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Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū
Bulletin Issue no.193
Spring 2018

Transpiration
Anthony Byrt on Steve Carr.

Her Own London
Felicity Milburn looks at
Juliet Peter's time in London.

Marie Shannon talks
to Lara Strongman
Failure and domesticity in
the artist's practice.

Girlfriend
Lonnie Hutchinson talks about
her new billboard work.

Powerfully Present
Ken Hall, Felicity Milburn,
Nathan Pohio and
Lara Strongman.

Of Braided Rivers and
Hydro-traders
Gregory O'Brien on water and
art in Canterbury.

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Silver gelatin print. Courtesy of the artist

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Director's Foreword

BLAIR JACKSON

August 2018

Welcome to the spring 2018 issue of *Bulletin*. As I write this, it is one of those truly beautiful, crisp Christchurch days outside. Our classroom, our gallery spaces and the NZI Foyer are full with holidaying children creating their own works of art, using our Art Explorer activity trail to discover our galleries or constructing precariously leaning structures in the Imagination Playground. It's lovely to see the place buzzing with so much creativity and exploration.

Behind the scenes, staff are working towards our spring and summer season of exhibitions and the stories and events that support them. In this edition of the magazine, curator Felicity Milburn looks at artist Juliet Peter's time in London in the 1950s. Juliet, who always trod her own artistic path, travelled to the UK to study with her husband Roy Cowan, and there produced a remarkable body of prints that put the viewer in the heart of bustling, post-war London.

Also in development as I write is a spectacular new project for the Gallery by Christchurch-based artist Steve Carr, *Chasing the Light*. We're pleased here to be able to reprint Anthony Byrt's essay on Carr, which was published in his *This Model World* in 2014. As this *Bulletin* was being produced Carr's project was beset by delays, from inclement winter weather to ill-placed livestock—in the December issue we look

forward to illustrating the work fully. In the meantime, Byrt's essay provides a fascinating introduction to the way in which Carr approaches his work.

Senior curator Lara Strongman interviews two artists whose works are currently gracing some of the more unusual exhibition spaces of this building—Marie Shannon, whose *Aachen Faxes* is on display in our lift, and Lonnie Hutchinson. Hutchinson's *Hoa Kōhine (Girlfriend)* illuminates our Gloucester Street façade, and is a multi-layered work that celebrates sisterhood and close female friendships. Shannon, whose superb *Rooms found only in the home* exhibition is on display until 2 December, reflects on failure and domesticity.

Curators Nathan Pohio, Ken Hall, Felicity Milburn and Lara Strongman continue our efforts to mark the 125th anniversary of women claiming the right to vote in Aotearoa New Zealand, by focusing on four contemporary works by women artists that assert a powerful presence in our collection. And poet, essayist, editor and artist Gregory O'Brien, who was recently included in Ashburton Art Gallery's *The Water Project*, looks at some of the conflicting meanings associated with the word, and colour, green in our increasingly irrigated, and intensively farmed country.

We've also got a first for *Bulletin* with a page for

colouring-in... as attendees of our Public Programme will discover, it's an activity that has been linked to increased well-being. However, here we're using it to draw attention (see what I did there) to our new project, *Wall to Wall*. This October we're encouraging everyone in Ōtautahi Christchurch to join us in a massive public paint-out of one of our downstairs gallery spaces. It's your chance to make your mark on the Gallery walls. Pick up a paintbrush and create your own masterpiece, or work with friends and family to make a bigger splash. We'll provide all the materials—you just need to bring yourself and your artistic flair. Why not use this *Bulletin* to get some practice in and hone your chops.

Our pagework comes from Christchurch-based artist Darryn George, My Favourite is supplied by musician Nick Harte, and our postcard is from Rebecca Galloway in Montreal, Canada. We also feature our yearly roundup of activities at the Gallery, and it's pleasing to note that we had 388,968 visitors over the past financial year—a fantastic thirty per cent up on last year. You can check out a range of other results and our award successes in our Year in Review.

Steve Carr Trans- piration

In Steve Carr's *Transpiration* (2014), huge carnations hover in half-dozen clusters on the wall. They start their lives looking like balls of cotton rags—white, bunched, frayed. Colour then gathers at their fringes and grows into a slow leach that turns them yellow, or pink, or blue. The flowers' inner folds wobble slightly. There's a more general sway at their outer limits—a kind of peripheral rocking. Single petals peel away, minuscule movements that turn into sublime shocks when you manage to catch one at the edges of your vision.

For all that, there's still the sense that maybe nothing is happening. While I'm there, a young woman walks into the flower-filled room and is convinced she's seeing a frozen image. When she sees a petal move, she wonders aloud whether the flowers are changing colour before her eyes. She pauses, before announcing that it's all a ruse.

There's nothing special about Carr's flowers, which are just shop-bought blooms. The process being witnessed is pretty basic too: the carnations are sitting in unseen pots of coloured water, sucking it up through their stems.

It's a primary school magic trick, a way to teach kids about natural science as well as a cheap device florists use to stain their stock. Carr has shot the process over twenty-four hours with a time-lapse camera, then stitched it together into a loop of around fifteen minutes, which runs forwards and back so that we witness the flowers' inhalation and exhalation as a constant, tidal pulse.

The banality of the work's origins is transformed by the weight of art history. Although the flowers aren't painted, they're thick with paint. Their ragged

edges are like the final drags of a brush before it breaks from the surface. The white on black is as stark and luminescent as Manet (one of the greatest flower painters), or Chardin, or even Velázquez. Carr's carnations are also a clear nod to Andy Warhol's *Flowers* and to Jean Cocteau's film *Testament of Orpheus*, where flowers become essential, surrealist symbols at the end of the film. From Cocteau to Warhol to Carr; a lineage that reaches through classroom science experiments and impressionism, all the way back to seventeenth-century still-lives. Except that Carr's flowers are never still.

We're used to thinking about cinema as a photographic medium. But conceptually and behaviourally, it shares a great deal with painting, in that both are concerned with the relationships between images and the passing of time. In painting, this is subtle and easy to miss because at first glance, its objects are static things: stillnesses, hanging on walls. Nothing moves. And yet a painting's surface is also an indexical record of the time it took to be made, every mark and stroke the trace of a body moving through space.

Cinema has a similar ability to defeat the laws of time and space. It can collapse whole lives into minutes, carry us across the world in the flash between frames, and slow time down to fix our attention on the quiet, unseen forces underpinning daily experience.

As well as being filmmakers, Warhol and Cocteau were painters. Many of cinema's greatest directors are, or were. David Lynch is another. Perhaps that's why he is also present in Carr's installation. The experience of watching *Transpiration* at the DPAG was

punctuated every fifteen minutes by the bright chirps of a mechanical bird, coming from a television screen in one corner. On the screen was a companion work, *American Night* (2014). In it, a little bird perches on a fake branch, against a background of spring blossom. It's an obvious set-up, and an incongruous letdown after the magic of Carr's giant floral illusion. But the two works are actually showing the same thing. As the screen's artificial day disappears into false night, it becomes clear that, here too, we're witnessing a twenty-four-hour cycle shrunk to a handful of minutes. As the sun comes up, the bird lets off its frenetic tweet. Just like *Transpiration*, Carr is riffing here on one of the great final scenes of modern film; instead of *Testament of Orpheus*, this time it is *Blue Velvet*, when a fake bird closes out Lynch's dreamscape.

In the time it takes us to watch the bird's daily cycle, everything is new, different and somewhere else: the flowers' blues are white and whites are pink and some yellows have turned so bright they're almost phosphorescent green. It's the strongest evidence yet of Carr's ever-increasing ability to control, and reinvent, the interaction between painting's history, film's materiality and cinematic time.

It's also a reminder that Carr's videos are about screens, in the same way that paintings are about screens: material things that act as images, as windows and as defeaters of sensible time. Like great painting, *Transpiration* is about what happens to our experience of the space *around* the work—just like the young woman who swore she'd seen a mirage.

The first time the art world really noticed Carr was in 2001, when he presented the video *Air Guitar* as

part of his final student exhibition at Elam School of Fine Arts. In it, Carr acts out a stadium-rock fantasy, miming a classic track from Joe Satriani's album *Surfing with the Alien*. Things develop as one would expect in any teenage boy's bedroom, until Carr dials the hubris up to ten. As a smoke machine shrouds him in a starstruck fog, he grows in confidence and strut, letting off a couple of Pete Townshend-style windmills before returning to his phantom solo.

As funny as it is, Carr's silent performance homes us in on a second layer of teenage male fantasy—all the bucking, thrusting and straining make it clear that this is, more than anything else, a wank video. Watching Carr pound away at his absent axe becomes ridiculous and awkward; he turns us into his mum, walking in at the worst possible moment.

This wilfully untoward sexuality didn't pass in a hurry. In 2002, he made *Pillow Fight*, in which he and a group of teenage girls have a pyjama party and smash each other around, sending clouds of feathers into the air. Not long after this came *Dive Pool*: a film shot underwater of Carr in a scuba mask, watching bikini-clad women swim past him while he sucks in oxygen—evenly, mechanically—from the tank on his back.

Ostensibly, there was nothing wrong with these acts, except of course, that *everything* was wrong with them. Carr used plausible deniability to infect childish activities with an implicit sexuality. For some critics, this tipped past the early humour of *Air Guitar* and into a more corrupt space. Rather than backing down, Carr made one of his funniest films in response: *Tiger Girls* (2004), in which he sits in a spa pool filled with attractive young women and does absolutely



Steve Carr *Transpiration* 2014. 6-channel installation, Sony XD, duration 15 mins (looped). Courtesy the artist and Michael Lett



Steve Carr *American Night* 2014. Single channel film, Blackmagic 4K, duration 15 mins (looped). Courtesy the artist and Michael Lett

nothing except drain several bottles of Tiger Beer.

There's no question that Carr's early games, performances and gags were adolescent, narcissistic and self-obsessed. But they were also important steps in his attempt to master a more archetypal condition: Carr is, above all else, a trickster.

In his book *Trickster Makes This World*, Lewis Hyde shows us that the trickster is, in every culture in which it appears, a force for change. Central to this is the power to step across the thresholds between gods and men and life and death, unencumbered or deliberately negligent of the rules that dictate behaviour in each. The trickster is also responsible for the forces that keep us rooted in our own mortality; most notably, our desires—our need to eat, to drink, to fight, to love, to fuck and so on. The trickster's troublemaking reminds us that we're only flesh and bone, and that our bodies are both contingent on, and vulnerable to, our appetites. Little wonder, then, that Carr's early works were full of booze and sex.

By 2009, Carr himself had largely disappeared from his films. Instead he began to focus on the close interconnectedness of his core mercurial forces—sex, mischief, humour and magical transformation. This came to a head in one of his finest and most painterly works, his 16-millimetre film *Burn Out* (2009). On an early West Auckland morning, a young man in a black car does exactly what the title suggests. But rather than the jump-cuts and heavy-metal typical of YouTube videos of burnouts, Carr's event is shot at distance against lush Henderson bush, with no sound. There's a rough, transformative physicality to the action: rubber turning into smoke

for no good reason other than for its beautiful grandeur. It is, in many ways, *Air Guitar* redux: smoke, circles, humour, solitary romance, hopeless bogan endeavour. Except what we're witnessing this time isn't a fantasy or a jack-off but a tangible transformation (rubber combusting into smoke).

This is a vital shift: because with *Burn Out* and everything since, Carr, instead of using himself, now uses matter undergoing extreme change to lead us across thresholds.

Nowhere is this clearer than in *Screen Shots* (2011). Across nine monitors arranged in a three-by-three grid, we see the artist's hand slowly pricking paint-filled balloons against a coloured background. As the pin slips in and each balloon peels back, there's a brief and wondrous moment in which the paint holds its shape and wobbles in mid-air before coming apart. Once again, Carr transforms a childish pleasure (blowing up a paint bomb) into something erotic and sublime.

The explosions are filmed using a Phantom camera, capable of shooting high-definition footage at more than 5,400 frames per second. It's designed to show us things our eyes weren't meant to see. Carr doesn't use the Phantom to get off on its technological capabilities, but rather to create an image of total bodily empathy. His balloons, and the paint they contain, hang like organs and burst with human release. To over-emphasise this, they're presented on 32-inch screens, which provide a 1:1 scale between the artist/magician's hand and our own. Carr can't resist a dig at painting's history here either, crashing the absurdity of abstract expressionism's drippy masculinity into its fussy,

industrial cousin—the pristine minimalist grid.

In *Dead Time* (2012), Carr used the Phantom to mine even deeper into art history. Seven screens hang, like still-life paintings, in a row. On each, a single apple is suspended from a string against a black ground. The inspiration for his composition is obvious and unhidden: the paintings of the Spanish master Juan Sánchez Cotán. Each apple is just different enough for us to realise that it isn't the same image repeated seven times. Then we're forced to wait, and wait. But for those patient enough, the payoff arrives—a William Tell succession of explosions as each apple is obliterated, one after the other, by a single bullet that traces visibly across the screens. By stretching an event that lasts a few seconds to several minutes, Carr allows us to witness not just action, but complete, painterly disintegration. The last flecks of apple flesh look like stars spread across black space—a Big Bang that tricks us into thinking, just for a moment, that we're staring into the heart of the universe.

Transpiration, then, is more than a one-off victory over time and space; it's the culmination of an intense period of magical experimentation. Carr's carnations are the sorts of things a clown might use to squirt you in the eye. But they're also paintings, bodies, organs demanding slow release and things experiencing their own death, over and again.

The great sophistication of Carr's recent works lies in his recognition that the forces of material transformation he's so interested in—combustion, explosion, degradation, disintegration, transpiration—are, like cinema and painting, entirely contingent on time, and that the tools of

his trade give him the ability not only to witness temporal change, but completely alter our experience of it. In doing this, Carr allows us to breathe underwater, see the universe in a shattered apple and disappear with him into clouds of smoke.

Anthony Byrt is an award-winning critic and journalist and his writing has appeared in leading publications around the world. A version of this essay was first published in Art New Zealand in 2014, and later adapted for his book This Model World: Travels to the Edge of Contemporary Art (AUP 2016). Steve Carr: Chasing the Light is on display from September 2018 until 10 February 2019.



Steve Carr *Burn Out* 2009. 16mm film transferred to digital video (4min 53 sec).
Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery 2016

Marie Shannon talks to Lara Strongman

Lara Strongman: This show brings together thirty years or more of your work, put together with the curators from Dunedin Public Art Gallery. I wondered what you'd discovered through the process?

Marie Shannon: I discovered that I hadn't moved very far. That's not to say that I didn't feel my work had developed, but I'd just run around in such confined territory. Of course that's not necessarily a bad thing, but I found it confronting to look at that short reach in my output. I had to convince myself that it didn't all look like shit. (You probably can't say that here because you want people to come and see the exhibition, but I'm being perfectly honest.) Each time the show was hung, I'd walk away feeling despondent and then I'd sort of think, "No, it's actually okay".

I think one of the things that struck me was how close to my subject matter I'd stayed and how I'd circled around the same kind of subject matter. But people do. I don't think that's a bad thing, and I don't think working on a small scale is a bad thing.

LS: Yeah. I've often thought of this sort of problem—you have one big idea when you're about 23 or 24 and then you spend the next thirty years working through it in different manifestations. Or it sometimes seems like that to me. So, when you looked at the exhibition, you felt uneasy at times, but what was the thing that you saw that these works had in common?

MS: Well, very much the domestic location—the location that I could control, that I could work in any time that I wanted. But that wasn't just convenience. I am one of those people that really likes sitting in a room staring at a corner—looking at the space of a room, at the arrangement of furniture. Locations have their own characters but there is something universal about domestic locations. It's a background against which you can do things and say things. I really enjoy unspectacular locations. When I first began working in this way, a lot of photographers weren't seeking out their own environments. They were outward looking and they were trying to put themselves in novel situations to bring back news



Marie Shannon *Phone Friends* 1990. Silver gelatin print (diptych). Collection of the artist

of the world or bring back news from places that weren't their own. I knew from early on that didn't fit with me just because I wasn't that kind of outgoing person. I wasn't a person who could bury myself in somebody else's life or situation.

LS: Let's talk about failure. You and I have quite often talked over the years about failure and its possibilities. Does that still interest you as an idea?

MS: Oh yes. I think everyone has to admit to their failures—and I think everybody's probably getting a little bit better about that now. There's more of a culture of not pretending you're king of the world all the time at the moment. But in a way my work was always kind of a rebuttal to having to put on your best front and always having to be successful. I think there is something to be said for admitting to, and celebrating, failure—doing those things that are a little bit crappy or making artworks that are about the ideas that you had that you knew you actually didn't have the capability to carry out.

LS: In a way your first video works were actually photographs, about your ideas for videos that you never made. The art bloopers, and so on.

MS: Yeah, I was going to be so good at making videos.

LS: Why did you make the switch to primarily working in video?

MS: In 2011 I made *What I'm Looking At* and that was the first of the text videos. Afterwards, I went back to video when I had material that seemed to manifest itself as text. It obviously wasn't going to turn into a book that people would want so I was thinking about making a visual object and having moving or animated text in some way. The text was generated out of the situation of Julian dying, when I had to deal with the studio and the contents and catalogue a lot of stuff. And so that was really what I was immersing myself in. I like that way of writing by making lists because it affords the possibility of juxtapositions.

Lists allow you to bring things together in a way that's quite powerful. You can talk about things that wouldn't normally sit together.

LS: Given that text has appeared in your work from the beginning, how do you see the relationship of your photographic practice to narrative?

MS: My photographs often imply a story or tell a fragment. In the early years, I would set these things up, derived from an everyday situation that had narrative possibilities or photographic possibilities.

LS: Like *Rat In The Lounge*?

MS: That was a real situation that obviously had good image potential and so I restaged it.

LS: I want to ask you about the shape of your practice over the years. You've tended to produce bodies of work over time. Sometimes quite a long time. And sometimes there have been long gaps between those series. I wondered if you could talk a little bit about that from the vantage point of looking back through your work on the occasion of the show?

MS: Yes, that's true. There have been threads that have carried on, and there have been themes that I've not resolved at the time but later the way to resolve them has become clear. There are bodies of work that aren't represented in the show. There were several bodies of work that looked at creative processes in themselves. Photographs that were almost like demonstrations of how to make something. They were based on the process photographs that you used to find in mid-twentieth-century cooking books.

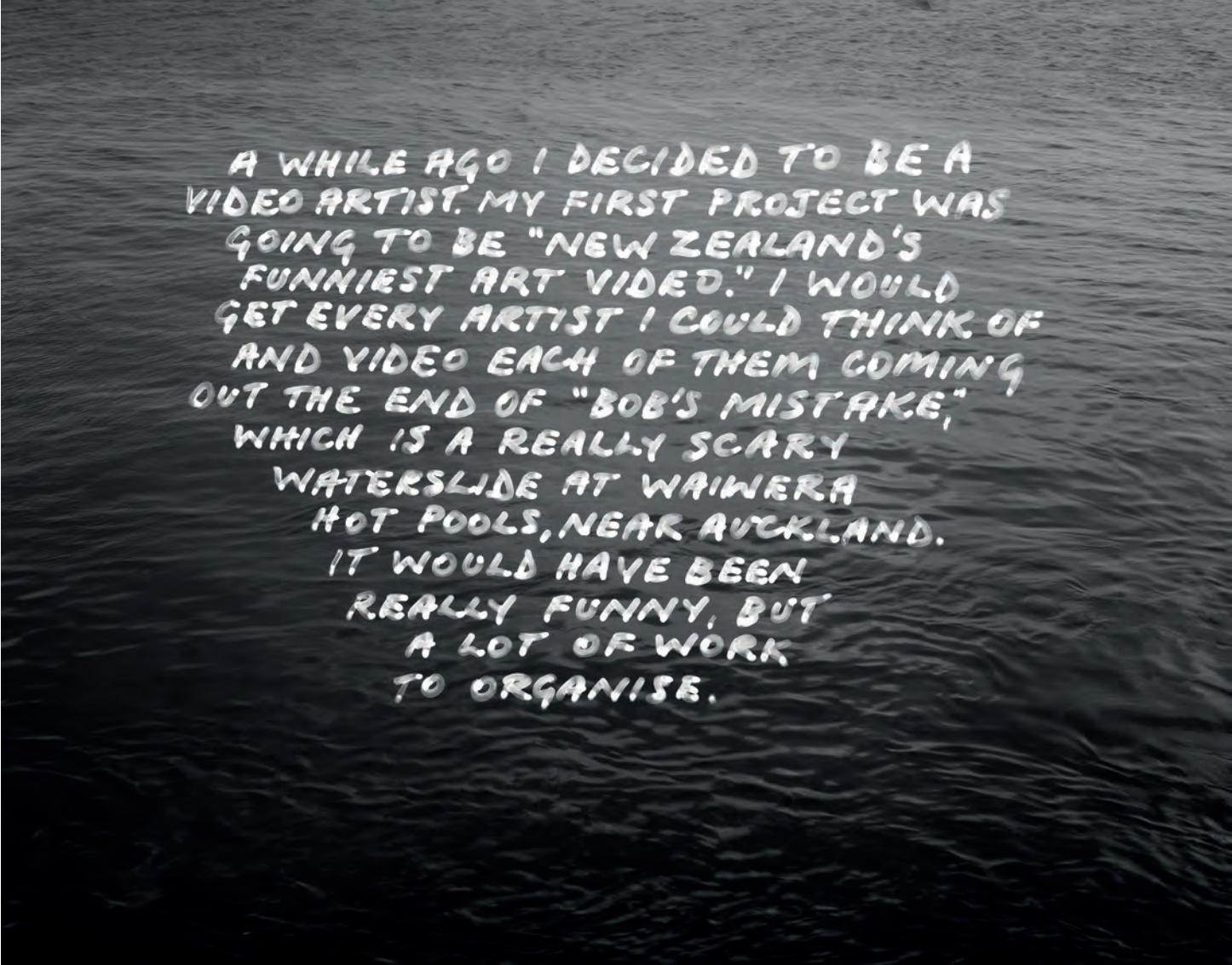
LS: Have you always worked consistently, Marie? In your studio practice, do you work every day or every week or whatever?

MS: No. There are really long gaps because I am someone who lets life get in the way and I find it very, very difficult to keep working if too much other stuff is happening. And you know, I can't turn my back on things. I can't turn my back on people. When I had Leo, I really thought, "Okay, this is it. I'm not going to try to do anything. I'm not going to try and keep working right now" because I knew I would resent my baby for you know, sitting there wanting me to do whatever babies want you to do. I'm not someone who can snatch half an hour at a time and quickly jump into that space that you need to be in. I tend to need to sneak up on things over quite long stretches of time.

LS: How do you know when ideas have percolated?

MS: It's just when you actually start doing stuff. You realise the thinking process is over or that the back of the mind process is over and you know, "Oh, it's time to actually make this thing now". Suddenly I think it might actually work, it might not be the world's dumbest idea.

Marie Shannon talked to senior curator Lara Strongman in June 2018. Marie Shannon: Rooms found only in the home is on display until 2 December 2018 and was developed and toured by Dunedin Public Art Gallery.



A WHILE AGO I DECIDED TO BE A
VIDEO ARTIST. MY FIRST PROJECT WAS
GOING TO BE "NEW ZEALAND'S
FUNNIEST ART VIDEO." I WOULD
GET EVERY ARTIST I COULD THINK OF
AND VIDEO EACH OF THEM COMING
OUT THE END OF "BOB'S MISTAKE,"
WHICH IS A REALLY SCARY
WATERSLIDE AT WAIWERA
HOT POOLS, NEAR AUCKLAND.
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN
REALLY FUNNY, BUT
A LOT OF WORK
TO ORGANISE.

Marie Shannon *New Zealand's Funniest Art Video* 1994. Silver gelatin print. Collection of the artist

HER LON

**OWN
DOWN**

I laughed at your note. Our packing was not done until the last minute of the 11th hour, and when we at last got onto the train we could only think how lovely it was to do nothing and think about nothing. However, by now we realise we are really going to England. After 17 days at sea, out of sight of land, N.Z. seems as if it was in another universe.¹

Juliet Peter wrote to her friend Jean on 17 August 1953 from the cargo liner RMS *Rangitiki* (then approaching the Panama Canal). On board with her was Roy Cowan, whom she had married the previous year after meeting while they were both employed as artists in the Department of Education's School Publications branch in Wellington. There, they provided illustrations for a range of publications, including the *New Zealand School Journal*, which had been recently revamped to include more New Zealand content. It was creative and reasonably paid work, and popular with many of New Zealand's best artists at that time, but the newly minted Mr and Mrs Cowan were giving it up to try their luck on the other side of the world.² Roy had been awarded a scholarship to study art in England and they were headed there together.

It wasn't Juliet's first trip to England. At eleven years old, she had been taken to Kent by her elder sister following the death of her parents. She lived there for almost a decade, spending some time at boarding school, until she returned to New Zealand in 1935 to attend art school at Canterbury College in Christchurch. She had also spent a year in London in 1951, attending classes at the Central School of Arts. She learned lithography and also studied life drawing (taught by Mervyn Peake, the writer, artist, poet and illustrator best

known for his Gothic fantasy novels about the inhabitants of the decaying Castle Gormenghast). This time, Roy was enrolled to study printmaking, drawing, book design and art history at the University of London's Slade School of Fine Art, while Juliet would study lithography (under Alistair Grant) and ceramics part-time at the Hammersmith School of Building and Crafts. The latter was a characteristically practical choice. The couple shared a belief that the best art combined creativity with craftsmanship, and lessons at Hammersmith were oriented towards hands-on practice rather than theory. Located in Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush, it incorporated a series of studios in which textile design, ceramics, sculpture and printmaking were taught, as well as a number of trades, from plumbing and welding to bricklaying and plastering. The close proximity between the workshops was designed to encourage students to learn across disciplines.

The London the Cowans arrived in was a city of contrast and transformation. Still reeling from the recently ended war, and with much of the central city devastated by bombing raids, it was nonetheless re-emerging as a modern centre of culture and fashion. At first, they stayed with another New Zealander, Helen Hitchings. They knew her from Wellington, where she had opened New Zealand's first modernist dealer gallery in a converted warehouse space. Hitchings had cultivated a deliberately relaxed atmosphere, inviting visitors to smoke and drink coffee while appreciating works by painters such as Evelyn Page, Rita Angus, Colin McCahon, Toss Woollaston and Douglas MacDiarmid. Her gallery also showed pottery, textiles and furniture (the latter designed by the Modernist architect



Juliet Peter *Afterthought*—Helen Hitchings, London 1953. Lithograph. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1996

Ernst Plischke). As Juliet related later, Hitchings had arrived in London with an ambitious plan:

*She conceived the scheme of making a collection of New Zealand art of that period and taking it with her to London and finding a gallery to show it. She thought it would be easy—it wasn't—but she was still there when Roy and I first arrived in London. She was a great help because she had an apartment in Oakley Street in Chelsea and we stayed for our first week or two with her in London.*³

When the Cowans found an apartment at 40 Warwick Avenue in Maida Vale, Hitchings visited them there, and Juliet's portrait of her captures a strong sense of her personal style and, perhaps, a trace of disillusionment.

Maida Vale is famous for its large late-Victorian and Edwardian blocks of mansion flats, and the Cowan's flat was a short walk from Hyde Park and Little Venice, providing Juliet with an ever-changing panorama for people-watching. Their landlady, whose black dog Lulu was later immortalised in one of Juliet's lithographs, taught ballet dancing downstairs: "At night, we could hear the trains pulling in to the station, and then in daytime, we'd hear this strange ballet music. It was very entertaining."⁴ Though somewhat reserved in character, Juliet was a natural observer, accustomed to filtering her experience of the world through the lens of her artmaking. "Very early in life I discovered the fascinating marks that a pencil could make on paper," she once said, "drawing became my delight—and it still is."⁵ Growing up, she drew the animals on the family farm at Anama, near Ashburton, and in Kent she had earned pocket money selling her sketches of the neighbours' houses. While at Canterbury College, her talent for caricature came

to the fore, as she skewered lecturers and prominent students with a witty, occasionally astringent, eye in sketches published regularly in *Canta* magazine. When she took up war work in the 1940s as a land girl on Rydall Downs sheep station, near Oxford, Juliet sketched her fellow farm workers in action and repose. Gaelyn Elliot, grand-daughter of the station owners, remembers her drawing on the backs of matchbooks in the kitchen after meals: "she caught the whisky old great-uncles to a T."⁶ As Juliet's letters from aboard the *Rangitiki* make clear, she was always alert to unusual subjects and spectacles. Of their stop at Pitcairn Island, where the crew took on fresh supplies of oranges and bananas, she wrote to Jean: "In the light of the ship we could see pale white flying fish cruising about under the water, which was soon a rubbish dump of banana skins as the passengers gorged."⁷

London was a world ripe with possibility for an artist with an eye for the poetry of everyday life: "The more one sees and does in London, the more is revealed, the more possibilities open up. Everybody eventually finds their own London, that aspect that most appeals to their interests."⁸ Juliet explored it with her sketchbook in hand, capturing its people, architecture and atmosphere with characteristic economy and humour. She drew stone façades, ornate iron gates, a flower-seller and her cart, the Cockney men who gathered at Billingsgate fish market, a string of ponies for hire in Regent's Park Zoo, a drooping line of coppiced trees along Clifton Road and, of course, the fashionable locals exercising their dachshunds and poodles. "It was natural for me to incorporate some of the local scene of Hyde Park. I admired the comings and goings and variety of what one saw ... I loved London, really."⁹ Many of these scenes were translated



Juliet Peter *Façades, W.9. 1954*. Lithograph. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū



Juliet Peter *London Pigeons* 1954. Lithograph. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

into lithographs that were later exhibited in New Zealand, including at the annual Group exhibitions in Christchurch. At the time, Juliet and Roy were amongst the few New Zealanders working in the medium: “There weren’t many people doing printmaking then. We were pioneers, I think.”¹⁰ Purchasing an old London taxicab for £25 after it was advertised on a noticeboard at New Zealand House, the Cowans explored the Continent and also ventured into the English countryside, as Juliet’s later advice to Jean attests:

*When you do set out to explore the by-ways of Britain, I do recommend that you go to Somerset. On both my trips, I liked it more than any other part I saw. To start with, there is Bath, Wells and Glastonbury. Then there are forgotten hamlets with names like music: Dinder, [Compton] Dundon, Muchelney, Montacute (the latter has a wonderful Elizabethan great house) and 18th century town-lets such as Somerton. Should you go to Glastonbury, there is a very fine youth hostel on Polden Hill in heavenly open country beyond a place called (probably by the Romans) Street. Thereabouts the roads still follow Roman roads that converged to the Fosse Way and Somerset people still talk of “Green Ways” in the woods.*¹¹

In that letter, written a decade after returning to New Zealand, there’s a more than a hint of nostalgia for the freedom and excitement of those years: “Looking back on our own two years in London, and I was there for a year in 1951 also, I am sure it was the happiest and certainly most stimulating time of my life.”¹²

United by a shared aversion to authority and conformity, Juliet and Roy resisted the stylistic shift sweeping through the art scenes of both London and Wellington.

*We weren’t interested in abstraction. We solved that problem very early—we took up ceramics and nobody could tell us in ceramics what we ought to be doing. We had no intention of going abstract. It wasn’t our thing. ... The pressure was on artists, and we refused to go with it. At that period, in the 1950s and 60s, everyone was going abstract on the local scene, and we went our own way. It was very simple.*¹³

Juliet’s London works, however, are far from straightforward representation. Instead she applied an approach she had developed while at Canterbury College—to the frustration of more conventionally-minded lecturers like Cecil Kelly and Richard Wallwork, who would have preferred her to obediently copy what was in front of her:

*I had other ideas, that I could use the subject but I wanted to do something else with it. I didn’t want to sit down and just copy a piece of landscape. We all wanted to get away from the photographic approach and bring in some personal input. We were getting away from the idea that you had to view landscape as if you were a camera. We were taking the elements and adjusting them towards an individual point of view.*¹⁴

In works like *October, London* (c.1954), Juliet deftly manipulates scale, colour and form to intensify the autumnal atmosphere and create a sense of immediacy and immersion. Placing three large falling leaves immediately in our line of sight, she brings us right into the centre of the scene, experiencing it as much as observing it. And while she rebuffed the official movement, Juliet wasn’t above borrowing a few tools from the abstractionists’ repertoire, often simplifying forms and adapting them in ways that defy pure



Juliet Peter October, *London* c.1954. Lithograph. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, donated from the Canterbury Public Library Collection 2001

representation. In *London Pigeons* (1954), which incorporates the distinctive classical portico and spire of the Grosvenor Chapel in Mayfair, she draws the cluster of wide-eyed birds with loose, gestural outlines, the forms intersecting and overlapping to create a geometry of life and movement.

When the Cowans left London in 1955, their keepsakes were suitably idiosyncratic: a nineteenth-century lithographic press and a small electric kiln. These would be the bedrocks of the artistic partnership they would establish at their home in Heke Street in the bush-clad Wellington suburb of Ngaio. They worked there together for more than forty years, making a modest living from selling their works privately and relishing their independence. Though they contributed generously to New Zealand's art scene by sharing their knowledge of pottery, kiln-making and cutting-edge colour lithographic techniques, they remained a society of two—an exclusive club defined by practicality, industry, invention and humour. Each year, they shunned the official Daylight Savings changeover, preferring to remain permanently on what they called “Summer Time”. As far as I know, they didn't write a manifesto, but Juliet went some way towards suggesting one in an interview she gave late in life: “the arts”, she said “are deadly serious—and full of fun”.¹⁵

Felicity Milburn

Curator

Juliet Peter: *Where the Line Leads is on display from 1 September 2018 until 20 January 2019.*

Notes

- 1 Jean Jones, née Angus, was the sister of Rita Angus. Juliet Peter knew the Angus family from her time as an art student at Canterbury College in the 1930s and both Rita and Jean also contributed illustrations to the *School Journal*. Juliet corresponded with them for many years and her letters are an insightful and entertaining record of her experiences and opinions. Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers—8036-087—Jones Family papers.
- 2 Juliet Peter took Roy's name when they married, but continued to use “Juliet Peter” in signing her work. Her first name is used throughout this article for simplicity.
- 3 Juliet Peter, quoted in Damian Skinner, ‘A Modest Modernism: An Interview with Juliet Peter’, *Art New Zealand*, No.119, winter 2006, p.71.
- 4 Juliet Peter, interview with Damian Skinner, 19 August 2004. Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers—8776-054—Damian Skinner 2.
- 5 Juliet Peter, quoted in Dunbar Sloane auction catalogue, 29/30 September 1999, p.58.
- 6 Gaelyn Elliot, in conversation with the author, 29 May 2018.
- 7 Juliet Peter, letter to Jean Jones, 17 August 1953. Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers—8036-087—Jones Family papers.
- 8 Juliet Peter, letter to Jean Jones, 29 January 1965. Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers—8036-087—Jones Family papers.
- 9 Juliet Peter, interview with Damian Skinner, 2004.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Juliet Peter, letter to Jean, Fred and Christopher, 7 February 1965. Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers—8036-087—Jones Family papers.
- 12 Juliet Peter, letter to Jean Jones, 12 June 1968. Alexander Turnbull Library MS-Papers—8036-087—Jones Family papers.
- 13 Juliet Peter, interview with Damian Skinner, 2004.
- 14 Juliet Peter, quoted in Damian Skinner, 2006, p.67.
- 15 Juliet Peter, quoted in Diana Dekker, ‘Work was for fun, not fame’, *Weekend Press*, 30 January 2010, p.13.

GIRLFRIEND

Lonnie Hutchinson talks to Lara Strongman about her new billboard work, commissioned for the Gallery's Gloucester Street façade.

Lara Strongman: Why did you call this work *Hoā Kōhine* (Girlfriend)?

Lonnie Hutchinson: The work is very feminine in nature. Because it's the 125 year celebration of women's suffrage in Aotearoa this year, I wanted to refer to women, and to the friendship between women. "Girlfriend" is what women friends call each other, in an affectionate sort of way. *Hey girlfriend!* And in a text we'll use gf.

LS: What's the background to this work?

LH: It relates to most of the work that I make, in that the original motifs are cutouts. Then they're scanned and digitised, and then I can start having some fun playing around with them. I have quite a large vector library, from all the work that I've made. I also have a cutout on the wall of my studio from *Kahu Matarau*, the cloak work I made for the Ministry of Justice. It's on the outside of the building, and the billboard is on the outside of the Gallery building. I thought it would be nice if they could have a conversation of sorts.

I took the cutout panel I used in that work—the vector—and then I repeated it into a kind of a flower form. I was thinking of lace curtains. I read that when the first European settlers came to Christchurch over the Port Hills from Lyttelton they brought window glass with them—and some of the women brought lace curtains. A guy wouldn't do that, it's a female sort of thing to do, to bring a piece

of home with you. In terms of Māoridom, craft practices like tāniko and muka are very similar in that the designs are very fine. Māori were also very drawn to lace fabric when it was imported.

LS: You were born and raised in Auckland, but you always feel like a person from Christchurch. We're claiming you anyway! What is your relationship with Christchurch?

LH: I whakapapa to Kāi Tahu on my father's side, so it's in my bones, let's put it that way. But specifically, I whakapapa to Kaikoura. To the north of Ōtautahi. When my son Leigh was a baby, I took him down to Christchurch because some of my Samoan family were living there, and I just kept going back and forwards. Since then I've developed relationships in the iwi. The funny thing was, my cousins who I used to stay with knew everyone in the tribe anyway. But I wasn't making art then. I was being a mother, and working part-time at various jobs.

LS: I think you originally trained as a pattern cutter, didn't you?

LH: Yes, that was my first job. I was in the sixth form. I walked into Early Bird Fashions and I got a job just like that. No CVs or anything! They trained me. I got a little job in the design room—my first year was unpicking samples from overseas.

LS: Later on you transferred the creative skills you gained as a pattern cutter to being an artist.

LH: I was always a drawer. My father was a very good drawer too. He used to make scenes out of little bits of native wood, like a fox hunt. And he used to do embroidery as well. My nana was a big knitter, and my mother was very good on the sewing machine. I grew up sewing. I made all my own clothes, so I was quite confident going into fashion. That was my first job, but I had quite a few jobs. I was a farmer for a while. My ex-husband and I went share milking to make some money. But I still kept drawing right through. I used to draw my baby, the farm, people in the family—I was always drawing. And then an opportunity came up. I was working for a screen printer, putting graphics together, and we used to hand-cut them on the lightbox in those days. Then the firm I was working for put me forward for the New Zealand screen-printing awards, and I won! Someone left a note at the exhibition, at the Aotea Centre, an interior design lecturer from Unitec, and that's how I got into tertiary education. I ended up studying under Warren Viscoe. He was fantastic.

LS: How do you see the relationship of cutting to drawing?

LH: It's kind of the same. You're drawing with the blade. Except that it is also a bit like sculpture—you're cutting, and once you've removed it you can't put it back. You can't rub it out. When I'm designing my work, I draw it first. Some things don't

work because the lines are too thin and you've got to thicken them up, or look at other ways of doing it. Cut-outs are quite mathematical. You've got to think about the weight of the paper. You don't want to cut too much out or they become weak. If I want to make them figurative, I found I have to use more crosshatching to build strength into the negative spaces. You don't have to worry about these things when you're designing something that is 2D, for paper. There's more freedom in it.

LS: Do you still cut your works by hand?

LH: Yes. It's been suggested to me that, with the advances in technology, I should get them computer cut. But it's not the same. You don't get the artist's hand in there. Not all my lines are straight.

LS: They're very labour intensive.

LH: Yes, but you just get into the rhythm. Sometimes—I call it the factory—that's when the factory starts. Having a talking book on is quite good for me. You get into the story, and you cut. It takes a while. It is quite labour-intensive; and I do have to watch it. I don't cut for any longer than four hours anymore, or I start getting blisters up my forefinger.

Lonnie Hutchinson: *Hoā Kōhine (Girlfriend)* is currently on display on the Gallery's Gloucester Street façade.



Lonnie Hutchinson *Hoa Kōhine (Girlfriend)* 2018. Digital print. Collection of the artist, commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū 2018

POWERFULLY PRESENT

In the last issue of *Bulletin*, to mark the 125th anniversary of women claiming the right to vote in Aotearoa New Zealand, our curators wrote about five significant—yet lesser-known—nineteenth and mid-twentieth-century works from the collection by women.

In this issue we focus on some contemporary works by women artists that assert a powerful presence in the collection—and which variously explore the charged politics of representation.

Teaching Aid #1: Appropriate brushes for large flower paintings

Walking through Victoria Square in the autumn of 2013, I was brought to a standstill by three monstrous, dried-up flowerheads marooned in the shadow of the quake-munted Christchurch Town Hall. It took a long moment to reconcile these desiccated aliens with the cascading splendour of the Ferrier Fountain's triple *sphere de fleur*, a sight that held me spellbound as a child and graced countless flashy postcards of the Garden City since 1972. Even in their dehydrated mode, they held a strange, apocalyptic beauty. Recently, visiting the collection galleries in that quiet half hour before the public arrives, I had another unsettling floral encounter. Rounding the corner, I came face-to-face with Julia Morison's *Teaching Aid #1: Appropriate brushes for large flower paintings*, a wall's worth of flowers at human scale. I wasn't surprised to see them—they're up as part of *We Do This*, an exhibition I curated with Lara Strongman—but, even in a room full of attention-grabbing showstoppers, their out-of-place-ness seemed suddenly magnified into an absurd grandeur.

Morison's 'brushes' call attention to the region's strong flower painting tradition, and also take a gentle swipe at Christchurch's much-vaunted 'Garden City' status. Made when she was working as a painting lecturer at the University of Canterbury, the *Teaching Aids* were Morison's tongue-in-cheek 'how-to' guide for students, her ironic exposition of the mechanics of painting. A rebuke to the idea that art, or teaching, could, or should, be measured in standardised terms, they are also a demonstration of what Morison enjoyed most about her role; the opportunity to encourage and collaborate with students in acts of serious play.

Alternately blooming and drooping across the gallery wall, Morison's dark bouquet thrums with subversive symbolism. Size is the first thing you notice. They're ridiculously big flowers—flaunting the kind of exaggerated dimensions that are used to claim attention, capture the narrative and shake up the usual order of things. So, in part, they're a work about the politics of scale—that shift in power that comes when you take up space. Now, take another look at that subtitle, 'Appropriate brushes for large flower paintings'. Read one way, it's

straightforwardly descriptive. As John Hurrell has noted, however, these flower-brushes are also *appropriations*: objects borrowed from one context and repurposed for another. In this case, floor mops—traditionally associated with housework, especially 'women's work'—have been stiffened and strengthened with fibreglass and plaster to form strange new specimens that reference both the physical and domestic obligations that might suppress women's creativity and conventional expectations about gender roles. Historically, female artists often suffered from a kind of genre snobbery that dismissed them as mere hobbyists—in an ideal world, ladies quietly amused themselves with delicate flower paintings while real artists wrestled manfully with the landscape outside. The sheer physicality of Morison's flowers contests the validity of these categorisations, bringing our attention firmly back to the determination and dexterity required to succeed—as Margaret Stoddart and her flower-painting, hill-climbing peers did—in any creative field.

In conventional art symbolism, where tightly budded roses represent chaste, perfect beauty, and dropped petals or aging blooms signal a lack of virtue or desirability, Morison's blown-out flower heads would be well past their best. Too big to be ignored, they're now dropping their seeds and passing on their influence to the next generation. The Latin word for flower gave us the term 'flourish' in the sense of blossoming or thriving. Later, though, it came to refer to the idea of brandishing—the act of holding something in the hand and waving it about—a weapon perhaps, or even a paintbrush.

Felicity Milburn

Curator



Julia Morison *Teaching Aid #1: Appropriate brushes for large flower paintings* 2001.
String, plaster, resin, galvanised pipe and set of ten wall labels. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2008

Sex Trade, Gift for Banks, Dancing Lovers, Sextant Lesson (18550) (19205)

The panoramic image of CinemaScope is one of the defining technical achievements of twentieth-century cinema—an accomplishment that marked the medium’s arrival as an independent artform yet had painting and printmaking at its beginning. Artist Lisa Reihana, of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāi Tu, English and Welsh descent, located her twenty-five metre wide video installation *In Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (2015–17) in a more Georgian tradition to represent Aotearoa New Zealand at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017.

In Pursuit of Venus [infected] is a scrolling mise en scène that employs samples from a Georgian wallpaper, Joseph Dufour’s *Sauvages De La Mer Pacifique* (1804), and composited video of historical narratives and invented tableaux. At 10.8 metres long, Dufour’s original mural spanned a room, looping around as if endless. His depiction of a Tahitian landscape is populated with fifteen representations of the Polynesian and Australasian nations including Māori. All appear Eurocentric. On first seeing the wallpaper at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra in 2005, Reihana was struck by the cultural conflicts the work raised for her:

*... this beautiful but strange object, this wallpaper, and then being told that these were Pacific people. I was completely gobsmacked because I couldn’t see anything that I recognised and I came across the catalogue that Vivienne Webb had written and I suddenly thought, what an amazing idea, to bring a wallpaper back to life!*¹

The Gallery’s recent acquisition, *Sex Trade, Gift for Banks, Dancing Lovers, Sextant Lesson (18550) (19205)* (2017) stems from Reihana’s grand work for Venice and reflects a class system directed by males and operating across race and cultures. By representing the historical accounts of specific women as objects for negotiation and trade, Reihana reveals the way in which, regardless of status, they existed within a power structure principally overseen by men.

In responding to Dufour, Reihana provided a cinematic space for Māori, Polynesian and Australasian nations to represent themselves. As a collaborator Reihana was in the background, operating within Barry Barclay’s definition

of Fourth Cinema and a Māori philosophy towards filmmaking. With that she demonstrates manaakitanga (kindness), whakawhanaungatanga (connectedness), and rangatiratanga (stewardship).

It could be argued that a tradition of the panoramic exists within te ao Māori arts: some pigment on rock paintings span several metres while the smaller drawings in charcoal often appear in clusters that are reminiscent of Reihana’s various tableaux, and are also part of the landscape.

Kowhaiwhai, another tradition of painting was described by Herbert Williams as being a “painted scroll ornamentation”.² This is a useful observation for considering *Sex Trade, Gift for Banks, Dancing Lovers, Sextant Lesson (18550) (19205)* in relation to Reihana’s panoramic moving image. As kowhaiwhai sit within the wharenui, these works might sit within Reihana’s most ambitious project—her digital marae. She continues and expands upon the relationship between Māori arts and architecture from a Māori woman’s perspective.

Nathan Pohio

Assistant curator

Notes

1. A conversation with Lisa Reihana / 2015 QAGOMA Foundation Appeal, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEBO2eD2JrI>
2. Herbert W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1975, p.152.



Lisa Reihana *Sex Trade, Gift for Banks, Dancing Lovers, Sextant Lesson (18550) (19205) 2017.*

Pigment print on Hahnemühle paper, mounted on aluminium dibond behind acrylic. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2018

The Charlotte Jane

Fiona Pardington is a photographer of Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe and Scottish ancestry, a well-travelled artist whose work often opens up paths of discovery for herself and others. While we understand that her finger eventually engages the shutter, we also see regular evidence of her searching for a particular kind of pulse. The work can feel like dreamlike exploration, and the passages taken akin to something like time travel, while also conveying a certain sense of risk. This is *The Charlotte Jane*.

Farewelling her London home at daybreak on Wednesday 3 September 1850, 27-year-old Mary Ann Bishop gave anguish to paper. “We left Hackney at a quarter to 6 in the morning; to describe my feelings at this painful moment I cannot. I pray that this gigantic speculation of my brothers will not turn to our ruin, and may God give us strength to bear with our tribulations...” At Gravesend three days later, waiting with others of the Bishop family including brothers Frederick, Edward and Charles, she recounted that “we were told to be in readiness as the ships were expected in hourly, and so the moment is coming when I am to bid adieu to England, my friends adieu, may you never know the feeling of an emigrant”. Mary Ann Bishop and others preparing to board the *Charlotte Jane* were among some 750 people joining the voyage to the ends of the earth on the Canterbury Association’s first four ships; participants in John Robert Godley’s experiment. On Saturday at noon, in Miss Bishop’s words:

*I stepped from my native shore, alas, my feelings
I cannot describe, better pass over this part as no
one on earth can know or fully enter into the conflict
and contention of mind I was suffering under, to be
thoroughly happy from England I never can as long
as memory bears in mind the objection my beloved
Parents had to emigration, I thought my heart would
break, illness began directly and it was very rough...*

The Bishop family, among 154 souls leaving on the *Charlotte Jane*, were Colonists rather than Settlers, this distinction through their being prosperous enough to be purchase land when in their new situation.¹ Along with hopes, all those on board shared some of Miss Bishop’s

trepidation and seasickness. Alleviating the boredom and privations of shipboard life, diversions over the next fourteen weeks included natural phenomena such as porpoises, flying fish, spouting whales, albatrosses and storm petrels—sometimes at night sailing through phosphorescence (as Emma Barker recorded three weeks into the journey, “Tonight I have been watching a lovely sight from our clergyman’s stern cabin windows, the sea all in a state of phosphorescence in the run of the ship, resembling a milky way of brilliant morning stars dashing along.”) There were also regular reels and dances and songs; watercolour painting, poetry and sermons; two manuscript weekly magazines (*The Cockroach* and *The Sea-pie*); one birth, one marriage, and the deaths of three small children.

A hundred years later, Canterbury’s 1950 centennial year summonsed forth commemorative murals, biographies, postage stamps and exhibitions, along with celebratory film reels and historical re-enactments. Putting his glass blowing skills to a fabulous test, Christchurch man John Rowe’s personal response was to create, in threads of glass, a scale model of the *Charlotte Jane*, the first of the First Four Ships to berth at Lyttelton; the one that also carried his ancestors. His first completed version is said to have been damaged or lost; his second is now in good care at Canterbury Museum. For Pardington’s eye, John Rowe’s ship was a waiting gift.

Ken Hall
Curator

Notes

1. Cabin passengers paid £42 a berth, intermediate passengers £25 a berth, and steerage passengers £15. See <https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/the-first-four-ships/>



Fiona Pardington *The Charlotte Jane* 2009. C-type photograph.
Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2009

Tena I Ruia

When I'm thinking about putting together an exhibition, I often look for some kind of anchor point. By that I mean a work that not only asserts its presence in a space but which grounds and challenges my thinking—a place to start from and to return to, again and again. Robyn Kahukiwa's magisterial *Tena I Ruia* is exactly that kind of work, a powerful and generative presence in our current contemporary exhibition from the collection, *We Do This*, which I co-curated with Felicity Milburn. It was one of the first works we confirmed for the exhibition.

Tena I Ruia is a big painting. It's four metres wide, just over two metres high. It's on loose canvas, pierced with eyelets, painted in flame red and deep bruised violet with sharp yellow highlights. It's an assertive physical presence in a room—and that's before you've even got to the subject, which is the depiction of a group of Māori women performing a commanding haka. While most haka are performed by men, some iwi, including Ngāti Porou to which Kahukiwa whakapapas, have significant traditions of female haka. At times, haka have been used by women to articulate their fight for social justice.

We Do This is an exhibition to mark the 125th anniversary of universal suffrage in Aotearoa New Zealand—the moment when women claimed the right to vote. (I always think it's important to write about it like that, rather than falling into the smug national line that Aotearoa New Zealand was the first country to *give* women the vote. It took many years of struggle for New Zealand suffragists to prevail in their fight for representation, against trenchant opposition. The right to vote was *claimed* by women, rather than given to them.)

There's an extraordinary energy that comes off Kahukiwa's *Tena I Ruia*. It's the energy of seven individual women moving in unison, painted at life size. While the expression and character of the figures are different, each woman has one foot firmly planted on the ground, while the other is raised in the process of stamping vigorously. Their arms are elevated, their mouths are open. They are making sound, taking up space, filling the air, claiming attention. They represent their own message. It's impossible to ignore them.

Kahukiwa is a hugely significant figure in the expression of mana wahine in the visual arts. She grew up in Australia, and moved to this country as a young woman. Around 1967, noted the late art historian Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, “as a housebound young mother in Greymouth, she succumbed to an impulse to paint.”¹ From 1985 she began to draw on traditions of the carved figure in her work, following what she described later as “a significant meeting” with master carver Pine Taiapa's carved image of her ancestor, Te Aomihia. “My subsequent work,” she said, “has been influenced by the beauty and message of this carving.”² *Tena I Ruia*'s figures are derived from the ancestral forms of carving, transformed into two dimensions and metaphorical space through the contemporary medium of paint.

Kahukiwa has stated that *Tena I Ruia* represents “a form of challenge to Māori and Pakeha to show that we have the drive to self-determination and the affirmation of tangata whenua status.” As a Pakeha woman, I am profoundly grateful for the leadership shown by Kahukiwa and other mana wahine. Her work reaches back into the past and gestures towards the future in which strong women represent themselves. As poet and artist Roma Potiki has said, Kahukiwa's work offers “a view that helps us reshape the way we look at the formation and importance of identity.”³

Lara Strongman

Senior curator

Notes

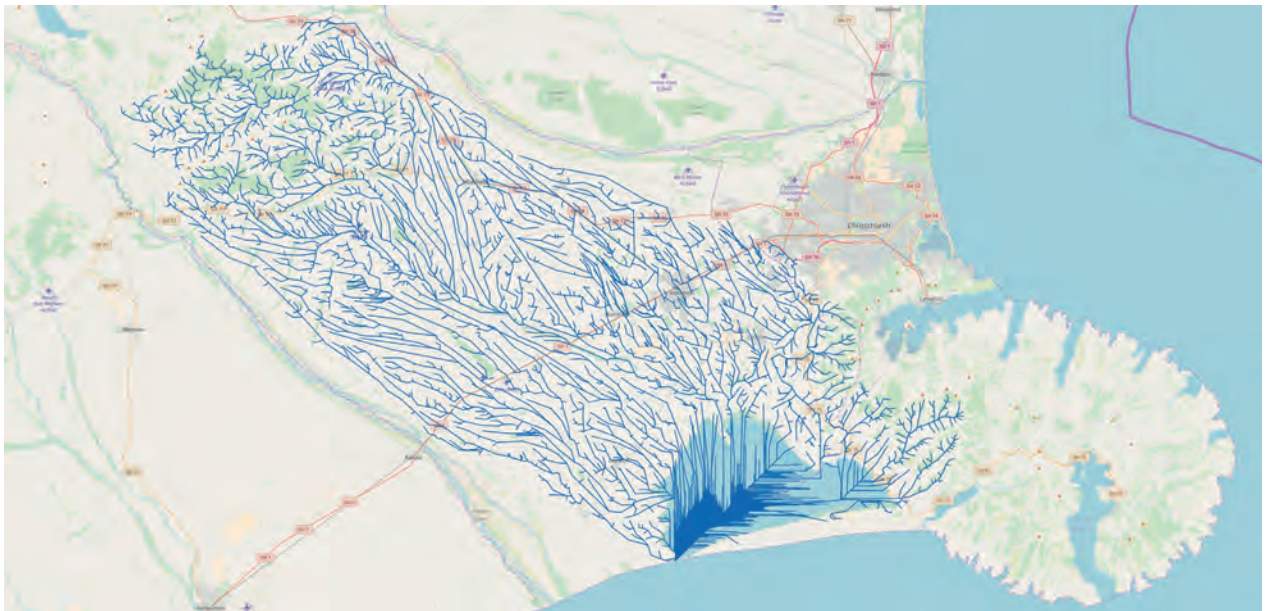
1. Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, *Toi Ata—Robyn Kahukiwa*, Wellington, 1995, p.10.
2. Robyn Kahukiwa, quoted in Angela Vreede et al., *Touching the Sky: The Art of Robyn Kahukiwa*, Whangaparaoa 2004, p.8.
3. Roma Potiki, *Toi Ata—Robyn Kahukiwa*, Wellington, 1995, p.19.



Robyn Kahukiwa *Tena / Ruia* 1987. Acrylic on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1989

OF BRAIDED RIVERS AND HYDRO- TRADERS

WATER AND ART IN CANTERBURY



Visualisation of all waterways that drain into Lake Ellesmere. Image courtesy: Niwa

SAME PLANET, DIFFERENT WORLD

“With 14,000km of coastline, over 180,000km of rivers, and 3,820 lakes, there’s more to the land of the long white cloud than land...” So began an advertisement in a recent *Sunday Star Times*. It might have been the opening gambit for a campaign devoted to water conservation but was, in fact, a promotion for the latest model jet ski: “And all you need to unlock it is the all-new Yamaha Waverunner FX HO... SAME PLANET, DIFFERENT WORLD. Yamaha-motor.co.nz.”

Rivers mean different things to different people—be they hydrotherapists, water-traders, keepers of tribal wisdom, watercolourists or riders of jet skis. In our era of rapidly expanding dairy farming, adventure tourism, fresh-water bottling, fly fishing and ecotourism, the multifarious and often competing uses of rivers have never been more apparent. And rarely have these conversations been more animated than in the Canterbury/Otago region, especially since the recent influx of, to borrow a phrase from the eco-protector’s handbook, “big irrigation, more cows and polluted rivers”.

Among a small number of braided river systems still in existence globally (others can be found in Nepal, South America and, heavily modified, in Italy), Canterbury’s waterways offer a salient metaphor for the delicate wider ecology of Aotearoa New Zealand and, as Hamish Keith stated in his 2007 television series and book *The Big Picture*, for the country’s population. The series concluded with an aerial view of the Rakaia River plain which, according to Keith, mirrored the current state of multicultural New Zealand, with its “countless braiding threads ... different currents, depths, directions and colours”.

In fundamental ways, issues surrounding water

are currently being rethought at many levels of society—a case in point being the 2017 granting of legal ‘personhood’ to the Whanganui River. Yet any newly heightened awareness of the importance of water has to be qualified by the invariably bleak prognosis offered by scientists—according to one recent report, 43% of New Zealand lakes and 84% of pastoral catchments are polluted; 68% of ecosystems are degraded. With the further expansion of dairy farming, these statistics can only get worse.

Among the recent art projects drawing attention to issues surrounding water, Ashburton Art Gallery’s *The Water Project* (April until June 2018) engaged a group of thirteen artists to, in the words of curator Shirin Khosraviani, “explore the cultural, conceptual and imaginative qualities of the rivers, lakes, wetlands and freshwater systems of Aotearoa New Zealand”; bearing in mind that “in an era of ramped-up environmental degradation, water is being reconsidered as a natural element essential to our wellbeing and as carrier of histories and traditions, myriad individual and collective meanings”.

Water might be a hotly contested issue at the present time but as a subject for art it goes way back: “Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water,” wrote St Francis of Assisi in his thirteenth-century “Canticle of the Sun”: “She is very useful, and humble, / and precious, and pure.” Praise of pure water was a common theme in traditional Gaelic poetry—as it was and is in many other traditions, including that of Māori. In *On going out with the tide*, Matire Kereama described the Te Aupouri tradition of dunking a newborn baby in the cold river daily—a task given to the grandmother and deemed crucial for the child’s physical and spiritual well-being. For a contemporary Māori angle on the topic, you could start with Hone Tuwhare’s aptly named

poetry collection, *Deep River Talk*. Colin McCahon's preoccupation with the spiritual element of water went as far back as *The Virgin and Child compared* of 1948 and permeated his later *Waterfall* series and the oceanic meditations that emerged from his Muriwai Beach studio towards the end of his career. Late works such as *A Letter to Hebrews (Rain in Northland)* and *Storm Warning* are a theologically driven immersion in the planetary water cycle.

Waterways flow through the history of New Zealand art, from the cave art near Duntroon (which *Water Project* participants visited) to the work of William Hodges, Petrus van der Velden, Sydney Lough Thompson, Trevor Moffitt, Joanna Margaret Paul, Pauline Rhodes, Mark Adams, Gaby O'Connor and more. Phil Dadson wrote memorably, in the wake of a voyage to the Kermadec Islands in 2011, of his realisation, mid-ocean, that the human body—which is made up of over 60 per cent water—moves in accord with the tides and movements of the hydrosphere. Water is not something we are separate from.

WATER FEATURE

The Water Project began with a day-long seminar/hui in Christchurch in March 2017, during which the artists involved and other interested parties heard from scientists, conservationists and iwi. Alongside much celebration of the river systems so beautifully charted in a NIWA map of the region, the discussion was haunted by the spectre of neo-liberalism, with its hard-nosed commodification of natural resources. The stated corporate objectives of dairy giant Fonterra were cited, the Three V's: "Value, Volume and Velocity". One speaker felt compelled to agree with J.R. Neill's gloomy assertion that, over the past two centuries, "the human race, without intending anything of

the sort, has undertaken a gigantic uncontrolled experiment on the earth". Another quoted Northrop Frye's indictment of the Western world's obsession with progress and production as "the conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it".

The seminar was followed by a five-day tour of the Canterbury region, with artists meeting various experts, visiting sites and trying to get their collective head around some very complex river systems, floodplains, aquifers and the myriad lifeforms which inhabit both underground and terrestrial waters. Along the way, the group couldn't help but notice the many kilometres of pivot irrigators that lined the roads of rural Canterbury. Also notable were the massive human-made water storage ponds, constructed to syphon off river water after heavy rain—this despite the widely-understood fact that river ecosystems need to flood periodically to renew and cleanse themselves, to move boulders and to maintain their coastal outlet.

The objective of the *Water Project* was, as Khosraviani noted, to provide a timely and necessary "catalyst and a forum for discussion in the wider community about how we think about and inhabit the natural world". Two months into the exhibition period she reported that responses had been mixed: "We have had angry people who have called the show 'aggressive' and we've also had people moved to tears by the works. I have been reminded by some that 'dairy built your art gallery' and others have spent time and truly appreciated the different voices and perspectives in the show."

In tandem with the need to protect waterways, social scientist Charlotte Šunde, spoke to the seminar of the need to nurture and cherish the discourse around rivers. The vocabulary needs to be protected from, or reformulated in opposition to, "the alienating narrative of the status quo", with its plethora of pseudo-technical



The Waiau River from space. Image: Google Earth



Ross Hemera *Ko Kārewa te Whakarare* 2018. Alkanethene pipe, raffia, river stones, charcoal, kokowai



Colin McCahon *Keep New Zealand green* 1966. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
Private collection. Reproduced courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust

and business-friendly terms. A new terminology was, she said, flooding the land—“hydro-trader”, “flood-harvester”, “functional landscape”—words which were “a scaffolding propping up a specific way of seeing reality”. She prescribed a programme of “word rescue” as part of the riparian project, and suggested a good start would be to stop referring to rivers and water as a “resource” and move away from the notion of the functional landscape in which invariably “the land rules the stream”. Rethinking verbal and visual approaches is, as numerous commentators agreed, a crucial part of re-engaging with and re-animating the subject. Later, artist Ross Hemera spoke of the need to renew our intimate relationship with water, to rediscover lost wisdoms and rites—“to know what eel to take, and what time of year to take it.”

In a comparable spirit, New Zealand poets have celebrated both the impurity and the purity of water—qualities which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. M.K. Joseph, in his 1959 poem “Distilled water” highlighted a quintessential, life-enhancing impurity:

*Consider now the nature of distilled
Water which has boiled and left behind
In the retort rewarding sediment
Of salts and toxins. Chemically pure of course
Tasteless and flat. Let it spill on the ground,
Leach out its salts, accumulate its algae,
Be living: the savour's in impurity.*

On the other hand, James K. Baxter’s “Winter monologue” of 1971, concludes with a paean to pure water: “...water is the sign of God, / common, indispensable, easy to overlook... / time then to soak myself in / the hot springs of Heaven!”

For a dramatically different artistic treatment of water—but one attuned to its present-day commodification—you could look to Michael

Stevenson’s installation at the 2003 Venice Biennale, which featured, alongside a Trekka, a little-known piece of homegrown technology known as a “Moniac”. In the accompanying catalogue, curator Robert Leonard elaborated:

Seven feet high, four wide, and three deep, the MONIAC was the brainchild of New Zealand economist Dr Bill Phillips. This perspex labyrinth is a high-tech, hydraulic model of the economy, a water-driven analogue computer. Phillips created it in 1949, while studying at the London School of Economics, where it was used in class to demonstrate Keynesian macroeconomic theory. Water represents money in circulation. By regulating its flow using gates and valves—reflecting interventions in the economy—complex downwind effects can be observed and plotted.

If the economy can be understood in terms of the flow of liquid, so can a myriad of other aspects of human and non-human life—a point made by Hemera who told the group of artists, on the rocky foreshore of Lake Pukaki, there was a saying in Māori, “Ko wai koe?” which means “Who are you?” or “Where do you come from?” But there was a further translation he drew attention to: “What waters are you from?” Water defines our identity—past, present and future—as well as permeating our physical being.

FOR AND AGAINST A GREEN WORLD

A clean-cut, youngish man sits on a grassy mound, leaning against the trunk of a tree: a modern-day Johnny Appleseed or a dramatically tidied-up version of the archetypal nature-poet—think Baxter, with a dash of Keats and Whitman. Instead of writing in a journal, he is tapping away on a laptop, the screen of which is dominated by six irrigation circles, seen from



Euan Macleod *Swingbridge* 2018. Acrylic on canvas

high above. The circles are arrayed like wheels or dials in some Utopian—or, depending on your viewpoint, diabolical—machine.

This image—in hyper-real yellows and greens—is prominent on the website of the irrigation manufacturer Bauer. Beyond the upraised laptop screen, an irrigator arm extends outwards into what looks more like a heavenly kingdom than a farm. The Bauer Boy is clearly in the business of overseeing or delivering a dream. His mission, like that of the archetypal Romantic poet, is not only to enhance and improve nature but also to humanise it. Entering stage-left, a sky-blue tag announces: “BAUER—For a green world”, a slogan that has become increasingly familiar to any motorist travelling through the South Island on account of its trademark appearance on much roadside hardware.

In New Zealand over the past few years, the word and colour ‘green’ has taken a hammering. In the 1960s, when Colin McCahon painted *Keep New Zealand green* and artists like Michael Illingworth were instrumental in the emerging ‘Green’ movement, the colour was associated with untrammelled, rejuvenating nature. Since then, its status has become increasingly problematic. Greenness—while being central to photosynthesis and, accordingly, to life on the planet—has lately also become synonymous with the expansion of dairy farming and intensive irrigation. Across the ochre and brownish lands of McKenzie Country—lately rebranded as “the McKenzie Dairy Frontier”—or around the edges of Central Otago, the cogs of the Green Machine churn onwards. Not far from the town of Tarras, an hour north of where I write this, the skeletal architecture of a water irrigator, maybe a kilometre in length, is parked along the verge of State Highway 8. From the window of our car, the hills beyond are seen through a matrix of aluminium pipes, dripping nozzles and bracing.

These overarching structures stalked the *Water Project* exhibition, as they do the Southern flatlands. Hemera’s *Ko Kārewa te Whakarare* comprised lengths of black plastic irrigation piping, shaped and woven into the form of a waka, inside of which were placed river stones. Similar piping was moulded into outsized bovine form in Jenna Packer’s *Pipe Dream*—a work which also referenced the ‘bull market’ of international finance and the ‘John Bull’ personification of colonial England. The aerial view of irrigator circles featured in the Bauer advertisement is given a less romantic treatment in Brett Graham’s *Plus and Minus*. Using drone footage, the multi-screened work presented numerous aerial views of an irrigator spraying water and effluent onto a 26 x 26 metre frost cloth.

Just beyond Tarras, a gigantic coat-hanger is parked alongside the road. The owner has constructed earthen mounds so the wheels of the irrigator can gain sufficient height for the network of metal beams and pipes to clear the rooftop of his house. The farmer and, presumably, his family go about their daily lives beneath the intermittent shadow of its long arm. *Same planet, different world.*

Gregory O’Brien is a poet, essayist, editor and artist. *With one foot in the literary world, the other in the visual art realm, he has been a prolific and busy presence on the cultural scene for nearly three decades. O’Brien’s poem “Conversation with a mid-Canterbury Braided River” (see following spread) was read at the Ashburton Art Gallery’s recent exhibition The Water Project, curated by Shirin Khosraviani. The poem was accompanied by Phil Dadson, who played an assortment of rocks from the bed of the Maraewhenua River, South Canterbury. The exhibition opened on 10 April 2018.*

CONVERSATION WITH A MID-CANTERBURY BRAIDED RIVER

'Fifteen apparitions have I seen; The worst a coat upon a coat-hanger'
(W. B. Yeats, 'The Apparitions')

Moved, as I am
immovable, like you

I turn over, I sleep
on my side

nestled in the
watery fact

of you. I fall about, collect
my thoughts—

another thing we have
in common—I get ahead

of myself, I meander
so as not to

lose my way. I rock
and sway.

I digress. And this is how
I come back to you

bedded and besotted, body strewn
with inverted clouds

migratory birds, dawn-lit
improbable.

Like you, I have
my sources; I wade

the long waters
of myself. My ear

to the ground or
the constant applause

of your rapids. You are your own
concert, open-air, a solitary leaf

crowd-surfing downstream
and the occasional beer can

thrown from a passing car. Lately there
has been talk of you as

**lapsed or recovering, dispersed
drained, interrupted or**

**resumed. And this
my sleepless night, my apparition:**

**an insect walking this land—
a coat-hanger on which might**

**hang a bright green shirt, a stream led
down a long avenue of hosepipe and**

**aluminium, a river flowing
sideways, its taniwha**

**reduced to a drizzle or fine mist
a trickle from**

**an automated tap. Your position on
this too is inarguable**

**as if argument was ever
a river's way.**

**Braided, you tell me, I was
upbraided, scrambled across**

**siphoned and run ragged by hydrotrader, flood
harvester, water bottler, irrigator**

**and resource manager. This riverbed is
my marae, the long legs of wading birds**

**my acupuncture, these waters
my only therapy.**

**On clear nights
galaxies enter me, planetary bodies**

**like swimmers. How many minds
a river has—caddis and mayfly**

**eyeless eel and
native trout. As an argument**

**this might not hold water
but neither does**

**a paddock gone around
in circles**

**or a skeletal arm endlessly
scrawling its initials in**

**a sodden green ledger. Whichever way
the river doesn't flow**

**I remain undecided, as is
water's way.**

**I disperse, lost for words
I dry up.**

**I saw an apparition, an insect
walking this riverless land**

**earthbound stars
rattling, beyond reflection**

**along a dry
river's bed.**



Get closer to art with the Friends

Private Viewing of Gordon Walters: New Vision

Saturday 24 November, 8.15am / Universo Brasserie & Bar
\$30 (includes breakfast) / bookings essential

We welcome the Friends of Te Papa with breakfast in Universo followed by a tour of the new Gordon Walters exhibition with a Gallery curator before it opens to the public.

To join the Friends and access more great events, head to christchurchartgallery.org.nz/friends. Check out the event listings on pages 68–71 of this magazine for all our events.

Marti Friedlander *Gordon Walters – Christchurch (Studio) (detail) 1978*. Vintage silver gelatin print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased with the generous assistance of the artist and FHE Galleries, 2016

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The Year in Review...

A summary of the year in business at the Gallery

388,968

NUMBER OF VISITORS

27,124

**NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO
ATTENDED 251 PUBLIC
PROGRAMME EVENTS**

Including lectures and talks by Gallery staff and invited experts.

9,477

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS
WHO ATTENDED 295
GALLERY-LED LESSONS**

3,158

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS
WHO TOOK PART IN TOURS
OF THE GALLERY**

3,190

**NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER
HOURS OF VALUED SERVICE**

Given to the Gallery by our volunteer guides, who helped and informed approximately 15,000 visitors.

2,768

**NUMBER OF HOURS OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC**

Gallery Publications

In addition to a range of guides, fliers, posters and newsletters, Gallery staff contributed to 11 publications:

Jenny Harper, Felicity Milburn and Lara Strongman, *B.189*, spring 2017

Jenny Harper, Felicity Milburn, Nathan Pohio and Lara Strongman, *B.190*, summer 2017/18

Jenny Harper and Lara Strongman, *B.191*, autumn 2018

Ken Hall, Blair Jackson, Felicity Milburn, Nathan Pohio, Lara Strongman and Peter Vangioni, *B.192*, winter 2018

Lara Strongman, *Aberhart Starts Here*, 2017, 136 pages

Felicity Milburn, *Say Something!: Jacqueline Fahey*, 2017, 64 pages

Four *Little Books of Art* (*Little Book of Birds*, *Little Book of Black*, *Little Book of Flowers* and *Little Book of the Sea*), 2017

Lara Strongman and Peter Vangioni, *US V THEM: Tony de Lautour*, 2018, 224 pages

Other Writing

Janet Abbott

The Lost Cave Baches, Beca Heritage Week October 2017, Christchurch, 32 pages

Felicity Milburn

'Things can speak for themselves—the confidence and uncertainty of Edwards + Johann', *From the Edge of Spaces*, Christchurch, 2018, pp.37–42

'Hanging up her hat/s', *Museums Aotearoa Quarterly*, March 2018, pp.6–7

Nathan Pohio

'Horopaki – to surround', in Blair French (ed.), *Mischa Kuball: Solidarity Grid*, London, 2017, p.7.

Lara Strongman

'Dusseldorf-on-Avon', in Blair French (ed.), *Mischa Kuball: Solidarity Grid*. London, 2017, pp.154–8

With Fiona Jack, 'Otakaro Plant Parade', in Rosa Shiels (ed.), *Scape 8: New Intimacies*, Christchurch, 2017, pp.50–55.

In addition, 11 columns on items in the Gallery collection were written for *The Press* by Gallery staff.

Invited Public Lectures and Industry Workshops

Ken Hall

'Godley for Sale?', Beca Heritage Week, Christchurch, October 2017

Tim Jones

'Life Offline', National Digital Forum, Wellington, November 2017

'Collecting Oral History in Bougainville', National Oral History Association of New Zealand, Wellington, November 2017

'Archiving Photographs', Photography with Pixels Inc, Christchurch, June 2018

Gina Irish

'Separating Wheat from Chaff: Collection Priorities at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū', Association of Registrars and Collection Specialists conference, Vancouver, Canada, November 2017 and Museums Aotearoa Conference, Christchurch, May 2018

'Managing Seismic Risk (Storage and Display)', Tasman Marlborough Museums Network, Nelson, April 2018

'Copyright: Conundrums and Workarounds' and 'Copyright's Orphans', Museums Aotearoa Conference, Christchurch, May 2018

'Rethinking Copyright: GLAM and the Review of the Copyright Act 1994', Canterbury Regional Digital Forum, Christchurch, June 2018

Felicity Milburn

'A New Net', Institute of Contemporary Art, London, September 2017

Broadly Speaking, Christchurch, 15 May 2018

Nathan Pohio

Gordon Walters Lecture, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, March 2018

Mana whenua as curator presentation: Kāhui Kaitiaki Programme, Museums Aotearoa Symposium, Tuahiwi Marae, May 2018

David Simpson

'Telling Stories: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū', Best in Heritage 2017, Dubrovnik, 28–30 September 2017

Lara Strongman

Chair, Solidarity Grid panel discussion, Christchurch Art Gallery, May 2018

'The Wisdom of Crowds: Crowd-funding and Christchurch Art Gallery's collection, from Gibb's Shades of Evening to Parekowhai's Chapman's Homer', U3A Pegasus, July 2017

Peter Vangioni

'The Golden Age: British and New Zealand Wood-engravings', Puke Ariki, New Plymouth, April 2018

Exhibitions

15 + 1 artist project

Collection

Acquisitions: 92 (including 51 gifts)

Outward loans: 28

Inward loans: 600

Professional Advice

Ken Hall

Board member, Commonwealth Association of Museums
Judge, University of Canterbury Classoc
'Attic Art in the Attic' event

Amy Harrington

Member, Museums Aotearoa Conference organising committee

Airi Hashimoto

Canterbury regional ambassador, National Digital Forum

Gina Irish

Chair, Australasian Registrars Committee

Blair Jackson

Trustee, W.A. Sutton Trust
Member, Christchurch Arts Audience Development steering committee
Member, Museums Aotearoa Conference organising committee

Tim Jones

Convener, National Digital Forum regional event, Christchurch
Member, Find New Zealand Artists steering group
Member, International Federation of Library Associations conference working group

Felicity Milburn

Judge, Sculpture on the Peninsula
Judge, Ashburton Art Award

Nathan Pohio

Member, Museums Aotearoa Conference organising committee

Lara Strongman

Juror, Walters Prize, Auckland Art Gallery Selector, Sculpture on the Peninsula

Peter Vangioni

Judge, Grace Butler Memorial Foundation Award

Library

The collection of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives now comprises 12,775 items, including new archival collections from Rosemary Perry, Professor John Simpson and Judy Tait.

Awards

Aberhart Starts Here: Cornish Family Prize for Art and Design Publishing, 2018 Melbourne Art Book Fair (finalist); Museums Australasia Multimedia and Publication Design Awards 2018 (finalist); Publishers Association of New Zealand Book Design Awards 2018 (finalist, Best Illustrated Book and Best Cover)

Bad Hair Day: Best Design Awards 2017 (finalist); Publishers Association of New Zealand Book Design Awards 2017 (finalist, Best Illustrated Book)

Little Books of Art: Museums Australasia Multimedia and Publication Design Awards 2018 (winner, Best Book and Judges' Special Award)

Bulletin: Museums Australasia Multimedia and Publication Design Awards 2018 (winner, Best Magazine)

Design Store: Museum Shops Association of Australia and New Zealand Award (winner, Best New Product or Range supporting the exhibition *Wayne Youle: Look Mum No Hands*)

Venue Hire

28,520 people attended 221 events

Design Store

Top 5 products sold (by quantity):

Bad Hair Day publication

Say Something! Jacqueline Fahey publication

Cass (Rita Angus) greetings card

Seven-colour Pencil

Among the Sandhills (Adrian Stokes) greetings card

Wall to Wall

This October we want everyone in Ōtautahi Christchurch to help us create a new exhibition! *Wall to Wall* is a massive public paint-out of one of our downstairs gallery spaces. Pick up a paintbrush and create your own masterpiece, or work with friends and family to make a bigger splash.

To help you get in the mood, grab your pen or pencil and get creative. Feeling social? Snap a picture and tag us in on it—we'd love to see what you come up with! @chchartgallery







Robin Neate *In a lonely place* 2013.

Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2016

My Favourite

Nick Harte is a Christchurch-born painter, writer and musician who currently plays in DOG Power. Past projects include Shocking Pinks.

I still fondly recall my initial exposure as a teen to Ian Curtis's final and uncannily premonitory composition with Joy Division, *In a Lonely Place*. But with its violaceously autumnal palette, Robin Neate's work of the same name feels far removed from the dismal granite grey of a Manchester morning, or even the stark monochrome of the 1950 Nicholas Ray film that both of these pieces appropriate their title from.

Ray himself (whom Neate named his *Ray Paintings* series after) was "the outcast Hollywood rebel, white hair, black eye-patch, and a head full of subversion and controlled substances."¹ In writing about the isolation or outsidership of Ray's cinema, the filmmaker and critic Jacques Rivette proposed that "everything always proceeds from a simple situation where two or three people encounter some elementary and fundamental concepts of life. And the real struggle takes place in only one of them, against the interior demon of violence ... which seems linked to man and his solitude."²

Compared to film or music, the allure of the solitary nature of painting was possibly the primary motivator in my decision to move from Wellington to Christchurch to study at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts under Robin Neate. Neate himself has said that "*In A Lonely Place* could be an artist in their studio rather than the title of one of Ray's films."³ I also found his embrace of cinema very encouraging, as this was something I'd been looking at in my own practice. There is something of the (albeit taciturn) outsider in Neate's personality and practice too; during writer John Hurrell's visit to my studio last November he reminisced about having been in the same painting year as Neate at Canterbury and remembers him as being something of a rebel. In a recent email he elaborated: "Robin was distinctive

in that he made monochromes, which was pretty outrageous for a first year student who was straight in from school. I never saw any other first years do that. Painting monochromes was very cheeky."

In the flesh, these paintings are quite overwhelming due to their imposing scale. I recall visiting Hamish McKay Gallery as this work was being packaged and shipped to Christchurch and I can still visualise the difficulty with which it was hauled down the stairs. On a special recent trip into the innards of Christchurch Art Gallery's storerooms I was able to enjoy an extended peek at *In A Lonely Place* and was struck by the textures and remnants from previous layers where Neate had overpainted early attempts. Neate explains: "each layer (informs) the next until I get them to a point where they feel right."⁴

As I bus in from Antrim farm (my partner's parents' estate in Valetta) on the Ash Vegas to Christchurch intercity link, I'm reminded of but one reason why Robin Neate's *Ray Paintings*, and *In A Lonely Place* in particular, resonate so thoroughly with me: their sumptuous chromatic field evokes and reinterprets the distribution of these gloriously pinkish twilit horizons that we're lucky enough to observe here in Canterbury on a brisk, autumn night.

Notes

- 1 Jim Jarmusch, from the promotional material for Nicholas Ray's autobiography *I Was Interrupted* (University of California Press, 1993).
- 2 Jacques Rivette, 'De L'invention', *Cahiers du Cinema* 27, October 1953.
- 3 Robin Neate, quoted in Emilie Sitza and Peter Vangioni, *Robin Neate: The Ray Paintings & The Other Yesterday Paintings*, Ilam Press, 2013, unpaginated.
- 4 Ibid.

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three boys brewery

**CAKES
BY
ANNA**

Pagework No.38

Each quarter the Gallery commissions an artist to create a new work of art especially for Bulletin. It's about actively supporting the generation of new work.

For over twenty years Darryn George has been, as an artist of Ngāpuhi descent and Christian faith, developing a personal language in painting centred upon his identity and beliefs. Through this he reflects upon the world around him.

As a teenager in the 1980s, George saw new musical ideas arrive in New Zealand through hip hop culture. One of these was the musical technique of sampling, where a producer can record an excerpt of an existing sound or piece of music, and use that to build something completely new. This, George tells me, informs something of his attitude towards drawing on mid-twentieth-century masters: “I am sampling all the time, seeing how things come together.” In a formal sense, George riffs on artists who share his spiritual concerns—Barnett Newman for hard-edged abstraction and more recently the late works of Mark Rothko. “It's the conceptual stuff which I hooked into the most, I have not sampled their formal qualities so much, though I do find them beautiful. It is the conceptual aspects that initially interested me. I sample him [Rothko] for what it means.”

In George's pagework, te reo Māori text is presented as vertical elements that appear weightless, floating before configurations of deep blues that pulse in relation to sunken, mottled blacks. The texts appear almost like stations suspended in space—white flecks announce their presence while classic kowhaiwhai design fix the names Ropoka/Dopkah, Aruhu/Alush top and bottom. The names refer to two of over forty locations that the Nations of Israel travelled through

after exiting Egypt. George says: “In a sense, some of the places don't exist anymore, not by their ancient names, so it is difficult to understand the history of these places. The places remain in the Bible as a way to a destination. In a way they are a metaphor for art making, a metaphor for the Christchurch rebuild.”

Nathan Pohio
Assistant curator

Darryn George *From Ropoka to Aruhu* 2018. Digital image.
Courtesy of PG Gallery 192



THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Photos: Rebecca Galloway

Postcard From...

Rebecca Galloway
Montréal, Canada

Bonjour from Montréal! As I write this, we're sliding into summer like a squirt of Palmolive down a Slip'n'Slide. The sun is blazing down, the vines are snaking around the lacy iron staircases outside, and everyone and their grandma seems to be sitting out on a *terrasse* with a cold beer. It's a relief after almost six months of snow and -20°C temperatures.

Summer also spells festival season: the Montréal Jazz Festival, Festival TransAmérique, Mutek, Montréal Completément Cirque, Just For Laughs. It's a crazy time of year if you work (or just play!) in the arts.

I have my fingers in a few different pies here—I handle the communications for a well-known data visualisation studio and I'm also an arts writer and consultant on the side. Last week I was on a freelance assignment at the École National de Cirque, which is just next door to Cirque du Soleil's world headquarters. I was interviewing a graduating tightwire student from Vermont and asked this kid what was great about training at ÉNC. He replied without skipping a beat: "Being in a city where there's so much going on."

That resonated with me because I feel exactly the same. Montréal is a special place.

Not too many people know this, but Montréal (like New Zealand) is an island. Not figuratively in that *Two-Solititudes* kind of sense, I mean it's literally an island; a pocket-shaped piece of land at the confluence of the St Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. In Kanien'kéha, the Mohawk language, the island is called Tio'tià:ke. This place has layers of immigration and history built up over centuries like paint over embossed wallpaper. The past always shows through in spots.

I guess for this reason, among others, there are few places that can beat Montréal on the cultural front. On top of all the festivals, this city has four universities and

countless galleries and museums. Montréal is also in the vanguard of VR and AI research internationally, and is an official UNESCO City of Design.

On the other hand, it's not all curvaceous architecture and *joie de vivre*. When I moved here almost seven years ago, I didn't speak French, which was pretty isolating. The official language here is resolutely *français*, and there's even an organisation affectionately known as the Language Police that runs around town fining restaurants that use English on their menus and what-have-you. Google "pastagate" and you'll see. Every few years the political/linguistic tension begins to bubble away, and someone in local government invariably suggests Québec cleaves itself off from the rest of Canada.

But right now, at least, things feel calm, *pacifique*. I'm looking forward to a long hot summer.

Rebecca Galloway spends her time writing and thinking about arts, design, technology and culture. She is marketing director of award-winning data visualisation studio FFunction and a freelance writer. She studied art history at Victoria University of Wellington and has worked at a number of arts organisations nationally and internationally.

Exhibition Programme

Opening this Quarter

Juliet Peter: *Where the Line Leads*

1 September 2018 –
20 January 2019
Delightful observations of character and place, from rural Canterbury to bustling 1950s London.

Steve Carr: *Chasing the Light*

September 2018 –
10 February 2019
A spectacular new project by Christchurch-based artist Steve Carr.

Wall to Wall

29 September – 4 November 2018
Pick up a paintbrush and make your mark on the Gallery walls.

Paul Hartigan: *Alphabetic Redux*

5 October – 17 November 2018
A 3D laser light show illuminates the Gallery's NZI Foyer as part of SCAPE 2018.

Trusttum: *Just a Glimpse*

Opens 23 October 2018
Exuberant and boisterous, these large paintings by Philip Trusttum will lift the spirits.

New Dawn Fades

Opens 10 November 2018
A selection of the Gallery's most-treasured historical European artworks.

Gordon Walters: *New Vision*

24 November – 17 March 2019
Modernist abstract painting with a distinctly South Pacific energy.

Closing this Quarter

US V THEM: *Tony de Lautour*

Until 16 September 2018
Welcome to the low-brow, high-art world of Tony de Lautour's paintings, sculptures and ceramics.

Untitled #1050

Until 14 October 2018
Expand your mind with this selection from the collection.

Yellow Moon: *He Marama Kōwhai*

Until 28 October 2018
Yellow is a colour with impact—it's time to encounter its brilliance.

Ongoing

Marie Shannon: Rooms Found Only in the Home

Until 2 December 2018
Marie Shannon's intimate and witty photographic and video works.

Luigi Rossini: Le Antichità Romane

Until 20 January 2019
A young Italian architect and archaeologist is captivated by the Rome of antiquity.

Our Collection: 19th and 20th Century New Zealand Art

Our lively historical collection exhibitions explore Māori architecture, colonial portraiture, early landscape painting and mid-century abstraction.

We Do This

As Aotearoa New Zealand marks 125 years of universal suffrage, we've recharged our contemporary collection spaces with a high-voltage hang featuring several must-see recent acquisitions.

Lonnie Hutchinson: Hoa Kōhine (Girlfriend)

An intricately cut-out billboard celebrating supportive friendships between women.

Martin Creed: Everything is Going to be Alright

A completely unequivocal, but also pretty darn ambiguous, work for Christchurch.

Tony de Lautour: Silent Patterns

An outdoor painting inspired by wartime Dazzle camouflage.

Reuben Paterson: The End

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

Séraphine Pick: Untitled (Bathers)

Pick's lush watercolour offers a utopian vision in the carpark elevator.

Marie Shannon: The Aachen Faxes

Shannon's sound work contemplates love, loss and longing across distance.

Tomorrow Still Comes: Natalia Saegusa

A fragmented, poetic temporary wall painting by Natalia Saegusa.

Coming Soon

Jess Johnson and Simon Ward

A new digital and analogue artists' project from 2018 Walters Prize finalists Johnson and Ward.

Simon Denny: The Founder's Paradox

Simon Denny uses gaming to reflect on competing political visions for New Zealand's future.

Events

Talks

WORD Christchurch Festival 2018

29 August – 2 September / Philip Carter Family Auditorium

WORD Christchurch presents its most adventurous festival yet, with twenty international writers and over 100 New Zealand speakers in nearly 100 events. The spirit of adventure, and of 125 years of women's suffrage, runs through the festival with writers who take risks in their lives as well as their work. Sessions at the Gallery include: British poetry star Hollie McNish with *Emily Writes* on motherhood; body activist and poet Sonya Renee Taylor; science-fiction writer Ted Chiang (whose short story became the film *Arrival*); A.J. Finn on his thriller *The Woman in the Window*; and beloved Scottish crime writer Denise Mina, who leads a delegation of Scottish writers. See the Gallery website for tickets and details.

Curator Ken Hall on Luigi Rossini

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

Join curator Ken Hall for a virtual trip to Rome as he takes you through his new exhibition *Luigi Rossini: Le Antichità Romane*.

Felicity Milburn on Juliet Peter

9 September / 3pm / meet at the front desk / free

Curator Felicity Milburn takes you on a fascinating tour through her new exhibition of Juliet Peter's work and discusses the New Zealand artist, potter and printmaker's life and art.

Friends Speaker of the Month: Julia Holderness

12 September / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium

Friends \$5, non-members \$8, students with ID free

Julia Holderness's installation practice explores domestic ware, applied art, decorative and design histories—categories often overshadowed by the dominance of fine art in New Zealand's art history. As well as her current PhD research, Julia will discuss the theatre workshop at the Bauhaus and her current exhibition at the Ilam Campus Gallery.

Friends Speaker of the Month: Heather Galbraith

3 October / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / Friends

\$5, non-members \$8, students with ID free

Heather Galbraith will give a richly illustrated introduction to *SCAPE Public Art 2018: Our Braided Future*, the six-week season of artworks in public space that opens in Ōtautahi Christchurch on the weekend of 6 and 7 October, including behind-the-scenes insights into how works have evolved, and highlights to look out for.

The Secret Life of Baches

13 October / 3pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Janet Abbott discusses what is often seen as the pinnacle of Kiwi culture—the humble bach. This illustrated talk focuses on the baches of Taylors Mistake (including the Lost Cave Baches and Boulder Bay) and explores 100 years of baching on this coast. Part of Heritage Week.

Trust the Women: Dora Meeson Coates

19 October / 12.30pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free
 Curator Felicity Milburn discusses the extraordinary life of Canterbury College-trained artist Dora Meeson Coates. Meeson not only signed the 1893 suffrage petition in Christchurch, but also actively campaigned for equality in both Australia and Britain, not least through her persuasive and ground-breaking political cartoons. Described as “an ardent feminist, all her life” she later became a noted maritime painter and war artist. Part of Heritage Week.

Artist Talk: Philip Trusttun

28 October / 3pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free
 Artist Philip Trusttun chats with curator Peter Vangioni about his life as a painter and his recent gift of paintings to the Gallery.

Steve Carr and Anthony Byrt

7 November / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free
 Artist Steve Carr, journalist and art critic Anthony Byrt, and senior curator Lara Strongman sit down for a chat about art, life and Steve’s new installation, *Chasing the Light*.

Creating Well-being

14 November / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free
 In need of a mood boost? Join Dr Tamlin Conner (University of Otago, Psychology) as she discusses her research on the science of well-being. Discover the benefits creative acts, nature bathing, and even colouring-in, can have on your everyday mental health.

Friends Speaker of the Month: Zina Swanson

21 November / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium
 Friends \$5, non-members \$8, students with ID free

In Christchurch-based artist Zina Swanson’s work, scientific and natural histories combine to examine our relationship to the natural world. Delicate plants, roots, tendrils and vines meld into or infiltrate human forms in a delicate, meticulously crafted investigation of a vaguely sinister ecology.

Rome Then and Now: Exploring Rossini’s Views of the Eternal City

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

Classical archaeologist Alison Griffith explores Luigi Rossini’s etchings of ancient Roman buildings as an indispensable tool for architectural historians, and as a way of understanding how later Romans simultaneously lived with, and romanticised, their own past.

Special Events

Workshop: Zines and Risograph

9 September / 10am–1pm and 2–5pm / Education Centre
 \$15 per person

Jane Maloney from M/K Press will show us the ins and outs of the Risograph printer—a zine-making staple for years. This workshop will include a brief rundown on how the Risograph works, a little bit about zines, and then a chance to make five copies of your own two-colour A6 folding-zine to share or take home. Suitable for beginners and experts. Kids under 10 must have adult supervision. All materials provided.

The McCulloch Art Collection and Camerata Strings

16 September / 3pm / NZI Foyer / free

Join local author Laurie McCallum as he launches his book *The McCulloch Collection*. This is followed by a concert by Camerata Strings, conducted by Patrick Shepherd. The music will be original compositions by Shepherd and pieces chosen to complement the McCulloch Collection.

The Mix: Suffrage City 125

19 September / 6–9pm / NZI Foyer / free

This year, 19 September 2018 marks the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in New Zealand. Come celebrate in style with us. See the Gallery website for details. #adifferentnightout

Friends Event: Coffee + Art

28 September; 26 October; 30 November / 11.45am

Universo Brasserie & Bar / talk free

Join the Friends for coffee and great conversation in Universo Brasserie & Bar, then enjoy a 30 minute Art Bite talk. See the Gallery website for Art Bite listings.

Special Event: Wall to Wall

20–22 October / 11am–4pm / free

Join us in creating a massive piece of public art. This is your chance to pick up a paintbrush and make your mark on the Gallery walls. This October we want everyone in Ōtautahi Christchurch to help us create a new exhibition—a colossal public paint-out of one of our downstairs galleries. This event is open to all ages—doodlers and dab hands alike.

Workshop: Screen-printing

24 October / 6pm / Education Centre / \$15 per person

Design and print your own t-shirt with Gallery educator and artist Bianca van Leeuwen. Bring a white t-shirt, we'll provide the rest. Ages 16+. Bookings essential. See the Gallery website for details.

Friends Quiz Night

25 October / 6pm / Southside Social, 50 Wordsworth Street

\$20 per person, drinks and food available at the venue.

Join the Friends for a fun night that will test your art knowledge amongst other things. Make up your own table, or come and join others. See the Gallery website for details.

Art Do

27 October / 7pm / NZI Foyer / \$250

This October the Gallery is bringing together leading artists, international chefs, designers and star performers to create New Zealand's biggest art party yet. Do anything to be there. See the Gallery website for tickets and details.

Arts + Climate Innovation Roadshow—Christchurch

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

With expert climate scientists, professors James Renwick and Tim Naish (Victoria University), Track Zero founder Sarah Meads, and local creative practitioners (to be announced). Learn about the very latest climate science and be inspired by examples of projects that connect the creative arts to aspects of sustainability and climate change. Join us for a timely conversation about how the arts can contribute to our attempts to adapt to climate impacts and shape our carbon neutral future in Aotearoa New Zealand. Co-hosted with Track Zero. See the Gallery website for details.

Friends Art In The Capital

2–4 November

A weekend of art with the Friends in Wellington. Take this opportunity to enjoy galleries around the city with a group of other enthusiasts. See the Gallery website for details.

Muka Youth Prints

16–18 November / 10–5pm / Education Centre / free

The annual exhibition of Muka Studio lithographs by international artists especially for kids is back! The idea behind Muka Prints is to make contemporary art accessible by bringing together original lithographs from international artists, covering the artists' names, and letting young people under nineteen connect with works that speak to them.

Unframed works \$75, framed \$155.

Delaney Davidson Presents *Ship of Dreams*

22 November / doors open 7.30pm / NZI Foyer / \$25

Delaney Davidson brings you *Ship of Dreams*, his latest suitcase of collections from deepest Romania, Hamburg and the salt marshes of Maldon. Featuring some of Europe's finest acting talent. Silent film with live music, not to be missed!

Friends Private Viewing of Gordon Walters: *New Vision*

24 November / 8.15am / Universo Brasserie & Bar
\$30 (includes breakfast)

We welcome the Friends of Te Papa with breakfast in Universo followed by a tour of the new Gordon Walters exhibition with a Gallery curator. This is a great opportunity to hear more about the latest exhibition in a private viewing before the Gallery opens to the public. This is a Friends only event. Bookings essential.

Films

German Film Festival

22–23 September / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

This mini-festival, courtesy of the Goethe-Institut, showcases a fine selection of internationally acclaimed films from Germany, Switzerland and Austria in German with English subtitles.

Roman Holiday

26 September / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Be inspired by our new exhibition *Luigi Rossini: Le Antichità Romane*, and set out to explore cinematic Rome with Audrey Hepburn in this classic film. Hepburn is at her transcendent best as a sheltered princess who falls for an American newsman in Rome. Starring Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn and directed by William Wyler, *Roman Holiday* won three Academy Awards including Best Actress. 118mins.

Latin Film Festival 2018

17, 21 and 22 October / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Once again we are lucky to be home to the Latin Film Festival. Join us at 6pm on 17 September for the festival's opening film *Even the Rain* and then join us the following weekend for two jam-packed days of free films! Full schedule on our website.

School Holidays

School Holidays: *Wall to Wall*

29 September – 14 October / 11am–4pm / free

Join us in creating a massive piece of public art. This is your chance to pick up a paintbrush and make your mark on the Gallery walls. This October we want everyone in Ōtautahi Christchurch to help us create a new exhibition—a colossal public paint-out of one of our downstairs galleries. This event is open to all ages—doodlers and dab hands alike.

School Holiday Film: *The Princess Bride*

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

It's not often you find a film the whole family will love, even dad! Join us for a special one-off screening of a beloved film classic. While home sick in bed, a young boy's grandfather reads him an epic story of fantasy, adventure and romance called *The Princess Bride*. 98 mins.



Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation

The Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation is committed to building a collection of opportunities. We have the chance to shape the culture of Christchurch by developing a significant collection which honours the past, reveals the present and helps us imagine the future.

We began the TOGETHER programme in 2014 and are continuing to offer opportunities for business and individuals to help us realise our mission.

Level One TOGETHER Partners

Heather and Neville Brown
Philip Carter Family
Chartwell Trust
Sandra and Grant Close
Ben and Penny Gough, trustees of the Ben Gough Family Foundation
Grumps
Joanna and Kevin Hickman
Gabrielle Tasman
Sheelagh Thompson

Level Two TOGETHER Partners

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Christchurch Art Gallery Staff and Families
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Patsy Dart and Michael Norris
Rosie and Nick Davidson

Louise Edwards
Lisa and Garth Galloway
Gardner Family Trust
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Level Three Partners (100) and Hospitality Partners (5)

Please see christchurchartgallery.org.nz/support/foundation for a full list.

Thank you to the generous partners of our five great works:

Michael Parekōwhai Chapman's Homer

1093 generous donations from Christchurch and beyond, along with proceeds from the first annual gala dinner

Bill Culbert Bebop

Purchased with assistance from Gabrielle Tasman and proceeds from the second annual gala dinner

Martin Creed Work No. 2314 [Everything is going to be alright]

Purchased with the generous support of Grumps, and installed with proceeds from the third annual gala dinner.

Bridget Riley Cosmos

Purchased with the generous help of: Heather Boock; Ros Burdon; Kate Burt; Dame Jenny Gibbs; Ann de Lambert and daughters, Sarah, Elizabeth, Diana, and Rachel; Barbara, Lady Stewart; Gabrielle Tasman; Jenny Todd; Nicky Wagner; Wellington Women's Group (est. 1984); and installed with proceeds from the fourth annual gala dinner.

Ron Mueck

Purchased with the generous help of: Catherine and David Boyer; Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery; Ben Gough Family Foundation; Charlotte and Marcel Gray; Christchurch Art Gallery's London Club; Jenny and Andrew Smith; Gabrielle Tasman and Ken Lawn; proceeds from the fifth annual gala dinner; and 514 big-hearted individuals and companies.

Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū



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