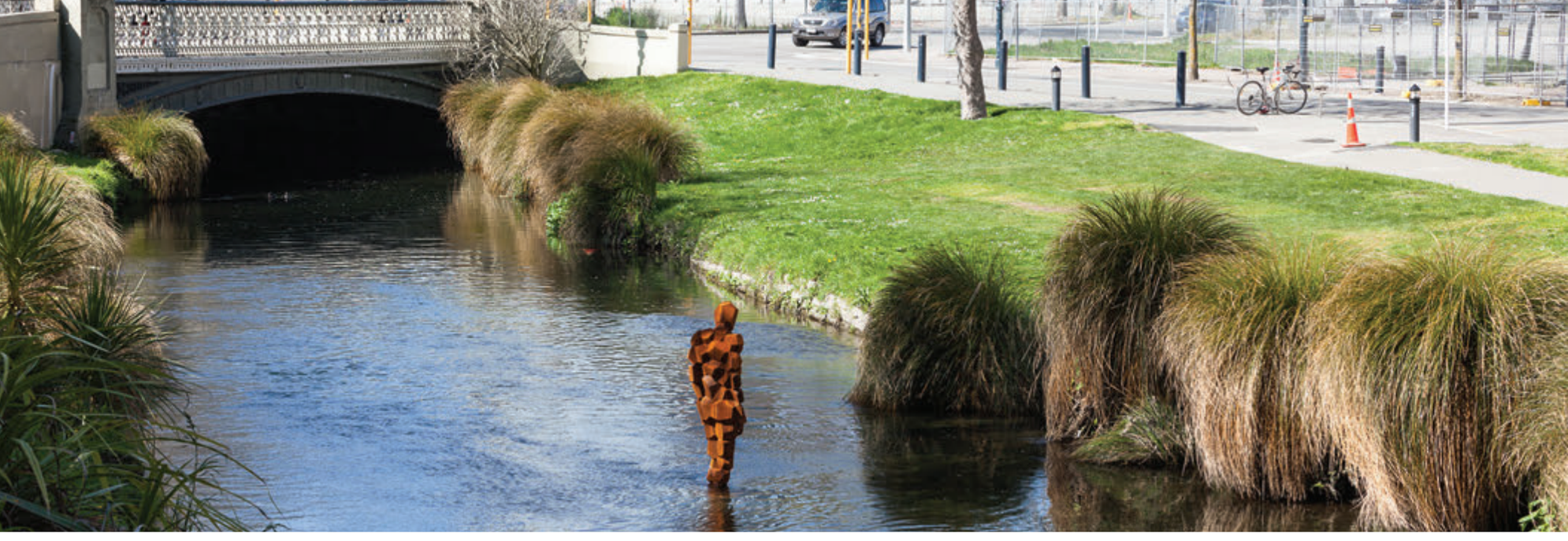
# B.182

**Bulletin**
Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu

Summer
December 2015 —
February 2016


SP45
AEK13N1


Fulton Hogan



# Bringing life back to the central city

**SCAPE8**
**New Intimacies**
Public Art Walkway
3 October – 15 November 2015

**Antony Gormley, STAY, 2015**

One project expressed as two new sculptures for Christchurch.

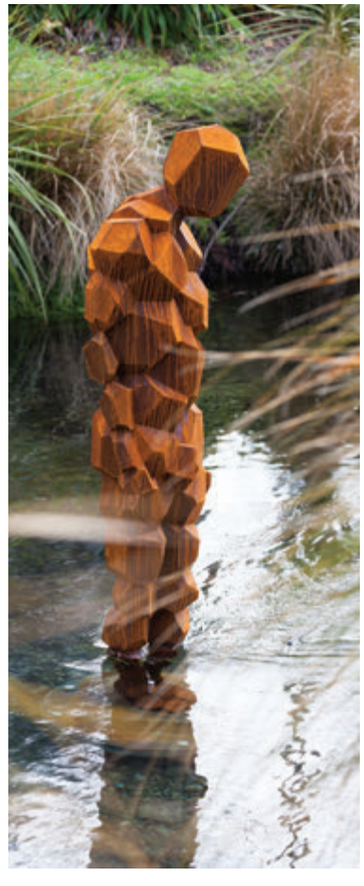
The first figure is installed mid current in Ōtākaro Avon River, which was comparatively unchanged by Christchurch's recent history. The second will be installed in the Arts Centre early 2016 – a site which bears the memory of the effects of the earthquakes.

Fletcher installation of both sculptures is near current work sites.

ABOVE AND RIGHT

**Antony Gormley, STAY, 2015**
One of two sculptures by Antony Gormley commissioned by the Christchurch City Council Public Art Advisory Group for installation on the occasion of SCAPE 8 Public Art Christchurch Biennial, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Courtesy of the artist.
Photos by Bridgit Anderson.



Fletcher Building

WORKING TOGETHER TO REBUILD CANTERBURY

Fletcher Living

Fletcher

Contents

# B.182



Cover: Martin Creed **Work No. 2314** 2015. Neon. Commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation; gift of Neil Graham (Grumps). Photo: John Collie

Inside Cover: Jenny Harper with some of the Fulton Hogan team working to ensure the Gallery is open on 19 December. Left to right, Pete Colombus, Jae Taueki (seated), Jordan Anderson, David Shelley, Richard Newland, Dennis Casey, Amy Stewart, Jenny Harper, Frank Prendergast, Buster Clarkson, Jade Sibley. Photo: John Collie. With thanks to Fulton Hogan


*Please note: The opinions put forward in this magazine are not necessarily those of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. All images reproduced courtesy of the artist or copyright holder unless otherwise stated.*

# Director's foreword

The cover of *Bulletin 181* featured a miscellany of crates in storage, several marked fragile, one weighing 156kg, some with arrows indicating which way up they should be, others instructing the reopener to lay it flat first. Some bear an image of what's inside. Ralph Hotere's *Malady Panels* and Julia Morison's *Tootoo* are there, one with a label, the other with an image of the installed piece. As I write this our collections remain in storage. A few new works and some which have been on loan are awaiting return from storage within other institutions.

A brightly lit public statement on the outside of our Gallery optimistically indicates how much closer we are now to reopening. This edition's cover features Martin's Creed's new neon, *Work No. 2314*, 2015. Commissioned by the Gallery's Foundation, it became a gift to all of us in Christchurch from the remarkable Neil Graham (Grumps to his many friends) who died a few days after it was turned on at our Foundation's gala dinner on 26 September. This new work of art clearly proclaims that 'everything is going to be alright', and to my mind it shall be when Te Puna o Waiwhetu reopens!

Symbolic of this moment, the neon will shine forth for years to come and become a vehicle for all the meanings we bring to it. For, as with all art, our receptivity and the quality of time and energy we give to looking are crucial to our understanding. I hope this work becomes and remains a simple message of reassurance to most of us, most of the time. Grumps was pleased when he heard that at 4.23am, after it was turned on, someone posted on Facebook that they could see the work from their hospital bed and they were thankful for its message.

As our Gallery's reopening approaches, spaces are being painted and cleaned, their climate control tested, so we can populate them with the art which has been in storage for much too long. Before we are flung into the joy of being ourselves once more, this is an appropriate time to reflect on the last five years.

In this edition of *Bulletin* we remember the role our building played in symbolising Christchurch, protecting us and our art collections and—in a sense also—our future. After the 2010–11 earthquakes, any vestiges of misgiving some had about the Gallery's architecture were forgotten. This community was in awe of the engineering triumph the Gallery, glass façade intact, proved to be. We recall the time when our Gallery was taken over as civic and national emergency headquarters. It was commandeered after 4 September 2010 for ten days—it seemed a lifetime at the time—and then, following 22 February 2011, for an extended seven months. Thanks to Lara Strongman for collecting and collating impressions and memories from this time.

Recalling our closure from her curatorial perspective, Felicity Milburn has written an overview of Outer Spaces, our series of exhibitions while the Gallery was closed. We learned a lot—about ourselves and our role as Christchurch's publicly-funded art museum—through exhibiting in largely uncharted waters beyond the Gallery's walls. We engaged in large and smaller exhibitions and publications, inside and out, conventional and less so, some 100 projects altogether.

While we've been closed we tackled many back-of-house tasks, developed new forms and standards and generally gained new skills. Getty thesaurus terms and geographical coordinates showing places related to each piece, were applied to works in the collection. Our curatorial staff and our librarian have provided fortnightly columns on a work from our collection to *The Press,* some better known than others. This well-received initiative reminded local people of both our presence and that of our loved collections. In some cases also, it served as a way of heralding newly acquired works in advance of our reopening.

While it has been an amazing challenge to maintain the Gallery's public profile and keep an admittedly-reduced staff active and engaged, we are grateful for the continuation of city funding during this time. Desperate as we've been to reopen throughout, we have been enabled to continue to show how good art really matters by making a consistent contribution to the raft of transitional activities which has characterised Christchurch during the last four and a half years. Oh, for this time to be over, however!

We've learned over the last few years just how much more complex it is to predict the end-date of a repair project than a new build. Various realities emerged from the woodwork, so to speak, and set us back; and it's frustratingly impossible to make improvements, even sensible and obvious ones, during an insurance-related repair such as this.

But we are hugely pleased that back in 2012, Council agreed to retrofit base isolation. This will be a major help to us as we reassure potential lenders that—despite being located within an earthquake zone, like much of the Pacific Rim—the Gallery is a safe place for loans and touring exhibitions, such as the hugely successful **Ron Mueck** in 2010–11. Although it has taken time, the insertion of base isolation also means that we'll never have to close this key cultural facility for so long again. Interestingly, as things have turned out, this single intervention also became the most cost-effective way of repairing our building. Initially approved as a betterment, it's turned out to be the best single way of bringing the Gallery up to the new building standard.

Looking to the future it's great to announce that two new publications will be available when we reopen, both nurtured into fruition by editor, Sarah Pepperle, and designed by Aaron Beehre. *101 Works of Art* marks our reopening in a special way; and a second book demonstrates the careful thinking behind our collections-based opening installations.

Our Foundation's TOGETHER endowment scheme has brought into our circle a wonderful range of supporters, new and more long-standing. Although we're not yet fully subscribed, progress over the year since it was launched has been marvellous. We're around sixty percent of the way to our goal of an endowment to support the Foundation's key *raison d'être* of working with us to ensure future active collecting. Alongside the committed individual supporters noted in this *Bulletin*, let me also introduce to our readers four great energised firms. We're delighted to welcome Chapman Tripp, EY, Fulton Hogan and NZI as Gallery strategic partners for the next three years. Some are known to us as supporters of past exhibitions, for example EY generously supported Bill Hammond's **Jingle Jangle Morning** in 2007. NZI have chosen to back art and Christchurch Art Gallery as a symbol of regeneration. Fulton Hogan have been on site since August 2014 and we think they're an obvious partner for us (we joke about how we love them, but how much we need them gone!). And Chapman Tripp are returning to the central city and we're delighted to have their support as well. You'll see these companies advertising in the *Bulletin* over the next while—it's part of the deal. For being publicly-funded is not the same as being fully-funded.

We're also pleased to welcome new product partners, Singapore Airlines, the Gallery's exclusive airline supporter, Ryman Healthcare, Samsung and Three Boys Brewery. We'll continue to thank some great individuals and companies for tangible evidence of their commitment to art and culture in our city. Let me also thank all who have commented in this edition of *Bulletin* on the role of arts and culture in the city.

It's been clear during recent commentary about the funding of public art in this city that some (perhaps a vocal few) think art is far from a necessity at this time in our recovery. Unsurprisingly, I disagree. While it will no doubt gnaw away in my mind in the interim, I shall assemble my thoughts into an argument and write on this when life settles a little more. This stage of transition in Christchurch has been immensely draining on all sorts of levels, personal and professional. But while I have no doubt we'll look back and assess things differently with more reflection, few have been as clear and simple as Grumps. In hospital, a week before he died, he stated with conviction: 'The arts and the people who work in them have made a real difference to Christchurch after the quakes; they've helped the psyche of this city while it recovers.'

When you receive this edition, we'll be within weeks of reopening. It's the reopening we've dreamed of but, in many respects, it won't be a dream reopening. It seems likely to be a work in progress, with our return to being fully operational staged following the completion of base isolation on 4 November. This is Christchurch. We are and have to be pragmatic as well as hopeful—

to continuously remind ourselves that everything will be all right.

While our target is to have all the gallery spaces re-hung before Christmas, time is already tight. We'll open on the weekend of 19–20 December 2015 with as much as we can, but with a sequence of other developments still to come: the shop, the café, the car park, the remaking of our workshop (to be suspended under the building) while the final staff and library move back is not likely until February 2016.

Nonetheless, we're positively planning a wonderful summer of art for all ages with a major weekend of celebrations over Waitangi weekend in early February 2016. Please join us! Come often to enjoy what we are able to share; and show how much you appreciate our return!

**Jenny Harper**
*Director*
*December 2015*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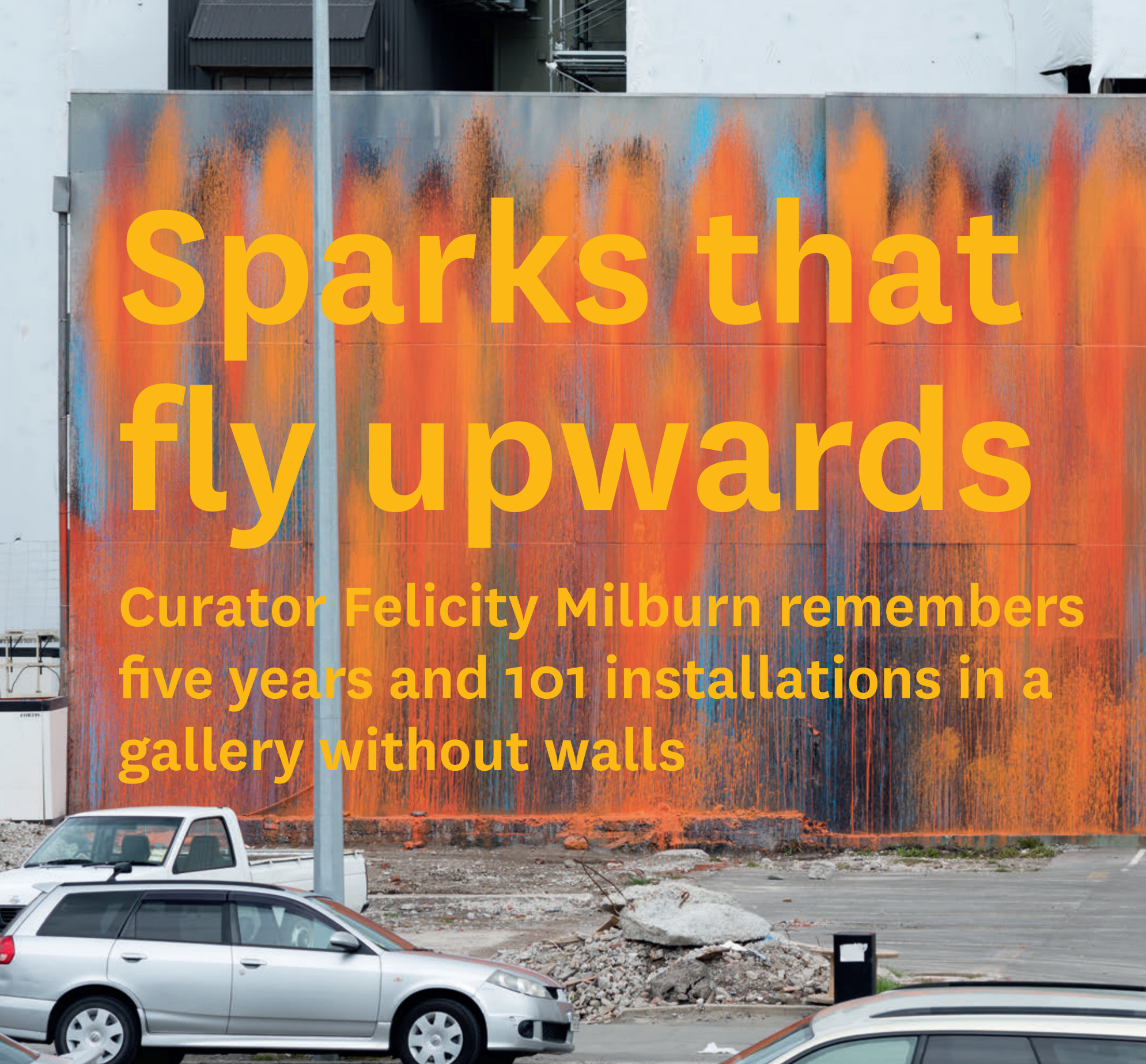


# Sparks that fly upwards

## Curator Felicity Milburn remembers five years and 101 installations in a gallery without walls

Looking back to when Christchurch Art Gallery's Outer Spaces programme was launched in 2008, I'm struck by our easy confidence in the future—which seemed to stretch out ahead with reassuring predictability—and by the excitement we felt at the prospect of expanding art's reach beyond our usual exhibition spaces and out onto the building's external walls, forecourt and other operational areas. It felt adventurous—ambitious even—as Fiona Pardington's ghostly image of a glass *Charlotte Jane* glowed from our giant backlit billboard over Worcester Boulevard and André Hemer deployed molten, oozing colour to reactivate our water feature with *Things to do with paint that won't dry*. By early 2011, the programme was in what felt like full swing, with a regular beat of projects enlivening an increasing number of sites across the Gallery footprint.

That February's earthquake, however, which within a few, frantic hours transformed the building into an operations centre for Civil Defence, forced a rapid and radical adjustment of the Outer Spaces boundaries. With our public locked out, and no known reopening date—or at least, none that stuck—we[1] had to think past our collection and our art-friendly, environmentally-controlled building, shifting our sightlines instead to the violently changed, and still changing, expanses of the central city.

We had our doubts. How would people respond to art touching down in a city still raw from disaster? What kind of impact could we hope to have in the context of such widespread destruction? How, in city streets left unrecognisable as familiar landmarks were relentlessly demolished and trucked away, would audiences find our projects, supposing they even wanted to? And yet, as the weeks wore on, it became increasingly clear that Christchurch's new enemy was not the still-frequent aftershocks, but the insidious, grinding bleakness of the recovery. Stoked in no small part by the enthusiasm of then-senior curator Justin Paton, our confidence grew that art could be part of the solution. Press releases from that time declare our intentions with considerably more assurance than we felt: we'd establish a gallery without walls, we declared, injecting 'moments of surprise, humour, colour and wonder into the post-quake Christchurch streetscape'.

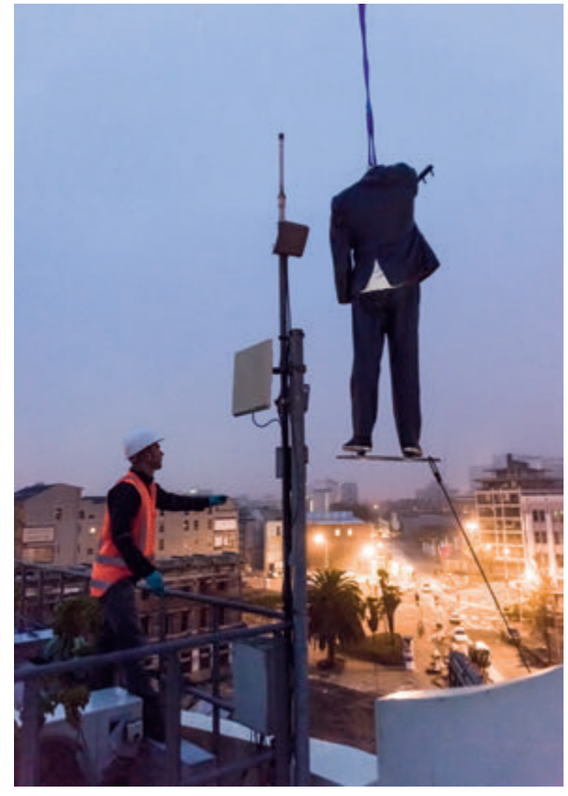
The first two projects unfolded on our own forecourt: Julia Morison's *Aibohphobia* wrapped our unsightly carpark bunker with a dizzying pattern in on-trend hi-vis, and Matt Akehurst's signpost sculpture *You are here* referenced our complicated, long-distance relationship with international culture. Then, in December 2011, the Gallery collaborated with Gap Filler to help Wayne Youle pull off *I seem to have temporarily misplaced my sense of humour*, his super-sized mural in Sydenham. What we didn't know then (and we didn't know a lot) was that the Outer Spaces programme would not only expand geographically, but also accelerate. In the almost-five-years between our closure and (imminent) reopening, the Gallery eventually realised 101 individual projects in and around the central city.

Even now, there's plenty that's shocking and disorienting about central Christchurch, but in those first years it really was like venturing onto a new frontier. Several of the sites we co-opted were at the edge of the emergency cordon, and during installation we'd encounter far more civil defence workers, engineers and army personnel than casual passers-by. There's a great photograph, taken by Gallery photographer John Collie, of Australian artist Ash Keating. He's in the midst of creating his huge, colourful wall painting *Concrete Propositions*, a Gap Filler/Christchurch Art Gallery collaboration that involved Keating firing paint from numerous devices, including the fire extinguishers he's carrying. He's making an artwork, of course, not bringing down a government, and his once-pristine tracksuit was acquired specially for the performance, yet something about his post-apocalyptic attire and sense of grim purpose sums up for me the wild-west/urban-revolution ambience of those times. As envoys from a public institution, we were working well outside our comfort zone, but there was also an intoxicating whiff of freedom in the air, as though the earthquakes

Above: Ash Keating creating **Concrete Propositions** 2012. Acrylic house paint on concrete. Courtesy the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne Australia. Photo: John Collie

Opposite: Installation view of Tony Oursler's video work **Fist,** part of **Bright Burn Want**, 2013. Photo: John Collie

Previous page: Installation view of Ash Keating **Concrete Propositions** 2012. Photo: John Collie



had somehow recalibrated and democratised Christchurch's unwritten rules of access, replacing its customary default resistance to public art with a new (and, we assumed, temporary) tolerance. For a while at least, the challenges we faced when siting works in the cityscape were primarily logistical, rather than political.

Unpredictable, and often excruciatingly inconvenient, weather may not have been scientifically verified as a post-quake phenomenon, but we certainly had our share of it, from the sleet and snow that accompanied the set-up of Sian Torrington's *How you have held things*, an intricate installation constructed from salvaged materials on an empty section in Avonside's Red Zone, to the typhoon-like weather-bomb that dropped in just as Ronnie van Hout's *Comin' Down* went up on the roof garden of the old post office in High Street. The Gallery team meticulously painting Wayne Youle's mural—not only the 95 objects, but each of the more than 10,000 dots—baked in the hot sun for most of the installation period, then found themselves running for cover as rain poured down on the last available day. Just as they were huddling together, working out how to explain to the curator (Justin Paton) that they'd warned him it was a weather-dependent project, the sky cleared. Scrambling, they finished on time, wiping up the by-now dripping paint as they went along.

As time went by, the post-quake art scene grew considerably, with an increasingly diverse range of players, from institutions and collectives to independent artists, ensuring that a wide spectrum of practice emerged throughout the city. Accustomed to the relative hermetic sanctity of our institutional white cube, it required an undeniable adjustment of perspective to see our carefully orchestrated projects bump up against art works (graffiti included) with a completely different aesthetic. There was no telling what our works might end up sitting next to; once up they were released into an evolving context as the city changed around them. Judging by the response of one tagger—who objected to us pasting up a large-scale reproduction of Tony Fomison's *No!* over a pre-existing tag, the sense of frisson was mutual. 'Keep your shit 4 the Gallery,' it hissed. Fair enough, we felt like replying, we would if we could. If it wasn't a new artwork going up around the corner, it was a wall coming down—sometimes one we had pegged for a project:

From left to right:
Gallery team installing Wayne Youle **I seem to have temporarily misplaced my sense of humour** 2011. Acrylic house paint on concrete Photo: John Collie

Installation of Ronnie van Hout's **Comin' Down** 2013. Mixed media. Photo: John Collie

Installation view of Michael Parekowhai's **He Korero Parakau mo Te Awanui o Te Motu: story of a New Zealand river** 2011. Wood, ivory, brass, lacquer, steel, ebony, paua shell, resin, mother of pearl. Collection of Te Papa. Photo: John Collie

the chaotic and rapidly changing nature of the urban environment could not have been further removed from the serene constancy of the Gallery. We honed our flexibility and Zen-like acceptance by the day, but, as usual, the artists we worked with were always far cooler about this sort of thing than we were.

Working from site to site on one-off projects proved as exhausting as it was invigorating, so three temporary spaces gave us a welcome place to hang our hats and—crucially—restore some kind of continuity for our visitors. In 2012, we leased an upstairs room in the NG building at 212 Madras Street, a Victorian warehouse lovingly restored and strengthened by Roland Logan and Sharon Ng. The conversion of this space into a gallery involved not only clearing it of several years' worth of accumulated furniture and other objects, but wire-brushing sections of the ceiling that had been charred from a previous fire, installing lighting tracks and, later, a degree of environmental control. Steel reinforcing beams gave the space an appealingly rugged character and the view out of the end windows, across the most ravaged parts of the city, was jaw-dropping from every angle. It's hard to imagine a better location for our first show there, Julia Morison's *Meet me on the other side*, a tense and disconcerting meditation on the transformation and loss that characterised the earthquakes.

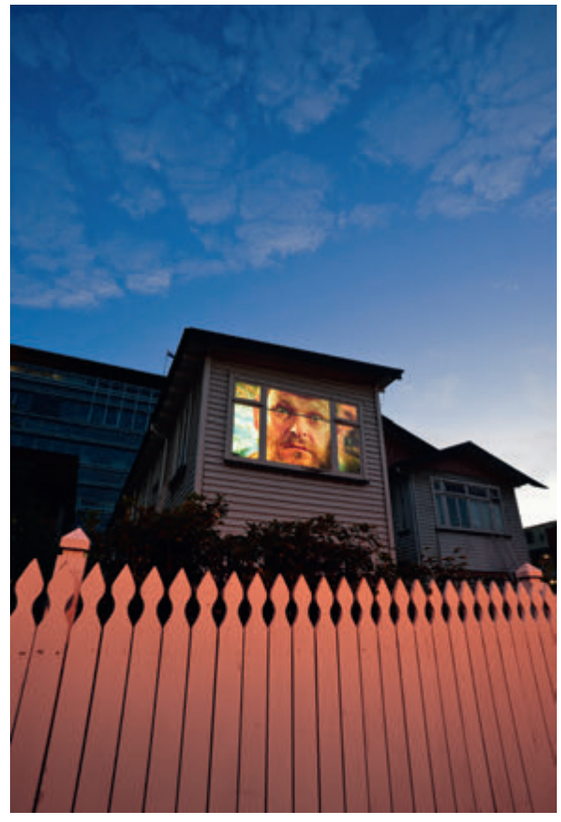
Fulfilling a promise the artist made to the city following the quakes, Michael Parekowhai's Venice Biennale exhibition *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* was reconfigured for the NG space—with the intricately carved red piano, *He Kōrero Pūrākau mo te Awanui o Te Motu: Story of a New Zealand River*, installed upstairs, overlooking two bronze bulls on pianos on the rough ground outside. One of the Gallery's visitor hosts, Michael Purdie, remembers standing at the window, looking out over the devastated cityscape in the winter twilight, while a pianist played 'something quite beautiful, Chopin I think'. Parekowhai's bulls prompted many connections during that exhibition—children swarmed over them, helmeted motorcyclists patted glossy black rumps with grudging admiration, and they caused near-misses as drivers gave them a too-long second glance—but it was the sound of that piano, combined with the end-of-the-world-as-you-knew-it view, that brought several of our visitors to tears.

ArtBox, constructed from a cluster of modular steel

cubes, was set up by CPIT on an empty section in the CBD as part of a short-term creative precinct and we were invited to programme its first year of exhibitions. The compact layout, intersecting views and natural light presented some challenges, but it proved an ideal venue for *Bodytok Quintet*, an interactive video installation by New Zealand sound artist Phil Dadson. After that, it hosted the ebullient **Burster Flipper Wobbler Dripper Spinner Stacker Shaker Maker**, an exhibition of contemporary work by New Zealand and Australian artists that placed the emphasis on the act of making, and was intended to appeal to children and families. A temporary onsite classroom allowed our educators to accommodate regular school groups and holiday classes. When we planned the show, in response to extremely limited opportunities for young art viewers in post-quake Christchurch, we weren't certain that parents would want to bring their children so far into the city, still resounding with the impacts of constant demolition. When we opened with a family fun day, however, around 2,500 people attended, and a steady flow of visitors continued throughout the exhibition's run.

Our third temporary gallery (only recently vacated) was situated above C1 café in the old post office building on the High/Tuam corner and had the most conventional fit-out. First hosting *Huggong*, Seung Yul Oh's enormous, space-hogging balloons, it was later divided into two rooms, which facilitated a range of exhibitions, from a meditative Tai Chi 'time-slice' by Daniel Crooks[2] to the elegant, thoughtful group show **Shifting Lines**.

We continued to refresh our existing sites on the Gallery's exterior and forecourt with new works, and added a few new locations nearby. Tim J. Veling's photograph of a brick wall[3] took up temporary residence across one of our closed-off entrances, and the old villa opposite the Gallery on Worcester Boulevard housed a series of increasingly off-beat projections by the likes of Ronnie van Hout, Justene Williams and Steve Carr.[4] Tjalling de Vries' monumental paste-up of paper sheets on the rear wall of the CoCA



Opposite: Julia Morison's **Meet me on the other side** 2012. Photo: John Collie

Above: Installation view of Ronnie van Hout **The creation of the world** 2011. Digital video. Collection of the artist. Photo: John Collie

building, revealed new layers of imagery as the wind and rain gradually peeled it away.[5] The new Central Library Peterborough provided both the setting for a work by Richard Killeen and also a venue for a series of book-related exhibitions.[6]

Above all else, the post-quake environment fostered adaptation, and many of our projects were realised in ways that we might not have previously considered. They included a poster run featuring Elliot Collins' delicately optimistic word paintings[7] and special artist publications in the form of *Christchurch Hills*, a hand-stitched book of watercolour drawings by Brenda Nightingale and *Unreal Estate*, Tony de Lautour's mordant commentary on the post-quake property market. Realised as a series of printed billboards that stretched down Worcester Boulevard, **Reconstruction: Conversations on a City** traced the history of Christchurch Ōtautahi through its built heritage and the walk-through format proved surprisingly satisfying and rewarding.

The motivation for most of our projects was simple; where we saw an opportunity to make good art happen, we tried to grab it. **Rolling Maul** had an additional purpose, addressing the desperate lack of exhibition venues for local artists. Conceived as a single, multi-artist exhibition to which new works were added each week, it was originally slated for the Gallery's eagerly anticipated reopening in July 2011. When that date was indefinitely deferred, **Rolling Maul** was put on hold until we established our temporary space in the NG building—it eventually ran out as a nine-part exhibition series, featuring solo and small group exhibitions by 18 artists with Christchurch connections.

In all of this activity, a lingering regret remained—the continued absence of the city's collection, locked in secure storage back at the Gallery. In fact, the collection was not static at all; it had to be shifted several times to accommodate repair work within and beyond the building, but although we lent as many works as we could to institutions throughout the country, for insurance reasons, we were largely unable to display collection works elsewhere in Christchurch. To counteract this, we exhibited **Faces from the collection**, a series of reproductions on walls around the city. Not quite the real thing, they nevertheless allowed the public to reengage with the collection and the combination of historical portraits with contemporary urban life provided for intriguing and often rewarding juxtapositions.

These days, as Christchurch Art Gallery's re-opening draws closer with every Fulton Hogan shift, our focus is squarely back on getting it alive and humming with great art. Rediscovering our exhibition spaces, we're imagining them filled again with people, who'll be renewing their connections with our collection, marooned in storage for almost five years. Beyond our newfound (and heart-felt) appreciation for luxuries like a well-stocked tool cupboard, environmental controls and a stable address, it's yet to be seen how the experiences of our earthquake years will affect the way the Gallery operates in the years to come, and how far we'll stretch our programmes beyond the boundaries of our site. Like most institutions, we'd talked often in the past about the power and importance of art, but seeing it in action, during moments when even brief interactions could have a lasting impact, inevitably strengthens our sense of purpose. Outside our walls, projects felt more peripheral than when they took centre stage in the gallery environment, but they were also somehow more alive in the rough and tumble of the 'real' world. It seems to me to be entirely appropriate that the work that signs off our gallery without walls years is Martin Creed's 45 metre technicolour beacon *Work No. 2314*, reading, 'everything is going to be alright'. If the last half-decade is anything to go by, we might best regard it as less of a comforting platitude and more of a call to arms.

Notes

1. The use of 'we' throughout this article reflects the collective effort that the Outer Spaces programme required of all Christchurch Art Gallery staff across every area of operation, from installation and registration to the supervision of the project spaces. Not to mention the customary curatorial willingness to take the credit for the hard work done by everyone else.

2. *Static No. 12 (seek stillness in movement)* a video work created by Daniel Crooks in 2009-10.

3. Bedford Row 2012, from the series *Adaptation* 2011–2012 by Tim J. Veling.

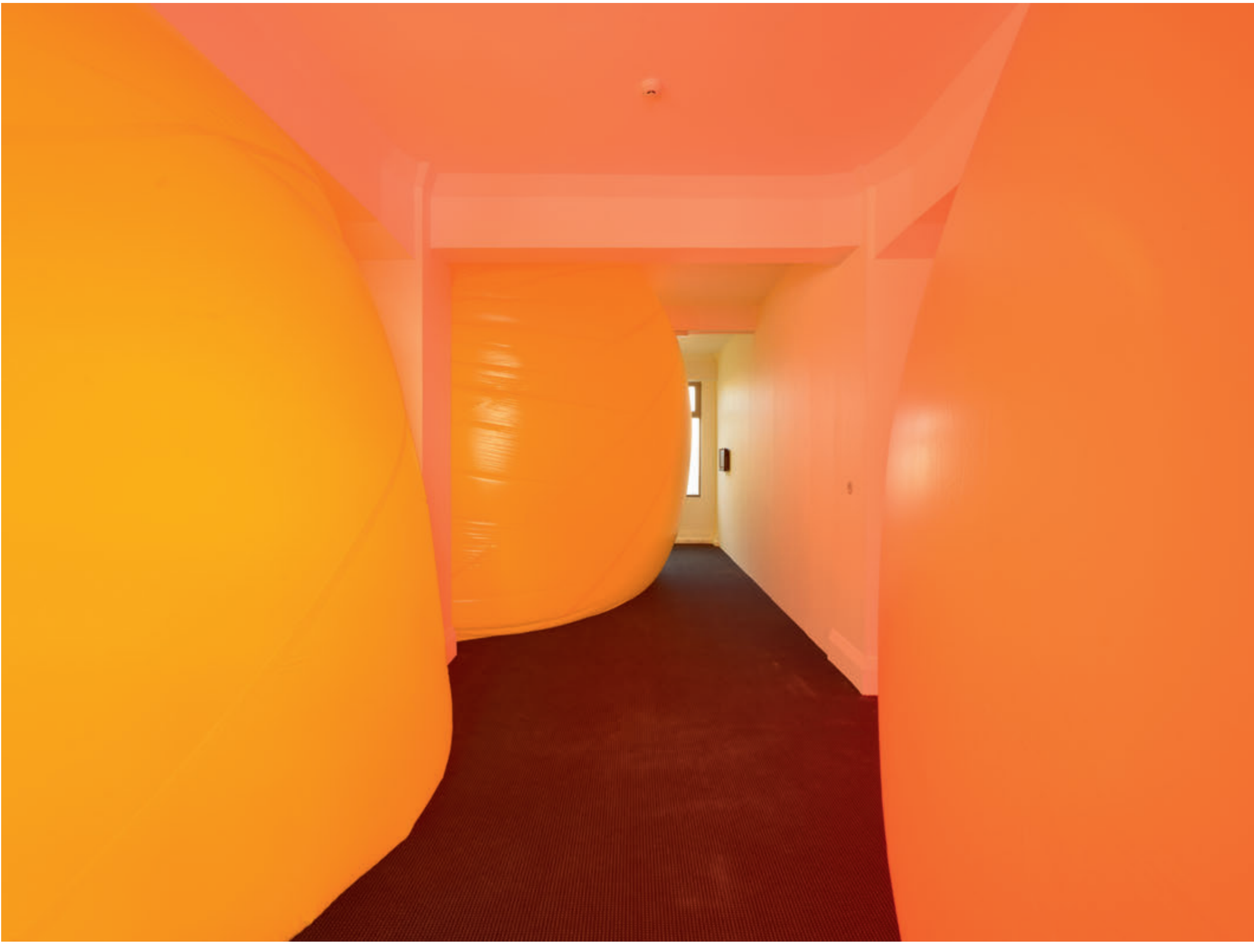
4. 56 Worcester Street projections included *The creation of the world* (2011) by Ronnie van Hout, *She came over singing like a drainpipe shaking spoon infused mixers* (2011) by Justene Williams and *Majo* (2010) by Steve Carr.

5. The paper collage *Tjalling is innocent* (2012) by Tjalling de Vries was a Christchurch Outer Spaces project in association with CoCA.

6. Central Library Peterborough is home to *The Inner Binding* (2012) a 22 metre long work in translucent vinyl by Richard Killeen and has hosted: **A Caxton Miscellany: The Caxton Press 1933-58**, 13 February–17 March 2013; **Face Books**, 10 May–7 June 2013; **Fernbank Studio: away past elsewhere**, 12 August–22 September 2013; **New Zealand Illustrated: Pictorial Books from the Victorian Age**, 29 October–2 December 2013; **The Art of the Dustjacket** 30 May–14 July 2014; **Proceed and Be Bold: The Pear Tree Press**, 25 August–6 October 2014 and **Dark Arts: Twenty Years of the Holloway Press**, 6 October–16 November 2014.

7. **For those who stay behind**, an exhibition of word paintings by Elliot Collins reproduced as posters, included the works: *Everything's Evaporating* (2008), *Sparks that fly upwards* (2008), which has been used as the title for this article and *Walkabout* (2010).

Opposite: Installation view of Seung Yul Oh's **Huggong** 2012. Vinyl/sheet rubber, air. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite. Photo: John Collie




# THE HUNG GAP

We invited artists, academics, city makers, curators, health specialists and gallerists to comment on the challenges and opportunities for the arts in our city and what art can contribute to the future of Christchurch.

# RY

# Philip Aldridge

We are good at catastrophe in the arts. The cataclysm might be a natural disaster, the crash of 1929 or *fin de siècle* decadence. The reaction might be community singing, the age of jazz or an Oscar Wilde. It's simply the human condition. Show us an extreme and there will be an artistic reaction.

So it has been in Christchurch. Catastrophe has become defining for us as a city and created an artistic movement that will continue. Not because of blueprints or grants, although they may help, but because the gauntlet that nature threw down to Cantabrians—and humans' inadequate response—continues to demand an artistic defiance.

The silt that Ma Nature shook off the river bed will take many decades to settle. We know that it will be a long haul to redefine the physical environment and we must brace ourselves that not all the battle scars have been inflicted yet.

So be it. We are changed. And we will change again. We must never settle. It ain't over yet and that fat lady is still far over the horizon. And that's not a bad thing.

*Philip Aldridge is chief executive of The Court Theatre and chairman of BNZ in Canterbury.*

# Audrey Baldwin

The earthquakes stripped many artists and institutions of their familiar surroundings; however, I feel that we have met the challenge and benefited from opportunities unavailable before. We've grown stronger from our tragedy, producing a vibrant arts community that I hope will keep growing and self-seeding.

The arts and the communities involved with them have demonstrated a spine of steel and have encouraged people to remain in Christchurch, to stake a claim and make this city worth staying for. Art has acted as a salve for wearied souls; it has offered a motive to venture out over rubble-strewn sites and crooked footpaths—a reason to navigate ever changing street layouts and tackle road cone rally-tracks to witness and be a part of something transformative.

Christchurch artists have learned to be flexible, innovative and determined in a landscape that often operates outside the bounds of logic. The Social, a collective of Christchurch artists, saw me and many other recent graduates making work in public spaces such as the Re:Start Mall and various vacant lots in the CBD. From Liv Worsnop's transformation of a Manchester Street demolition site into a Zen garden, to Tessa Peach and Heather Hayward holding a soup banquet for over 50 people along the tram tracks in Re:Start; surreal and ambitious projects have energised, inspired and surprised locals and visitors alike.

I see art as a key feature in shaping the future of our city. It's an element necessary to help people through the transitional stage and beyond. The arts are key to creating a thriving, cultured, exciting city that consistently has more to offer.


*Audrey Baldwin is an artist and arts enabler who calls Christchurch home. She curates First Thursdays Christchurch, jointly coordinates The Social with Gaby Montejo and is headmistress of the Christchurch branch of Dr. Sketchy's Anti-Art School, among other adventures.*

# Sally Carlton and Suzanne Vallance

Temporary art projects have brought colour, fun and life to Christchurch's post-earthquake central city, positively impacting those involved as well as passers-by. These projects offer an alternative approach to orthodox rebuilding and renewal processes, challenging us to reflect on the importance of resourceful, experimental and imaginative urban environs.

Especially crucial to urban environments is inclusivity, and art can play a key role in incorporating, showcasing—and ultimately championing—diversity. Consciously attempting to fulfil this role, some temporary use organisations have actively solicited the involvement of those who rarely feature in formal recovery programmes such as marginalised or minority groups, enabling them to participate in project design and creation. Yet temporary use and other public art will only prove truly inclusive once the initiators of these projects themselves hail from non-dominant backgrounds. With its tradition of post-earthquake community action, Christchurch's arts scene will hopefully continue to develop to accurately reflect the city's contemporary identity and rich socio-cultural diversity.

Sally Carlton left and Suzanne Vallance right

*Dr Sally Carlton's research interests include social impacts of, and community responses to, the earthquakes. Having completed post-doctoral studies at Lincoln University, she works for the Human Rights Commission.*

*Dr Suzanne Vallance is a senior lecturer in the Department of Environmental Management at Lincoln University with interests in sustainability and resilience.*

# Lucy D'Aeth

Art is good for health. Making art. Seeing art. Numerous studies support this.[1] As Christchurch regenerates, arts can play a fundamental role in creating an environment which supports all citizens to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Since the earthquakes, art has been a means to expressing grief and finding healing. In a city full of cones and potholes, formal and informal public art has been an unpredicted joy of transitional Christchurch. From a public health perspective, we know that the environment plays a significant role in whether people can lead healthy lives—if our city is safe, clean, accessible and beautiful, the population will be healthier and happier.

The five ways to wellbeing: give, take notice, keep learning, connect and be active,[2] are scientifically proven steps to feeling good and functioning well. Participation in and engagement with art in all its forms enables people to practice these five ways. Prescribing an arts course to treat people suffering anxiety or mild depression can be as effective as prescribing drug treatment.

A city which invests in public art, in participative arts and arts education will see benefits in both population health and financial prosperity. As Christchurch people encounter a vibrant arts scene, as local artists of all kinds are able to thrive, as all Christchurch people feel inspired to explore their own inner artists, the health of the city will be restored.

*Lucy D'Aeth is a public health specialist with the Canterbury District Health Board. Since the earthquakes, much of her work has focused on population wellbeing promotion.*

1. For a good local overview of the evidence see Susan Bidwell's paper 'The arts in health. Evidence from the international literature, March 2014', Pegasus Health.

2. The five ways to wellbeing were developed by NEF (New Economics Foundation) from evidence gathered in the UK government's Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing.

# Jessica Halliday

Since 2011 the arts in Christchurch, and many of those involved in the arts, have proved to be fleet-footed, agile, clever, caring and socially engaged. Our understanding and expectations of both art, and also the city, are broadened and now inform each other more closely.

The role of the arts post-quake demonstrates how important it is for a city to have or involve aesthetic aspects. In fact, the city really is an aesthetic cultural product in the broadest sense: the city affects our senses, our bodies, our minds, our relationships, and emotions. If we continue to see city-making as an art and art as part of city-making, we will grow a city in which simply being here can be more wonderful, rather than being something to endure.

Christchurch isn't just an economic instrument or a complex system that meets purely functional needs. Christchurch should be a place that feeds us aesthetically, intellectually and socially; art is necessary for that.

*Jessica Halliday is co-director of Te Pūtahi – Christchurch centre for architecture and city-making; and of FESTA, the Festival of Transitional Architecture.*

# Aaron Kreisler

Looking at art since the earthquakes, my major concern would be that relying on art to memorialise our recent history isn't enough. We have got to give artists space to do things beyond the feel-good. Art operates by not fitting into the system. You can't zone art into a particular space. Where are the places for artists to make truly exceptional, challenging artworks?

People don't question quality around material goods. But as soon as you apply quality to art you're accused of being a snob. We started the rebuild by discussing quality of design, architecture and urban flow. But now people are saying, no, we just need to get it done, we've got the money now, if we don't use it we'll lose it.

We put money aside for an art project, bureaucracy absorbs most of the funding and then we shoulder tap an artist and say: 'Can you do this?' But we've already set all the terms. The project needs to be culturally aware, historically connected, place conscious... Projects go through so many hands that ideas are over processed. Then we ask an artist: 'Can you put your name on this?'

There has got to be a way to not completely bureaucratise the regeneration of this city. We have to start to bring artists to the table. Artists bring a different set of values which will make more interesting work and change the process itself. We have to be willing to let go of a certain amount of control. And we need to respect that the people doing the work are taking always the greatest risk. The problem is we think that the greatest risk is the money.

*Aaron Kreisler is head of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury and was formerly curator at Dunedin Public Art Gallery.*

You can read an interview with Aaron Kreisler on this topic at http://bit.ly/AaronKreisler

# Kim Morton

Art can open up doors that trauma and grief have firmly closed. The deepest impact is made when we have opportunities to participate in arts—rather than be an audience for others' work—and through this, to connect with others. Artists can feel anxious when they first join shared spaces but once they feel at home they see possibilities—printmaking, sculpture, drawing, painting and much more—a creative spark is ignited. Isolation evaporates, replaced by a sense of belonging to a creative community which is welcoming, inspiring and encouraging.

As the city is rebuilding, creative arts give us a space to rebuild our lives so that we can be active participants in the regenerating city. Using art as a point of connection allows everyone to help shape our new city—including the hidden people who don't leave their houses, and who don't feel they have a voice.

Just as the earthquakes were a catalyst for change, art can also transform our lives. Let's not revert to the way things were before the earthquakes. Let's look beyond the CBD and support the villages that make up Ōtautahi to get creative together. Art represents the human dimension of the city as it is re-made and our city's manifesto should enshrine the vital role of art in the wellbeing of our communities.

*Kim Morton is the leader of Ōtautahi Creative Spaces, an arts and wellbeing initiative, which is based at the Phillipstown Community Hub and is expanding to other sites in Christchurch East.*

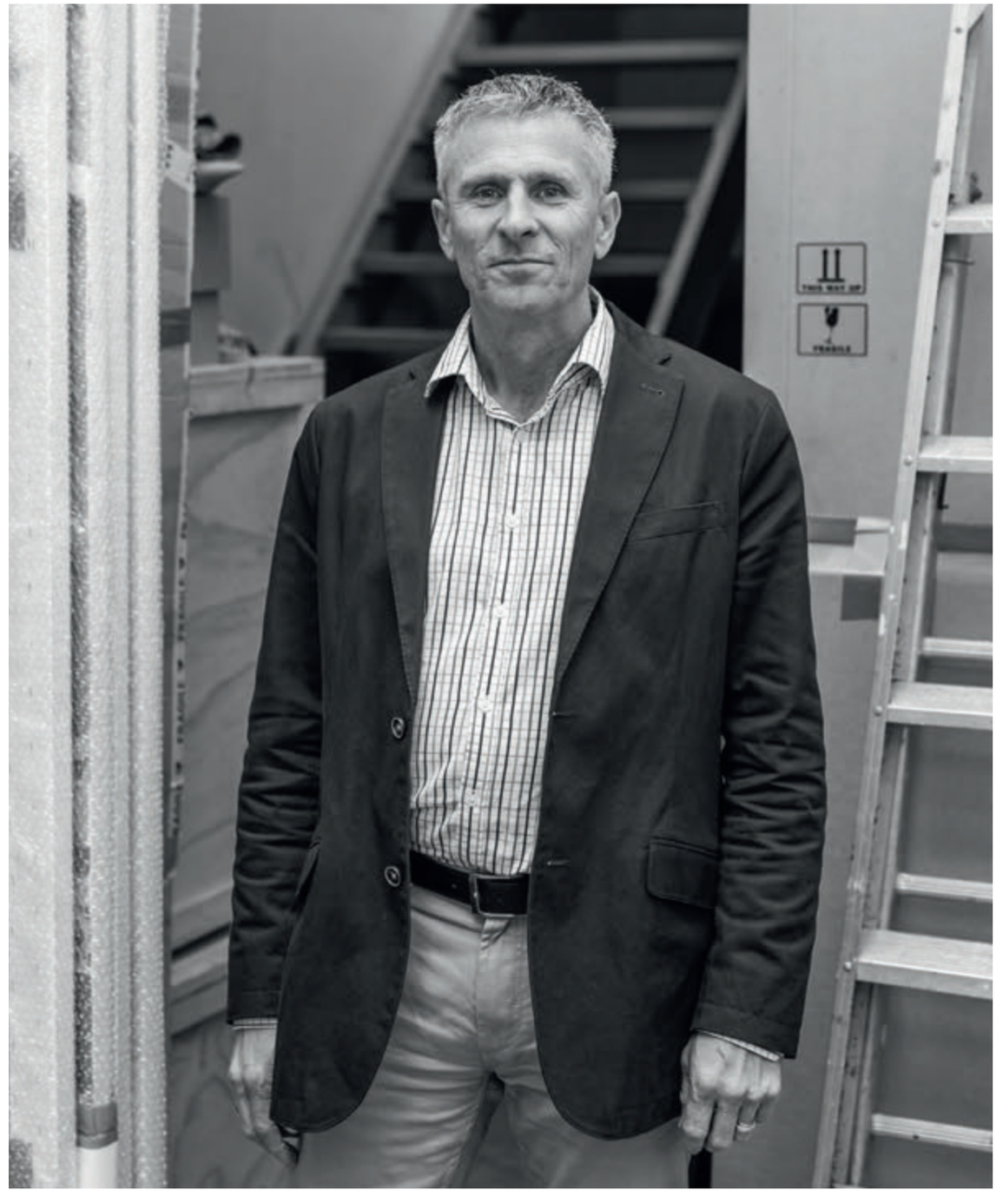
# Jonathan Smart

This might be an odd thing to say post-quake, but it seems to me that the big challenge for art in the city today and of the future is the same as it always has been—how to overcome a lack of opportunity.
We know that good art presents something energizing for people, something that stops us in our tracks and gets us thinking. The new Gormley work *Stay* will do this, I think.

But winning such opportunity is never easy. The All Blacks talk about 'earning the right' (for this and that), but they get to play quite a lot. As a gallerist in Christchurch for 27 years now, I look for opportunities for our best artists every day. And in the public domain, in the foyers, on the walls, or outside the buildings of our future city for example, there is precious little will to allow artists any opportunity to play.

Sadly, I think this is a lack of daring and trust, a crisis of commitment and imagination, as much as it is a challenge to the purse. Still, it is my job to prospect and dream of making the possible happen.

*Jonathan Smart is a gallerist and angler who runs Jonathan Smart Gallery, where for many years he has shown and sold contemporary New Zealand art.*



# Martin Trusttum

There was a groundswell of collective energy following the Canterbury earthquakes; individuals and communities forged alliances, which led to a great deal of productive activity. And the arts were not simply an example of this phenomenon but a catalyst for it. People believed art could make a difference; bringing people together to share, to grieve, and to begin to heal. Consequently, the arts and artists received support from industry and corporates, institutions and organisations on a scale that hadn't been seen before in Christchurch. Art galvanised the people of Christchurch at a time when the only other conversation was loss.

But as time passes and our city slowly regains a more solid form, the once shared collaborative objectives are facing the perils of fatigue, habit and pragmatism. For the local arts community the challenge is to nourish the unique enthusiasm that hatched in 2011 and to keep the local community engaged. The arts might seem less important in a hierarchy of needs than infrastructure, but I don't believe it's a competition. The arts are very rarely at the expense of infrastructure in our modern environment. People need a rich network of associations and links to feel happy and safe—to thrive. We clearly need to meet our physical needs, but as human beings, we have emotional needs too. Art, in the broadest sense, goes a long way towards expressing and satisfying this emotional requirement.

Artists appropriate influences, ideas and concepts from any source that seems relevant and in so doing develop, extend, and reframe conversations over time and distance—conversations that affect all of us and enrich our lives. Putting the arts at the centre of any debate about the city's growth is part of a long-game plan and is the hallmark of a mature culture. We need to be thinking 50 years into the future, 100 years even, and asking ourselves: what sort of city do we want our children's children to live in? If we do this I believe we will come to see that the arts will need a seat at the planners' table.

*Martin Trusttum is a project manager for the arts. Recent roles include managing development and operations of ArtBox, a relocatable gallery space designed and built using a bespoke modular system, and Ōtākaro Art by the River, a public art project as part of Te Papa Ōtākaro/Avon River Precinct.*

You can read an expanded version of this article at http://bit.ly/Trusttum

# Rachael Welfare

After the earthquakes, the loss of public art spaces and galleries was quickly felt in the city; the value of art was recognised more than ever when it was seemingly lost. Whilst Gap Filler and other similar organisations made significant physical contributions to the public art scene, perhaps more importantly they helped to provoke conversations about, or subtle shifts in, what art means.

What we have seen as an organisation is a huge opportunity to try new things, nurture initiatives and create without boundaries. Projects such as the Pallet Pavilion and Dance-O-Mat are perhaps not immediately identified as art; but as creative and emotive outlets that are beautiful as well as provocative, they sure fit our definition!

The huge variety of public art that sprung up after the quakes became a source of colour and hope in a city deprived of both. It created a shared sense of purpose and became a way to reclaim space, show support and give people a voice. The conversations have continued to evolve in recent years; more than hope and healing, art has become a way to voice defiance and frustration. The sense of shared purpose and community remains—and art is created not just by artists but by anyone with something to say.

As a result, the Christchurch public is more open than ever to a broad definition of art, and is appreciative not only of the physical outcomes but also of the purpose, energy and processes behind the acts of creation. These are the legacies of the arts in post-quake Christchurch—and long may they continue.

*Rachael is the operations director of Gap Filler. Gap Filler is a creative urban regeneration initiative that aims to innovate, lead, and nurture people and ideas. Their projects catalyse conversations about city-making and urbanism in the 21st century, whilst being engaging, quirky and fun.*

Gap Filler team clockwise from bottom left: Ryan Reynolds, Rachael Welfare, Bec May, Simon Gurnsey, Anita Parris, Rosaria Ferguson, Sally Airey and Richard Barnacle. Unable to be present were Coralie Winn, Hannah Airey and Trent Hiles

# The last five years

**An oral history of the gallery building, 2010–2015, by Lara Strongman**

**An earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale hit the Canterbury region at 4:35am on Saturday 4 September 2010.**

LYNLEY McDOUGALL: I got to the Gallery about 5:30am. I came to look at the building; I was concerned about the façade because I imagined that some of it could have shattered. But when I checked everything, I saw that the building had held up and been very strong. Everything was secure and only one pane of glass was slightly cracked. Then Michael Aitken arrived, and I asked how we could help. Then the police started arriving, and all the different organisations that support Civil Defence. I had to figure out where we could put everybody.

MICHAEL AITKEN: It was my month on as the city's Civil Defence Controller. I woke up at whatever it was, 4:35am; made sure my family was still alive, threw some clothes on and drove into town. We couldn't get generators going at the council building, and then we went over to the Gallery as our back-up site. The funny thing for me was as we walked around the front there was a cleaner inside just cleaning away as if nothing had happened.

BLAIR JACKSON: Civil Defence came in relatively quickly that day and took over, but most of their occupation was just in the foyer spaces. At the time it seemed like a major occupation.

MICHAEL AITKEN: We had Bob Parker and the other mayors on the phone and they declared a Christchurch emergency. I think initially we made it for 72 hours and then we got it extended as it became quite apparent it was going to take a bit more than 72 hours to get this sorted out. Once you declare an emergency then the controller's powers are massive. You can do amazing things—which of course you very rarely have to call on. Although we didn't know it then, actually September was remarkably well contained. We got it to a manageable state relatively quickly, and once you get it into a manageable state you really don't need the powers of declaration.

NEIL SEMPLE: When I got there the place was full of people doing Civil Defence work. I knew we had a role to play, but I don't think I appreciated exactly what it would mean for the Gallery to be headquarters for Civil Defence in a full scale disaster. There were extraordinary powers in place for people to commandeer our spaces. We had some sensitive needs in regards to the art on the walls, and fortunately people were respectful of that, so we worked with them to enable them to do whatever they needed with our building.

BLAIR JACKSON: I felt a sense of general relief on arriving at the Gallery, and checking the spaces—relief that everyone you knew was fine, and the comfort of knowing that the building was so strong. We felt like we'd dodged a bullet. But there was a concern about what would happen next: the whole Ron Mueck show was about to arrive.

JENNY HARPER: I was staying with some people in Akaroa. It was a pretty rocky ride out there. I drove straight back and was at the Gallery practically all weekend. My main focus for the next ten days was being in touch constantly with lenders to **Ron Mueck**. Keeping that show on the road seemed essential—when I say keeping it on the road, part of it was already on the sea coming to Lyttelton, and I wasn't sure if ships would be able to dock there. But at the same time Christchurch itself wasn't so badly affected, and I can remember saying to colleagues I defy anyone to come from the airport into town and say that anything has happened here.

NEIL SEMPLE: We had colleagues contacting us from international galleries, asking how we were affected and whether or not they should be sending their works and their couriers—you know, they could be sending people into a disaster zone.

BLAIR JACKSON: Jenny did a lot of work to reassure the lenders and organisers of **Ron Mueck** that it was a good idea to bring it here. The disaster was over; we'd been through the worst.

NEIL SEMPLE: We reopened ten days later—and it seemed like a very long


time to have been closed. Ron Mueck and his assistant came out, and we all had a great time installing the show. Christchurch was by that point relatively normal, the bars and restaurants were open again.

**JENNY HARPER:** People were unsettled. There was an air of pensiveness and general concern in the community. I think this added to appreciation of the humanity of Ron Mueck's works—from *Dead Dad* right through to the old woman almost dead at the end of the show, through cycles of birth and strange figures in different situations. There was *Woman in Bed*, from the Queensland Art Gallery's collection, which is modelled on Cas, Ron's wife; and I remember one of our visitors saying 'that felt like me, I felt like her on September 4th'. I think the community was openly receptive to the show in a way they may not have been otherwise; or perhaps the September earthquake changed the way they saw the work.

**MICHAEL AITKEN:** What Mueck does with scale—making you feel big or small—mirrors the incredible powerlessness of being in an earthquake. The next show, **Debuilding**, was also timely, but in a different way. The art gallery, I think, may be prescient; it sees ahead and prepares us for what we don't know is coming up.

**An earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale hit Christchurch at 12:51pm on 22 February 2011. The peak ground acceleration was twice the force of gravity. It devastated the city. 185 people were killed and many thousands were injured. A national state of emergency was declared which lasted until 30 April. Christchurch Art Gallery was again designated as the emergency response centre.**

**BLAIR JACKSON:** In the February earthquake, several of us were in a meeting about the website. We'd started a little late, which is a good thing; if that meeting hadn't run late a lot of us would have been in the city that lunchtime.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** We were looking at our watches quietly lamenting the fact the meeting had gone on twenty minutes too long. And then the earthquake threw people on to the floor of the office. Screaming and swearing. After it had stopped we checked we were all OK, and then people's instincts took over and they did what they most urgently needed to do. For some people it was to find their children or their partners who might have been in town—checking on people who they cared about.

**SEAN DUXFIELD:** I was in the collection handling area. When the earthquake hit I remember standing there and looking at two tables thinking I should probably get under one of those, but I couldn't actually physically move. The lights were swinging and swaying, light bulbs were falling out and big heavy things were sliding backwards and forwards across the floor. I remember when it all stopped putting my hand on my heart, feeling it motoring. I was standing in front of a camera, so this footage has been played in lots of talks. I didn't get a sense at the time that it was as strong or as violent a shake as you see when you watch the footage, because your brain takes a while to process what's going on.

**LYNLEY McDOUGALL:** I was in the loading bay, and a whole lot of huge gas bottles fell over and were rolling around. It was an incredible shake. My first thought was to get out and into front-of-house, so we could get the visitors out. Again, the building was quite safe. We had a couple of ceiling tiles down. The glass doors had shattered and that was very frightening, especially for the school children who were there at the time. We didn't have alarms going off and the plant room had held up well. It was actually surreally quiet afterwards. I mean, it sounds ridiculous, but I was really proud of how the building had stood up.

**BLAIR JACKSON:** I don't think we realised the extent of it in that meeting room. The building masked a lot of the strength of the earthquake. But then when we moved out into the Gallery spaces and heard accounts of the

Left: Mayor Bob Parker in the Gallery foyer. The Gallery became the Christchurch Response Centre for seven months following the February earthquake

Right: Emergency response staff working on the post-earthquake online communications in the Gallery

Provincial Chambers falling, I guess that's when it dawned on me that this was real. Lynley and Neil were both at the Gallery, and when things were under control and the public was evacuated I went into the city to find my kids who were at Unlimited at the time. I was walking against the flow of people, before the police stopped people going in. I found them and made sure they were with friends who took them home. Then I went back to the Gallery, walking past the PWC building in an adrenalin-fuelled state. Civil Defence had started to arrive and were setting up in the foyer.

**MICHAEL AITKEN:** I was in Wellington at an earthquake conference, just about to go and do a panel discussion about how brilliantly we'd managed September. Most of the Civil Defence people were there, as was the Police Commissioner Dave Cliff; and the head of the Fire Service and the head of ECan's Civil Defence and our Civil Defence. It was funny because all these pagers went off simultaneously around the room. The story started unfolding and we had to rapidly get as many of us possible back to Christchurch—which was a struggle. Police and Fire were helicoptered down very quickly. The rest of us ended up on a very small Air Force plane. We got back into Christchurch at about 6:30pm that day, but by then things were well underway at the Gallery.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** The aftershocks kept coming—once people had been evacuated I stood under a kind of lintel by the shop, waiting for the Civil Defence people to arrive. All of our automatic sliding doors had smashed and there were piles of glass that people had to step over to get into the building. The senior managers from Council who were heads of Civil Defence arrived quickly—they just walked over from the Council building. There was little more we could do. We made sure the gallery doors were locked, and Chris Pole and I went through with torches to check the condition of the works. Those things that were not going to get any worse, we left; but if something was at risk of further damage we made it safer.

**JENNY HARPER:** I was at Koh Samui in Thailand, and I heard about it through a text from someone at Te Papa. We watched the television all night and were aghast—but in a funny way I saw more of what had happened than if I'd been there because the power was off in Christchurch. I rang Blair. I can remember the sense of strength I got from him. He said look, there's nothing you can do; the Army is in the building and we've been taken over as a civil emergency. People are sleeping in the corridors.

**BLAIR JACKSON:** I got a call about midnight on the second night from the head of Civil Defence saying they needed more space and that they were organising for the Army to remove the exhibitions. He wanted my permission to tell security to unlock the doors to the exhibition galleries. I wouldn't give it. I rang and organised a group of staff that could be there early in the morning. We went in and took down as much of the van der Velden and Bensemann shows as we could physically manage.

**LYNLEY McDOUGALL:** I've never handled paintings before but I got a crash course in how to do it, with Sean, Neil and Blair. I put some gloves on, and they explained do it like this, never walk backwards, and so on. I felt really pleased I was able to do that and help clear out the gallery spaces so we could hand it over in a managed way.

**JOHN HAMILTON:** I arrived in Christchurch on the evening of Wednesday 23rd. My first port of call was the then Civil Defence group op centre at the School of Engineering out at Ilam. I came into the art gallery the following morning, by which time the Christchurch City Council Civil Defence people had established the base of the ops centre. We referred to it as the Christchurch Response Centre.

There was a huge number of engineers being briefed and prepared to go out and do structural assessments and they were milling in the foyer between the coffee shop and the stairwell and the reception desk. You had to run the gauntlet of the media to get into the building, they were outside. We deliberately excluded them from being in the building because experience shows that once the media start to climb all over the people who

**“The glass façade, and Bob Parker's parka, became symbols of the disaster in the early days. I guess the Gallery building took over from the Cathedral in a visual sense as a symbol of Christchurch for people from elsewhere.”**

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are trying to manage the operation, it gets disruptive. But the error of our ways was that we hadn't provided any facilities for the media lined up outside; they had no shelter. We put up tents on the concrete forecourt, but they still had to do their interviews standing outside.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** The Gallery was used as the backdrop for all the national media about the earthquake. The glass façade became the symbol of Christchurch through the earthquakes. People were amazed that it hadn't broken. The glass façade, and Bob Parker's parka, became symbols of the disaster in the early days. I guess the Gallery building took over from the Cathedral in a visual sense as a symbol of Christchurch for people from elsewhere.

**JOHN HAMILTON:** I was there as the national controller until the 30th April, responsible for coordinating and managing the whole of the national resources that were available for the response. One minister, who shall remain nameless, said gee, you're the most powerful bloke in the country; and I said I don't think so minister; the authorities are all in the legislation. I hasten to add we didn't use nearly as many of the authorities that were available. We didn’t have to, but they include requisitioning buildings, vehicles, that sort of thing. It certainly provided for cordoning off or restricting access to areas. It provided for emergency demolition of dangerous buildings, all that sort of activity which took place.

It was surreal for us to be working in the Gallery—initially with masterpieces still on the walls. There we were worrying about a modern day disaster and in the background was a painting by van der Velden from the 1800s, really dark and stormy and tempestuous, of the Otira Gorge. It was a weird feeling. As the response team got bigger and bigger we expanded further into the galleries and then upstairs, including taking over Jenny Harper's office.

**JENNY HARPER:** At first Gerry Brownlee occupied my office, and then John Hamilton, for quite a long time. He didn't mind me popping in to pick up a book or a file, or dropping some rubbish in his bin on autopilot, and we had some good conversations.

**JOHN HAMILTON:** We were quite worried about an artwork in Jenny Harper's office—she assured me it was really important. We didn't have a clue what it was but that was because we were philistines. We took it off the wall and put it behind the couch to keep it safe so that it wouldn't fall off in the aftershocks. And another story about Jenny's office: one day I remember there was a ginormous aftershock and I dived under the desk with a staff member and did the drop, cover and hold. When the shaking stopped we looked up at the big glass desk and said: actually that may not have been the best idea.

**MICHAEL AITKEN:** I had an office upstairs, but one of the things that really struck me was the large numbers of people constantly in the foyer. The sheer volume of people in that downstairs area was absolutely amazing. It was a bit like one of the openings, you could hardly move for people. The Gallery was perfectly suited to the job because it had all these separate rooms—you could concentrate people in different areas. The building was remarkable in its ability to house something it was clearly not designed for.

**LYNLEY McDOUGALL:** The Civil Defence people were coming to me saying, ‘Where can we go, how can we get power?’ ‘We need more light in this area.’ ‘It's cold in this room.’ Over the months they were there, my building manager Brad and I continued to sort out those housing issues for them. Things went into their natural places; they brought in massive *bain-maries* and the café was used to cater for hundreds of people.

**JOHN HAMILTON:** Coming from a military background I knew the value of this: the endless stream of good coffee and food that came out of the café at the Worcester Street end was a huge morale booster for the people who were working in the Gallery. In fact it became a bit of a hub because we found there were all sorts of officials from various parts of

Christchurch who were making excuses to come into the Gallery ostensibly to meet someone, but so they could have a good cup of coffee and a hot meal.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** It was difficult to get into the Gallery as the red zone cordon had gone up. There was Army on the checkpoints, New Zealand police, Australian police sometimes; and coming from home I had to go through three checkpoints to get to the Gallery. In the early days I found that wearing my fluoro bike jacket made me look like I was some kind of official, and that and my Gallery ID got me through the various zones.

**DONNA ROBERTSON:** You had to have a pass to get through the checkpoints, and they were always moving. I think I borrowed a hi-vis polar fleece off my partner's brother, so I felt totally good—warm and official. I arrived at the Gallery on the Thursday to help with web and social media. There were so many people there—a massive influx of hi-vis. Our job was to put information out there, via the council website and Facebook and Twitter: spreading information and correcting misinformation, especially early on when there were a lot of rumours. We were tracking other media so that we could give the correct info. Actually, it was a great distraction from being maudlin or dwelling on things. You felt that you were useful, even if a lot of the stuff we dealt with was negative. It was satisfying to be able to give people some clarity. Not everyone had power or the internet but they could get information from people around them who did.

There were a lot of aftershocks in that period, and the building would make funny noises like a big ship creaking, like it was OK with what was happening. I found it almost comforting—and it was good to be somewhere I was familiar with, even if in a totally different context. There were people from all over the library seconded to different jobs—we were all a big gang really.

**BLAIR JACKSON:** It was quite comfortable sharing the building. And I was in my own workplace, able to carry on—there was a sense of order and


Emergency response staff recharge in the Gallery foyer. By this point the exhibitions had been dismantled and packed away, but the signage remained

Excavations to enable repairs to the Gallery foundations

continuity there. If the Gallery hadn't been the Civil Defence headquarters, it would have been much more difficult for us to have had access to it. Actually looking back, and it's a really weird thing to say, but I almost enjoyed the experience. I would never want to do it again but it was exciting.

**DONNA ROBERTSON:** One day I was upstairs in a room that had really interesting photos in it, checking the status of a building for an owner. There was an absolute belter of an aftershock and I said to Warwick Isaacs, that'll be a 4.1 because it feels like a 4.2 but I'm always one point out. Afterwards he came and saw me and said I was right. There was a feeling of camaraderie. Of black humour. We were all in it together.

**JENNY HARPER:** We learned—as you do in many crisis situations—that you're not an isolated individual. You are part of a community and your neighbours' problems are your own. When the Gallery Apartments next door needed to be demolished, that became quite a significant thing for us.

**BLAIR JACKSON:** We had to move the collection. Because the crane that was going to take down the apartment block would swing over the collection stores, we thought it best to remove it. And Civil Defence and Council moved out, primarily because they couldn't have their staff there while the building next door was demolished. So this was the end point for their occupation.

**JOHN HAMILTON:** I disappeared back to Wellington. The role of national controller had by that stage been stopped, so all the authorities I had as national controller were relinquished. CERA was set up and Roger Sutton took over.

**GINA IRISH:** The demolition of the Gallery Apartments felt like quite a momentous event for the staff. We all knew the apartments needed to go, they were red-stickered, and their demolition meant that the Gallery was one step closer to being reopened. We cracked into moving the collection quite quickly and it should have felt like a daunting task but I don't remember it being like that. It was a major mission. Collections don't typically move from stores; it's unheard of to move your entire collection unless you are going through refurbishment or redevelopment.

**SEAN DUXFIELD:** I pushed very hard that the collection should stay on site. We didn't have the time or resources to pack it properly or safely, and there wasn't a venue anywhere in the South Island to take it that had temperature and humidity control, 24-hour alarms, security, fire suppression, and all the things we had in place in the building already. We shifted the whole thing in six weeks.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** It was a massive undertaking. Every piece of artwork that we have in the stores was moved down to the touring galleries on the ground floor, because we were able to climate control those areas. The whole collection was shifted piece by piece into the goods lift and across the foyer into those spaces.

**SEAN DUXFIELD:** It was a big game of Tetris really. We mapped it, and just started filling the place, making racks and cobbling together temporary storage systems.

**GINA IRISH:** The designers came up with huge plans for the space. A bit like what they do when they're designing an exhibition, but this was on a grand scale. We had paintings covering the walls in a salon hang so they could be stored safely. Shelves had to be built, shelves from storage had to be decanted, taken downstairs, and objects put back on those shelves. And of course we were still in a very active aftershock sequence so the collection had to be checked regularly; everything had to be strapped down, chocked, or blocked; and hangers had to be seismic-proof.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** The process of repairing the building went through a number of false starts. Initially we thought that once Civil Defence had done their job and left the building, we'd be able to paint the walls and hang the art and throw open the doors again, but it slowly became clear that the building was a little sicker than we'd first thought.

**BLAIR JACKSON:** We never anticipated that the building was actually that damaged. Everyone thought it was amazingly strong, but as time went by and there were geotechnical investigations into the ground underneath, the full extent of the damage became known. There was a sense of safety; the building had gone through regular inspections after every earthquake over a magnitude 5, as engineers were concerned about the space that Civil Defence were in. But as time went by the focus moved to how much damage there was to the building and what it was going to take to repair it.

**MICHAEL AITKEN:** So then we got into a lot of argy-bargy about what to claim for in the insurance—what the insurance will pay for and what the policy really said. There were some wide-ranging discussions but pretty rapidly we got to the fact that we needed to get the Gallery up and running, and it needed to be right. We had a lot of discussion about base isolation. After going through multiple forms of Council discussion that's where we got to in terms of the repair strategy. Let's get it back up and running and let's get it in a better state than it was. The key thing we thought about is the function of the Gallery in the life of the city.

I've heard Jenny's speech about how poorly endowed this gallery is because we didn't start collecting early enough. We live on exchange; we live on borrowing. The **Ron Mueck** exhibition is a great example. You bring in the right exhibition and you change people's lives, you break barriers for people with art. If that isn't what we're in the business of doing I don't know why we're open.

**JENNY HARPER:** I was absolutely clear that if we didn't attend to the building and make it absolutely optimal we would be out of the exhibition circuit. And I suppose having come from Wellington where there were examples of retrofitting of base isolation I knew it was possible, and I did a lot of research into retrofitting of base isolation in international museums. At first it looked as if the base isolation would be enough on its own. It was probably during this


The Gallery Apartments next to the Gallery being demolished


Base isolators stacked in the basement

time that we became more conscious of the fact that the ground was going to need remediating as well as the building. The ground had settled in a different formation.

**NEIL SEMPLE:** The building had settled differentially; from what I recall it's a total of 150mm across the plate. This company Uretek came in with a highly technical kind of ground engineering, and effectively floated up the building to be level again.

**RUSSELL DELLER:** The technology we were bringing to Christchurch was new to this part of the world, though it had been used in Japan. We combined two technologies that had never been used in conjunction before; the jet grout for creating the columns underneath the Gallery and the JOG computer system for re-levelling it. One of the challenges was the high tensile steel rods—ground anchors—that had been put down there during construction to hold the floor slab down so that it didn't float up. Some of them had worked in compression, which means when the building was sinking some of them were actually stopping sections from settling. When we lifted the building we had to release these anchors. We were about a metre and a half below the water table where we were working—effectively we were working underwater.

The jet grout columns have created a soil block which has provided some future proofing, and a strong enough reaction platform to lift the building. We installed robotic stations and monitored the building at over 350 locations so we could see every aspect of the building as we were moving it—and make sure it was floated up gently. When the building started to move—in a controlled way—we could all breathe a sigh of relief; everything we'd designed and engineered and thought about was OK, and the result was outstanding. Then Fulton Hogan separated the above-ground structure from the in-ground foundations. In a future event—due to what we've done to the ground—the ground is more stable, and any energy that's transferred through the building can move independently from the ground. Really, it was a feel-good—being able to save a building that was quite iconic in Christchurch.

**DONAL BUCKLEY:** My first impressions when I came onsite were almost of sadness. When you get into a building of such public significance and see it standing empty with the art held in one room, contained and stacked, it brought home the massive impact that the earthquakes have had on the community as a whole. My immediate reaction was that it's such a shame to see a building of this size sitting there empty. It probably reflects the city centre as a whole—it was empty, and needed to be brought back to life.

I got involved as we were just about to start the design and procurement of the base isolation. It was quite a tough project to get immersed in—the vastness, and the different number of work streams involved in it.

**BEN HARDY:** For its scale, it's a very complex project. Base isolation technology is complex enough when you're starting an new build, but when the building already exists there's lots of hurdles that need to be overcome. We used 140 bearings in the building. While half were used in a routine way, inserted into each of the 70 columns in the basement, the other 70 were all bespoke solutions to individual problems; where there are stairs, for example, or a lift shaft, or the back of the building where there's no basement at all.

From a construction point of view, it's been really hard work for the guys that have been out there. A lot of concrete breaking, and noise, and dust; pretty brutal, really. They've put their heart and soul into doing the work, and everyday those guys on the tools go home, they know they've done a hard day's work—but with that comes a lot of pride.

There was a chap—Juan, who was travelling around the world, working with us for six months—who scabbled images on to the columns in the basement. And it was wonderful how well that was received from outside and latched on to as being of value, as a contribution that was worth recording. I guess it challenged a few people's ideas about where art can come from, and who can be an artist. He started that on one of his smoko breaks, mobile phone in one hand, pen in the other. And it turned everyone on


Left: A lot of the repair work has been hard physical labour for the team involved

Right: Jim Morrison presides over repairs to the basement, scabbled onto the column by Juan Pablo Laplechade


The robotic stations monitoring the movement
of the building during the re-levelling process

**“The end of the project is coming over the horizon very quickly now. It might be a bit surreal when it actually happens.”**

to the fact that this wasn't just a retail building, or an office block. It's more than that.

**DONAL BUCKLEY:** It quickly became apparent that the Gallery team were very protective of their building, and I suppose this was amplified by the fact that the art was still stored onsite. They protected it like it was their children, and that rubs off on the rest of the project team. You feel that you're there to act as part of that protection process. As much as bring the building back to life there's a primary directive to also protect the art.

**SEAN DUXFIELD:** My role was really to be the voice of the collection; to make sure whatever was proposed in terms of the building repair didn’t impact on the collection; or if it did have an impact, that it was minimised. The collection had to stay where it was, and that was completely non-negotiable in terms of the repair. Often it meant physically moving things away from a wall or from below a ceiling, draping or covering things with cardboard or plywood sheets.

**LYNLEY McDOUGALL:** We had a very thorough risk strategy for managing the artworks, the security, and the shell of the building while they were doing this work. A few struggles; but you just have to look forward and keep the communication going. Managing the plant is very complex, and it's vital to keep the environment stable to care for the artworks. The Gallery's like a mini-environment separate to the outside world, a breathing organism.But around it you've got all this massive mechanical and electrical activity going on with the civil engineering. It's something that's been quite unique.

**BEN HARDY:** We've had to take a lot of care in the sequencing of work so that we've always been able to maintain the appropriate services to keep the art in the right environment. I think we can say at this point we've succeeded.

**GINA IRISH:** As registrars you're quite risk averse: that's your job. There's nothing more terrifying than having your collection in a building that's effectively a construction site. I'll sleep easier when we get the keys back and the contractors move out.

**BEN HARDY:** I'll remember the project for the continual rattle of concrete being broken out and scabbled and drilled. The sheer energy of the workforce that's gone in to transforming the building from one type of building to another. And after all that time in the transformation, we'll end with a building that looks the same. It's one of those projects where the ultimate goal is making no apparent change at all: a lot of effort has gone into being as unobtrusive as possible.

**DONAL BUCKLEY:** A challenge has been conveying the level of activity and complexity of the work involved in the project. To anyone walking past on the street you don’t see a huge amount of activity, but at any given time there could be 150 guys in the basement cutting concrete and steel. Managing people's expectations across all of the stakeholders on the project has been a particular challenge. Jenny put out a quote to me last weekend: we love you, but we want you out of our building.

**JENNY HARPER:** I long to see the building open and busy with people. I think the building will be fantastic. I'm sorry we couldn't have done some of the things we'd like to have done while it was closed because there were things we could have changed to everyone's advantage. Unfortunately the time it's taken to sort insurance matters has meant that we really haven't had the option.

**BLAIR JACKSON:** Having had no involvement in the original planning of the building I've often tended to see its weaknesses—the bits that make exhibitions or public access difficult. But all I see now is the strengths of the building and the opportunities of what we could be doing with it.

**SEAN DUXFIELD:** The funny thing is that when we reopen you won't see the enormity of the scale of what's gone on. It will just look like it always did bar a couple of minor cosmetic things. But the fact it's just a better building will be significant enough.

BEN HARDY: The end of the project is coming over the horizon very quickly now. It might be a bit surreal when it actually happens.

MICHAEL AITKEN: When we welcome people back I think it will be a psychological milestone for people. It's the first major reopening of a civic building after the earthquakes. I think this reopening is going to be very important to the city.

DONAL BUCKLEY: We've always found a way to get the best for the project. One case in point is the latest piece of art that we got up on the building, which says 'everything is going to be alright.' It was quite late in the piece, but Jenny came in and just said we want to get this up, can you do it? With a little bit of coaxing from Jenny everyone bought into the whole process and it's amazing, with a little bit of cooperation a huge amount can be achieved. For a three week period all politics that you would usually associate with a contract process were put aside and everybody did what they needed to get this up on the wall. When it was unveiled, it was a very uplifting moment for everyone involved. It sends a message not only to Christchurch but to the project team. We all need to pull together and look at the positives, and when you have that literally written over your head it drives it home.

JENNY HARPER: One of the things I was very pleased about between the September and February earthquakes—as well as **Ron Mueck**—was that we'd started writing a vision. What we actually wrote was a manifesto. But it doesn't talk about a building. It talks about why we're here and what we do and what our relationship with artists is and how we set standards and do great things, and break rules—even our own—and I reckon that has helped us no end over the past five years.

**The people interviewed for this article are:**

**Lynley McDougall**
Christchurch Art Gallery Visitor Services and Facility Manager.

**Michael Aitken**
former Christchurch City Council Community Services General Manager. The Gallery operates as part of the Council's Community Services division, now Customer and Community.

**Blair Jackson**
Christchurch Art Gallery Deputy Director.

**Neil Semple**
Christchurch Art Gallery Projects Manager.

**Jenny Harper**
Christchurch Art Gallery Director.

**Sean Duxfield**
Christchurch Art Gallery Exhibitions and Collections Team Leader.

**John Hamilton**
former Civil Defence National Controller. Civil Defence coordinated the disaster response to the earthquakes, and established the Gallery as Civil Defence headquarters.

**Donna Robertson**
editor of the Christchurch City Libraries' web team. Donna was part of the group that coordinated Christchurch City Council online communications to the public from the Gallery after the earthquakes.

**Gina Irish**
Christchurch Art Gallery Registrar.

**Russell Deller**
Mainmark Ground Engineering General Manager Mainmark (formerly Uretek Ground Engineering) re-levelled the Gallery building.

**Donal Buckley**
Greenstone Group and Greenstone Pace Project Director. Greenstone Pace project managed the re-levelling, base isolation and earthquake repairs throughout the Gallery.

**Ben Hardy**
Fulton Hogan, Civil Operations Manager, Southern Region. Fulton Hogan completed the base isolation retrofit and insurance repairs to the Gallery.

Above Guam

*Twenty days in*

# China & Japan

Louise Bourgeois, **Maman**, Roppongi Hills, Tokyo


Shinjuku, Tokyo

Lee Bul, detail from **Doctor's House**, Echigo-Tsumari Art Field

Rice fields, near Tokamachi City

After ten days in China—where we visited an artist's studio in a half-empty compound of 140 multi-storey buildings, a private museum of antiquities in a sky-scraper and a tiny artist-run space in a hutong (alleyway), and met writers and curators and art dealers and collectors all over Shanghai and Beijing, with a side trip to Nanjing—I wrote an anguished note to myself: how will I write an article about all this that's not just a list?

Two hours after getting off the plane we were in the basement of an apartment block in Shanghai, being shown the treasures of the Propaganda Poster Art Centre by its director, Yang Pei Ming. It's a private museum of the propaganda posters produced by the Chinese state between 1949 and 1979. Mr Yang thinks of them not only as cultural heritage but also as works of art. Once common all over China, many were destroyed at moments of political change, as their distinctive aesthetics were associated with particular regimes. Mr Yang, however, is determined that they should not be forgotten; at a time of rapid change in Chinese society, they provide a tangible link to the recent past.

The problem of how to connect the contemporary to the recent past is something preoccupying many artists and curators we met in China. Much of the new Chinese art of the 1980s and 1990s was bought by offshore collectors and wasn't shown in China. And Chinese art history teaching, we were told, stops in the early 1980s. So there's a historical context for understanding the contemporary which is not immediately available to locals. Organisations like the newly-opened Yuz Museum in Shanghai and the established Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing were founded around private offshore collections of 1980s and 1990s Chinese art; although they commission major contemporary art projects, the collections provide a context for understanding the rapidly moving present.

I realised quickly that my own conception of China was about twenty years out of date. Chinese culture, I saw, was accelerating at lightning speed. On the fast train between Shanghai and Beijing, we passed hundreds of tall apartment blocks in new towns and villages alongside the railway line, variously almost finished or newly finished or half finished. A year ago there would have been nothing but farmland on the same spot. And new highways were signalled by vast disembodied legs of concrete waiting to be articulated by an as-yet-unbuilt elevated road.

The same sense of urgency and drive is present in the Chinese contemporary art scene, where constellations of energy are constantly forming themselves around new locations. 'Things happen here in the blink of an eye,' said Arthur Solway, one of the first western art dealers in Shanghai, who opened the James Cohan Gallery in 2008, 'or they take 5000 years.' Most of the people we spoke to had been in their positions for less than two years; Li Qi told us that Shanghai's Rockbund Art Museum, where he is curator, has a five year history of exhibitions. At Beijing's Institute for Provocation, Peng Zuqiang told us about various initiatives to make a map of contemporary art spaces in the city—an impossible task, as new ventures are opening and closing all the time and directly a guide is printed, it's out of date.

Wang Mai is a Beijing-based artist whose work is concerned with revaluating the recent past. On a studio visit, we saw recent works in mixed media that refer to science fiction and petrochemical companies. He spoke about the difference between the future that was projected in his childhood and the present he inhabits. 'The future,' he said through our translator Sophie McKinnon, 'is not like what was predicted but is a direct result of the forces making those predictions.' He comes from the remote forested Heilonjiang

Li Jinghu, **Waterfall**, Taikang Space, Beijing

San-He Residence, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing

Red Gate Gallery, Beijing

Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing

Nezu Museum, Tokyo

View from Mori Art Museum, Tokyo

Carsten Höller, **Rolling Cylinder**, Echigo-Tsumari Satoyama Museum of Contemporary Art, Kinare

Echigo-Tsumari Art Field

province where the traditional dress is wolf skin in winter, and was one of the generation of Chinese artists who worked in the 798 district of Beijing in the early 2000s, transforming the 1950s East German-built factories into studios. (The district is now filled with high-end dealer galleries—including four simultaneous exhibitions by Ai Weiwei, when we visit.) When Wang Mai talks about his 798 experience, it seems like a lifetime ago. I recognise a character in one of his figurative works, and through our guide, ask him about it. It is indeed Monkey, the character from the baffling late 1970s martial arts serial that screened on New Zealand TV, which is known as *Journey to the West* in China. We stand around in his studio saying 'Aha, Monkey! Arrgh, Pigsy! Hwah hwah!' and burst out laughing.

The time we spent in Japan was considerably quieter. Likewise, though, recent political histories dominated our encounters with contemporary work. In Tokyo at the Mori Art Museum, we saw a major exhibition by Vietnamese-American artist Dinh Q. Lê, curated by Hou Hanru, dealing with issues of personal memory and public trauma forty years after the end of the Vietnam War. We met artist Futoshi Miyagi of the XYZ Collective and discussed his work *American Boyfriend*, an ongoing examination of suppressed histories on Okinawa island where he grew up. And I was moved by video works by Akira Takayama and Meiro Koizumi screening at the private Hermes gallery, dealing with the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster and with problems in articulating past trauma.

From Tokyo we took four separate trains to the Echigo-Tsumari Art Field in the Niigata prefecture. Echigo-Tsumari is a remote mountainous area northwest of Tokyo, where the snow lies in drifts three metres deep in winter, and the houses are built with enormous foundations and external doors opening out from the second storey so that residents can step out into packed snow. Traditionally the home of internal Japanese exiles, it's a hard place to live because of the climate, and has suffered from rapid depopulation in recent decades. Every three years, new temporary and permanent works are added to a collection of public art spread across an area of more than 700 square kilometres. Works pop up in rice paddies, and are installed in abandoned schools and houses. It takes two weeks to see everything; we were there for a few days, and viewed extraordinary works including James Turrell's *House of Light*, Marina Abramović's *Dream House*, and Christian Boltanski's *The Last Class*.

I was interested to think about Echigo-Tsumari Triennale's mission to regenerate the region through art in relation to the post-quake situation in Christchurch. Their problem is lack of people, but the consequent opportunity is surplus buildings. Our problem is lack of buildings, but our opportunity is open space. The clear success of cultural tourism at Echigo-Tsumari—and the Japanese government's major investment in the Triennale—point towards interesting possibilities for Christchurch.

***Lara Strongman*** *is Christchurch Art Gallery's senior curator and travelled to Japan and China in August visiting leading art museums, galleries, and artist spaces to explore future collaborations. She travelled with Emma Ng from Wellington's Enjoy Gallery and Abby Cunnane from St Paul St Gallery in Auckland. The Asia New Zealand Foundation runs the curators' tour in association with Creative New Zealand. Photos: Lara Strongman*

# *Dancing on shifting ground*

Sophie McKinnon explores art, resilience, change and urban regeneration in China.

Previous page: Jin Shan detail of **Self-Doubt 2014**. Plastic. Photo: Sophie McKinnon from a studio visit in Shanghai

Top: Zheng Bo **Garden (Lane 62 Zhaojiabang Road)** 2015. Installation from **Weed Party** at Leo Zu Projects. Photo: Sophie McKinnon

Bottom: Installation view Intelligentsia Space Beijing, with founder and curator Cruz Garcia Frankowski. Photo: Sophie McKinnon

In the winter of 2006 I found myself traipsing around the 798 art district in Beijing, in search of someone to talk to about factories morphing into gallery spaces. I was fascinated by the story of a defunct industrial district turned rapidly expanding contemporary art zone. 798 had been the unofficial site of regeneration for Beijing's art community since 2001. This community had spent over two decades plagued by isolation and displacement but seemed finally to be finding a home.

I distinctly recall sitting in a deserted pizza shop whose paint was fresh and heating broken, listening to an artist describe how challenges and obstacles are the greatest asset to positive change. 'Without limitations, anything is possible,' he said. 'If someone builds a wall, you work harder to find a way over, through, or around it.'

Nearly ten years later, the district has evolved considerably. The twelve or so galleries have multiplied to over 200, and have been joined by design stores, restaurants, photo studios, and even a cafe serving a 'New Zealand style flat white' for a frustratingly artisanal $9. One or two artists' studios still remain, but most have moved on due to rising rent. This is a classic art district paradigm—in with gentrification and out with artists. But the commercialization of the area signaled an even more interesting phase for Beijing's art community, one which is robust, responsive and increasingly varied geographically.

In 2008, while Beijing hosted the Olympic Games and prepared to show the world its glistening new sports stadiums and meticulously engineered blue skies, artists Rania Ho and Wang Wei were adjusting to new opportunities on a smaller scale. The Arrow Factory, a glass door art space occupying 12 square meters on the site of a former vegetable shop in one of Beijing's oldest hutongs (alleyways), was one of the first independently run project spaces outside 798. What began as a conversation among friends about the impenetrability of 798's mass crowds and macro gallery formula has now become a mainstay of a new generation of organic, grassroots art spaces. Exhibitions at Arrow Factory are visible from the street, but ask nothing of the audience. There are no opening hours, no entrance tickets, and there is no doorway in.

In 2014 Cruz Garcia Frankowski founded Intelligentsia Space, also in the hutongs, as a way to serve an artist community chasing opportunity. Frankowski says: 'We don't romanticize our location because we want people to understand that what we are doing is independent of that'. Spaces like this are alternative in the sense that they offer up new approaches to what art spaces can and should be, in a place evolving as fast as it is questioning that evolution.

The contemporary art community in China is associated with resilience amidst social turmoil, political pressure and shifting urban circumstances. Yet adjusting to change is nothing new. This attitude is pervasive throughout Chinese society. Groups of elderly dancers gather in

local parks to exercise to music. It's a community activity, rigorous in its regularity. If the space they use becomes a construction site, they move to a public square, or a street corner. If it becomes a modern mall, they continue at the foot of the mall, reclaiming the space in collaboration with change.

Similarly, the traditional image of the brooding artist in a bare bones loft as a victim of change has given way to one of the artist as savvy entrepreneur, moving fluidly between the studio and the market while continually reinventing. Shanghai-based artists Jin Shan and Maya Kramer relocated by invitation from a studio near downtown, to the outskirts of the city. They tell me: 'It was an opportunity too good to turn down—our landlord loves art. He offered us the space at no cost, in exchange for some pieces for his collection. We leapt at the opportunity'. Such aggressive commercial/residential trade-off for artworks could be construed as crude, but it is all a matter of perception. This pragmatism has come to be one of the defining qualities of artists' response to change in China today. Jin and Kramer are now in a new mixed use complex far from any foot traffic. Yet on the day we visited, Jin was busy receiving a queue of museum and gallery representatives who had travelled to see his work.

Just up the road is Xu Zhen, an artist whose name and brand, Xu Zhen produced by MadeIn Company, are one and the same. MadeIn is a self-described artist organization which operates as, and riffs on, art-world institutional structures—the artist, the gallery, the archive, the fabricator, the agent, and the curator, among others. The name MadeIn refers to the abundance of mass produced items made in China and the psychology of China as the factory of the world. Zhen's installation series *Eternity-Winged Victory of Samothrace, Tianlongshan Grottoes Bodhisattva* (2014) fused classical Greek and Buddhist marble sculptures into hybrid, top-heavy columns. The series is full of irony but speaks of a deeper reality, one which champions infinite combinations of ideas rather than the immovability of institutions.

Zheng Bo's 2015 installation *Weed Party* at Leo Xu Projects in Shanghai painstakingly re-created a derelict industrial façade in the gallery—from greasy tiles, graffiti, and litter—including local weeds at the base, climbing to a grass arboretum on the top floor. Xu explains that these grasses were introduced, largely from Europe and North America, and survive extremity while continuing to flourish. They aren't pests—they are a socio-political metaphor for adaptation and resilience.

It's tempting to think of regeneration as a process of complete transformation or the old adage of the phoenix rising new from the ashes. In China it is rather a matter of persistence. Ai Weiwei placed fresh flowers in the basket of his bicycle every day until he received his passport back. Now enshrined in porcelain, the flowers continue to say, 'I'm still here'.

Installation view of Ai Weiwei **Bicycle basket with flowers** 2014. Porcelain. Chambers Fine Art, Beijing. Photo: Sophie McKinnon

***Sophie McKinnon*** *has worked with the Red Gate Gallery, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, and as a programme developer for Arts Can Do, an art based education project for disadvantaged children in urban and rural China. She coordinated the 2014 China-based Festival of New Zealand Filmmaking and runs China Contemporary Art & Architecture Tours with co-founder John O'Loghlen.*

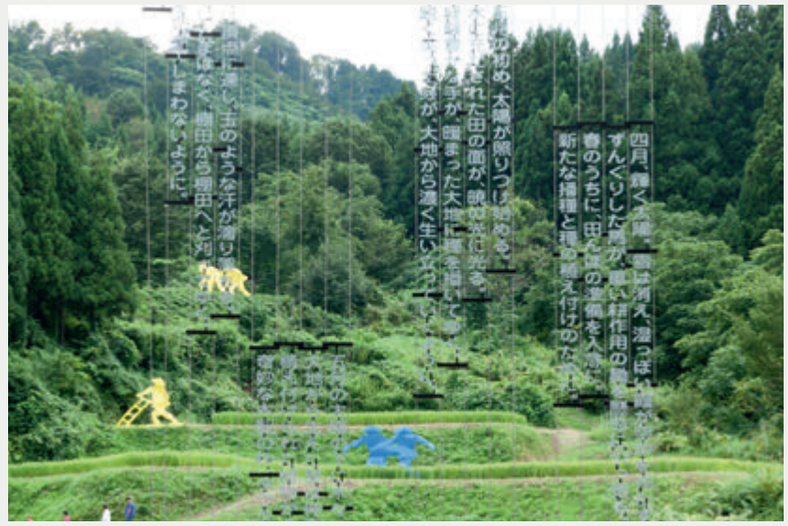
# Regional revitalisation with art

## Rei Maeda, coordinator of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, writes on art's contribution to the regeneration of a remote rural area of Japan.

On 12 March 2011, the day after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, a great earthquake struck the region where the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale is held. The devastating effects of the earthquake threatened the fifth Triennale planned for the following year, but the local residents were not discouraged and committed to the work needed to rebuild in time for the festival. The Triennale team were initially puzzled by their response, recalling that the locals had been skeptical or even opposed toward the event at first. Then we realized that they had changed over the years and had come to take great pride in the art festival and feel a sense of ownership towards it.

The Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale was launched in 2000 with the aim of revitalizing the Echigo-Tsumari region (comprising Tokamachi City and Tsunan Town, Niigata Prefecture), which suffered from depopulation and an aging population. The government's post-war policies of prioritizing the urban over the rural and reducing agricultural production, not only fatally weakened the country, but also robbed elderly farmers of their dignity and purpose in life. The Triennale was conceived to bring pride back to local people and build a base for regional regeneration.

The region still retains a cultural landscape called *satoyama*, Japanese traditional landscape shaped by 1,500 years of farming by a population closely connected to the earth. The people of the region have coped with repeated, harsh natural disasters such as heavy snowfalls, earthquakes and floods. That humans are part of nature is clear in Echigo-Tsumari and this concept has been the guiding inspiration of the Triennale's activities and artworks. Over the course of six Triennales, more than seven hundred artists from around the world have created works in rice fields, abandoned houses and closed schoolhouses in the *satoyama* landscape. They have questioned what art can do in a place so severely affected by modernization and globalization. Learning from



Opposite: Yukihisa Isobe **A Monument of Mudslide** 2015. Photo Gentaro Ishizuka

Top: Ilya and Emilia Kabakov **The Rice Field** 2000–ongoing. Photo Osamu Nakmura

Bottom: Seizo Tashima **Hachi and Seizo Tashima Museum of Picture Book Art** 2009–ongoing. Photo: Gentaro Ishizuka

Akiko Utsumi **For Lots of Lost Windows** 2006–ongoing. Photo: H. Kuratani

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov **The Arch of Life** 2015–ongoing. Photo: Osamu Nakmura

the local communities' survival in a difficult climate and a challenging landscape, they have sought the vast potential of art. The artworks function as devices to expose and highlight the power of the sites and rediscover relationships among nature, art, and humanity. The empty houses and school buildings once regarded as useless relics have become outstanding resources for artists, architects and other experts.

For the sixth Triennale this summer, 380 works were installed, including over 200 permanent works. The artworks are dispersed across a 760 square kilometer area, with fewer than 70,000 permanent inhabitants. Over half a million people visited the area during the 50 day festival. Traveling from one work to the next, visitors interact with the artworks and the local communities, experience the full historicity and cultural context of the area and open their senses.

There are no conventional gallery spaces or art museums in Echigo-Tsumari. When an artist takes on a project, permission to carry it out must be obtained from the landowner. Realizing their ideas on someone else's land requires the artists to deeply consider the site, establish positive relationships with the local residents and the community, which leads to a mutual willingness to see beyond the private and individual.

The typical and symbolic work is Ilya and Emilia Kabakov's *Rice Field*. It was created in a terrace rice field for the first Triennale. Initially the landowner rejected the artist's offer, as he had suffered a broken femur, had no successor and had resolved to retire. But Kabakov never gave up. He studied Japanese agriculture and rice production, and finally his enthusiasm and respect for the overwhelming labour of the farmer won over. When the Triennale was opened, numerous visitors applauded not only Kabakov's work but also the owner's rice terraces. He regained his pride and, despite his physical decline, he continued farming the field until the third Triennale.

Art is not useful and has no direct influence. Art is like a baby. It can be cumbersome and burdensome and will perish if left alone. It requires the support of those around to help nourish it. Over the 15 years of the Triennale, many people have been involved in producing and maintaining artworks, which belong not only to the artists but also the locals and to all involved in the projects. Art connects people with different backgrounds and ideas, and brings about collaborations that transcend origin, generation and profession. The meetings of different people, including elderly local farmers, urban youth, artists and foreigners have sparked chemical reactions.

Driven by the unification of financial markets and communication systems, globalization and homogenization have begun destroying the conditions humanity requires to exist. We are facing the age of the global environment and we need to shift the way we think and live. We hope the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale can offer an example of reconnecting people to nature and indicate some hope for our survival.

***Rei Maeda*** *has worked as coordinator for the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale since its beginning and was involved in the international programs of Setouchi Triennale in 2010 and 2013, as well as working as an editor. If you would like to read more about Echigo-Tsumari, Fram Kitagawa's book 'Art Place Japan Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale and the Vision to Reconnect Art and Nature' is published by Princeton Architectural Press.*
*www.echigo-tsumari.jp*

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# PAGEWORK no. 28

*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.*

He weaves across the city map on foot and then encircles, casting his silver thread. You are the next exquisite moth caught in his flexing, expanding web. You haven't given this moment a further thought, yet can remember it: a minor irritation, an oddity that you immediately brushed aside. Diversions, appointments, other thoughts crowding. You didn't (and perhaps yet don't) appreciate how you had been apprehended, captured in time, stripes obscuring a shadowy celebration. Ballantynes department store's one hundred and sixty years means a lot of shopping. 1855, when it started, is too far back to comprehend, but try going forward instead to 2175 and you'll get something much stranger. It doesn't even look like a proper year.

Doc Ross describes his daily photographic pursuit as 'a snapshot of the psychology-people-city at this point in time' as well as 'a bit of a beast… I now find myself unable to stop as the longer I go on with it, the more complete, yet incomplete, the story becomes'.

***Ken Hall***
*Curator*

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

Doc Ross **Untitled** (detail) 2015. Black and white photograph. Courtesy of the artist


celebrating
1851
160
2011
years

Reproduction of Peter Stichbury
*NDE* 2013. Acrylic on Linen.
Photo: John Collie

# MY FAVOURITE

It's difficult to choose a favourite thing, no matter what it is. A favourite artwork for me can depend on my mood, the weather, or how hungry I am. I imagine it's like a parent being asked to pick their favourite child. So, I'm going to change the assignment slightly and tell you what artwork comes to mind when I think of art and Christchurch.

I grew up in Christchurch, but it wasn't until returning to this city in 2012, post Auckland university degree and post-quake that it finally began to feel like home. During my four years at Elam, I became much better acquainted with the Auckland art galleries than the ones back home. I recall spending mid-semester holidays in Christchurch a little bored. I didn't give the city much of a chance, and was quick to label it conservative, adamant that all the exciting stuff was happening in the North Island.

One place that provided some comfort and excitement for me was Christchurch Art Gallery. I would walk down Riccarton Road from my parents' house in Ilam, through the park, and spend the afternoon wandering around the exhibitions, recognizing artists that had been discussed in tutorials. Spirits would lift and I would leave feeling great about life. On the walk home the heavens would usually open and I would arrive home drenched, grumpy, and moaning about Christchurch weather.

Fast forward to 2015 and Christchurch has become my precious home. I think its chaotic and unpredictable nature has lured me in. The city has come alive and is a living gallery space. We no longer have to venture inside a gallery to view art. Passengers on a bus can be treated to public art on their way to work. Other cities may boast an abundance of white-walled galleries, but Christchurch has something more exciting for its people and visitors to the city. I love turning corners and discovering art in unlikely places.

Stichbury's *NDE* on Worcester Boulevard has become a familiar face during my walks through town. She's almost become the guardian of the city centre, her watchful eyes have looked over us as we have continued with our day-to-day lives amongst the rebuild. This is one of my favourite artworks in the collection because it has been with me almost every day during the past few years and I imagine those wide eyes will continue to pleasantly haunt me for years to come.

Cesar A. Cruz said: 'Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable'. Thank you Christchurch Art Gallery and Stichbury for providing some comfort to a tired baker on her walks through the city. I look forward to seeing what is waiting for us around the next corner.

***Anna Worthington** is the creator, baker, and maker of Cakes By Anna. After completing her BFA at Elam School of Fine Arts and spending time abroad, she returned to Christchurch and fell into the wonderful world of cake. Outside the kitchen, Anna enjoys gardening, drawing and eating.*

Since Anna wrote this piece *NDE*'s time as guardian of Worcester Boulevard has come to a close. The south facing wall of the Gallery is now home to Martin Creed's *Work No. 2314*. The original painting by Peter Stichbury is in the Gallery's collection and will be in the re-opening exhibition **Unseen**.

# Remembering Grumps

His name was Neil Graham, but he preferred Grumps—so that's what we called him. He would tell you he was a truckie when you met him, but he didn't do that for long. He co-founded Mainfreight and made some money. And he became one of the most quietly beneficent people I knew, not only in terms of money, but with his time. He visited prisons and talked with felons and murderers, so he loved the irony when we sat him next to some judges at our 2014 fundraising dinner. He visited the old and the dying in rest homes with his Scottish terrier, Dougal. He supported a whole classroom of children through their schooling in Rwanda and he wanted to see them get through university. There's an elephant in the San Diego Zoo which owes its life to Grumps, and recently he imported the gorillas for the local Orana Park. He got many calls for help and suggestions for causes to become involved with. He was one of a small number of Christchurch benefactors with specific interests.

Jo Blair from Brown Bread and I met with him several times over the last couple of years to discuss potential support for the Gallery. We became friends. Earlier this year we took him some mushroom soup for lunch and showed him a mock-up of the third key work which our Gallery Foundation is supporting to mark this time of extended closure. It's by the renowned British artist Martin Creed and Grumps's response was immediate and positive. He agreed to buy the work for Christchurch. Between Grumps and Martin Creed we have been given reassurance and hope—and hope is what all of us who have stayed in Christchurch have needed and clung to most. Grumps had not been well for some time but, although he was in hospital the week before, he seemed determined to be at the 2015 Foundation dinner this year. All of us were able to thank him and he was given a standing ovation as the neon work was turned on for the first time. Grumps died a few days later on 30 September 2015. What a wonderful and witty message he has left us with—simple, but with so much meaning.

***Jenny Harper***
*Director*

*Grumps at the Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation dinner on 26 September 2015, when the Martin Creed work was turned on for the first time*

# Summer of Art

## We're celebrating our reopening with a summer full of art events

## Talks

### An Astonishing Variety of Effects

31 January / 3pm

Experience the dazzling watercolours of Margaret Stoddart as art historian Julie King presents a fascinating talk on the art and life of one of New Zealand's first professional female artists in front of Stoddart's own works. Presented by Chapman Tripp.

### Art Bite

Every Friday from 1 March / 12:30pm

Presented by our volunteer guides, these thirty-minute lunch time presentations are a wonderful way to discover new and old favourites in the Gallery's collection, learn more about the artworks and the artists.

## Tours

### Free Guided Gallery Tours

Daily / 11am and 2pm

Tour collection highlights with our friendly and knowledgeable volunteer guides.

## Special Events

### Reopening Weekend

19 December / 10am - 10pm
20 December / 10am - 7pm

The Gallery will be open for the first time in five years! There will be tours, talks, films, music and fun children's activities to celebrate.

### World Buskers Festival

14 - 24 January
See World Buskers Festival Programme for details

The World Buskers Festival will take over the Gallery in January with performances and music ranging from the delightfully quirky to the pleasantly unusual. There will be daily music out on the Gallery forecourt between 11am and 4pm and evening performances in the auditorium.

### License to Chill

Every Sunday from 31 January from 11am

Chill out, unwind and get inspired for the week ahead by joining us on summer Sundays for a relaxing cultural experience with music, talks, films and activities for adults and children.

### The Mix

Six events beginning 10 February / 6:30pm / More dates to be announced February – April

Rediscover the Gallery after dark as it comes alive with a vibrant calendar of special events combining art with live music, great food and wine, pop-up talks, demonstrations, debates, films and live performances. There will be six summer editions of The Mix, see our website for more dates.

Yana Alana will be performing in the 2016 World Buskers Festival.
Photo: Peter Leslie

# Families

## Imagination Playground

All January / Ages 2+

An incredible play system made up of giant blue blocks. Designed by New York architect David Rockwell, it offers endless creative potential for children to play, build, dream and explore.

## Universe in a Jar

6 January / 11am / Ages 4+

Did you know that using simply the magic of glitter and glue you can create a glowing universe you can hold in your hand? Join us for an out-of-this-world take home activity.

## Curious and Curiouser

10 January / 11am / Ages 4+

We'll be heading down the rabbit hole to a wonderland of crazy collage using Victorian images inspired by Alice in Wonderland and the Golden Age exhibition. Get cutting and pasting and create something impossible.

## Design-a-Dragon

16 January / 11am / Ages 4+

Celebrate Appreciate a Dragon Day by making your own fire breathing friend (or foe) and learning about the origins and legends of these fantastical creatures.

## Bubble Wrap Beasties

24 January / 11am / Ages 2+

Come and find the wild things at Christchurch Art Gallery. Combining the magic of bubble wrap with the spectacular animals in our Beasts exhibition, Bubble Wrap Beasties will be a world of fun. We'll be making all sorts of crazy critters using bubble wrap and paint.

# Film

## Through a Different Lens / Film Work by Joanna Margaret Paul

Every Saturday and Sunday from 10 January / 2pm

Film-maker, poet, artist and photographer Joanna Margaret Paul (1955-2003) made quietly observational yet radical work reflecting on motherhood, domestic life, and the dichotomy between urban spaces and the natural world. Commissioned by CIRCUIT Artist Film and Video Aotearoa New Zealand and curated by Peter Todd with the support of Creative New Zealand, Through a Different Lens/Film Work by Joanna Margaret Paul is a programme of recent digital restorations of films shot in the 1970s and early 1980s. Several of the films in this programme were recently premiered by CIRCUIT at the 2015 London Film Festival. Presented by Chapman Tripp.

Visit **christchurchartgallery.org.nz** or sign up for Gallery email updates for more upcoming events.

A still from *Through a Different Lens / Film Work* by Joanna Margaret Paul

**Tangle by Polyglot Theatre**
5-8 February / Two sessions daily 10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm. Free. Bookings highly recommended.

*Tangle* is an enormous, weaving play space event, using coloured elastic to create a vibrant, live, interactive artwork onsite by children and their families.
A giant elastic ball is given to each participant to weave around golden poles. Before long the children create a dense, multi-coloured landscape to play, explore and bounce in. Featuring live music, Tangle is an event where children take the lead, building and contributing to an enchanting public artwork, which adults can also enjoy. In Tangle, the single path of each child becomes the interconnected story of all the participants. It's part visual art installation, part performance, part playground and all chaos! Take part in this unforgettable New Zealand first, proudly presented by the Chartwell Trust.

Visit **christchurchartgallery.org.nz** to book your session.

*Tangle* in action in Brisbane. Photo: Sean Young

A child takes a breather by one of *Tangle's* gold poles. Photo: Wendy Kimpton

Polygot Theatre's *Tangle*. Photo: Aaron Walker

Children throw themselves into the labyrinth of coloured elastics created by *Tangle*.
Photo: Aaron Walker

# The printing arts

PMP Print have been printing *Bulletin* since late 2013. They sponsor the production of the magazine (which, given our modest budget we greatly appreciate) but more than that, they're a true partner, going above and beyond to ensure that each edition of *Bulletin* is produced to the highest quality. We thought you might enjoy a brief insight into the delights and challenges of producing a magazine.

*Bulletin* is a pretty technically challenging print job. It's an unusual format, and we often use special print processes or unusual stocks to enhance the visual and tactile appeal of the magazine. Issue 179 was particularly demanding, as we combined three different papers, including an artwork on a rare translucent stock, which was delivered to PMP to be bound into the magazine. As you can imagine, this level of complexity is tough to pull off, and we couldn't make it work without the expert advice and support from Nigel South and his colleagues.

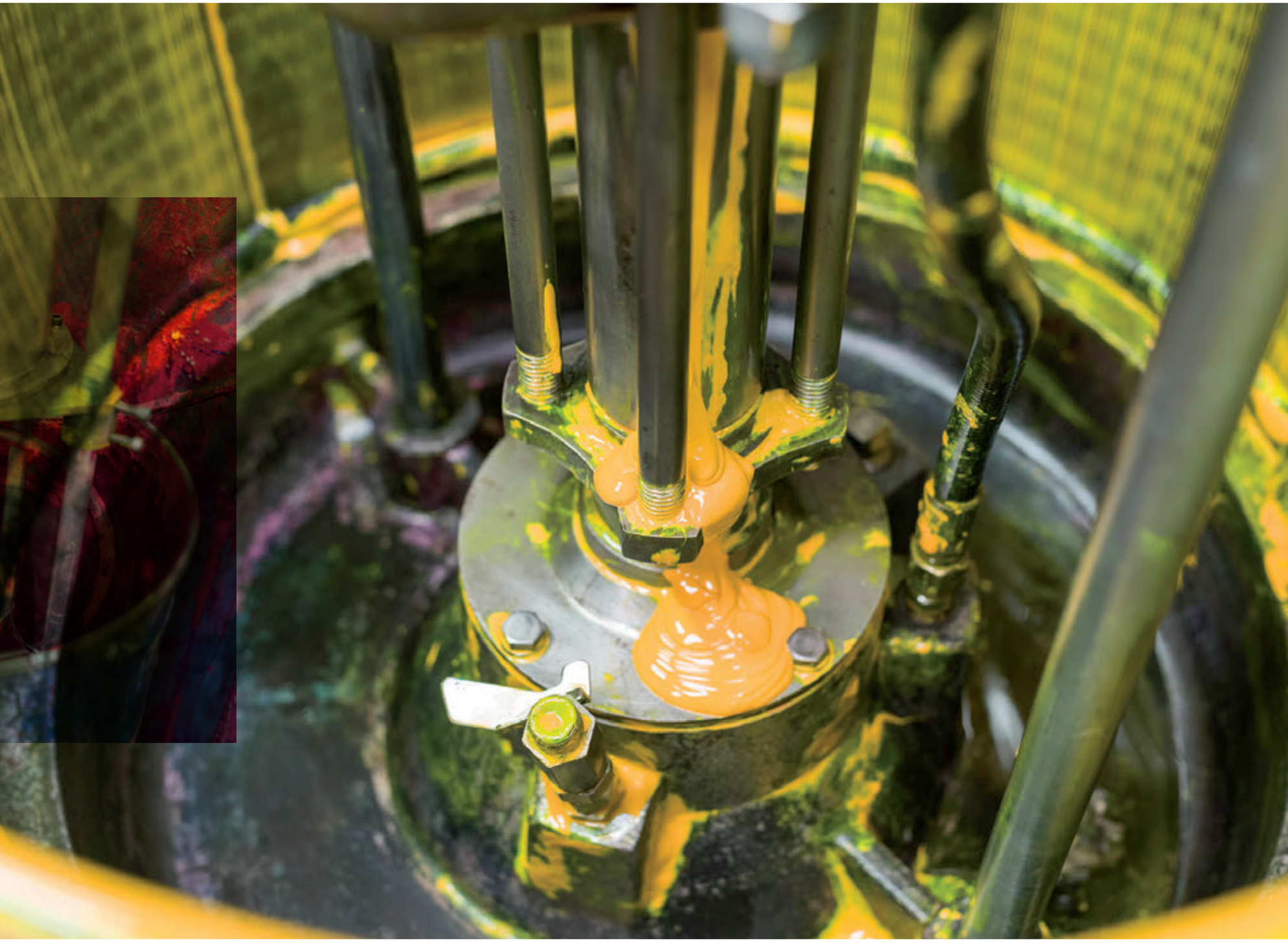
One of the main reasons people read *Bulletin* is to enrich their understanding of art, and so high quality art reproductions are fundamental to us. Reproducing artwork brings its own challenges. It is important that the magazine accurately matches the colours of the original works of art and that any crossovers (images running across two pages) align precisely across those pages.

You'll often find Gallery photographer John Collie, Aaron Beehre from the Ilam School of Fine Arts and me, huddled around a spread pulled from the press, peering at the colour matches through a magnifying lens, and earnestly discussing whether there is too much magenta in an image. PMP get every bit as involved in these discussions as we do. Printing is a complex art and it takes an expert team to get a great result.

We asked PMP why they sponsor *Bulletin*. Nigel said: 'Art makes us excited about the future of Christchurch. Art is a very personal expression, and the artworks around the city teach us to respect each other's ideas and opinions. Art is playing a growing role in Christchurch. We started with a blank canvas following the earthquakes and with the Gallery as the epicentre of this art revolution, colour and vibrancy is coming back to our city. We're pleased we committed to Christchurch after the earthquake; forming relationships with Christchurch Art Gallery and Christchurch City Council has been a big part of this for us.'

PMP Print is New Zealand's largest printer with plants in Christchurch and Auckland. They're the preferred supplier for most of New Zealand's leading retailers including Countdown, New World, Farmers and Mitre 10 and they print a number of magazines including *New Zealand Listener*, *SkyWatch* and *New Zealand Women's Weekly*. *Bulletin* is a tiny project for them, which makes the care and attention they give it all the more impressive. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for all the effort they have put into making *Bulletin* the award-winning magazine it is.

***Elizabeth Davidson***
Editor

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# 101 Works of Art

In this large, beautifully presented book, Christchurch Art Gallery showcases 101 treasures from its collection – paintings, drawings, sculpture, film and photographs that stand out in a line-up of New Zealand's most significant collected works. Enjoy thoughtful, conversational texts by Lara Strongman, Ken Hall, Felicity Milburn, Nathan Pohio, Peter Vangioni and Jenny Harper – written to feel as if the reader is standing with the curator in front of the painting. Also includes insightful interviews with artists and curators.

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