to the influence of lunar cycles – this non-hierarchical sequence suggests that our places of departure are as important as our destinations. Directing our attention upwards, outwards and within, they also remind us that knowing where you come from is essential when steering by the stars.

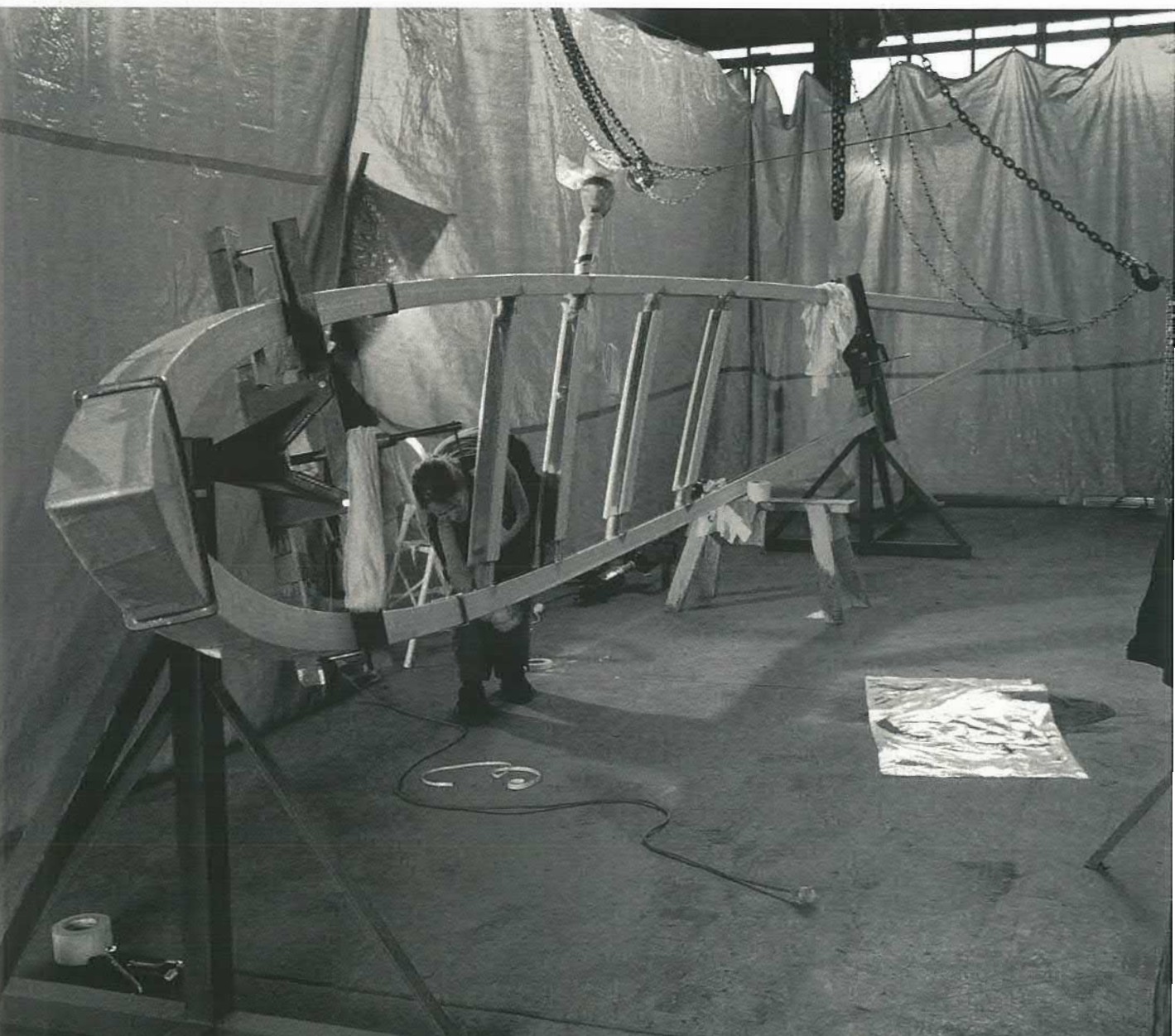
4. Interview with Graham Bennett, April 11, 2001.
5. Graham Bennett, Artist's Notebook, B4, p.16.
6. Graham Bennett, Concept Statement for *Reasons for Voyaging*, 1999.
7. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman, Aetheneum, New York, 1974, pp. 37–8.

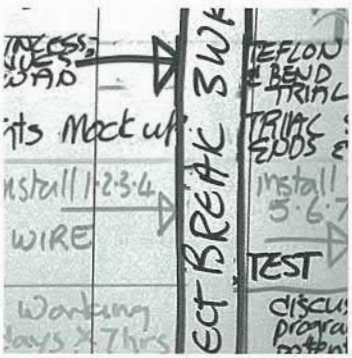
In the Making

Brendan Lee





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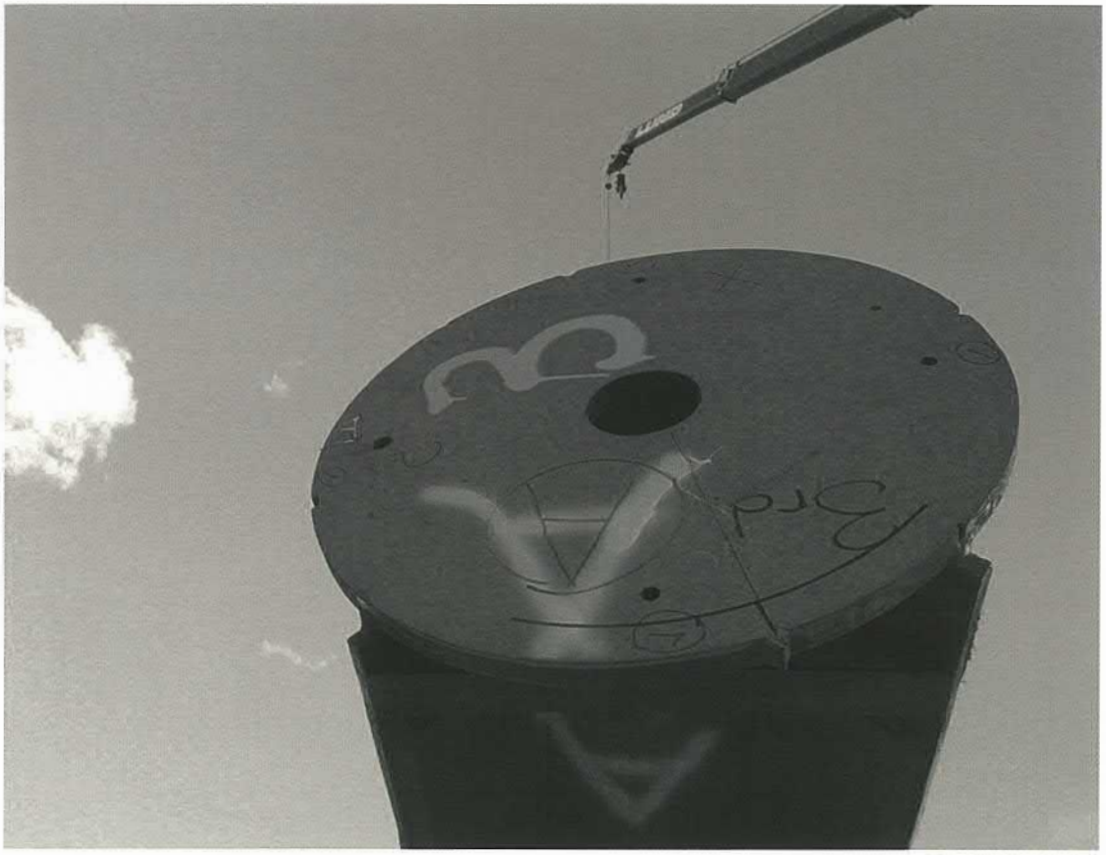


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Seven totara faces of
Reasons for Voyaging
2003 (detail)
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Reasons for Voyaging welcomes people to the Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetū (the wellspring of star-reflecting waters). The materials of the sculpture and the building essay new and old ideas about dispersal and connection and express the belief that this is a good place to meet or live.

By its slow and almost imperceptible actions, this sculpture, like ancient dolmens or old-world marvellous marbles, acknowledges the passage of time and our movements within it. Like the rhythms of city life and the nature of time itself, the work shifts among and reflects the surrounding elements. Graham Bennett conjectures that the moveable parts of *Reasons for Voyaging* will engage people in reflections of themselves and their forebears through the representation, and actual occasions of, movement. These apparently slight and insubstantial steel members are, in fact, substantial and steadfast yet mobile, implicitly underlining the work's enquiry into movement.

Changing Reflections

Cassandra Fusco

And as to its directions? We decide. Like the nature of voyaging itself, with its myriad reasons, any number of points of focus is possible. Here, sky and street meet in a play of spontaneous reflections calculated to introduce and engage us in meetings and departures, habits and directions beyond the mind-lines of latitude and longitude.

In this regard, it is intriguing to consider the markings on the irregularly distributed poles and their implications. Cut by circular-saw, chain-saw and band-saw, the markings in the totara sections resemble hae hae (groove patterning), the parallel lines that enclose pakati (traditional style notchings).[1] Others read like cross-currents and tidal swells. Some are like graffiti (literally 'little scratchings') that have often been used (generally in unauthorised ways) to inscribe social and cultural space. Others again, like cross-hatchings, recall Polynesian navigational charts, and the geographic trajectories of New Zealand's two main islands, North and South; trajectories which have often been used by Bennett to signify our Pacific place and wider connections. But whether interpreted as hae hae, as graffiti, or as any other 'signature', or simply as saw marks, these markings establish space. They evoke nautical practices and Pacific mytho-poetic odysseys. Like written narratives, these marks in the timber prompt considerations about the processes of cultural survival, cultural identity and the possibilities of self-location.

Thus, *Reasons for Voyaging* acquaints us not only with those past or present, but also those who have yet to arrive, those who still wander. By walking through this work we are thus engaged in the reasons involved in voyaging.

1. According to Herbert Williams, hae hae can denote lacerations, the stars that shine before dawn, the dawn itself, the pollen of flowers, decorative parallel grooves, the dog-tooth patterning, or the scratching and tearing associated with Māori tangi (wake) customs that honour the dead. Bennett's choice of marks in the totara invites richly various readings; referencing classic Māori art, the stars, honouring the dead and making connections with the wider world through graffiti-like marks. See: Herbert Williams, *A Dictionary of the Māori Language*, GP Publications Limited.

Milling of totara log, 2002

Study for Sea/Sky/Stone
1993, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
630 x 520 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Study Towards Reasons for Voyaging
2000, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
450 x 320 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

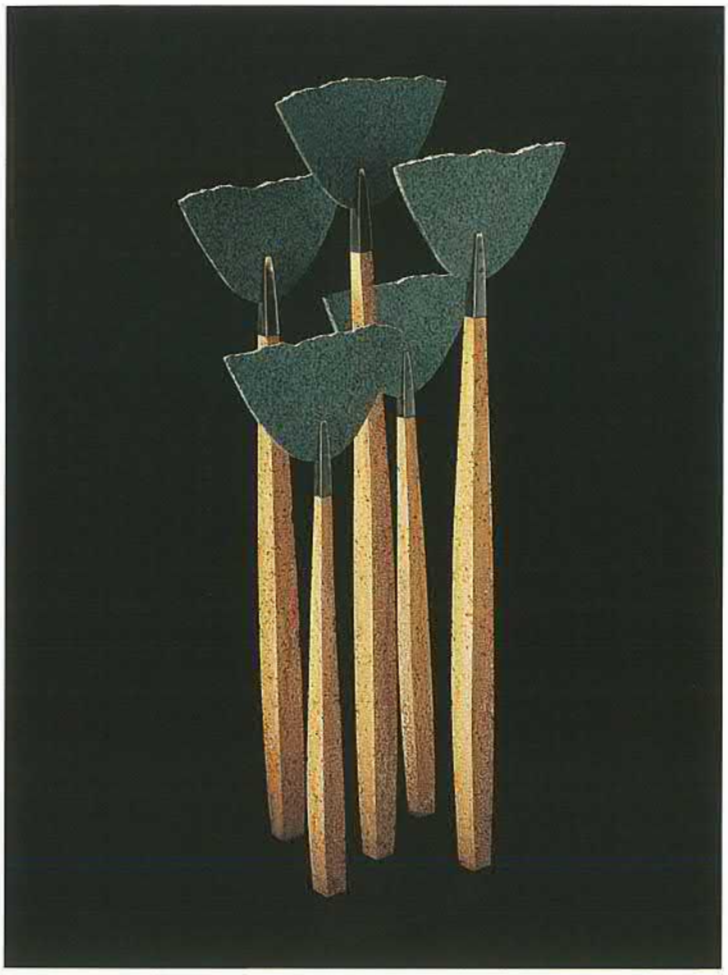
A Question of Identity II
1999, Graham Bennett
stone, bronze, painted iron
Private collection, Japan
Photograph: Lloyd Park

Bennett maintains that all movements are narratives. Whether we rise and journey to work or elsewhere, we move. These everyday actions define us; as members of a community, as workers, or simply as visitors passing through. Accordingly, movement relates to the issues of identity and self-location.

Using steel and unseen motors (housed in the seven poles), this gateway sculpture gathers us into reflections about everyday comings and goings, as well as the wider journeyings of Pacific life. That said, *Reasons for Voyaging* is not a tautology. It is not a visible 'record' of past journeys. It is not a steel conglomerate of variable and undifferentiated experiences, nor is it a one-man product of old and new technologies. The 'seeds' of this work are multiple. It is a work in which a nautical engineer's contribution has been crucial. It is also a public sculpture to which Ngāi Tahu have gifted one of their customary totara logs and, in so doing, add significantly to the work's cultural celebration. In addition, it is a work (part of a continuum) informed by many stories and two in particular: a shipwreck story from Bennett's childhood concerning Huria Te Matenga, and a diary written by his father's mother's grandmother, Margaret Sharp Peace. These several contributions move the work ex-workshop, towards its wider implications and changing reflections.

I wanted to create a work capable of reflecting upon human presence and experience, not in any self-contained way; but something that celebrated the fundamentals of survival and accommodation, the myths and rituals that precede all journeys. And I wanted the sculpture to be joyous, able to gather people in to their own lives, the city and the new art gallery. For me, a culminating aspect of the work has been the understanding of the necessary struggle (technical, aesthetic and philosophical) that forms part of any growth and change, and the potential sense of joy that accompanies such journeys, brought to realisation through the efforts of many.

My interest in this project was deepened, indeed influenced to some extent, by the record of my great great-grandmother Margaret Peace who emigrated firstly from Scotland to Newfoundland and from there to New Zealand in the 1860s on board the Clara *and by the childhood recollection of the heroic efforts of Huria Te Matenga.*[2]



Bennett's comments are instructive because they indicate how his mind and imagination were working both before and during the writing of his design proposal, and the actual making process.

As a child he was told the story of a Māori woman who had saved many from drowning not far from his home in Nelson. Huria Te Matenga gained national prominence for the part she played in a sea rescue in September 1863.[3] The brig *Delaware*, en route from Nelson to Napier, ran into a storm and was cast on to rocks off the cliffs at Wakapuaka (the name of Kupe's fishing ground in Tahiti, transferred to Nelson). Together with her husband and several other men, Huria swam to the aid of the crew, picking up a lead line thrown by the captain of the stricken vessel. Eventually all but one of the crew was saved and Huria was hailed by the people of Nelson as another Grace Darling.[4]

Like many childhood experiences, the story registered but lay dormant in Bennett's imagination. Much, much later, returning to Nelson as an Artist in Residence, the centrality of the location and its impressive Boulder Bank once again fuelled his imagination.

The result of this particular 'return' was *Sea/Sky/Stone*, a work resembling a gargantuan steel and glass concertina installed on the Boulder Bank. Until *Reasons for Voyaging, Sea/Sky/Stone* was, perhaps, Bennett's largest and most transparent statement to date about movement. It literally reflected the elements (of its title) in perpetual motion. Bennett says *Sea/Sky/Stone* was not only "mapping" perpetual natural changes, but also instigating questions relating to "our personal and Pacific cartography, the possibilities of interactions and making connections." [5]

2. Interview with Graham Bennett, September 7, 2000.

3. Huria Te Matenga (c1840–1909) was born at Wakapuaka (near Nelson) and named Ngarongoa Katene at birth. She was able to trace her genealogy back to an ancestor in the Tokomaru canoe. See: *The People of Many Peaks: The Māori Biographies, The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. 1, 1769–1869, Claudia Orange (Gen. Ed.), Bridget Williams Books Limited and the Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1990, pp.41–43.

4. Grace Darling had rescued four people from a shipwreck off the Farne Islands in 1838.

5. Bennett states it was a work conceived to facilitate connections across cultures and time: "Seeing and understanding ourselves and others is an integral part of this practice, questioning, dialogue." Interview with Graham Bennett, September 7, 1999.

A raft of related works followed over the next decade, their titles spelling out movement and enquiry; *Finding a Balance, A Pacific Dialogue, Connections and Differences*, and *A Question of Identity.* The actual forms, fairly modest in scale, were more metaphoric than literal. Effectively they demonstrated Bennett's belief that whether private or public, sculpture can not only engage us in the space it occupies, traverses or creates, but also encourage us to explore the knowledge which pre-empts the initial enquiry and the significance of such works in relation to ourselves and others. Accordingly, each work poses fundamental enquiries concerning shared and sustainable values. Bennett has commented that early in his career he perceived silences in contemporary New Zealand culture and that exploring these led him into museums and histories, and also back to the formative, imaginative reaches of his childhood and stories such as that of Huria Te Matenga.

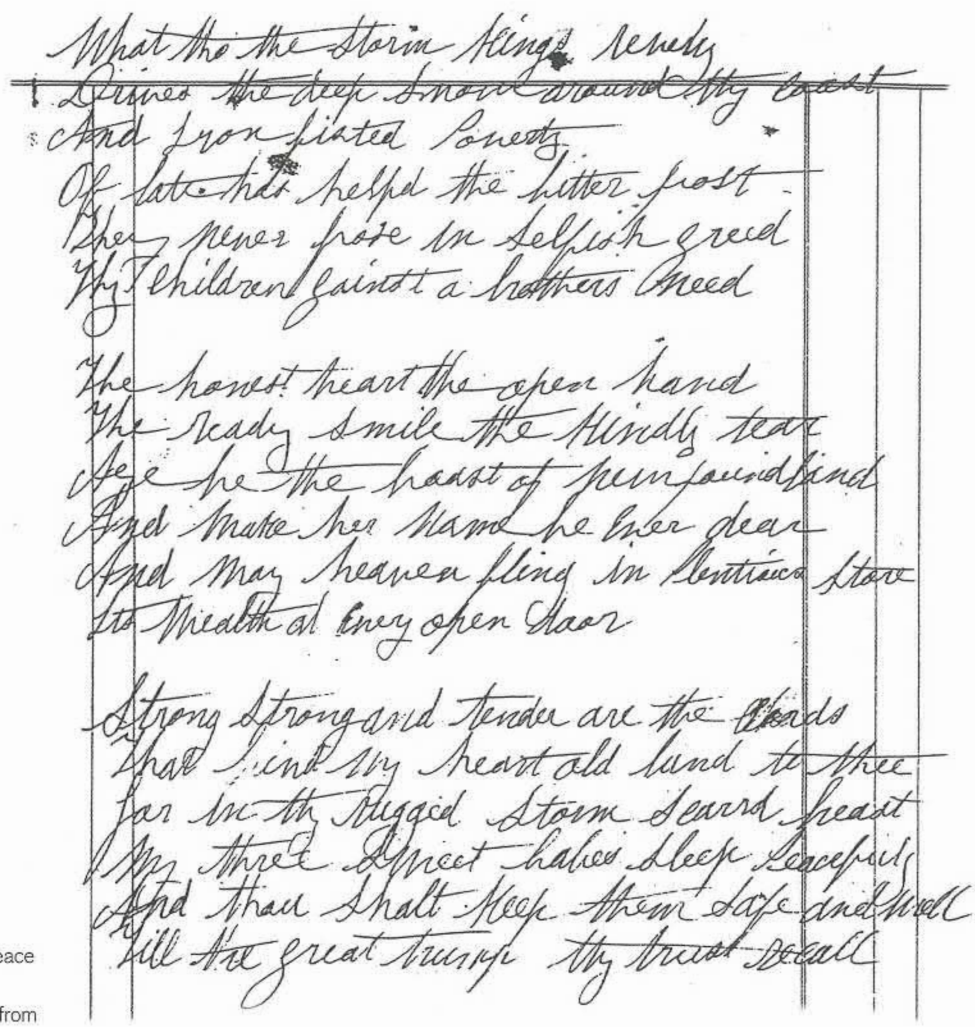
Subsequently, he was given a diary written by his great great-grandmother, Margaret Sharp Peace.

Written in her own hand, it is a fascinating account of her journey to New Zealand in 1864 on board the brigantine, Clara, *132 tons and the reasons which prompted that journey. For me, it is a record that has become symbolic of other such voyagers, and their stories, many of which have fallen into obscurity. It has also given me insights into the complexities beyond the written account. Like the story of Huria Te Matenga, that of Margaret Peace is very much part of our shared history.*[6]

Margaret Sharp Peace began her diary:
December 24th, 1864. A beautiful morning. The pretty picturesque city of St. Johns is sleeping in the frosty air…The wharves and stores that have given labour to so many seem idle and deserted for the fisherys [sic] have failed for three successive years and the poor of the land are crying for bread. The rich are either withdrawing or losing and those of moderate means are seeking another land where they may get along without the continued harassing fear of failing fisherys and bad debts and also where the climate will not be so severe. So we, along with many others, are about to leave the now quiet city and seek our fortunes on the distant shores of New Zealand…We should have sailed yesterday but for a very melancholy occurrence which has taken place. A little child, the daughter of a passenger, named Davie, died on board so we stayed till she was buried, a melancholy beginning. God grant it be not a bad augury of the success of our voyage.

Successive entries describe both turbulent and becalmed seas, cramped quarters, the birth of a baby, the ramming of the little craft by a steamer, and glimpses of land, including:

…the island of Fernanda de Noronha, a place where the Brazilian prisoners are kept [and] the Cape of Good Hope …Very hot…Have no particular affection for people of colour, remembering that God hath made all nations of the earth of one blood yet cannot say I would like to live among them…All our passengers have been off today…some of them …drunken and rowdy.[7]


What tho the Storm Kings revely
~~Drives the deep snow around thy coast~~
And iron fisted Poverty
Of late hath helped the bitter frost
They never froze in selfish greed
Thy Children gainst a brothers need

The honest heart the open hand
The ready smile the kindly tear
Aye be the boast of Newfoundland
And make her Name be Ever dear
And may heaven fling in bounteous store
Its wealth at Every open door

Strong strong and tender are the threads
That bind my heart old land to thee
Far in thy rugged Storm seared breast
My three sweet babes sleep peacefully
And thou shalt keep them safe and well
Till the great trump thy trust recall

In late March, Margaret Sharp Peace recorded:

"We are now about 6,400 miles from New Zealand so if we get fair winds we will expect to get there by the end of April." In mid-April, she describes how, "James caught an albatross today, a beautiful bird with white body, black wings, black bill and dark grey eyes. It is very wild and cries very like a sheep. They put a halfpenny round his neck and let him fly again…They have been fishing for albatross for nearly ten weeks but could not get the art of catching them until now."

Subsequently, the narrative records the killing of albatross, a "revengeful sea" and a prolonged stopover in Melbourne due to the *Clara* being declared unseaworthy. In late June, Margaret's final entries describe fine weather with the "ship going beautifully" en route to New Zealand. However, instead of putting the passengers down in Waitemata, as originally agreed, the *Clara* berthed at Manukau on June 30, 1865. Margaret remained on board while her husband set off to complain to the authorities.[8]

The diary of Margaret Sharp Peace offers us both gaps and insights into why she left Scotland and voyaged to Newfoundland, and subsequently to New Zealand on board the *Clara*, and what hopes she held for her life in the antipodes. Her voice entered our consciousness in a fascinating anthology recalling the "unsettled lives of women in nineteenth century New Zealand," edited by two other women.[9] Similarly, the story of Huria Te Matenga entered European consciousness not as a descendent from an ancestor in the Tokomaru canoe, but as a woman who, through great bravery, helped rescue ship-wrecked unfortunates from the *Delaware* and subsequently recorded in *The People of Many Peaks, The Māori Biographies* from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography.* [10]

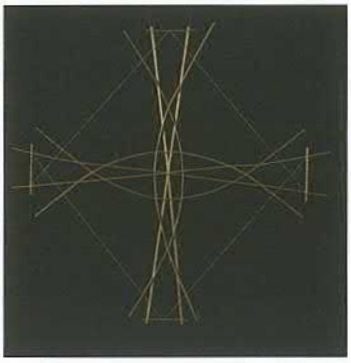
6. Interview with Graham Bennett, September 7, 2001.

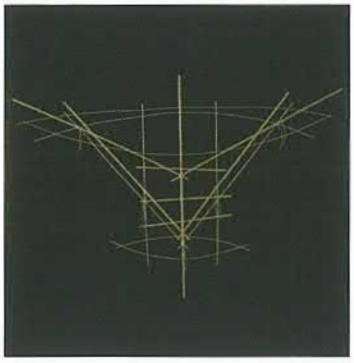
7. Margaret Sharp Peace, Journal of a voyage from St. Johns, Newfoundland to Auckland, New Zealand, 1864–65, Private MS.

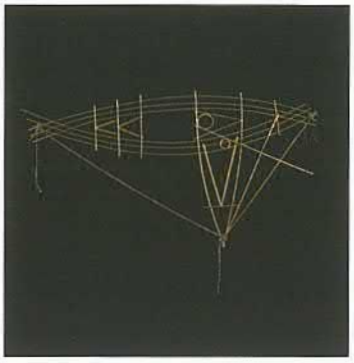
8. Ibid.

9. Frances Porter and Charlotte McDonald (Eds.), *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1996, pp. 64–69.

10. In her account of Huria Te Matenga, Mary Louise Ormsby comments that although shipwrecks were common, the part Huria played in the rescue caught the public's imagination. Her bravery was hailed as a sign of common humanity at a time when armed conflict in Waikato and Taranaki raged between the two races. Public acknowledgement was made by a government award and with the presentation of a gold watch to Huria Te Matenga by the people of Nelson.
See: *The People of Many Peaks*, pp. 41–43.







Reconstructed Marshall Islands
mattang sea chart
2000, Graham Bennett
split bamboo and thread
690 x 620 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Maquette based on
voyaging canoe plan
2000, Graham Bennett
split bamboo and thread
560 x 810 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Reconstructed Marshall Islands
meddo sea chart
2000, Graham Bennett
split bamboo and thread
390 x 700 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Roger Fyfe (Curator of Ethnology,
Canterbury Museum) with
Graham Bennett
2002
Photograph: Brendan Lee

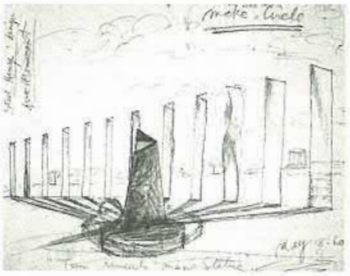
11. For example, over many centuries Marshall Islanders made navigational charts with thin strips from the midrib of coconut leaflets, usually arranged on a rectangular frame. Curved strips were used to indicate altered directions of winds and ocean swells when deflected by the presence of an island. The money cowry shell (*Cypraea moneta*), tied to the framework, indicated islands. See: A.C. Haddon and James Hornell, *Canoes of Oceania*, Vol. 1, Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1975, p. 372.

Both accounts engage us symbolically, representing a host of immigrants. From different cultural situations, the voices of both women represent a constancy of movement within historical change, a recurring preoccupation in Bennett's work.

With the inclusion of these two stories, this essay, like Bennett's sculpture, acknowledges the contributions of all such voyagers and the forces of change, especially in relation to space, travel and mobility. Such accounts verify that journeys are rarely undertaken without some degree of discomfort or danger. Nevertheless, whether journeys result in dislocation or rescue, these accounts represent the spectrum of possibilities inherent in any voyage undertaken in order to be at home in the world.

In its own way, *Reasons for Voyaging* is a companion account. It gives contemporary representation to, and reflects on movement, on journeys undertaken. Its measured movements slowly contravene stasis and a single (or best) viewpoint. Its uneven-numbered poles do not necessarily guide us to a centre. Yet these two negatives (promising neither arrival nor conclusion) embody engagement. This is one of the gateway aims; to show that movement and engagement are modes of lived experience, not just (sculptural) abstractions, that journeying both opens and facilitates experiences of space in time. It is no accident that the sculpture celebrates voyaging undertaken using means as different as mnemonic Polynesian sea charts and the cardinal pointers of a compass rose.

Reasons for Voyaging physically invites us to partake in the ongoing narratives of voyaging, descent and belonging, the cultures, cleavages and meetings between the peoples of the Pacific and further afield. It reconfigures elements of ancient Pacific charts and modern engineering skills, together with some very human thoughts on the reasons for voyaging.[11] It translates these into a series of relations. Abstracted and combined, their symbolic expression resists singular claims about time or place and offers instead a poetic syntax of past and passing experiences, of knowledge gathered and engineered into something public, inclusive and ongoing.

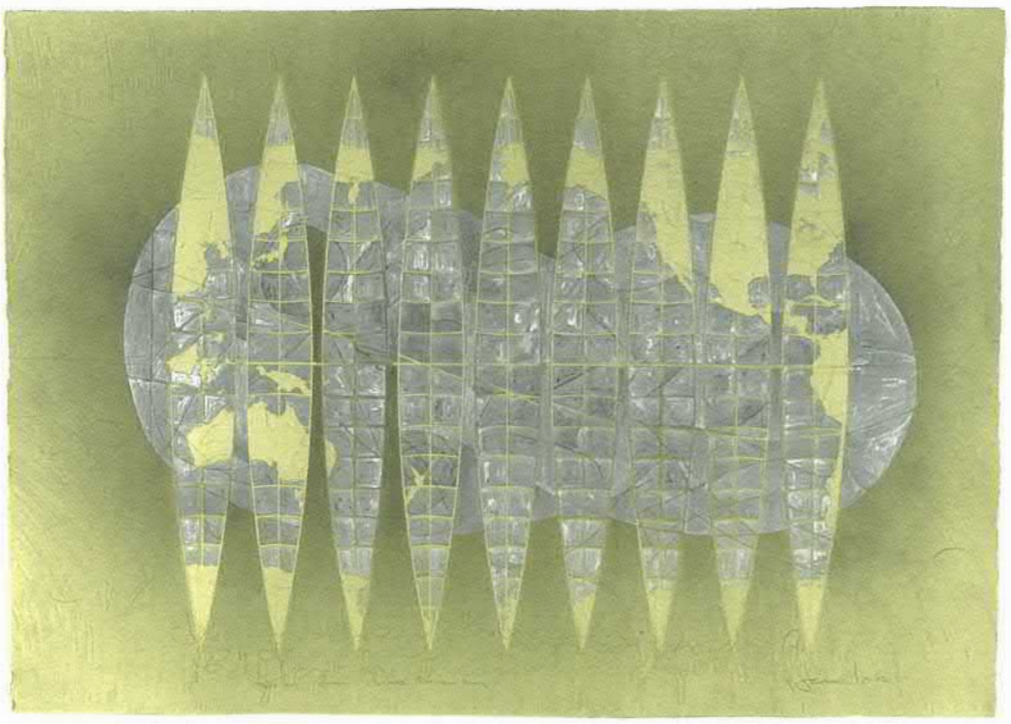


'Timehenge' or 'Steel Henge'
1980, Len Lye
ball point pen and
pencil on paper
215 x 279 mm
Collection of the
Len Lye Foundation
Photograph: Roger Horrocks

Tribute to Firefighters
2002, Graham Bennett
recovered steel
(World Trade Center, New York)
7000 x 7000 x 5000 mm
Firefighters' Reserve
Photograph: Murray Hedwig

Study for Lines Extending
2000, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
760 x 1060 mm
Collection of
B. and J. Mullaly, Christchurch
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

At its most immediately playful, *Reasons for Voyaging* finds physical reflection in the glass curtain wall of the gallery where it both inhabits and creates space in blends of time and movement. Through their looking-glass aspects, the poles and 'sails' and the companion curtain wall work in collusion, reflecting the surrounding elements. Each is a mirror of change and reflection. And whether by day or night, whether conjuring masts scudding through seas of pitch and toss tilting at distant horizons, or navigational charts, these strategically placed linear gestures echo the bends in the river nearby and the life sources that all such rivers potentially represent.



As travellers and visitors we bring this work into meaning. Within its play of forms certain physical echoes can be detected. The steel uprights may evoke tipsy maypoles, or a Len Lye tangible, or simple sky drawings, or Gaudi's earth-sprung parabolas hosting silver crescent moons. Or their tilting gestures may hint at another commission, four twisted steel limbs sent from New York to Christchurch and 'choreographed' by Bennett into a sculpture for the Firefighters' Reserve. A mobile against disequilibrium, this sculpture is also an affirmation of the necessary journeying towards finding a balance.

However, rather than imply a successful historical assessment – many have come and settled here – it surely must be regarded as a work of reflection: of past and passing communities, continuous and ongoing. It is about growth, gathered from experience. Thus, through imagination, and by eschewing any logic of completion or finality, *Reasons for Voyaging* avoids the 'literalism' of modernism and engages us in enquiries.

Various or vague, meanings will spring from within the reaches of our own imagination, from engagement with the signs we find in its forms. At its narrowest reaches, walking through *Reasons for Voyaging* may be experienced in terms of the connective steps en route to the gallery. But at its widest, it may perhaps focus us on the steps and changes we have yet to meet in our own lives. Either way, the work offers not so much a map for all such eventualities, but rather encourages reflections on self-location and cognisance of the fact that art, like life, is made meaningful, or otherwise, by its participants. In this sense *Reasons for Voyaging* is not a representation of time in slow, almost imperceptible movements engineered by the sculptor and his assistants. It is a work in progress, 'completed' by our participation.

Trees in Hagley Park, Christchurch
2002
Photograph: Brendan Lee

Study Towards Sculpture
2000, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
450 x 320 mm
Collection of
Arch and Jane Campbell,
Christchurch
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

A cluster of pine trees stands in a corner of Hagley Park. Their angles and lines and the spaces they punctuate suggest a place to start out from. Where will I walk? What will I notice as I move through the spaces between them? I think of Graham Bennett's *Reasons for Voyaging*.

Like the trees in the park, the sculpture too evokes a sense of anticipation as well as reference to place. My attention is engaged, I'm drawn in, but there is no hint here of a one and only place to stand and look. Walking through and around the sculpture, making straight lines and curves, conjures up puzzles for perception as well as the tricky matter of meaning.

Around Every Circle
Another Can Be Drawn

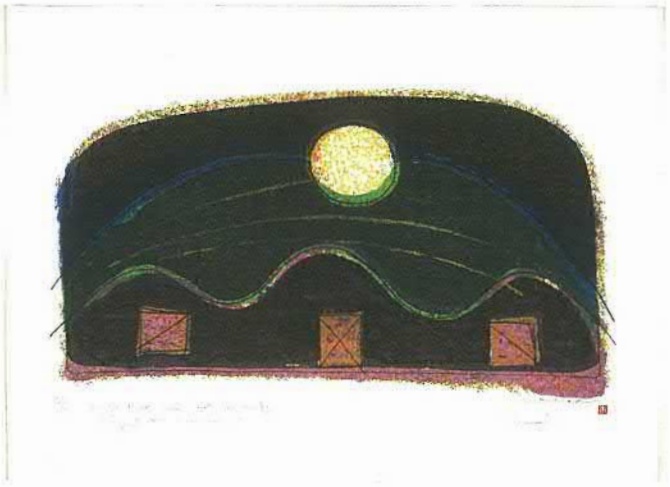
John Freeman-Moir

How, then, might *Reasons for Voyaging* function for a viewer? What are its purposes? To mark a path. To announce an arrival. To beckon those who drive or cycle past. To intrigue pedestrians as they hurry through the city. To be a series of passageways and portals. To fascinate the curious. What the sculpture is, how it works – what it does within and to our experience – depends very much on what we bring to it through active perception and judgement.

The experience of walking and looking, and walking from yet another angle is, it seems, central to the content and meaning of the work. "What is this sculpture about?" someone may ask. "About the experience of art itself," might be the reply. *Reasons for Voyaging* exemplifies critical elements of aesthetic experience. It reminds us that in confronting any artwork "...much of our experience and many of our skills are brought to bear and may be transformed by the encounter. The aesthetic 'attitude' is restless, searching – is less attitude than action; creation and re-creation."[1] *Reasons for Voyaging* is not so much an object of beauty and contemplation as it is a means to this end. It works well if it stimulates the viewer to be inquisitive, questioning and exploratory.

One of the most challenging aspects of the sculpture in relation to the gallery is its inescapable presence. As the viewer walks, looks and experiences the sculpture, the tapering poles, their inclinations, markings and expressively curved top elements point to new horizons for the eye and the brain. The urge to explore has always provided a straightforward rationale for voyaging. This urge is characteristic not only of explorers, but of anyone for that matter who is trying to find a way forward, as we all must, using the artefacts and bits and pieces of technology which are to hand. Of the experience of *Reasons for Voyaging*, Graham Bennett has this to say: *I'm interested in how various peoples reference their environment; their symbols for a sense of place. I'm curious about how our particular environment and location could have an impact on our vision of ourselves... I aim to create a type of choreography of the march/dance/parade in following or choosing a path to the gallery. A celebration of arrival, a fulfilling departure.*[2]

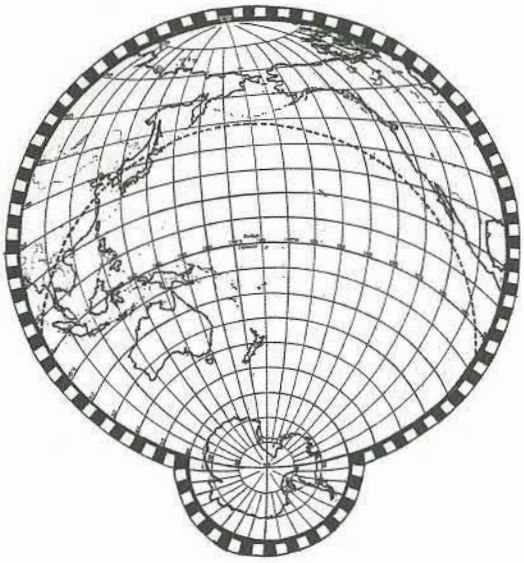
1. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Oxford University Press, London, 1969, p. 242.
2. Interview by Felicity Milburn with Graham Bennett, April 11, 2000.



Pacific Arc and Four Diagonals
1992. Masao Ohba in collaboration with Graham Bennett
paper screen print
380 x 500 mm
Collection of Greta Bennett, Auckland
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Richard Serra, the American sculptor, has similarly emphasised the actions of the viewer in relation to the meaning and content of sculptural experience, particularly of works like his own, that one can move around, through and stand inside. In reference to this shift towards the viewer, Serra has made the following point: "...the viewer in part became the subject matter of the work, not the object. His perception of the piece resided in his movement through the piece, so the piece became more involved with anticipation, memory and time, and walking and looking, rather than just looking at a sculpture the way one looks at a painting."[3] Might not such an experience, if undergone immediately before entering a gallery, dispose the eye to 'walk' more actively and intelligently once inside?

Art, like science, is potentially an invitation to embrace new perspectives and understandings. To accept such an invitation requires an involvement with an artwork, somewhat in the manner in which the artist has been involved. The viewer must, so to speak, 'relive' aspects of the artist's experience. As the philosopher John Dewey famously argued, "...to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent. They are not the same in any literal sense."[4] *Reasons for Voyaging*, like any artwork, works to the extent that it enters our ways of seeing, perceiving and comprehending, even if we follow in the footsteps of the artist.



There is a passage in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Circles* (1841) which conveys a view of life as tentative and experimental, of our actions as being the only means we have by which to grasp and understand the world, of each ultimate fact being only the start of a new series, of fresh views and inevitable surprises. This passage from Emerson captures much of the meaning of *Reasons for Voyaging*: *The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end. It is the highest emblem in the cipher of the world...We are all our lifetime reading the copious sense of this first of forms...every action admits of being outdone. Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon, and under every deep a lower deep opens.*[5]

Exploration, beginning with the movement of the eye, is a natural human capacity. Without movement (voyaging), perception (ordered experience and habit) is impossible. Thus, reference to voyaging in the title of the sculpture points to one of the fundamental conditions of aesthetic experience. For a viewer to create the relevant kinds of experience it helps to have some understanding of the artist's ways of worldmaking; how the artist, in other words, selects, perceives, simplifies, clarifies, condenses, abridges, refines, abstracts and imagines. Indeed, an alternative title for the sculpture might well have been *Ways of Worldmaking*.[6]

3. Richard Serra, *Running Arcs (For John Cage)*, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1992, p. 14.

4. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Minton, Balch and Company, New York, 1934, p. 54. An example of the 'parallelism' of experience between artist and viewer is recorded with wonderful clarity by W. H. Auden in his poem, *Musée des Beaux Arts* (1940).

5. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, First Series*, (1841), The Riverside Edition, George Routledge and Sons, London, 1900, p. 281.

6. Borrowed from the title of a book by Nelson Goodman (1978).

Stops Around Avebury Circle
1978, Graham Bennett
pencil on paper (4 drawings)
420 x 300 mm (each drawing)
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

This essay considers three motifs, evident in Bennett's aesthetic experience, which underlie *Reasons for Voyaging*. I refer to these motifs as *sequence, frame* and *projection*. For convenience of discussion they are treated separately though in reality they are interwoven through his work, as they will be interwoven in the flow of the viewer's experience.

Walking a path, detailing a *sequence* of perceptions, is a method of visual exploration integral to Bennett's visual thinking. In 1979, for example, when visiting Avebury, he began a series of drawings based on the prehistoric circle of stones there. Moving from stone to stone Bennett drew each in turn, incorporating facets of the stone just passed and the one to be drawn next. This technique inaugurated a series of drawings which explore sequential moments in the artist's travels; a trip from Dubrovnik to Sarajevo, through Spain, across Turkey and Greece, a train journey in London, walking across Sydney Harbour Bridge and along a street in Barcelona. In all this work the notion of a path as a record and residue of experience, of things seen, found, done and anticipated is essential. This method is nicely captured by the old Icelandic word 'afangar'; "stations, stops on the road, to stop and look; forward and back, to take it all in."[7]

The use of sequence to indicate the temporal unfolding of perspectives – serial instances of the now, the then and the next – inevitably finds its way into the sculptural constructions of Bennett. In *Sea/Sky/Stone* (see Felicity Milburn's essay), the largest of these works, the rigour of carefully measured movement is evident and assertive. But the play of light and reflection on the sequence of glass and steel surfaces in this work is also a reminder that, despite repeated calculation and dogged belief, even our most constructed constructions lack the assurance of permanence and predictability. From moment to moment views and reflections shift, and with these shifts impressions, judgements, and memories shift too. The rhythms of conscious experience seem mostly to move in this combined yet uneven way.

In response to *Sea/Sky/Stone*, Bennett drew a sequence of images based on observations from multiple viewpoints. This is suggestive of how *Reasons for Voyaging* might be approached, enabling it to become active in perception and, in consequence, heightening the experience of viewers as they enter the exhibition spaces of the Gallery. Each consciously achieved perspective opens up the possibility of further perspectives. Our journeys and explorations are made by us within and between the cultures we inhabit, and it is important to remember that they can always be made another way; "...every end is a beginning... there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon."

7. Richard Serra, *Drawings and Etchings from Iceland*, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, 1992, p. 2.

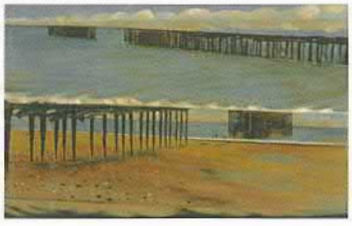
Sixty Four Steps, Fushimi Inari
(and detail)
1995, Graham Bennett
photographic sequence
1030 x 690 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Twenty Steps,
Spiral Upwards, Sea/Sky/Stone
1991, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
1250 x 820 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Two Tides at Onekaka
1969-70, Doris Lusk
oil on canvas on hardboard
751 x 1209 mm
Collection of the
Museum of New Zealand
Te Papa Tongarewa

The simplest meaning of *frame*, our second motif, is something that can be looked through. More precisely, a frame outlines a point of view. It picks out some things and eliminates others, according to our interests. Bennett draws on a rich set of observations and memories in which the notion of frame is central. To mention just three: geometric drawings of the cracked ceramic surfaces of aged planter boxes on a patio in Barcelona; recording a walk along the three kilometre pathway shrine Fushimi Inari in Kyoto (comprising hundreds of torii or gateways); reflecting on an abandoned coastal structure in a compelling painting by one of his art school teachers, Doris Lusk, *Two Tides at Onekaka*.

In a set of experiments Bennett placed a steel frame in the landscape and drew what he saw through it, starting from the assumption that an unframed landscape lacks significance. Our frames of perception (our skills, actions, emotions and all we have learned and made) are the means by which we bring the world or, more accurately, parts of the world, within the scope of motive and comment. In drawings and sculptures Bennett has explored the framed view as a way of capturing what we can know and explore. Doors and gates serve as frames through which we move – expectantly, anxiously, hopefully, excitedly, without thought – from one experience to another. *Reasons for Voyaging* acts to frame, to map or define possible pathways towards and away from the gallery, by capturing our attention as we arrive and by offering an expanded field for perception as we leave.



In *Reasons for Voyaging* the framed view is embodied, most explicitly, in the curved elements balanced on each pole. These curved elements are frames with which the viewer, like the artist, can select and emphasise according to preference or interest. Each of these frames offers a different account of what can be seen and understood. The stainless steel sections curving and reaching out simultaneously in two directions might be roving eyes guiding perception and action. They call to mind the technologies and beliefs of sea-going people, map projections, lines laid out, distances measured and directions travelled. Without some point of origin, without a frame of reference – "the first circle; [and] the horizon which it forms" – voyages of discovery could not even be conceived of, let alone undertaken. And without discovery there would be no history.

This brings us to the third motif of experience, *projection*. By projection I mean the use of symbols (lines, marks, gestures, inflections) to convey a sense of transition, impermanence or anticipation. At the point of its earliest conception and during the period when the sculpture was being constructed, Bennett frequently wondered what the experience would be like for people as they walked through it and how this might relate to the gallery experience. The curved sections of the gallery's façade resonate with the sculpture's forms and the lines traced by viewers as they walk between the poles. The spatial configuration that locates each unit of *Reasons for Voyaging* in relation to the whole is based on a number of implied arcs that are rich in meaning for the artist. These arcs find reference in Bennett's thinking to lines of connection between geographic points, to expectations and pathways that might be taken; "...every action admits of being outdone." Analogously, the movements of the viewer create ever-changing alignments of the sculpture's elements, thereby forming new perceptual possibilities, some of which will be caught by the eye for only a fraction of a second.

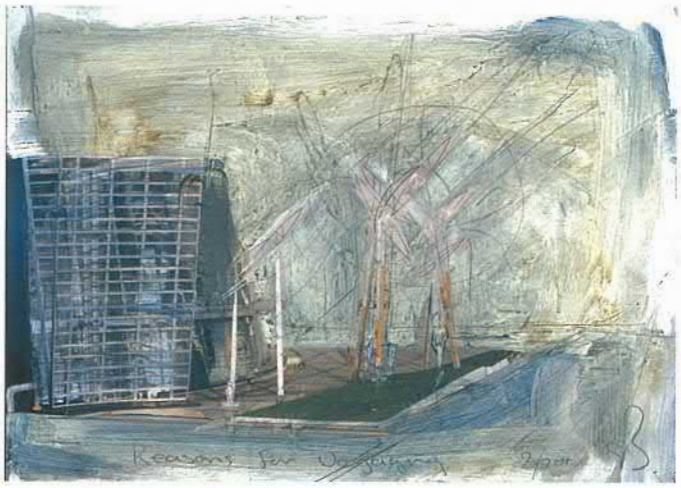
Reasons for Voyaging
2003 (detail)
Photograph: Brendan Lee

Model for surface markings.
Reasons for Voyaging
2002, Graham Bennett
paint on card
580 x 260 x 200 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Study Towards Sculpture
2002, Graham Bennett
mixed media on paper
450 x 320 mm
Collection of the artist
Photograph: Hedwig Photography

Two Studies, **Towards Reasons for Voyaging**
2001, Graham Bennett
mixed media on photograph
110 x 160 mm (each image)
Collection of the artist

Less abstractly, the curved elements suggest celestial motions and cycles, but also, maybe, movements around the curvature of the earth and beyond those horizons which demarcate the known and the familiar from the undiscovered. These elements, which are programmed to move each month at midnight through varying degrees of arc, trace a complicated pattern of intersecting circles that will only be repeated once each quarter of a century. The pointing ends, the curvatures, the flashes of reflection from the steel and the interchange of light and shadow are all expressive of flight, take-off, acceleration, the traverse and dissection of space and time, beyond the immediate space and time of the gallery. Each element also traces smaller, more intimate circles, as, for example, in the way the ends are fixed to the main steel sections. These curved junctions echo the catboards on canoes, the point where the prow is joined to the hull.



To return for a moment to the work done at Avebury, the gestural lines of those drawings, in their delicacy and movement, contrast with the stable earth-bound forms of the stones. The scribbled lines propel the viewer's imagination, as I suspect they propelled the imagination of the artist, to what lies beyond view. They invite us, perhaps, to conceive of the world as "...strung-along, not rounded in and closed," to recall a phrase of William James.[8]

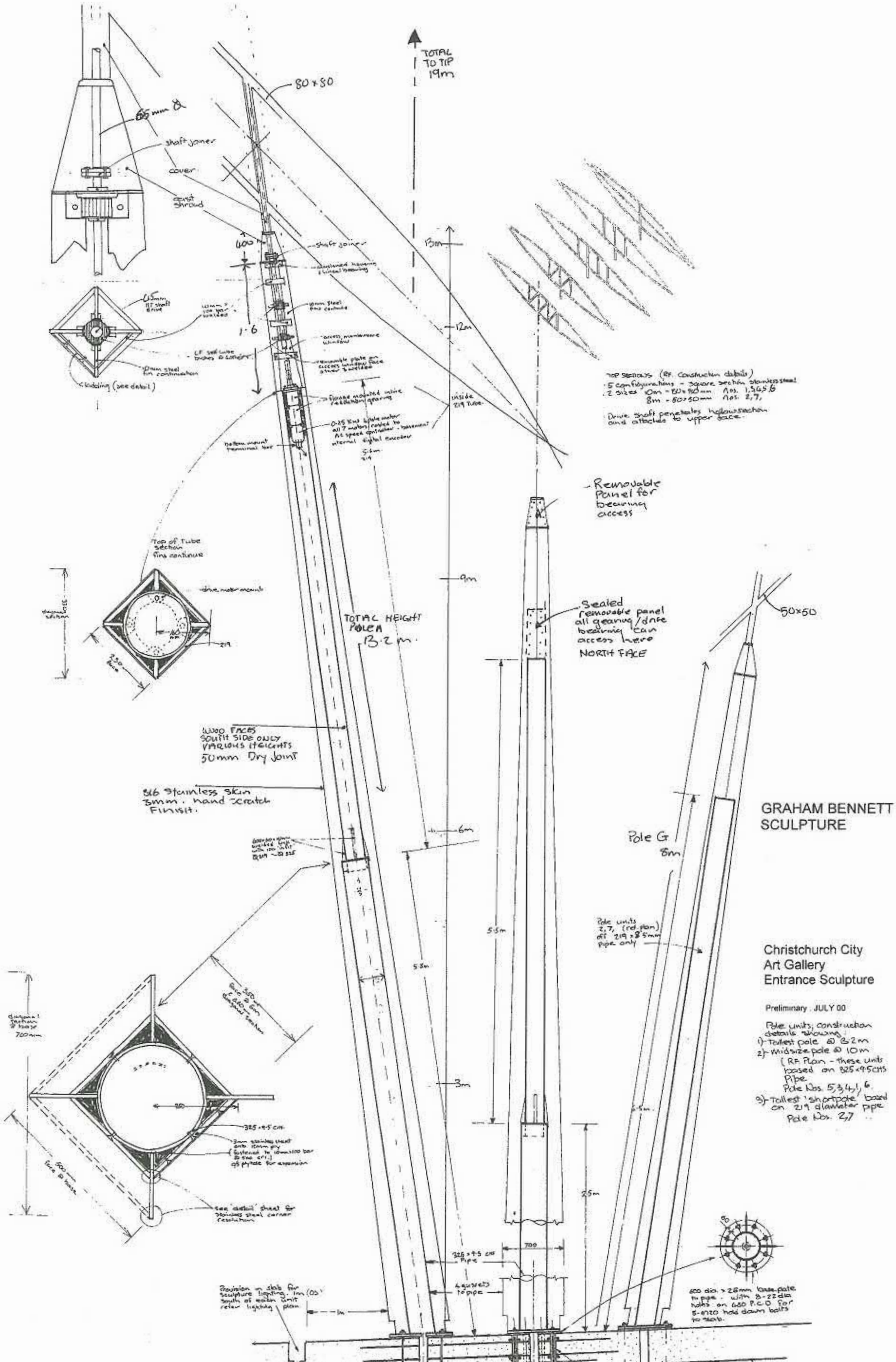
In the case of *Reasons for Voyaging*, scratched arcs on the steel surfaces of each pole carry a similar import. Depending on the angles of light and perception, these patterned arcs may appear as either sharply drawn or indistinct. Thus, the viewer catches the rhythms and anxieties of exploration, but also the optimism of knowing that "...around every circle another can be drawn."

The dialectic of gestural lines and marks, expressive of the dynamic, the fleeting and the moving, with forms that speak of the relatively enduring, the stable and the fixed, is found throughout Bennett's work, including *Reasons for Voyaging*. This dialectic will, I think, find its particular registration in the experience of each viewer; experience constructed from the interplay of memory, expectation and a sense that our descriptions of the world are ever-not-quite.[9]

Reasons for Voyaging encourages exploration and visual improvisation. The curves, the outlines, the continuations and reflections carry the eye to the front of the gallery, across its conical sections and faceted glass panels to the evocation of other worlds and of what might be seen and done. But just as surely, *Reasons for Voyaging* anchors our experience to a particular location, a particular history, a place to stand on the earth, a place to start out from, a place to look back at.

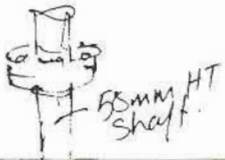
8. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, Longmans, Green and Company, London, 1909, p. 328.

9. A sense that our descriptions are "ever-not-quite" is Jamesian in flavour.



TOTAL TO TIP 19m
80×80
65mm Ø
shaft joiner
cover
cast shroud
shaft joiner
600
1·6
13m
12m
Skidding (see detail)
TOP SECTIONS (RF. Construction details)
5 configurations - square section stainless steel
2 sizes 10m - 80×80mm Nos. 1,3,4,5,6
8m - 50×50mm Nos. 2,7,
Drive shaft penetrates hollow section and attaches to upper face.
Removable Panel for bearing access
Top of Tube section fins continue
drive motor mount
219
9m
TOTAL HEIGHT POLE A 13·2 m.
Sealed removable panel all gearing / drive bearing can access here
NORTH FACE
50×50
WOOD FACES SOUTH SIDE ONLY VARIOUS HEIGHTS 50mm Dry Joint
316 Stainless Skin 3mm. hand scratch Finish.
6m
Pole G 8m
GRAHAM BENNETT
SCULPTURE
5.5m
5.3m
Pole units 2,7, (ref. plan) of 219 × 8.5mm pipe only
Christchurch City
Art Gallery
Entrance Sculpture
Preliminary . JULY 00
Pole units; construction details showing;
1) Tallest pole @ 13.2m
2) Midsize pole @ 10m
(RF Plan - these units based on 325×9.5CHS Pipe
Pole Nos. 5,3,4,1,6
3) Tallest 'shortpole' based on 219 diameter pipe
Pole Nos. 2,7
3m
325×9.5 CHS
2.5m
700
325×9.5 CHS Pipe
4 gussets to pipe
1m
Provision in slab for sculpture lighting. 1m (OS) South of each unit refer lighting plan
600 dia × 28mm base plate to pipe - with 8-22 dia holes on 630 P.C.D for 8-M20 hold down bolts to slab.
Slab fall

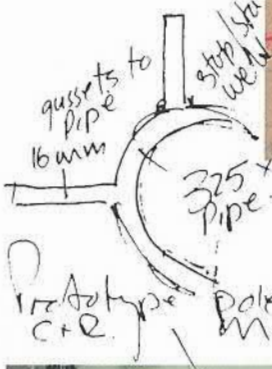
Artist's Notes



Large scale model with ball joint to check with angles & orientation

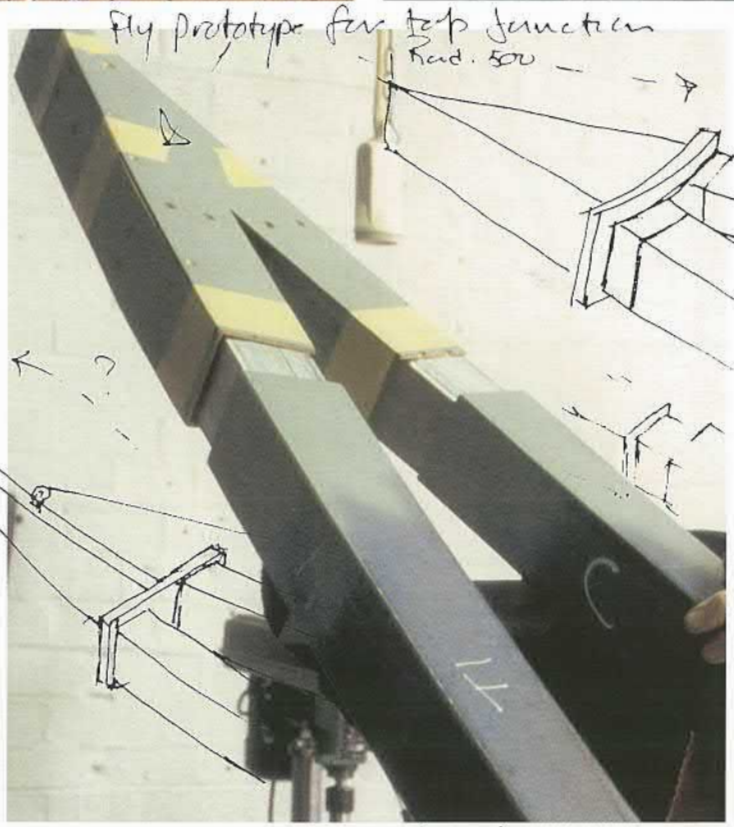
Provide site info on plan.
eg. Pole D.
2 m North of grid line A.
1.4 m west of grid line 3
Pole height 11 m.
Wood face centres on 205° from Datum O
Angle = 9° on 263° from Datum O

Weld with top 2m prototype



Prototype Pole section C+R. May 01.

Fly prototype for top junction
Rad. 500

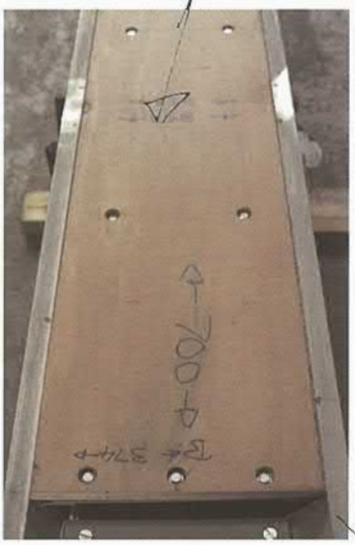


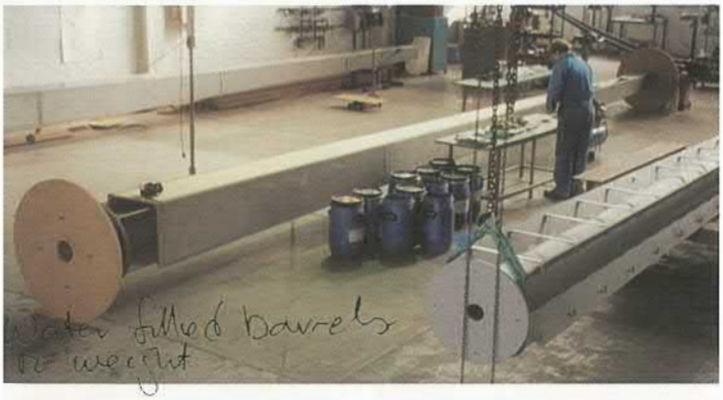
Dual radius bend experiments mild St prototype

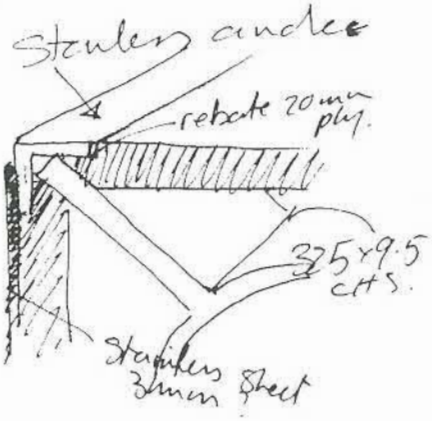
C+R May-Aug 01.

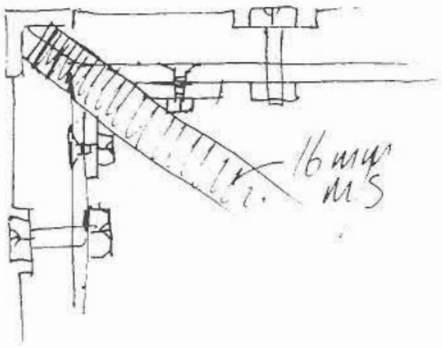
Ian with Pete A
& Lugs in place to take flat bars.

Rebated ply bolted to bars.
Stainless corner < in place









Flexi Bravini couplings -Jackshafts

Cyclodicil Geared brake motor
VX609/08 1rpm (120 Nm)
0.18 kW

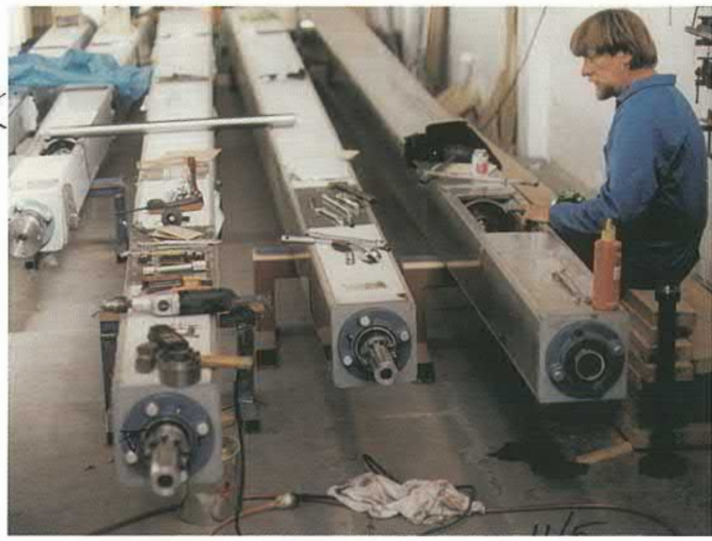
EZ-2P2-MIF T-Verter speed controller

Sept. 01

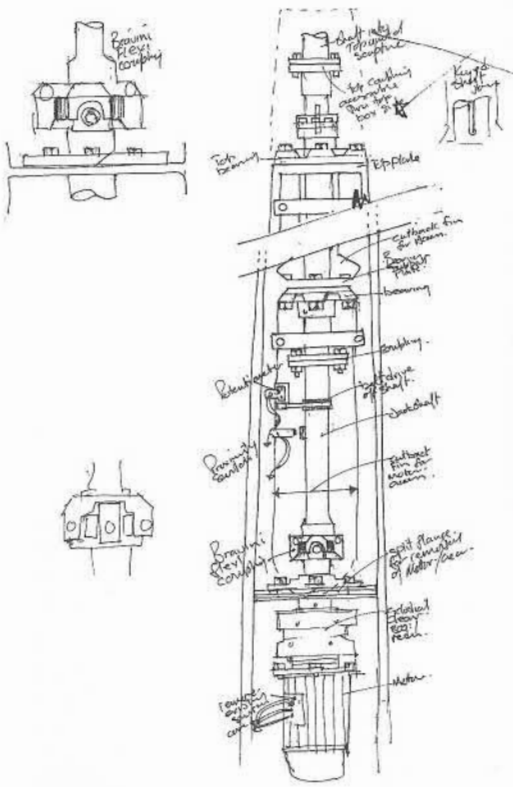
Drive components & couplings:

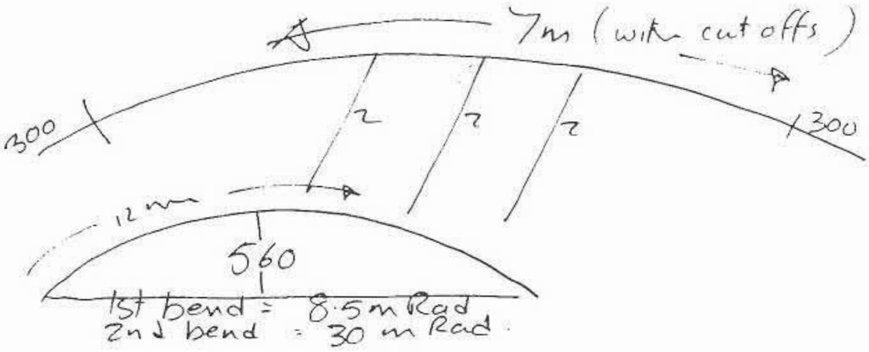
Clendan gave d.k for HT shaft to reduce from 60 mm to 58 mm

Need to bend HT shaft to fit curved vent box

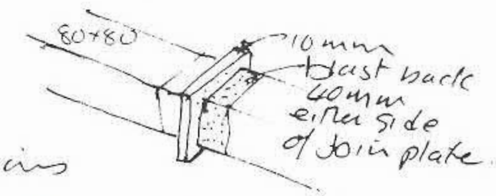


* Two small shafts to reduce to 4.5 1/2





316 SS. 80×80 × 3mm
Reqd. 168 m. min
in 8 m lengths.
+ allow for 500 mm damage
each end - each piece
each Roll.



Jan - March 02 80×80 Junctions

16

May 02

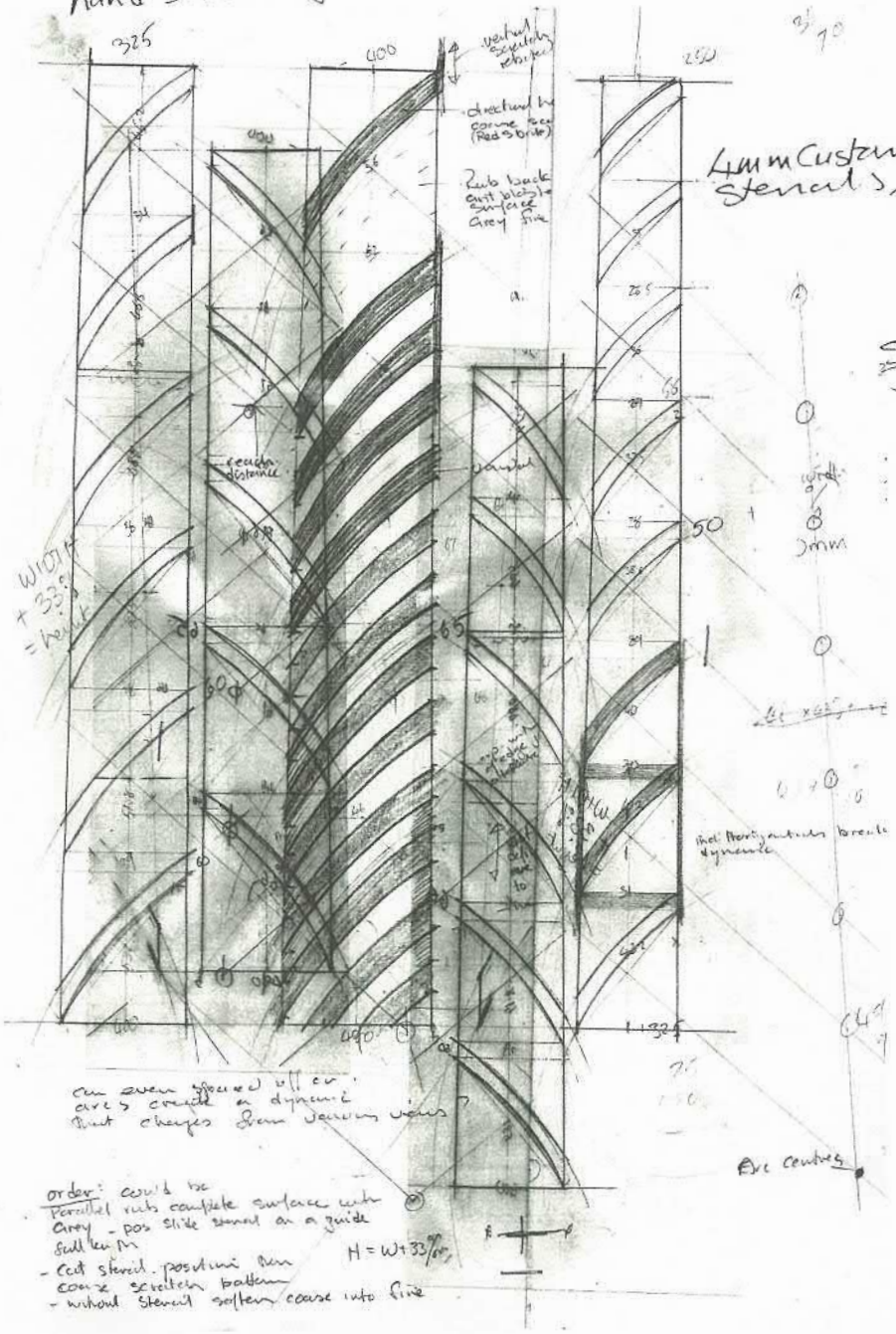
Initial polishing
approach left stop/start
marks when seen in
sun shine

Resolved with
Chris' invention for
continuous end-end
Polish

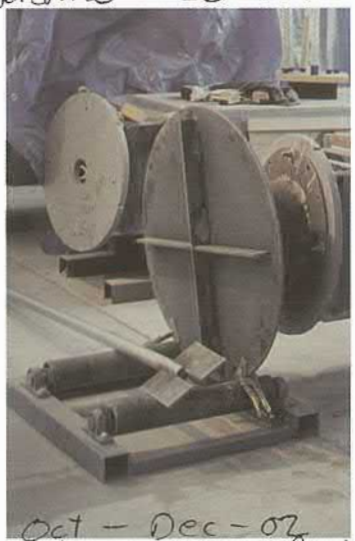
21/5 April 02.

Craig. Al. oxide blasting through stencil
- Lisa on stencil cutting

hand scratch finish for stainless.



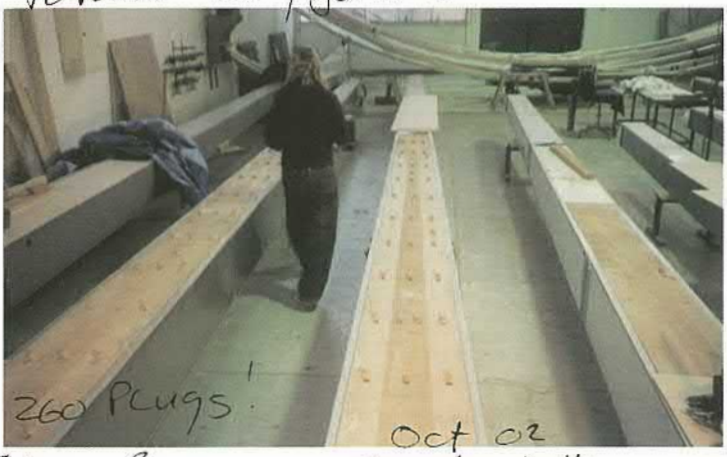
Scotch brite blocks.
Justine & Esabelle.



Oct – Dec – 02
Pole blasting & finishing rollers & steel plate device for rotation & workshop ← →

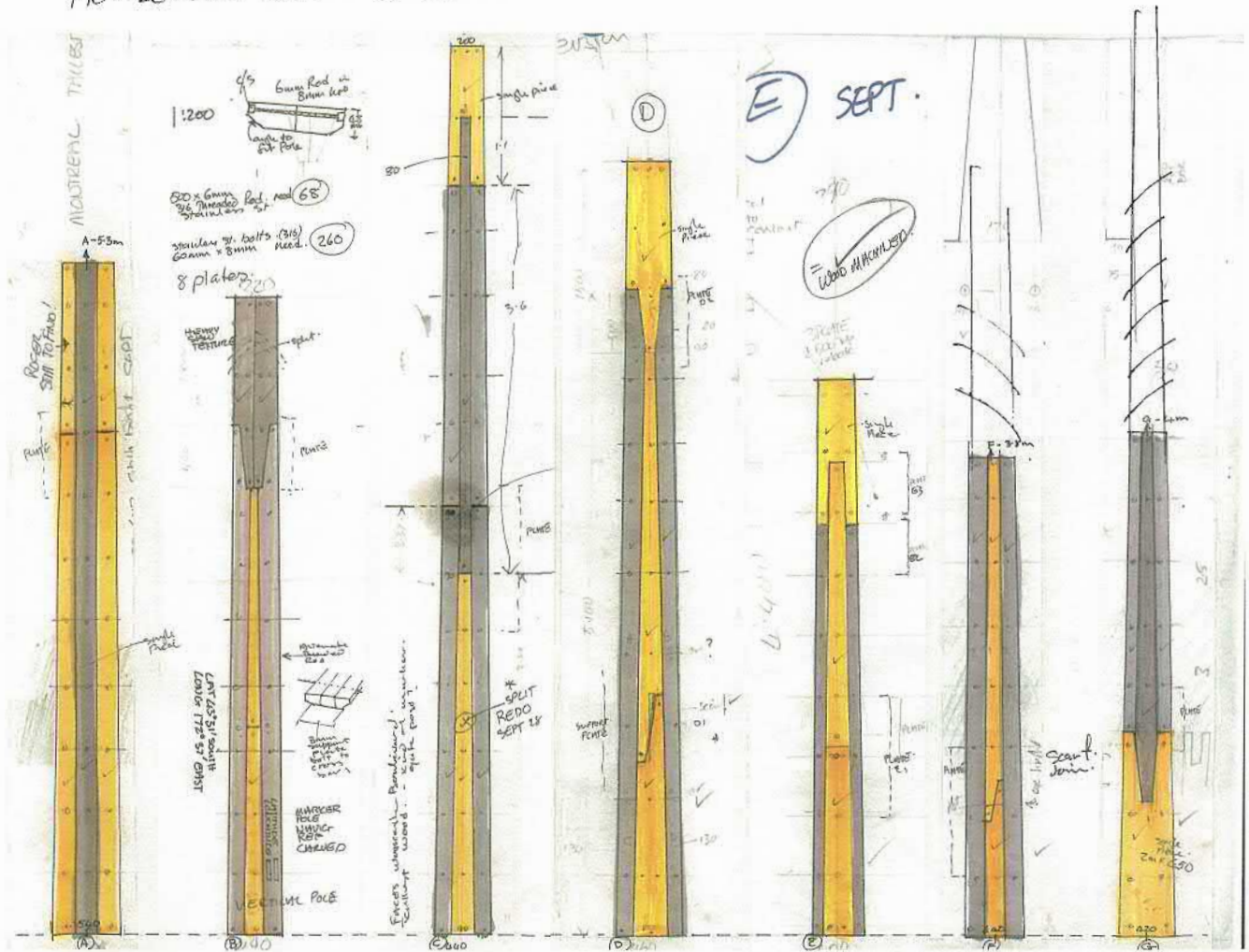
Roger machining top of pole C. Totara. Convex wood faces onto Boulevard.

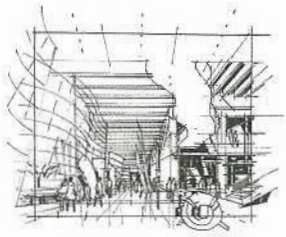
Totara - dry jointed - stainless bolts.

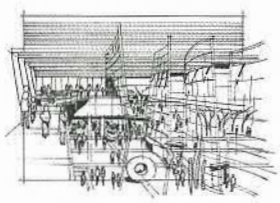


Totara Plugs over stainless bolts @ 500 crs. Horizontal bolts between.

May 02 Milling







John Freeman-Moir: Your original architectural conception of the gallery included a number of sculptural elements, poles. Can you tell me something about the overall architectural design of the gallery and how the poles fitted into it?

David Cole: Well, the poles are really inseparable from the concept as a whole. The genesis of the concept was, in essence, a building that was fit not only for its purpose, but fit also for its place. I'd known the city for a number of years before I embarked upon this design. Christchurch is a city that, in its physical context, is well ordered, well-structured, orthogonal, carefully planned, a city which also blends a strong sense of the informal and the picturesque. There is a special relationship of the ordered grid of the city with the Avon River and Hagley Park.

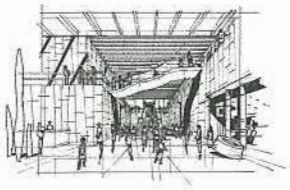
I wanted to express this duality, this paradox, in the architecture. Hopefully, this expression is plain to see in the juxtaposition of the robust, rectangular bluestone forms of the exhibition spaces, with the curvilinear, almost ephemeral, light, sculptural, picturesque, water-like image of the glazed sculpture wall. The sculpture wall, which is set against the backdrop of the masonry forms of the exhibition spaces, in turn creates interstitial foyer spaces, public spaces that are indoor/outdoor spaces. When you are in these spaces there is a strong sense of being in a covered outdoor space. The light streams in, merging the indoors with the outdoors. I think that this creates a sense of experiential hierarchy. There's the outdoor condition, the outdoor/indoor condition and then, via the grand stair space, one ultimately enters into the exhibition spaces which are absolutely indoor spaces, where almost no natural light penetrates. You've reached a sense of culmination, a sense that you're in an almost secret private world, and that's very important.

The poles are an important part of that total design. In aesthetic terms they are linear counterpoints to the gallery façade, with line counteracting plane. The sense of point/counterpoint in this case emphasises a sense of announcement, an eye-catcher announcing the entry. There is also a sense of architectonic elements pervading the outdoor spaces and the landscape. I also wanted the poles somehow to convey the notion of a hidden reference to the natural world, evocative of forest and, in reference to more recent history, evocative also of the urban sense of the site. The design is, in that sense, a microcosm of Christchurch itself; open space and building, Hagley Park and the city, with the river interposing the streets, if you know what I mean.

Tony Preston (Gallery Director) said to me that he knew an artist who was working with totemic elements, and he suggested that Graham Bennett and I might get together and compare philosophies. It was clear to me that Graham would be the perfect artist for the entrance sculpture.

You clearly see a flow of meanings between the design of the sculpture and the design of the gallery, specifically its façade.

Absolutely, it is a dialogue. There should be an unmistakable sense that the sculpture is architecture and that the architecture is sculpture.



Point/Counterpoint
An Interview with David Cole

February 22, 2002

John Freeman-Moir

Do you think there is any danger either of the sculpture being overwhelmed by the building or the sculpture being so dominant that the building is somewhat overtaken?

No I don't think so. During the process of discussion Graham and I were certainly concerned with coming to a mutually agreed position in relation to a number of things such as placement, scale, and the number of elements. I was at pains to have one or two of the sculptural elements peaking above the level of the building. That was a very conscious decision, it's all about, as I said, point/counterpoint and co-relationship. In the end, my sense of the appropriate balance was that the majority of the poles, should be lower in height than the parapet of the building, and that's how it ended up. There's no conscious analysis in it, it's just a feel, it's instinctive.

I had originally envisaged that the poles be replicas—not necessarily in terms of materials, but in terms of shape and form—of the constituent columns of the sculpture wall. It was Graham who convinced me that that was needlessly underscoring the point. Of course, the angle of inclination of the poles is essentially the same as the inclination of the constituent columns of the sculpture wall.

Why do you call it a "sculpture wall"?

It has had various other names. In the presentation to the judging panel I referred to it as the defining element of the design. So I sensed that in talking about it, I needed to have a name for it, and I called it the 'koru wall'. I became fascinated with the reference and symbolism to the curvilinear, sinuous unravelling nature of the koru.

Interestingly, as I found out later, the judges also thought it appropriate to put a name to this aspect of the design. Their label was the 'silky wall'. There were images that I had provided, that evidently showed the wall as appearing to look 'silky'. I confess to liking the name 'silky wall' the best. A couple of months into the process someone decided that 'sculpture wall' would be the appropriate name, which was fine. It is envisaged, after all, as sculptural architecture.

What is your view of the way in which the gallery façade and the sculpture relate to each other?

Originally I was optimistic enough to propose that the columns of the sculpture wall be stainless steel. That became prohibitively expensive so they're actually structural steel with a metallic paint finish which will take on the lustre of stainless steel. Then Graham and I discussed whether the poles should be a combination of stainless steel and wood, wood expressing historic reasons for voyaging. My sense of it had been that some should be wood, some should be steel. But it was Graham's call obviously that each pole should be a combination of wood and steel.

Where Graham uses the word 'voyaging' I use the word 'journey'. The art gallery experience is not only about being in the gallery, it's also about going to the gallery. There is a buzz about making the journey to a gallery (I'm talking now about someone walking about the city, rather than someone parking in the car park and going up to the gallery via the lifts). So the idea of walking through the sculpture gives a sense of anticipation and realisation, of getting in the mood. It's an overture if you like. The idea of walking through the sculpture, which is like a skeletal forest, and then passing through the gaps in the sculpture wall to enter the interior spaces, means you're actually walking through folds in the wall as you pass into the spaces. It's a little like that book *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe.* Remember the child in the story opening the wardrobe and feeling through the coats and passing into it and entering a magic world. The arrival experience is as important as being there, I think.

So your sense is that walking through the sculpture and the glass wall will give people an immediate experience of negotiating spaces and of entering possibilities?

Yes, but there were practicalities too that needed to be considered. As an architect, you have to be a bit more pragmatic perhaps than a sculptor (some may disagree with the claim of an architect being practical!). Graham has had to come to terms with the rigours of a budget, design practicalities and technology. One of the many things I like about Graham is that he's very open to technology; he actually embraces technology, so he's more than open to it. There were practicalities to be addressed in terms of the placement of the poles in relation to emergency vehicle access. And of locating the poles with regard to the base ground slab structure, which is in itself derived from the dimensions of the mighty automobile, the basement car parking column-grid below, I mean all of those practical things. So it's not as if we had an open palette here, like a painting where placement is essentially open.

In what ways do you think that the movement of the viewer will inform the perception of the sculpture and the glass wall?

You know, this building and this sculpture will be perceived both statically and dynamically, by people walking about the building as well as going past in cars. So, people will perceive the design, the total design of the place unfolding as they move about it. And that's a fascinating thing to me, about the design of the sculpture wall. It is something that is enveloping. It has fantastic possibilities in terms of encouraging differences of viewpoint, as opposed to rectilinear architecture that doesn't offer the same potential to be seen as forever changing.

The form, though obviously not the medium, of the wall makes me think of some of Richard Serra's sculptures, great plates of curved, inclined steel, like walls that lean over people.

I experienced one of those Serra sculptures at the Guggenheim in Bilbao and yes, I know what you mean.

The Buchan Group

My sense is that, as an experience, people are going to have a somewhat similar feeling as they move through Graham's sculpture and into the gallery, that the sculpture and the sculpture wall will pose a question for gallery visitors, "what's happening here, what's going on?"

That's the idea.

An edgy question-making kind of experience?

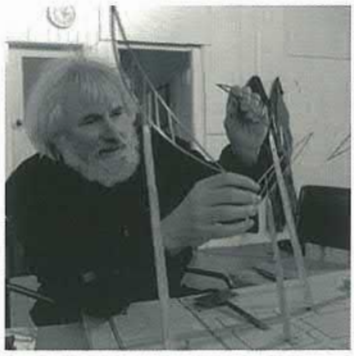
Very much so. I must say that I felt that very question posing itself when I saw the Guggenheim in Bilbao. I happened to be there very soon after it opened. I was in Spain with a client procuring granite for an office building we were doing in Sydney, and the quarry happened to be very close to Bilbao. It's an amazing building. I remember being left with this feeling, "where on earth can architecture possibly go after this, I wondered?" I still do in fact, whether the purely sculptural aspect of architecture might have been taken too far. What could possibly be more confronting and challenging than this?

Have you worked with sculptors on other projects in the way you have worked with Graham on the gallery project?

I've worked on projects where sculpture had to be designed and provided for in a new space that I had designed, and also where existing sculptural pieces had to be relocated or adapted for the context. I don't happen to believe that sculpture is entirely site specific. There are of course permanent installations but I'm not quite convinced that sculpture has to be, and can only be, valid in terms of the specific place for which it was designed. Having said that, I think *Reasons for Voyaging* for all the reasons I've given, is very much a site-specific work.

I've recently designed a studio and broadcasting centre for the Channel Seven Television Network in Melbourne which involved a collaborative working relationship with a graphic designer and an artist, which was also a rewarding experience. I have not worked so directly before with a sculptor as I have with Graham on this project, and I must say that I have really enjoyed it.

Artist's Biography



Photograph: Karl Hedwig

Graham Bennett
Born 1947, Nelson. Lives and works in Christchurch
1967–70, University of Canterbury, School of Fine Arts
Lecturer Emeritus, School of Art and Design, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology Te Whare Rūnanga o Ōtautahi

Selected Awards

1984	New Zealand Arts Council Grant
1988	Artist in Residence, Nelson Polytechnic
1995	Fellowship in Visual Arts, New Zealand Arts Council Toi Aotearoa
1996	Trustbank Community Trust Arts Excellence Award
1995, 1996, 2000	Asia 2000 Foundation Grants

Selected Exhibitions and Installations

1982	Dunedin Public Art Gallery
1987	*Parameters*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1989	Annex Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1991	*Sea/Sky/Stone*, Boulder Bank, Nelson
1993	Gallery Miyazaki, Osaka
1995	Mie Prefecture Contemporary Art Museum, Japan. New Zealand Embassy, Tokyo
1997, 1999	NICAF International Arts Festival, Tokyo. Galerie Paris, Yokohama

Selected Commissions and Public Art

1997	*Sea/Sky/Kaipara*, Gibb Sculpture Park, Kaipara
2002	*Tribute to Firefighters*, Christchurch
2003	*Reasons for Voyaging*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Christchurch
	Defining Positions, Waiheke Island

Selected Group Shows

1979, 1983	"International Drawing," Miro Foundation, Barcelona
	"100 International Drawings," Seo de Urgell, Spain
1980	"Sydney Print Survey," Sydney
1988	"30 Canterbury Artists," Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1990	"Canterbury Perpsective," Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1991	"New Zealand Contemporary Metals," Memphis
1994	"The Crane and the Kotuku, New Zealand Artists Link with Japan," Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
	"Contemporary Canterbury Sculpture," Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1996	"Transformable sculpture," Gallery Miyazaki, Osaka
	"Small Sculptures," Medialia Gallery, New York
	"The Land," Centre of Contemporary Art, Christchurch
1997	"Part of the Furniture," Art Annex, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
	"Ishidatami," Fukuoka Art Museum, Japan
	"Nga Taonga a Hine-te-iwaiwa, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
1998, 2000, 2002	"New Zealand Outdoor Sculpture," Lake Pupuke, Auckland
2001	"A Shriek from an Invisible Box – 100 International Artists," Meguro Museum, Tokyo
2003	"Sculpture on the Gulf," Waiheke Island

Acknowledgements

Project Engineer	Jeff Golding
Structural Engineers	Jeff Clendon, Grant Wilkinson
Steel Bending	Louis Slade
Woodwork	Roger Davies
Engineering Advisor	Rob Malcolmson
Component Machining	Dirk Good
Structural Pole Welder	Ian Brown
CAD Engineers	Doug Powell, Colin McLeod
Laser Cutter	John Harris
Sheet Metalworkers	Phil Askin, Tony Harris
Pole Blasting and Coating	Ross Camp
Electrical Design Advisor	David Brooks
Electrician	Don Turner
Electrical Technicians	Steve Syder, Michael Köhler
Programmer	Graham Le Mon
Programme Commissioner	Thomas Beedles
General Electrician	Mike Terrell
Carter Observatory Advisor	Brian Carter
GPS Advisors	David Dalley, David Fletcher
Lighting Advisor	Mark Herring
Steel Bending Advisor	Brian Moore
Ethnological Advisor	Roger Fyfe
Ngāi Tahu Advisor	Cath Brown
Provision of Totara Log	John Bond
Log Miller	Tony Foster
Blessing of Totara Log	Terry Ryan
Kiln Drying of Totara	Clive Harper
Wood Supplier	Peter Manera
Workshop Assistants	Jo Bennett, Esabelle Mashoko, Justine Ottey, Vicki Piper
Stencil Cutter	Lisa Patterson
Fine Finishing Polisher	Chris Reddington
Polishers	Fred Williams, Corey Williams, Nick Frazer, Herbie Smith
Grit Blasters	Brent Brownley, Craig Baker
Administration	Paula Bennett
Specialist Equipment Supplier	Bob Clemence
Specialist Engineering	Hans Ver Hagen
Additional Welding	Gordon Dowler
Powder Coating	Dave Rimmer
Truck Drivers	Peter Sturgeon, Gus Smith, Kelvin Berry
Crane Operators	Rusty Ross, Brian Checkers
Riggers	Bryan Treleaven, Rob Palmer
Installation Assistants	Randall Watson, Nick Channon

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Acquisition Funds, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū
Art in Public Places Funds, Christchurch City Council
Christchurch Art Gallery Building Fund
Cam and Rosemary Greenwood
Sir Miles Warren

Notes on Contributors

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Cassandra Fusco: Freelance writer living in Christchurch.

Brendan Lee: Photographer, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

Christopher McDonald: Senior Lecturer, School of Architecture and practising urban designer, Victoria University of Wellington Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui.

Felicity Milburn: Curator of Contemporary Art, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.