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**Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu
Bulletin Issue no.187
Autumn 2017**

**Wayne Youle:
Look Mum No Hands**
Felicity Milburn looks at the
self-deprecating humour
that buoy's Youle's work.

**Don Peebles:
A Free Sense of Order**
Peter Vangioni finds an artist
continually striving to develop
his art.

A Torch and a Light
Nathan Pohle interviews
2016 Walters Prize winner
Shannon Te Ao.

**The Borrowings of
Francis Uprichard**
Tessa Giblin talks cultural
and technical borrowings
with the artist.

**Anticipation
and Reflection**
Jenny Harper reflects on more
than thirty-five years of visiting
Bridget Riley's studios.

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Previous spread: Joyce Hinterding *Aeriology* (detail) 1995/2015. Installation view, *Aeriology*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2016. Image courtesy of the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney. © the artist. Photo: John Collie

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Director's Foreword

JENNY HARPER

February 2017

Welcome to 2017! We've all bounced back to work at our favourite gallery—and we've loved seeing a range of familiar faces at our exhibitions and events as well as the many new visitors enjoying what we have on display.

From my office window, I have a good view of Michael Parekowhai's *Chapman's Homer* on our forecourt. I'm constantly seeing groups of people enjoying this sculpture—and lining up to be photographed sitting on the stool as if they were playing the bronze piano. The fascination this work has held for Christchurch since we first showed it on Madras Street in 2012 has never waned.

Equally, I have enjoyed seeing visitors interact with *Energies: Haines and Hinterding*, which is still on display as I write this. I noticed a family in with *Geology* the other day; the father videoing his young son who was having a great time changing the yellow landscape on the large wall projection (featured on the cover of *B.186*). But then dad put away his camera and enjoyed the immersive experience alongside his son.

As a public gallery, we collect on behalf of this city and community and we introduce and reinterpret our collection, largely but not exclusively, in our upstairs spaces. Our curators select and organise changing exhibitions throughout the building and these are carefully designed and installed by technical staff. Curators also work directly with artists on solo or group shows, such as *The Devil's Blind Spot*. And when we can, we work with other galleries to ensure a special or especially relevant exhibition can be seen in more than one place in New Zealand.

In this issue of *Bulletin* we feature an interview with London-based artist Francis Upritchard, whose exhibition *Jealous Saboteurs* comes to Christchurch later in March. Jointly presented by Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, and City Gallery Wellington, it is the first major survey of the work of this internationally acclaimed graduate of Ilam School of Fine Arts. Born in New Plymouth, Upritchard spent most of her life here in Christchurch, where her mother Sue—also an artist—lives. Spanning twenty years of practice, the Gallery's presentation of the exhibition is enhanced by significant, recently acquired works from the Gallery's collection. Upritchard is interviewed by fellow Ilam graduate Tessa Giblin, recently appointed director of the Talbot Rice Gallery in Edinburgh.

Curator Felicity Milburn takes a look at Wayne Youle's oeuvre ahead of his solo show with us. From provocative early works, through to his huge Sydenham mural, *I seem to have temporarily misplaced my sense of humour* (2011) and the wry references to self-doubt found in *ALONE TIME* (2014), Felicity looks at the ironic, self-deprecating humour that buoys Youle's work—and the baseline of discipline that underpins his practice.

We also hear from artist Shannon Te Ao, winner of the 2016 Walters Prize, who talks to friend, fellow Walters Prize nominee and assistant curator Nathan Pohio. A prior conversation between the pair, held as part of the Gallery's recent Immerse programme was broad ranging in its remit—it was billed as 'Nathan Pohio and Shannon Te Ao Discuss Everything'. In this interview, however, they focus on Te Ao's working practice. It's a great introduction to the artist's work,

which features in *Shannon Te Ao: Tēnei Ao Kawa Nei* from early March.

Curator Peter Vangioni looks at the late Don Peebles and his wonderful relief constructions of the 1960s and 1970s. Peter explores some of the fantastic resources on Peebles in the Gallery's Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archive. He gives us the opportunity to hear the artist's own voice and, in doing so, reveals an artist who was continually striving to develop and challenge himself. And curator Ken Hall uses his exhibition *He Waka Eke Noa*, which brings together colonial-era, mainly Māori, portraiture, as a starting point to tell stories that show some of the complexity of a hitherto unprecedented movement of people.

Bridget Riley: Cosmos will open in June this year. Riley has been commissioned to make the fourth of five significant works to mark our lengthy time of closure for seismic strengthening following the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010–11. She's an artist with a stellar international career: representing England in the 34th Venice Biennale of Art in 1968 and winning the International Prize for painting—the first woman and the first British artist to do so. She has had huge numbers of solo exhibitions and her work has been included in multiple group shows as well. In this issue of *Bulletin*, I have written about my long association with Riley as a welcome for our new work of hers.

Our collective thanks to the wonderful generosity of a range of women donors, as well as all who attended our very successful Gallery Foundation gala dinner in 2016—the first to be held back in the Gallery's NZI Foyer. But also many, many thanks to Bridget Riley herself.

Her wall painting will be installed in the upstairs arcade area by three of her assistants and our staff in May. In addition, she has also generously offered to lend a small grouping of her work from her own collection until November. I know it will be a wonderful experience for all of us. Riley's acclaimed career has spanned some sixty-five years now; but those of us who visited her London studio and home last year can attest to there being no sign of her easing up at all. What amazing commitment!

Finally, a note to remind you that the car park underneath this building is well and truly open again. Enjoy the colours of the pillars that support our new base isolators and take the opportunity to journey from below in either the Séraphine Pick or the Marie Shannon lifts. And we're well on the way to having our café open again in mid-2017. More about that in the next edition.

WAYNE
YOULE:
LOOK MUM
NO HANDS

He's been called a cultural prankster, an agent provocateur and a bullshit artist (that last description came from his dad, but it was bestowed—he's pretty sure—with love). While we're at it, add 'serial pun merchant' to that list; in art, as in conversation, Wayne Youle can spot a good one-liner a mile off and has never knowingly left an entendre undoubted. It's fitting, then, that many of the qualities that have come to characterise his current art practice were not so much foreshadowed in his early work as sign-written. Under the guise of an optician's eye chart, the gradually shrinking text of *CULTURAL BLINDNESS TEST*, exhibited as part of Youle's 1999 Wellington Polytechnic Bachelor of Design graduate exhibition, wryly challenged his audience's world views along with their vision. Deploying Youle's now-customary blend of humour and provocation, it considered how we see ourselves and are seen by others, a subject with particular resonance for Youle. Of Ngāti Whakaeke, Ngāpuhi and European descent, he grew up identifying as Māori through his mother's side of the family, but more closely resembling his father's Scottish ancestors (his cross-cultural conception was memorably re-enacted by two entangled plastic dolls in the 2002 photograph *And then there was Wayne...*). He's more alert than many to the categorisations and limitations that are consciously and unconsciously assigned to us, often without our consent or even our knowledge. Although at first glance *CULTURAL BLINDNESS TEST* suggested a uniform standard of measurement, the 'dotting' of the sans serif 'I' with a small plastic tiki, painted white, suggested something both more nuanced and more personal. Crisply rendered with sign-writer's vinyl on canvas, it was an arresting demonstration of Youle's ability to complicate an apparently simple visual premise with a lingering, ambiguous aftertaste.

A few years later, that facility was again at the fore in *Often Liked, Occasionally Beaten* (2003), a set of brightly coloured tiki, cast in resin and presented on white sticks as a row of dangerously alluring lollipops. This highly charged combination questioned the unthinking consumption and commodification of Māori culture, as well as the appetite for indigenous culture-lite; sweetened and simplified for a general palate. Youle's Pop-ish tiki were laced with irony; he was well aware that even as he critiqued such practices, he too was creating questionable, but highly desirable, commercial objects.

Youle took up his artistic career only after finishing his design degree because his family initially considered art a bit flaky, and wanted him to train in something with more secure prospects. His early works often suggest an awareness of that ambivalence, and a residual uncertainty about his place in the art world—an anxiety often expressed with compensatory braggadocio. In a 2005 exhibition, Youle ostentatiously arranged twenty of his art ancestors around him as a series of nickel-plated silhouettes in the sardonically-titled *Old Boy's Club*, playfully tweaking their most iconic works to open them up to a range of new interpretations. Colin McCahon's thundering *I AM* made an appearance, as did Shane Cotton's birds and the koru of Gordon Walters, the last coiled into swastika shapes to critique the artist's appropriation of Māori artforms. With what Grant Smithies has called 'a mix of cheek and longing,'²¹ Youle positioned himself in twenty-first place.

The question of how cultural groups perceive and label each other has remained a key concern for Youle, and fatherhood has provided him with an additional lens on the subject: 'I know from my own children that racism and bigotry are taught. It's irrelevant to them, and that's how it should be.'²² From *12 Shades of Bullshit* (2003), which featured aluminium cuts outs in the shape of historic images of Māori by European artists, each painted a slightly different colour (Too brown? Not brown enough?) to the gleefully cringe-inducing *When I grow up I want to be Black* (2006), a photograph of the artist in full minstrel blackface, skin colour has been a recurrent motif. Recently, Youle took the theme to its logical conclusion, purchasing a pound (just under half a kilogram) of 'flesh-coloured' paint—it was a shade of pink, naturally—



Left: Wayne Youle *Lovers* 2014. Silk screen.
Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o
Waiwhetu, purchased 2015

Right: Wayne Youle *ALONE TIME* (detail) 2014.
Mixed media. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 2014

from his local art supply store and applying it to a small, square canvas. The irony underscored by Youle's work was that not only does this supposedly standard tone not represent the skin colour of much of the world's population, it doesn't resemble any skin you're ever likely to see. Instead, it's an unsettling and slightly gross approximation, in the same vein as the ersatz 'selves' of sculptor Ronnie van Hout. Titled *.454 kg of whatever and who really cares*, it is Youle's reminder of the inadequacy of empirical standards in reflecting our multi-faceted reality, and the absurdity of measuring ourselves and others against them.

Youle's works exude a brash physicality, full of balls and nuts, bared bums, bones and fingers (sometimes crossed, sometimes flipping the bird). Occasionally, however, this focus on the body, and its potential to transform the world around it, takes on a (slightly) more existential note. In *BEFORE/AFTER* (2015), two objects cast in bronze occupy the same plinth. One is a scale replica of a shiny red gumball, the other a chewed one, masticated into unrecognisable ruin. It's a testimony to the skill with which Youle creates his works, and the deadpan gravity with which he presents them, that these banal objects assume a temporary profundity; prompting, if he's lucky, some gentle musing on life, death, aging and even the effect of humans on the earth itself.

In recent years, a heightened awareness of time (passing/spent/wasted/lost) has emerged as an important motif in Youle's practice, reflecting his experiences as both the father to three young boys and the adult son of ageing parents: 'The trigger was seeing my old man slow down. Then, with my children, it's like the opposite; there's no concept of time. You get home from the studio and its three hours on the ground playing Lego.'³ One work, *March of the Good Bastard* (2015) documented Youle's father, Andy, walking one kilometre up his gravel driveway. Clad in a grey tracksuit, he trudges indomitably forward, tracing a slow trajectory across a vast backdrop of hills and sky, his steady progress marked by the power poles and fence posts he passes. It's a surprisingly moving scene; a reminder of how an apparently standard distance is relative to the strength of our body, but also of how personal relationships are measured out in ordinary moments, rather than grand occasions. Because, of course, the solitary man on our screen is not really alone; his son walks beside him as a witness and participant. The titles of two later photographs derived from these videos—*From whence ethic comes (walking out)* and *The place that honesty and determination lives (walking in)*—revealed the sense of connection and appreciation Youle sought to capture. In 2015, the title he chose for his *9:54 / 3:49* exhibition at Sydney's Carriageworks gallery further emphasised how distances seem to expand and contract in relation to our age by contrasting the time his father took to complete a kilometre with how long it took his five-year-old son Ārai to cover the same distance on his BMX bike.

For *How long a piece of string actually is* (2015), Youle asked his mother Jacqui to knit for him for a year. He didn't dictate the outcome, just supplied her with a ball of bright orange acrylic wool and told her to ask him for more when she needed it. The ritual prompted new opportunities for contact between mother and son; she would ring him with updates, apologising for her lack of progress, he would reassure her that he had no expectations. At twenty-eight metres long, the completed work offers an intimate, alternative timeline—an organic document of time spent and given, and material evidence of the affection between parent and child.

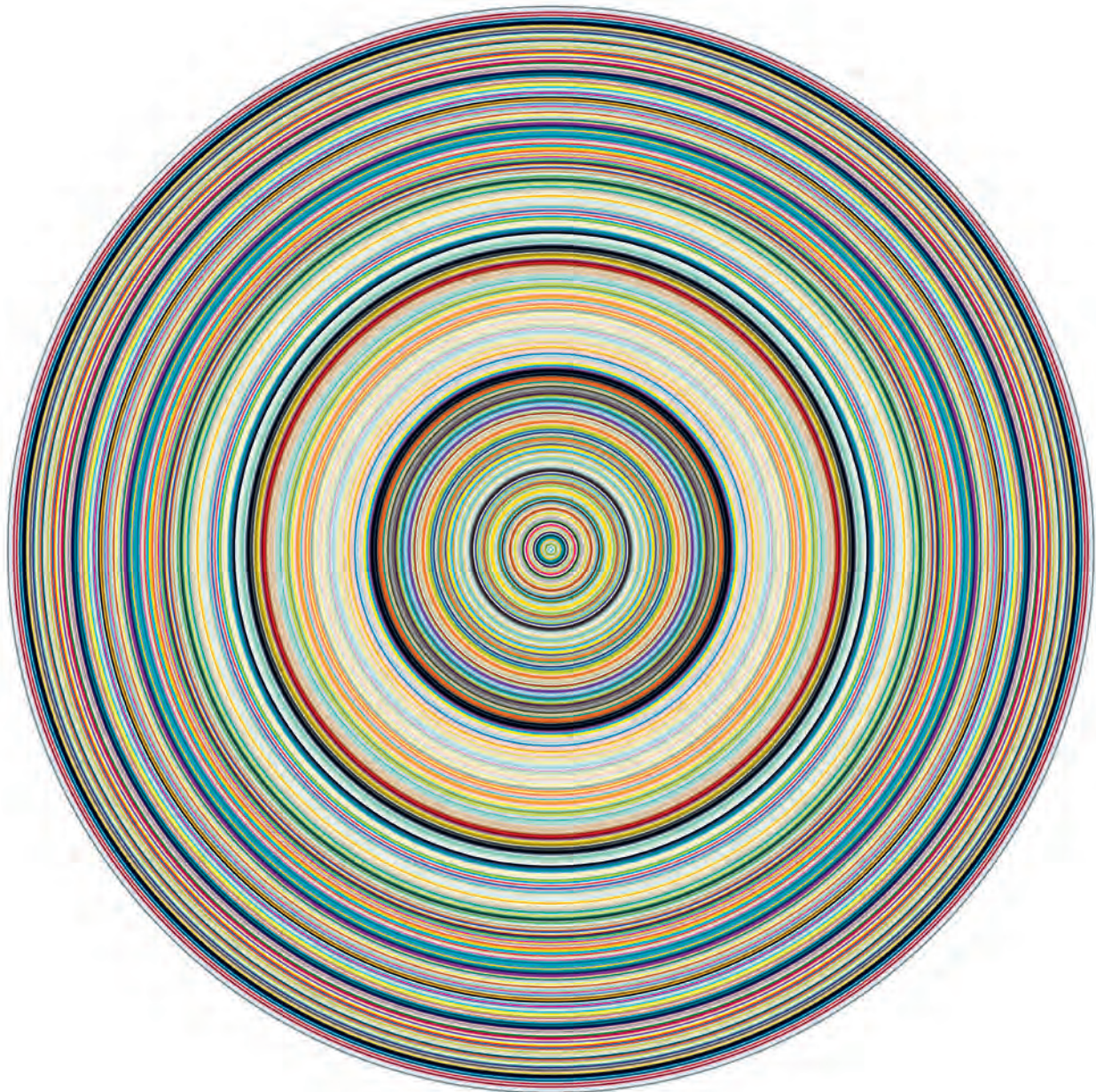
I've always found it telling that Youle's massive post-quake mural in Sydenham, *I seem to have temporarily misplaced my sense of humour* (2011), arguably one of his most public works, took on a form that recalled a very private kind of sanctuary—albeit on a grand scale. Black silhouettes and regularly spaced perforations readily evoked the shadow boards that are a staple of the traditional Kiwi toolshed, where there's a place for everything and everything is in its

MAORI



PAKEHA





Previous spread: Wayne Youle *Paper bags* (detail)
2009. C-type photograph of hand-cut, screen-
printed paper bags. Collection of the artist
Above: Wayne Youle *That's 2 hours, 1 minute and
40 seconds I am happy to give you* 2014-15.
Digital print on 308gsm Hahnemühle hot-press paper.
Collection of the artist

place. By augmenting the customary hammers and wrenches with less expected items—a guitar, a house, a rocking horse, a child—Youle drew a line between the disordering of familiar objects and routines following the earthquakes and the city-wide loss and dislocation that would be much harder to put right. The scale of that wall full of shadows matched the vastness of the challenge and Youle’s work struck a chord with a wide audience. Several people told me it was the first piece of art they ever really liked. His choice of imagery also tapped into a theme that runs through many recent works: the time and space he—and any artist—must carve out from the demands of everyday life. In *ALONE TIME* (2014), exhibited in Christchurch Art Gallery’s reopening exhibition, this physical and psychological ‘room of one’s own’ took the form of a 3.2 x 3.6 metre plywood bunker, which housed a wittily choreographed replica of the artist’s obsessively ordered, yet generously abundant, studio in Amberley. Amongst the works inside were many references to the self-doubt and work ethic that accompany and sustain the creative process—like the ‘thinking chair’ with a circle worn through the painted seat by the artist who always turns up.

There’s an interesting contrast between the ironic, self-deprecating humour that buoys Youle’s work—dryly undercutting the persona of the cocky creative genius before anyone can do it for him—and the discipline with which he carries out his practice. He’d be horrified if anyone thought he was taking himself too seriously, but he approaches the practical business of making art with conscientiousness and a hurricane-force intensity. Fatherhood has shunted his 9-to-5 work day to a 7-to-3 one, and he tries not to work weekends any more, but the ritual of those hours of graft in the studio remains a pillar of his practice—and he still vacuums at the end of each day. The ideas that spring up prolifically from his research—undertaken, as likely as not, on YouTube or in his local second-hand shop—are thoroughly proofed before they get anywhere near the public. Making is a fundamental part of his thinking process (a legacy of his design background), so almost every concept finds physical form, but only a tiny proportion will ever make it into a gallery. Over the years, he’s embraced a wide range of media, from sculptures and found-object assemblages to paintings, printmaking, video and ceramics; all rendered with exquisite care and united by a Prada showroom-level finish that encourages us to take a longer, closer look. Cracking his knuckles and limbering up his funny bone, he’s as obsessively well-prepared as any seasoned stage performer, even—especially—when it looks like he’s just winging it.

Felicity Milburn

Curator

Wayne Youle: *Look Mum No Hands* will be on display from 14 April until 3 September 2017.

Notes

- 1 Grant Smithies, ‘Art throbs’, *Sunday Star Times*, 18 September 2005, p.20.
- 2 Wayne Youle, quoted in ‘Boundaries are for breaking’, *Capital Times*, Wellington, 12 December 2012, p.12.
- 3 Wayne Youle, quoted in Mark Amery ‘States of Play’, *Art Collector Australia*, autumn 2015, p.175.



Such Human Tide

The exhibition *He Waka Eke Noa* brings together colonial-era, mainly Māori, portraiture alongside objects linked to colonisation—it's a predictably uncomfortable mix. While the degree of discomfort may depend on one's background or degree of connection to an enduringly difficult past, objects related to emigration and colonisation can be useful lenses. As relics from a specific period in global history, when the movement of (particularly) European people was happening at an unprecedented scale, they hold stories with a measure of complexity that obliges an open-minded reading. There is no denying that they speak of losses and gains, of injustices and rewards.

From a cold Lyttelton winter on 29 July 1851, Charlotte Godley—wife of John Robert Godley, founder of the new Canterbury province—wrote to her mother in Wales of

weather that was 'still very wet, and very unfavourable for slipping about in the dark, up and down these muddy hills.' In her next few lines she described 'a much deeper and pleasanter excitement, in watching a portrait of Arthur growing under the skilful hands of Miss M. Townsend, who has been staying with us to that end... It seems she used to take portraits professionally, in London; but she did not expect to be asked for such things here.'¹ A few days later, Charlotte appraised the completed portrait of their four-year-old son 'a very pretty picture, and I am going to get her ... to do another of my husband, for Miss Townsend only asks three or five guineas, and we are glad to give her something to do...'²

Mary Townsend was among the influx of recent arrivals, having reached Lyttelton aboard the *Cressy* on 27 December 1850 with her parents James and

AN. DOM: 1852.



MADON ZINGHIL FINNS

H. BOURNE SCULPT

THE LAST OF ENGLAND.

Alicia Townsend, five sisters, four brothers and a cousin. Eleven months later, she married the appointed ‘Colonial Surgeon at Lyttelton’, Dr William Donald, who in September 1852 made a gift of this portrait to the recently launched Lyttelton Colonists’ Society, as a likeness of their chairman—the portrait evidently initiated by Charlotte. Following the presentation came Godley’s ‘promised lecture on the early colonization of New Zealand’, as the *Lyttelton Times* reported, commenting also that ‘there are but few Colonists, we apprehend, who possess other than a very limited knowledge of their adopted country.’²³

At almost the exact same time in London, the painter Ford Madox Brown (1820–1893) was starting an ambitious work on the theme of emigration, inspired by the actions of a friend. Madox Brown, with William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, had recently farewelled their fellow Pre-Raphaelite brother Thomas Woolner—the sculptor who would later create Christchurch Cathedral Square’s memorial statue of John Robert Godley.

Woolner’s departure for the Australian goldfields on 24 July 1852 was a spark for Madox Brown’s *The Last of England*, a large oil composition of an emigrant couple; a contemporary Flight into Egypt with a British family entering the unknown. The painting pictured an increasingly familiar scenario, with vast numbers at this time entering foreign territory in pursuit of a better life. Most were bound for America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa.

Madox Brown modelled the couple on himself and his partner Emma Hill. The painting took three years to complete, during which time their partnership and eldest child Katty (born 1850) were legitimised in marriage (in 1853), and a second child, Oliver was born (in 1855). Katty appeared at rear left, while Oliver was just visible as the tiny hand held by Emma’s. Woolner’s story also changed in this time. He returned to London

in October 1854 before the painting was even finished: unsuccessful at mining, he had also been disillusioned by the coarse realities of colonial frontier Sydney life. (Herbert Bourne’s exquisite black and white steel engraving of *The Last of England*, published in London in 1870, must stand in for the original, which remains in Birmingham.)

25-year-old Samuel Butler reached Lyttelton from England in January 1860, and in his four and a half years here doubled his capital as a sheep farmer in high-country Canterbury. From his remote station in the Upper Rangitata, he also started writing *Erewhon; or, Over the Range*—the fantastical novel that would establish his literary reputation. His regular visits to Christchurch included receiving hospitality from this portrait’s subject, John Parker Marshman, and his wife Caroline. Butler is said to have ‘played on the Marshman piano, painted in the dining-room, and walked in the Marshman garden.’²⁴ He made this portrait in 1861, the year before Marshman left Christchurch to become Canterbury Province Emigration Agent in London.

John Marshman was a 24-year-old surveyor from Bristol when he first reached New Zealand in 1848, and was set to work in Wellington recording damage from recent earthquakes. Under Captain Joseph Thomas, he also did surveying for the Ngauranga Gorge and the Canterbury Province, its location selected in April 1849 by Captain Thomas on vast tracts of land purchased in 1848 from Ngāi Tahu by the New Zealand Company through the notorious Kemp Deed.

Marshman embraced opportunity and employment with Canterbury’s Provincial Government, settling at first in Lyttelton. A close friend of Godley, his earliest roles included provincial treasurer, auditor and ‘Registrar of Brands for Sheep’. He also started farming on the Lincoln Road near the Wilderness Road (later Barrington Street) and at Mount Grey, and became a thoroughly experienced colonist.







Marshman published two books for prospective settlers in Canterbury, in 1862 and 1864. While his role as emigration agent involved screening the suitability of settlers and overseeing the outfitting and construction of emigrant ships, his books advised on the essentials of settler life, including what to bring or leave behind. In recommending ‘What Sort of People ought to Emigrate’, he also dealt with ‘Discontent among New Comers’, ‘Description of Men who may count with certainty upon obtaining Employment’, and ‘Single Women, what description most needed’. Assisted passage was ‘restricted almost entirely to Agricultural Workmen, Shepherds, and Women Servants’.⁵

In 1862, facing his imminent departure for New Zealand, the London wholesaler’s clerk Edward Brendon Parsons chose to commemorate the moment by visiting a nearby photographic portrait studio with the voyage’s publicity poster in hand. Under 24-year-old Captain Holt, the *Devonshire* sailed on 29 October with ‘a very large cargo and a number of passengers, amongst whom [were] several officers to join their regiments and non-commissioned officers in charge of telegraphic apparatus sent out by Government.’⁶ There was both war and a push for new settlers in New Zealand. A stormy fifteen-week voyage to Auckland delivered 154 live passengers (two had died), including: ‘1 architect, 2 brewers, 1 grocer, 22 farmers, 1 nursemaid, 1 plumber, 1 surgeon, 3 clerks, 6 servants, 18 labourers, 1 butcher, 1 engineer, 7 farm servants, 1 shepherd, 1 baker, 1 iron moulder, 2 carpenters, 1 shopman, 1 draper, 1 iron founder, 1 shipwright, [and] 1 mariner’, along with ‘three splendid Leicester ewes and two rams...’⁷

Disregarding the poster’s promised ‘Free Grants 40 Acres Land and Upwards’ in Auckland Province, Parsons moved instead to Dunedin, where the Otago gold rush was underway, and entered into business with his future brother-in-law as a Princes Street grocer

and tea merchant. In 1863, he married Mary Arthur, daughter of Carpenter Arthur, a Cornish-born coal and timber merchant turned Auckland land agent. After relocating to Auckland, in 1868 Parsons became the secretary for the newly-established Auckland Gas Company, which produced gas for street lamps, gas-powered engines and stoves throughout the city. Parsons remained with the company for forty-one years, and became known as the company’s ‘indefatigable secretary ... happy to furnish every information in his power to anyone who may desire it.’⁸ He retired in 1909 and spent the last few years of his life in Japan, where he died in 1915.

(NB: This photograph is not included in the initial version of He Waka Eke Noa, but may be included at a later stage of the exhibition.)

In July 1860, Laura Herford (1831–1870) became the first female artist to be accepted into the London Royal Academy Schools, after shrewdly submitted drawings signed with her initials instead of her name. Her success occurred after a determined group campaign for women’s admittance into the Royal Academy, and became a watershed for many others.⁹

Four years later, Laura left England for New Zealand upon learning that her brother, Adelaide solicitor Walter Vernon Herford, had been seriously injured there. Finding himself in financial dire straits, with an appearance in 1863 in the South Australian insolvency courts, Walter had signed up for three years’ military service in the Waikato, New Zealand, after which time he would be granted 300 acres of land there: this he assigned in advance for repaying creditors.¹⁰ Major Walter Vernon Herford of the 3rd Waikato Regiment Militia thereby became part of Governor George Grey’s plan to extinguish the Māori Kingitanga movement. On 2 April, while he was leading a charge against the Kingites at Ōrākau, a bullet entered his skull and he became in need of urgent care.



NELSON K. CHERRILL, CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND.

Laura arrived in New Zealand in January 1865 to discover that Walter had died three months after being injured, even before she had left England. She spent three months in New Zealand, mostly with the Nelson surveyor Thomas Thompson and his wife Sarah, whose account of leaving Leeds as a young emigrant in 1841 inspired this painting: ‘She recounted how she often sat by the bulwarks looking out over the “wide, wide sea dreaming of home...”’¹¹ The evocative study was later shipped to New Zealand in a piano that Herford purchased in London on Mr. Thompson’s behalf.

Jane (1874–1909) and Elizabeth Macpherson (1872–1907) visited Nelson Cherrill’s photographic establishment in Cashel Street with their Christchurch cousins during a family visit south in 1879. The girls’ father John Drummond Macpherson (1833–1887) was a Scottish-born storekeeper and publican in Matata, Bay of Plenty. His elder brother in Christchurch, James Drummond Macpherson, was a Fendalton merchant, customs agent and local manager of the South British Insurance Company.

The venturesome John had been a mercantile clerk in Greenock before leaving Scotland in the early 1850s for the Californian goldfields. He later served with the California State Militia during the Indian Wars.¹² By the late 1860s he was working as a seaman in Australasian waters, but by 1870 he was settled and living in Matata, where he married the Mokoia, Rotorua-born Mariana Te Oha (1852–1931); they had six daughters and two sons.

The photographer Nelson King Cherrill arrived in Lyttelton from England with his wife and young family in 1876. He had won photographic prizes in Cornwall, London and Paris between 1867 and 1875 and numerous others in partnership with the (still famous) photographer Henry Peach Robinson; they jointly operated a photographic studio for seven years

in Tunbridge Wells, Kent and collaborated on artistic photography projects.

Cherrill opened his new Christchurch studio in December 1876, and in the following year oversaw a photographic display at Canterbury Museum while showing his own ‘art of ceramic enamel photography’.¹³ In 1879 he claimed to have ‘The only studio in the world where portraits are taken by electricity. The new electric exposing apparatus is the only perfect arrangement for taking children’s portraits.’¹⁴ Cherrill left Christchurch for a six-month home visit in 1881, intending to return, but—like the Godleys, Samuel Butler and Laura Herford—he never did.

Ken Hall Curator

He Waka Eke Noa is on display until 23 October 2017.

Notes

1 Charlotte Godley, *Letters from Early New Zealand, 1850–1853*, 1951, p.217. Arthur Godley’s portrait is in the collection of Canterbury Museum

2 *Ibid.* p.221.

3 ‘Lyttelton Colonists’ Society, *Lyttelton Times*, 11 September 1852, p.6.

4 *The Press*, 4 February 1935, p.12.

5 Marshman returned to New Zealand to become Canterbury’s first general manager of railways in 1868.

6 ‘Shipping Intelligence’, *Taranaki Herald*, 27 December 1862, p.2.

7 ‘Maritime Record’, *New Zealander*, 9 February 1863, p.2.

8 *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1879, p.6.

9 She was part of a group of thirty-eight women who in April 1859 signed a petition and circulated copies to the forty male Royal Academicians. See Clarissa Campbell Orr, *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester University Press, 1995, p.54.

10 *South Australian Register*, 23 January 1864, p.2.

11 ‘Echo of the siege of Orakau Pa—A picture and its painter [etc.]’, *The New Zealand Railways Magazine*, vol.14, no.9, 1 December 1939, p.25.

12 *Bay of Plenty Times*, 15 August 1887, p.2; see also <http://www.rootschat.com/forum/index.php?topic=472610.0>

13 *Star*, 8 June 1877, p.2.

14 *Southern Provinces Almanac*, 1879.

**DON
PEEBLES**

**A FREE
SENSE
OF
ORDER**



There's a wonderful film on Don Peebles in the Gallery's archive that provides a fascinating insight into the artist's practice.¹ Produced around 1980, it shows Peebles working in his studio and walking through his garden, past the fruit trees to his shed down the back, with an audio interview overdubbed. My favourite scene shows the artist in the shed with a box full of various wooden shapes that he has collected over the years, which he takes out and loosely assembles on a small sheet of plywood—a free sense of order created out of these seemingly random pieces.

As an art history student in Christchurch during the 1990s I saw several exhibitions at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery that I still carry around with me, among them the excellent Don Peebles survey *Harmony of Opposites*. It was the artist's relief constructions from the 1960s that really captivated me and repeatedly pulled me back to the Gallery for more.

I never got to know Peebles—my experience is limited to a single conversation with him and Barry Cleavin at an opening in town one night. The pair were in full flight, which was something to behold, both extremely articulate and with a wicked sense of humour—they obviously enjoyed each other's company immensely. Fortunately for the art historian, Peebles was very comfortable talking and writing about his art. He knew what he wanted to say and could express himself with clarity and precision.

Peebles's interest in art was given a boost when, in 1945, having served with the New Zealand Army in the Pacific and Italian campaigns of World War II, he was able to study briefly in Florence before returning to New Zealand. He continued his studies at home, both at the Wellington Technical College Art School and the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney, and by the late 1950s his work had evolved from Cézannesque landscapes to a more distinctive abstract style. Features of the landscape, such as the grey concrete metropolis of his *Wellington* series, seemingly dissolve out of focus in thick layers of paint, which is applied with a palette knife in a manner reminiscent of the post-war Tachisme style.

In 1960 Peebles was the first abstract artist to be awarded the Association of New Zealand Art Societies Fellowship Award. The fellowship enabled him to leave his job at the Post Office in Wellington and to travel to England to study and make art full-time. Prior to the trip, Peebles married Prue Corkill, his constant companion and supporter for the remainder of his life. It was an event which he summed up in a characteristically succinct manner: 'I proposed on a Friday, we got married the next Tuesday, and sailed for England on the Wednesday.'² *One of the good things that happened when I got to London, was the realisation that I was there to learn. I told myself that I should try, as much as possible, to drop the attitudes and the ways of working I had pursued back in New Zealand. It was time in which I could let myself go. Experiment.*³

Shortly after his arrival in London Peebles fortuitously came across an article by Victor Pasmore, one England's leading abstract artists of the post-war period, titled 'What is abstract art?'⁴ Pasmore argued that for abstract artists to develop their art fully they 'must move from the two-dimensional medium of painting to the three-dimensional world of sculpture, "construction" or pure architecture.'⁵ Pasmore's art appealed to Peebles: *[Here] were works that made no obvious reference to visual reality as we would normally understand the term. They were very, very logical but highly inventive images [...] totally abstract and yet at the same time there was a familiarity about them. That and also the lack of decorative incident, the clear direct and overt sort of way in which these works activated the space around them without any attention being given to triviality.*⁶

Oposite above: Don Peebles *Relief Construction No. 3* 1972. Enamel on wood with plastic. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 1973
Oposite below: Don Peebles *Relief Construction: yellow and black* 1966. Painted wood on panel. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1966

One cannot underestimate the effect of Pasmore's article on Peebles and his art—he himself described it as being 'like a kick in the guts'. His work headed in a brave new direction, canvas was replaced with hardboard, and timber and Perspex were cut and assembled on the surface.

I enjoyed what [Pasmore] had to say so much that I wrote to him, and he responded by sending an invitation to the opening.⁷ That was how I met him. Later I occasionally took work around to show him at his Blackheath studio. The whole three dimensional thing was very exciting to me—that's really how I got into making the reliefs and constructions I did during that time. The whole time I was in England I did drawings and reliefs, I hardly painted at all. I was totally absorbed in this constructive process, and yet it was something I don't think would have happened if I'd stayed in New Zealand.⁸

The artist's new relief constructions formed part of a lineage stretching back beyond Pasmore to an earlier generation with an interest in constructivism, including Ben Nicholson and László Moholy-Nagy. But more important was his immediate contact with Pasmore and experiencing relief constructions by his British contemporaries such as Anthony Hill and Mary Martin. Indeed, Pasmore invited Peebles to participate in an exhibition of constructions and collages with artists including Hill at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1962.

Much of Peebles's work did not return with Don and Prue when they made the trip back to New Zealand in 1962, but the artist immediately set to work creating new relief constructions. One of his first exhibitions back in New Zealand was held at Wellington's Centre Gallery in 1964. Some visitors to the show felt that Peebles was making a false start with the construction reliefs but his close friend Don McKenzie rose to his defence in *Landfall* 70: 'In view of his constant concern for structural relations and his trend towards even greater simplicity (allied appeal of colour) Mr Peebles inevitably began to paint in the tradition descending from Mondrian.' McKenzie argued that the difference between Peebles's relief constructions and his earlier paintings lay 'only in the gradual but consistent paring away of incidental effects and outworn problems, and in greater concentration on the fundamental challenge to create new life in accordance with the logic that does not correspond to the visually familiar but to an internal dynamic brought into being almost at the very moment the materials are chosen. At this point of refinement, abstraction ceases and construction begins.'⁹

For the next decade Peebles explored the endless possibilities presented in assembling his relief constructions. Alongside these he continued painting on canvas, producing works including the rigid and geometric *Canterbury* and *Linear* series, but it is the relief constructions that, for me, were most successful and continue to resonate. The construction reliefs had become more and more refined by the time of his large survey exhibition at the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery in 1973. This point is highlighted by examples such as the Gallery's *Relief Construction No.3* (1972) and its companion work from the Dowse Art Museum's collection *Relief 1* (1972). These works have an intensely austere, measured quality—a flat field of white, evenly spaced plastic strips and precisely painted black lines.

Peebles wrote an 'artist's comment' to accompany the Canterbury Society of Arts exhibition:

Construction, for me, is not a style but simply a method. Neither my reliefs nor my paintings derive from any strict mathematical basis but are assembled with a free sense of order, more characteristic of the painter, than of the function-influenced architect or designer. The narrative aspects of art are of less interest to me than the more



Peebles - Drawbridge - McDonald, London 1962

purely visual and private impulses—if such elements as colour, light, line, form, mass, volume are intimately experienced, they too can result in a very personal statement.¹⁰

Discussing abstract art can be a fraught affair because, as Peebles mentions above, it is such a personal and private response. One often cannot be sure of the artist's intent—Peebles once commented: 'I was once asked by a person at an exhibition of mine what my works meant? And I said "I do them, I don't accompany them."¹¹ But personally, what I find so appealing about Peebles's relief constructions is the profound sense of order and calm they provide amongst the chaos of nature and life. I like the quietness that gently reverberates from these works, the way they step out off the wall—not just two- or three-dimensional but, as Don McKenzie pointed out, even four when they cast shadows.¹²

Perhaps it was this quietness, this orderliness, that brought about a change in the artist's work from the mid 1970s. His relief constructions began moving away from the flat, defined areas of colour and exposed plywood he had been using for the previous decade to feature more expressive paint work as he reconnected with the painting process. By the late 1970s he had begun painting the multifaceted canvas reliefs for which he is best-known today. Peebles stated that he felt a need for change—his construction reliefs had become increasingly distilled until he felt he had refined the guts out of the idea, he needed to return to his 'painterly interests and the use of colour and now these canvas reliefs in a way seem to bring together the constructive 3-D element and the painterly colouristic ... negative and positive project from an assembly and so forth.¹³

Never one to sit still, Peebles was continually striving to develop his art, constantly looking at ways of challenging himself, just as he did when he first arrived in London in 1960. As he once said 'I want to be almost totally out of my depth all the time ... swimming to the surface, not floating on top and gradually sinking.'¹⁴

Peter Vangioni

Curator

Don Peebles: Relief Constructions *is on display from 8 April until 3 September 2017.*

Notes

1 Jocelyn Allison (dir.), *Don Peebles*, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts Honours project, c.1980 [film]. Don Peebles artist file, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archive.

2 Don Peebles, 'How to draw a horse', unpublished manuscript, undated, p.25. *Harmony of Opposites* exhibition file, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archive.

3 Ibid.

4 Victor Pasmore, 'What is Abstract art?', *The Sunday Times*, 5 February 1961, p.21.

5 Ibid.

6 Quoted in Don Peebles with Liz Grant, *Don Peebles: The Harmony of Opposites*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1996 [film]. Don Peebles artist file, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archive.

7 *Recent Paintings and Constructions by Victor Pasmore*, New London Gallery, London, March, 1961.

8 Don Peebles, 'How to draw a horse', p.25-6.

9 Don McKenzie, 'Don Peebles', *Landfall* 70, June 1964, p.162.

10 Don Peebles, *CSA News*, no.50, July/August 1973, unpaginated.

11 Don Peebles, in *Don Peebles: The Harmony of Opposites*, 1996.

12 Don McKenzie, 'Don Peebles', p.163.

13 Audio interview with the artist, 1 May 1986. Held in Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Library and Archives.

14 Don Peebles, in Jocelyn Allison, *Don Peebles*, c.1980.



**A
TORCH
AND A
LIGHT**

Shannon Te Ao is an artist of Ngāti Tūwharetoa descent. In 2016 Te Ao won the Walters Prize for his works, two shoots that stretch far out (2013–14) and okea ururoatia (never say die) (2016). Working in video and other performative practices Te Ao investigates the implications of various social and linguistic modes. Assistant curator Nathan Pohio, himself a nominee for the 2016 Walters Prize, discussed working practice with Te Ao in December 2016.

Nathan Pohio: One of the things that interests me about your work is that you might take a whakataukī, waiata or pēpeha, and then translate that and perform it to video. But I've also seen you collaborate and have performances delivered by others. So there's the permanence of the video work and then there's the more temporal work of the performance. Could you please expand upon this?

Shannon Te Ao: My interest in performative practices centres around a notion of immediate physical response. Physical impetus forms the beginning to understanding very complex ideas—anything that you learn starts with a very small hunch. I always come back to that initial physical response as a moment in which one might start to engage with complex, conflated, multi-layered and often contradictory social situations, ideas or historical events. The singular embodied moment is a recurring motif in my work.

A complex understanding of anything starts from somewhere, and that starting point is often represented in my work through

simple, repetitive actions. It might be a reading, a recital or a different form of physical activity—a really simple activity that we often take for granted. Reading is simple, but grappling with the meaning of a text is anything but. I'm interested in that tension, and how it relates to an imagined everyday experience.

Whakataukī, waiata, poetry and song are different ways to map out a space. They reflect upon the physical context of the narrative, but they also often consider the cerebral spaces that we might explore as people. For example, the text that is prominent within *two shoots that stretch far out* is, on one level, a very simple and relatable image of domesticity, but it's explored and considered in terms we don't actually often articulate in our everyday experience.

NP: Domestic tension resurfaces in your work in the whakataukī you choose, and the way you reflect situations. For example, *a torch and a light (cover)* (2015) is created with simple, easily accessible domestic materials.

STA: I am interested in the idea that you can make artwork out of

anything. What is beautiful to me is an artist, or a person, that is able to make do with what is around them. Generally the material in my work is relatively easy to come by. More specifically, it points back towards a commonly imagined version of domesticity. I say imagined, because I wouldn't really presume to know what somebody else's domestic situation is like.

The first shot that you see in *a torch and a light (cover)* is a panning shot of the interior of a former abattoir. I was interested in imagining that as a place of refuge, and trying, through the juxtaposition of the various video components, to create a space that was kind of tender and even welcoming. To me that is not necessarily about showing pictures that are 'lovely', but opening up a certain type of thinking space for an audience. The gaps between the main components of the work, the vocal and the text components, are markers to plot out an imagined discursive space for whoever is experiencing the work. The ambiguity in the work then aims to promote a level of inclusivity, through the

borderland that it opens up—the in-between, ambiguous space where nothing is dictated, but everything needs to be negotiated in relation to the things that are around us.

Almost always any performative action that is captured in the work is a live take, and that sense of immediacy is something that interests me, particularly in relation to the idea of that immediate physical impulse as a way of understanding.

NP: Is there a process fit for purpose for each work or is there a general kaupapa for everything?

STA: In terms of a kaupapa for the performances, it is about trying to

facilitate a space (for me, or other people that I might be working with) where everyone feels, first of all, safe. Safe to be involved and safe to express themselves, with a sense of open-endedness and freedom. That has essentially become a starting point that I try and facilitate around any performance work, whether it's a video, film performance or a live performance. They are very different ways of practicing for me. There are different things that I need to be responsible to in both contexts. I'm more interested in working with other people in a live setting. Similarly with the video works—I'm getting more and more interested in

removing myself and placing others in front of the camera.

NP: Are there any specific moments in movies where the camera has particularly impressed you?

STA: I suppose a director that I might cite would be Apichatpong Weerasethakul. I've been watching his work for the last seven or eight years, and I could talk about a number of his films, but I'll just quickly mention *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, which came out in 2010. One of the things that I find compelling is his mode of storytelling, which is slow and meditative but also disrupts the conventional notion of time.



He has a gift for pointing a viewer towards something that is quite sparse, but framing that moment in a way that is rich, challenging and multi-layered. I wouldn't say that he's necessarily the most significant director that I look at, but I remember watching that film with Iain Frengley, who is a long-time collaborator, and both of us really just going on a journey with it. We were both on the Rita Angus Residency when that film came out and we watched it a number of times during those months.

NP: In cinema, long takes are typically used as a device to create tension, because audiences are used to a particular pace of editing that pushes the narrative along. I tend to look at video installation as the material make-up of something and then from there start to build up an idea and sink myself into any psychological or emotional territory the work might have. I find video installation work so much more satisfying when I think about things that way, because there are wider implications to a work in this field than simply the content.

STA: The work is not just the video clip. It's easy for me to send you a link to a video file, but that's not necessarily how I would have people consider my work. I think there is still a kind of subconscious preference given to the imagery of the video as opposed to the audio of the video.

Those things are always fundamental to what I would have people consider to be one of my works. It's only when an audience experiences the installation of the work that the discussion happens. That's where it's at for me.

NP: Some recent work of yours has been produced with a really strong focus towards light and colour—is that a serious consideration for you?

STA: I used to be less interested in staging—it used to be just about, 'okay, this is where we are and this is what we have to work with.' But then I found myself feeling limited by the reference to actual geographical locations. So it has become important to me to open up new kinds of spaces and new ways of making. I'm working through a relatively slow-burning process of reconsidering how I manage my own reference material, including the locations that might spark a particular project.

There is a shift from liveness to a more constructed space happening in my work. And so that changes the register, the overall tone or the inference that a singular work might prompt. In *Untitled (epilogue)* (2015), the work responds to Joanna Margaret Paul's poetry. The studio lighting used offered a number of things. It was a homage or reflection to her interest in colour and form. It was also a simple way to highlight the form and physical qualities of the

plants that feature in that video. And, on top of both of those things, it was also a device to help me propose an image beyond reality. That's really how I see it.

NP: Domesticity is elemental in Joanna Margaret Paul's work and you seem well suited to respond to it. How did you prepare for this commission?

STA: Mark Williams from Circuit, who commissioned that whole project, simply gave me a handful of her published poetry as a starting point for my own response. And as with her drawings or paintings, they enact a quality that is common, perhaps not everyday. But then her poetry, her paintings and drawings, are all triggers for much more complex issues.

I think her written work embodies some of the ambitions that I have for my own work: digestible, accessible, relatable to a common sense of experience.

NP: You responded more to the text, did you?

STA: Yes. You can read her film works through the same lens or filter that you might read any of her written or poetic works. Part of the power of the work and part of my own intrigue in it is the way that it is momentary, but somehow universal.

NP: In another recent work of yours, *Untitled (malady)* (2016) we see two women dancing, and there also appears to be an interest in light



and colour. It seems to me like the light is entering the frame from an exterior, or another space, shining through a patterned window. Are you working with the available light or something more interventional?

STA: One of the things that I love about that particular piece of footage is that there is no lighting apart from what was there in that moment. We had taken additional lighting with us and decided against using it—again, coming back to the immediacy within the sites or spaces, and using what was there. Very little post-production happened in terms of colour on that sequence.

I suppose the starting point for that footage was a sense of twilight, or transition, and essentially that is part of the work's fundamental interest. It explores a transition of movements, but also the work does

essentially move from the light to the dark. It is about communicating within that transitory space. That is reflected in the lighting, but also within the nuanced form of progression that happens socially within that sequence as well.

NP: Can you talk about that a little?

STA: *Untitled (malady)* references a scene in the 1978 Charles Burnett film, *Killer of Sheep*. That particular scene is one of the most noted in the film, and it shows the main protagonist, Stan, and his unnamed wife, slow dancing within their living room. Nothing and everything happens. The audience sees the couple slow dancing across the floor of their lounge. That's about as clearly as I can describe it, there's no dialogue in the film. I think from memory it's about a two-and-a-half minute sequence, which again is

interesting, given the time when that film was made. But within the context of that narrative, it is one of the most complex social interactions that takes place. And that became the impetus or the starting point for my own script. *Untitled (malady)* is really about two people, one real, one imagined, and what might happen if they met. I was interested in proposing that they become confidants and console each other in relation to their two very separate lives. Very simply put, the work is about how far you might connect with somebody, but then also from what proximity you might actually miss that person.

The thing that drew me to Burnett's film is the mode of storytelling as potent social and political critique. That film is set in the late 60s, early 70s, at a moment



when the American Civil Rights Movement was in a very different place. A very charged moment. In that film we're able to bite into all of what that means in a family situation. So, I'm interested in how we bridge that gap between these massive political discourses and the home.

NP: I'm going to bring us back to *two shoots that stretch far out*, where you appear to be reading a text to animals in a barn's interior. You perform the reading five times, but there appear to be subtle nuances between each reading. Can you expand upon this for me?

STA: The work consists of five sequences where I'm reading different versions of the same translation to different groups of animals. The different versions are defined by my own failings and my own inconsistencies. They're all live

readings—they all sound the same at the time, but the variation comes through errors in my delivery.

I became interested in the barn as a type of professional space, a socially provisional space, which is echoed within the interaction between me and the animals. Often the animals and their trainers used it as a rehearsal space, a training ground, and so it sits as a shifting space between the animals' home lives and their working lives. I became interested in that simple crossover.

NP: So the situation when you were doing the filming had a relationship with what's going on in the text itself—there's some sort of correlation between the architectural space and a psychological space...

STA: I wanted to explore the parallels between the imagined space that the

text carries, and the physical reality of the performance space.

NP: There is a strong sense of you investigating ideas around text and performance and how to consider this. I imagine that, because your art making is open ended, it would generate more to think about as an artist?

STA: It's becoming more and more clear to me that the things that I make are borne of the other things that I have made. The work itself has satisfied many of my questions, but it opened up a whole bunch more.

Shannon Te Ao: *Tēnei Ao Kawa Nei* is on display from 11 March until 23 July 2017.

The Borrowings of Francis Upritchard

Interview with Tessa Giblin



Arriving at the studio and home of Francis Upritchard on a Tuesday morning in East London, you'd hardly know she was opening a solo booth at Frieze Art Fair later that day, launching a fashion collaboration with Peter Pilotto the following day, and juggling studio visits and interviews throughout London's hectic art-focused week. She's the picture of tranquillity. The calm doesn't last long though, as discussions of Christchurch's rebuild, the Christchurch Art Gallery, our friends and memories are quickly interrupted by an escalating flurry of visitors and family dropping by and couriers collecting objects, packing crates, dropping off documents. I've lost track of who lives there and who is arriving to work, but it's a division that I sense Upritchard also pays little heed to: she surrounds herself with creative people; collaborating formally, or sharing ideas, materials and techniques informally. Many of the fabrics and materials you'll see in her sculptures have come to her via friends and family—others she's commissioned from artisan weavers. And she is also a 'borrower', like some of the more culturally critical attitudes of her objects. Her borrowing comes through travel—she picks up skills or discovers artefacts and forms as she moves around, and will stay for extended periods of time on residencies in order to learn the techniques she's hoping to master.

Tessa Giblin: When you are adopting objects from other cultures, or learning their craft techniques, how do you relate to the historical context of these forms?

Francis Upritchard: I love stories and mythology. When I first started working in the Amazon jungle (during a 2004 residency in Belem, Brazil), the guy I was working with told me all about his creatures and what they mean. One of them was a mythological creature—a guy with his feet turned backwards, who's holding a goat. You'd see him and shout, 'Hey, my goat!' and he'd surprise you by running off in the opposite direction. He also made a lot of dolphins. Apparently the dolphin symbolises another mythological creature—a man who could turn into a

dolphin, then go and have sex with all the women on a little island and swim off again. And there was another, a monkey with one eye, and, well, loads of different local mythologies. I guess I find these ideas a little more interesting than religion.

TG: How did you find yourself working in the Amazon, working with rubber from trees?

FU: I was trying to make my work as I usually did, using found objects. But during that trip to Brazil, I couldn't find any spare objects because everyone there uses everything. I went to a craft fair, met my friend, a local artisan named Mr Darlindo, and just fell in love with his work. I asked if I could pay him to teach me. So I went out to his amazing place on the edge of town and he showed me how he made his work. Even now I buy material from him. He supplies me with balata—raw, untreated rubber straight from the tree. I heat it in a bath of nearly boiling water, and it becomes very hot and malleable, and then I sculpt it in a bath of cold water. So the works are made, pretty much, underwater. I've got about twenty minutes, because it's heating and cooling simultaneously. I'm basically burning my hands by putting them in hot water, then soaking them underwater for twenty minutes—it's a nightmare on the hands, but it's also extremely fun. It is an ancient technique that people have been using for centuries. More recently balata was also used industrially inside old-fashioned golf balls, and it used to be used for underwater cabling.

TG: And what creates the variation in colour?

FU: The darker brown is older balata, and the lighter brown is newer, better quality. Before he sends it to me, my friend heats it a few times to get some of the bark out, so it'll be slightly cleaner and have hopefully a few less insects.

TG: Have there been other times in which you've studied with artisans from different fields?

FU: Yes, a lot. There's a big pottery vessel that I made

with Nicholas Brandon, who's a potter I've known since I was a child. He's from that generation who are digging their own clay, making their own glazes, doing completely wood-fired work—both bisque and second firing. I work with him a lot, and I've worked with other potters over the years. It's because pottery is really ancient as well. I first started learning at Camden Arts Centre, but I could never get the glazes or the feel I wanted. I realised it was because I was using this pretty much dead technique of firing in an electric kiln. It's not alive. I think Nick does it over eighteen hours with bisque firing and fourteen hours for the other firing. So it's very long, technical and precise, but it's mostly to add depth and irregularities to the glazes.

TG: Do you think about materials as things that hold meaning, associations or contexts that you want an artwork to become laden with?

FU: Sort of, but not like 'this is cotton, cotton means this'. It's more about something I pick up and I feel really drawn to. Lots of works at the moment contain charms that I have collected over many years. Even though I don't believe in luck, I have a sentimental attachment to the charms or to certain fabrics and things. I really love fabrics—they're important to me because they're beautiful, and they are worn. Whether you like fashion or not, every kind of cloth you put on your body is a choice and can be read.

TG: You often seem to work with quite rough, imperfect fabrics; fabrics where you can feel the particular fibres within them. You don't seem to favour machine-made fabrics.

FU: I use many good quality fabrics that are maybe hand-woven rather than machine-woven. The most recent Japanese ones are just very sophisticated loom-woven. But at the moment, I'm using a lot of nylon (like tights) and printed fabrics as well. It really is a huge range: hand-woven and painted bespoke for me; a silk scarf from a second-hand store; generic wool; high-quality

wool; cheap linen; funny tights; and cheap acrylic. They're all different—one figure wears muslin I dyed myself, another wears a T-shirt that I owned. So, you know, lots of them have quite personal stories. One of the shawls, my weaver friend gave to me, and her brother had given it to her. The accumulation of stories is nice. Fabric from an old skirt of mine. The piece of trimming that I have been carrying around for years—I've still got some of it left. An old blanket of Martino's. An old blanket I found in New Plymouth. Hand-painted trousers copying a curtain that I have at home. Fabric that my neighbour made for the clothing brand Acne, with a Mexican jeans patch ironed on. Lots of different times and types of things jammed together. There's even some fabric my sister Hannah bought for me, and I thought—that's disgusting, what on earth will I use that for? But I kept it because every fabric she ever gives me ends up in my work. I'm not trying to make pretty things; I'm trying to make things that are interesting.

TG: You say that you don't want to make pretty things, but you want to make interesting things. How could you describe what that means to you?

FU: I've always found figurative sculpture to be really problematic. I'd been making this animalistic sculpture for many years, and around 2007 I decided not to make any more shows for a year. I just worked on my figurative art to see how that developed. Later on I went back and I realised that of course the Pākehā shrunken heads are figurative art, and that the mummy is figurative, but I'd never seen them that way. When I made *The Thinker* (2007), I was looking at carved, medieval German work. I felt like the pieces I was making were very old-fashioned and the most obvious way to take them out of this old-fashioned feeling was to add colour. I was doing this faux-bone look—scraping them, scoring them. It's very much in the vein of Rodin's *Thinker*, sort of gone-wrong as if it was mated with a medieval sculpture. Also I wanted it to look like a bit of a doofus.

TG: The sculpting of faces is such a curious thing, isn't it, because they're so sacred to so many people. How do you think about those complications or those sensitivities, especially when looking at or borrowing from different cultures?

FU: Well, they're so different. The Pākehā heads (like *Sammuel Horwell*, 2015) have a really different meaning politically than these other sculpted faces. The Pākehā heads are really specifically about the situation in New Zealand. We all know about the very problematic historical trade of Māori heads, so for me this was like feeding back to the aggressor, like you're buying back your cousin who was up to no good.

I directly work with Māori and Pacific treasure—for example, the works that I call ancestral boxes. They're very inaccurate—decorative rather than spiritual. They're meaningless, rather than full of the power of real taonga,

and they have no mana. They're plastic rather than bone—they're really bereft of anything, apart from showing how very special the real thing is.

TG: Even in your own personal narrative?

FU: Especially in my personal narrative. And so they're more about memory; they're all made here, in Britain, not looking at Māori work but remembering it, and remembering it obviously incorrectly. Also I'm trying to force these shapes into the voids left in compass boxes, so that gives it another, sort of, fucked-up-ness. That's the shape of a compass and I'm trying to make some sort of tiki-ish thing in that hole, so not only is my memory incorrect, but the whole shape of it is never going to work, so it's quadruply wrong. Around the time I'd started making these works, I'd gone to visit the Wellcome Trust in London and saw a whole load of tikis that were really incorrect, which were made



Francis Upritchard *Sammuel Horwell* 2015. Foam, nylon, fake hair and teeth, resin, glue. Courtesy Kate MacGarry, London

by sailors on the way back from New Zealand in the nineteenth century, appropriating and borrowing from their travels in the South Pacific. That's when I started making the heads and the misremembered tikis. They're made of this plastic, which is basically a poisonous material, rather than a natural bone. And they're made by modelling rather than carving, which is taking away something—building rather than removing. You know, I'm not religious, and I think all my things are specifically non-spiritual. The figures are all about the look of the figure, they're nothing to do with inner life.

TG: You also seem to have quite a tender relationship with literature. Time and again we'll see catalogues and artists' books about your work populated with pieces of fiction you have commissioned.

FU: Yes, I read a lot of New Zealand literature when I was young. Maurice Gee, Margaret Mahy, Witi Ihimaera, Owen Marshall. But Gee was actually my favourite. I loved those strange stories from O.

TG: And so when you commission works of fiction for your books, what do you say to authors?

FU: I just say, 'Look at the work and do what you want.' Keep it short. Have fun. Do it fast. The texts are commissioned to talk alongside my work. Not necessarily about it, but often there are characters or components that relate directly to my work, that have been really important to me. The last one, done for the *Jealous Saboteurs* book, is by Deborah Levy. She is a fantastic writer. I'd just read her book *Swimming Home*, which I adored, as well as her earlier novels, and a really lovely feminist text called *Things I Don't Want to Know*, which is a rebuttal to George Orwell's *Why I Write*. It's a bit like Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, it's super good. She was born in South Africa. Her father was anti-apartheid and was jailed, and the family politics are very present in her earlier works, which are set in South Africa. So I thought that she would really understand my New Zealand past, and

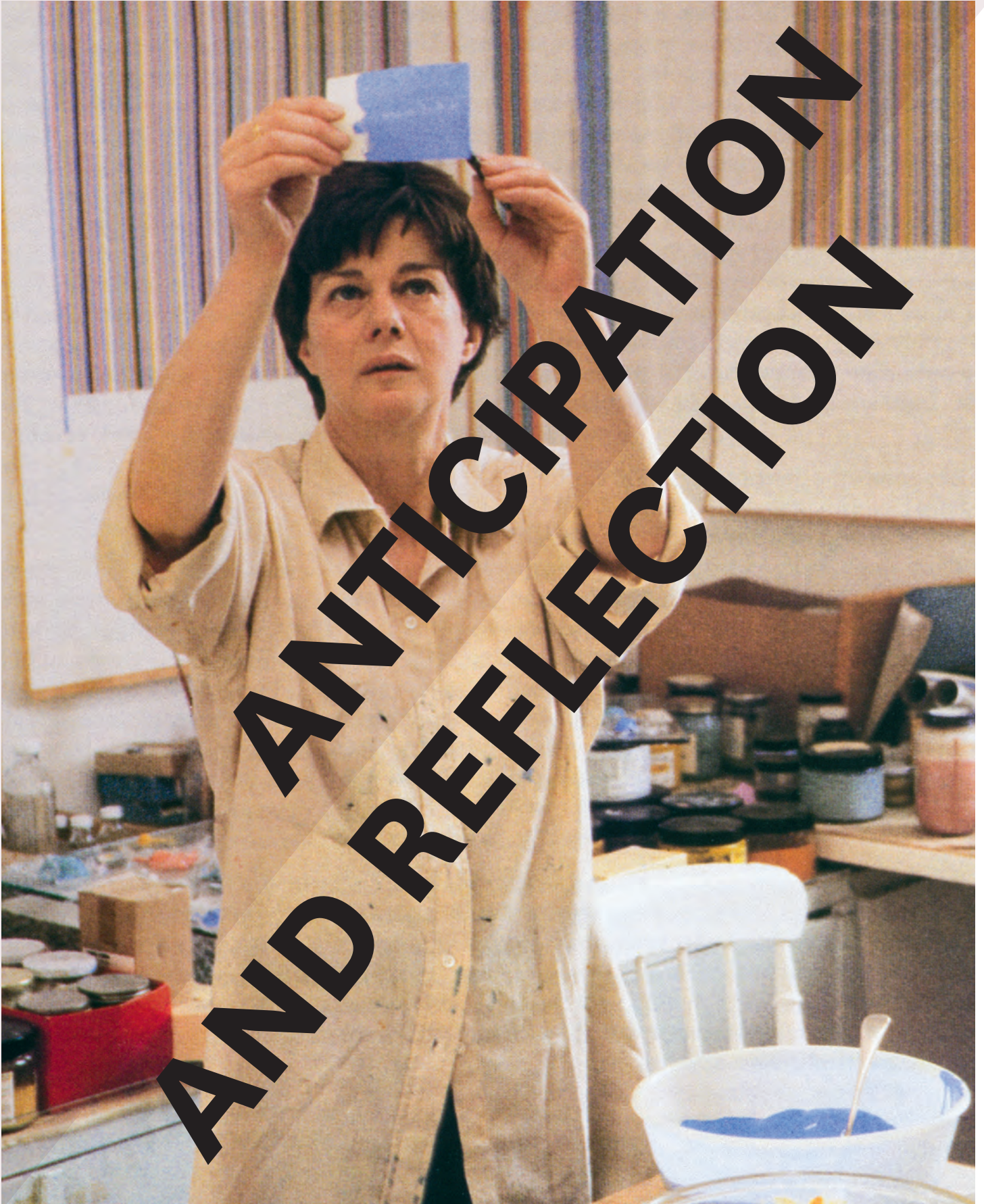
write about it interestingly. The story she wrote isn't actually about that much at all, but she touches on things that are current and relevant, like fleeing from war. It's really beautiful, it's actually about that sculpture I talked about earlier, *The Thinker*: she's written a text about what *The Thinker* might be thinking.

TG: When you leave your home, as you and I have done, your reflection on it and its place in another world comes into focus in quite a sharp and surprising way. I remember becoming profoundly aware of the extraordinary historical self-determination of women within New Zealand—something I'd always known about, but it was in the telling of the story of Kate Sheppard and her fellow suffragettes to others, that it really began to impact on me.

FU: That's something I thought about a lot when making this exhibition—what changes when you leave. The exposure I had to different forms affected me a lot—from Rome to Japan, Brazil to London, absorbing the sculptures, architecture and crafts everywhere I went—and I think also emboldened me to reflect on the New Zealand cultural complexities in a potentially freer way, with a self-deprecating idea of how the modelling or making of something transforms the memory of what it actually was in the first place.

Tessa Giblin was recently appointed director of Talbot Rice Gallery, the University of Edinburgh. She is commissioner of the Pavilion of Ireland for the 2017 Venice Biennale. Francis Upritchard lives and works in London, and is represented by Ivan Anthony in Auckland and London and Anton Kern in New York.

Tessa Giblin spoke to Francis Upritchard in October 2016. Francis Upritchard: Jealous Saboteurs is on display from 25 March until 16 July 2017. It is presented as an exhibition partnership between City Gallery Wellington and Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne and supported by City Gallery Wellington Foundation.



**AND ANTICIPATION
AND REFLECTION**

Visiting Bridget Riley's Studios

This is a time of considerable anticipation at the Gallery: Bridget Riley's new work for Christchurch is due for completion in late May 2017. A wall painting, it's the fourth of five significant works chosen to mark the long years of our closure for seismic strengthening following the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010–11. It has been paid for, sight unseen, by a group of wonderful women donors, with further support for costs associated with its installation secured by auction at our Foundation's 2016 gala dinner.

But, as well as being grateful to so many for so much support, I'm reflecting on an enduring acquaintance with the artist whom we've commissioned, for I've known Riley and admired her work now for more than thirty-five years. Not that I was there at the beginning of her lengthy and stellar career. By the time I met Riley in 1981, she was internationally recognised as an abstract painter and I was seeking to write my M.Phil thesis on her work. I had seen two exhibitions of her work in London, at the Rowan Gallery and at the Warwick Arts Trust, and I was entranced with her accomplishment. Concurrently showing a body of curved, wavy works in one venue and introducing the so-called 'Egyptian' series at her dealer's gallery, these were knock-out shows.

I had made a deliberate career change when I was thirty and had turned to studying twentieth-century art history at the University of London's Courtauld Institute of Art. With all its galleries, libraries and other resources, London was an

amazing place to study, and our tiny postgraduate class was both challenging and transforming. Conscious that my future was likely to be in the Southern Hemisphere, however, I sought to write about an artist with an international reputation and, in general, my preference was for an accomplished woman. So I was pleased when, after being approached by the late John Golding—a distinguished art historian, and one of my teachers—Bridget Riley agreed to discuss my research project.

And so began numerous visits to Riley's studio in Holland Park. I cycled through back streets to see her two or three times a week; I watched her work and questioned her endlessly. I happily fitted into her household, having lunch with her and her assistants; for Riley it's a daily convention that endures—a time to refresh the eye and to relax from the carefully painted curved, or the even more demanding straight, line.

Working my way through a wealth of media clippings, I became fascinated by how reviewers sometimes had reflected on the way her work developed within self-imposed and intentional limits. But just as often they diverged from her concerns and became caught up in some other context or debate; at this time the critical and theoretical frameworks of post-modernity were yet to be applied, at least within mainstream art history, and we considered the artist's intention a privileged key to its understanding. There's still much to be said for this and it's important that quality information is assembled while

Opposite: Bridget Riley working in her London studio c.1980. Photo: Bill Warhurst



good artists are still active.

During this time I became aware of Riley's intense dislike of the 1960s term 'Op', which was applied to her work following the inclusion of some early black and white paintings in *The Responsive Eye* in New York's Museum of Modern Art¹—she felt it denoted little more than a passing fad. I could sense her outrage when an image of hers was reproduced on lengths of fabric for the fashion market and when copyright legislation in the United States at this time did not support her rights of ownership.

Consciously working within the traditions of high art, Riley had rejected the option of making several versions of a given work except rarely and for very specific reasons.² Despite a full-time and unswerving commitment to her life's work and despite her use of assistants, I came to understand why she had completed relatively few finished works.

I saw how working within deliberately reduced options was pivotal to her form of invention and how she viewed black and white as extremes of colour; I understood that as much as mathematical formulae were alien to her practice, observation and experience were its central pivots. I saw how much she had learned from Georges Seurat.³ I began to see how colour really was her subject, with nature and her intuitive memory of experiences being key criteria for

taking an idea further or deciding when a given painting was ready to be launched.

So, what was Riley working on in her studio when I visited in the early 1980s?

In the winter of 1980, on her way to Japan, she spent three weeks in Egypt. Visiting the ancient tombs of Luxor, she was astounded at the consolidated effect of what she called a 'fabric of colour' in the well-preserved frieze paintings. Here was a restricted palette of colours that was fresh and perfectly harmonised, a condensation of light itself. On her return to London, these colours remained insistent—they had to be made. Having not used oil paint for some twenty years, Riley now felt the need to return to the medium so that she could approximate the brilliance of the colours. Still working through the clustered, twisted curves associated with paintings like the Art Gallery of New South Wales's *Aurum* (1976) at that time,⁴ instinctively she reverted to using the stripe, the neutrality of its form chosen to serve the brilliance of the new palette.

I recall her studio walls and tables covered with the Egyptian colours in many arrangements. Working studies on graph paper were dwarfed by full sized cartoons. Multiple strips of black, white and recalled colours hung ready to be introduced as part of her critique of studies as they developed. She enjoyed the pleasure of painting alongside others in her studio, but by

Above left and middle: Bridget Riley working in her London studio c.1980. Photos: Bill Warhurst. Above right: Jenny Harper and Bridget Riley.



using assistants her eye was able to remain fresh to judge and adjust each result. Then, as now, Riley liked to work alone in the evenings, and as her assistants work a three-day week, the remaining four days gave her time to survey what had been achieved with the necessary detachment.

Hers was a busy work space; a white, round table by the files that I was working on and two studios, one up a few stairs from street level and another on the floor above. Floors and walls were painted white, with some of her early *pointilliste* renditions of landscapes directly after Seurat providing colour. It was an active and engaged time for me as a student.

I had kept in touch over the years, but visited Riley again for a particular purpose in April 2004, having been asked to interview her for a British Council publication to accompany a major show that was to tour to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and City Gallery Wellington. She was in the studio she had renovated in Les Basaacs, France, where she enjoyed extended periods when she could work pretty much alone.

This time my daughter Sarah accompanied me—and I was delighted for her to meet Bridget since I had been pregnant while completing my thesis (and yes, cycling through the back streets of London). After a memorable Easter weekend together in Paris, we journeyed south by train and stayed in an old stable block refurbished as guest

quarters at Riley's place for about three days.

Again she worked in her studio during the day and, once more, we talked endlessly, this time more freely about her by now lengthy career and her wider interests. I recall being interested in the intersections between the colours and patterns of her work and Islamic art and architecture, which we both enjoyed; equally, we discussed the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins as a further example of how a strict foundation often results in greater freedom. We walked and talked and ate with Robert Kudielka, professor of aesthetics in Berlin and a long-time friend and writer about her work, who was also staying at this time.

By now she was well recognised in Japan and she told us of being presented with the Praemium Imperiale, the equivalent of a Nobel Prize in the visual arts by the Emperor of Japan. Interestingly, the largest percentage of her work has been purchased for public and private collections in Japan.

She was consolidating her thoughts in the studio with four- and five-colour rhomboid forms—both a logical progression of her visual imagination and also hard to imagine without Matisse—which seemed to dance across the planes on which they featured. Over the days a publishable interview took shape and was sent backwards and forwards for clarification and editing after my return.⁵



By the time I visited Bridget Riley's studio again in mid-2016, my travel was for an altogether more specific reason: we had decided to commission a work of hers for Christchurch.

I arrived in Europe in time for the opening of a large-scale solo exhibition of her work at the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag in late June. It was such a privilege to see her and her work in the home of Mondrian—an artist who, like Seurat, she's admired for many years. It was especially interesting to note a small number of her works at the end of the collection display of his. Such harmony.

I saw her a few days later at her East London studio, viewing graphics for a glazed internal window, visible from both sides, which she had designed for installation at the exhibition's

end at the Gemeentemuseum—and she told me of the lengthy process involved in producing this single pane of glass in a factory. Her work takes many trials and I recalled her telling me years before of how the four screen-prints, *Nineteen Greys* (1968), took over a year to print.⁶

But then we discussed possibilities for her forthcoming Christchurch commission. An exciting moment. Only rarely are we involved in the purchase of a work by such a well-established international artist. However, relationships and a sequence of events sometimes work together to ensure this can happen. By reaching above and beyond our usual means, we've managed to target a group of artists whose work we could not have afforded at other times.

The first collections-related prompt to

Above: Bridget Riley's assistants work on a cartoon in 2016.

approach Riley came when we bought a wonderful black and white koru painting from the Gordon Walters Estate in 2014. I recalled Walters telling me of how he'd travelled to Sydney specifically to see an exhibition of her work in 1979, meeting and talking with her on this occasion.⁷

I had become aware from a social visit to Riley earlier in 2014 that, after a long period of working with colour, she had returned to the stark contrasts of black and white. She had also been making a range of wall works, directly painted onto well-prepared spaces to specific instructions. The purchase of our Walters prompted me to think again of her and to propose a work for Christchurch.

So my most recent visit to Riley's studio was made with others. Some donors—and some of their sons and daughters who lived in London—came with me. We had visited London's National Gallery and I had created a tour of my favourite paintings that reflected what I knew had intrigued her at different times. As well as marvelling at Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434) I pointed out the artist's 1433 *Self Portrait*, which Riley had copied as a teenager; I explained how she would have noted the remarkable blue of the sky in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1520–23); and finished with Seurat's extraordinary *Bathing at Asnières* (1884), her all-time favourite in that collection.

Our studio visit itself was magic and Riley was utterly generous with her time and thoughts. Her assistants installed three full-scale cartoons and she discussed how she progressed her ideas and worked through versions. We looked at other works in her storage area and she explained how often she re-visits and pushes further colours she may have used before. The colours of her 1970 painting *Vapour*, a case in point, were re-presented in a magnificent wall-scaled rectangle of circles of grey, mushroom and a muted green, also painted directly on the wall in a smaller square, to indicate the difference this made.

After a studio lunch, we leapt into two cars and headed to Holland Park. This was unplanned,

but what luck—we were going again to where it all began for me thirty-five years ago.

So much was familiar, the white walls and floors and the table I had sat at in 1981. We were able to see the early Seurat-related studies, the basement where her archive is now, two levels of studio and, as if to add to an already perfect day, we saw some of the works of art she owned. After a day of taking about her own work, to hear Bridget Riley analyse her Matisse drawings in terms of her 'friends, the straight line and the circle', was an absolute highlight. The simplicity and joy of it all.

So it seems fortuitous that Matisse's brilliant *Jazz* portfolio (1947) is coming to Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu and will be here when our new wall painting by Bridget Riley is revealed. Won't it be wonderful to see groups of children in our gallery grasping how very difficult it is to copy Riley's or Matisse's work or that of Gordon Walters? The easier it appears, the harder it is to do.

Jenny Harper

Director

Notes

- 1 *The Responsive Eye*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1964.
- 2 Among these, she made an exhibition version of *Late Morning* using PVA on linen when London's Tate Gallery, which had purchased the majestic 1967–8 work (on canvas), declined to lend it for an exhibition.
- 3 *Bridget Riley: Learning from Seurat*, Courtauld Institute Gallery, London, 2015.
- 4 For other works then in Australian collections see my essay in Queensland Art Gallery, *Bridget Riley: An Australian Context*, 1985, 14pp.
- 5 'Bridget Riley in conversation with Jenny Harper' in *Bridget Riley: Paintings and Drawings 1961–2004*, Ridinghouse, London, 2004, pp.94–9. Subsequently translated into German, it was also reproduced in a larger edition of writings about her as 'The spirit of enquiry', in Robert Kudielka (ed.), *The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley Collected Writings 1965–2009*, Ridinghouse, London, 2009, pp.172–9, 184–5.
- 6 The subtle tones of grey changed unpredictably as they were overprinted many times and it was necessary for the Kelpra studio to pull a run of about 500 to complete a perfect edition of seventy-five. Four of these are in Australasia, with one each in Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, and in AGNSW, NGV and NGA (see *Bridget Riley: An Australian Context*, 1985, pp.5 and 14).
- 7 Gordon Walters's *Black on white* (1965) was purchased by Christchurch Art Gallery in 2014 as part of the N. Barrett Bequest collection. See also my article 'Black, White and 'Op: Links between Gordon Walters, Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely' in James Ross and Laurence Simmons (eds.), *Gordon Walters: Order and Intuition*, Auckland, 1989, pp.24–31.



My Favourite

Valerie Muir is the wife of Brian Muir (1943–1989), the first professional director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

I have chosen Don Binney's *Canterbury Garden Bird* (1970) as my favourite painting in the Christchurch collection. This painting was a major work that my husband, Brian Muir, bought for the Robert McDougall Art Gallery when he was director in the 1970s. Don came down to Christchurch in an old Kombi van specifically to paint the work. The painting shows a very solid black bird in the foreground, a fantail, resting on large green leaves. In the background are the Cashmere hills.

To me this is a very formal painting compared to the elegant flowing lines and shapes of another Binney Brian bought for the Manawatu Art Gallery—*Pond Bird* (1970)—or the painting we bought for ourselves on the eve of our departure from Christchurch entitled *The Entrance to the Manukau Harbour*.

These three paintings that I have loved and lived with over the years gave me an insight into Don's ability to study and then capture the essence of each subject that he chose to work on.

An environmentalist and conservationist, Don's love of painting the New Zealand landscape, with or without birds, was an interesting choice as New Zealand was inhabited mostly by birds before humans came here. I would like to quote Don's own words from 1971—I feel they say it all about his lifetime love of our country:

New Zealand's remote and isolated ecology was one of the most sensitive and integral in the world. Remarkably specialised birds filled the roles more usually occupied by mammals elsewhere. Their whole existence was reciprocal to a delicate and specialised forest system. I think a characteristic of this, and a lot of work from this

period is the structural coordination of bird and land form—what I think of as resonance really. A physical resonance between one shape and the other. Why? Because as an ornithologist I've always been thoroughly involved in the way in which the land, the environment, the creature lives in, modifies the creature. The creature of course also modifies the land: it's symbiosis really, isn't it?

My last memory of Don was when I attended the opening of the new Christchurch Art Gallery. Don was there, elegant with his walking stick. He invited me to accompany him through the new galleries. Of course everyone knew who he was, so it was very special for me to be given the VIP treatment by one of New Zealand's major artists, who produced paintings from the 1960s onwards. Thank you, gentleman Don.

Don Binney *Canterbury Garden Bird* 1970. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 1970



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TE PUNA O WAIWHETU

Pagework no.32

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.

Gee, it's good to be human! Secure our in our advanced intelligence and bi-pedal superiority, we stroll and swagger through our domain, towering over all those other less fortunate, less *evolved* creatures. We've got the internet, we've been to the moon. We're masters of the universe. And yet...

At the back of our collective consciousness, somewhere just along from where all those half-remembered passwords and PINs might end up, a faint, ill-defined unease persists. Alone in the woods, or late at night, it takes on clearer form. Bigfoot, Sasquatch, Yeti; is it a lingering sense of inadequacy that prompts our imaginings of these monstrous, muscular offshoots from our genetic line? An anxiety that our celebrated evolutionary ascendancy might have left us ill-equipped to grapple with life's more primal challenges?

James Oram's art practice thrives on just this kind of existential insecurity. With a fondness for the out of place, absurd and maladjusted, he enjoys how our primeval and civilised sides wrestle with each other

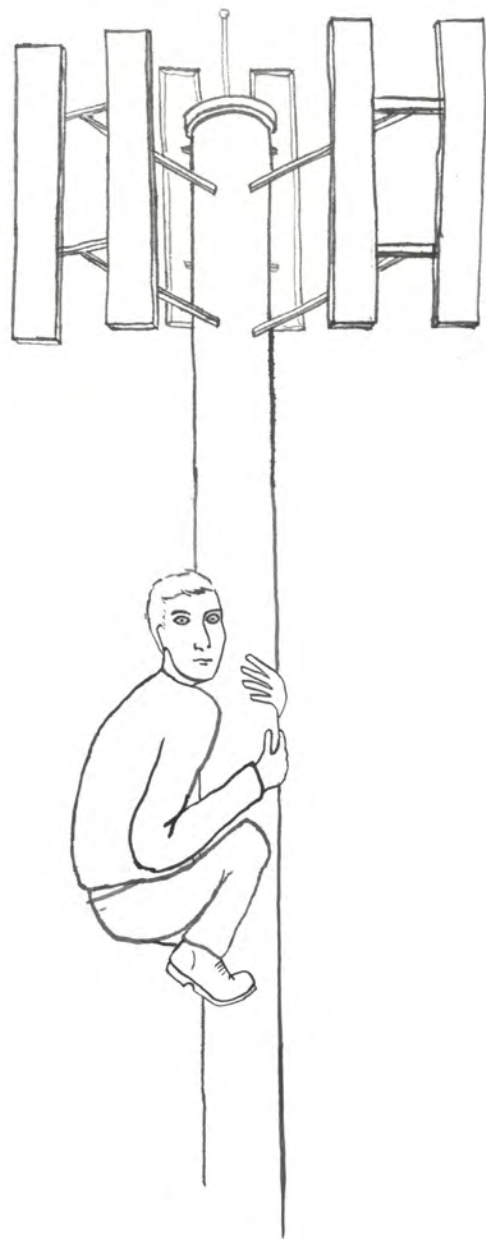
through the challenges of modern life. Do Segways and hoverboards represent the heights of technological development, or are the countless YouTube clips of people falling off them a more accurate measure of where we're at as a species? Sure, we conceived the internet, but instead of using it to unite humanity or rescue our failing planet, haven't we mostly used it to gossip and show off to our friends? And how much has all our intellectual firepower gained us if we use it up camouflaging cell phone towers so they resemble (more or less) the trees that our unreconstructed side yearns for? If the bewildered, possum-eyed *Homo sapiens* staring out at us from Oram's pagework is a symbol of anything, it might be this: our fearsome capacity for technological advancement is rivalled only by our proportionate ability to screw things up.

Felicity Milburn

Curator

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

James Oram *Untitled 2017*. Acrylic on paper







Postcard From...

EMILIE SITZIA

Maastricht, Netherlands

Dear Christchurch,
I hope you are doing better and healing, slowly but surely. It has been four years since I moved to Maastricht and life here is pretty good. I am now director of the Master Arts and Heritage at the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands (an exciting international and interdisciplinary programme).

Maastricht is an old European city cut through by the river Maas and crisscrossed with bridges. The high, narrow and intricately decorated brick buildings make the town look like a doll's house village. People move around town on foot or by bicycle. No one can live without a bike here and I am the proud owner of a matte black Cortina 'oma' (grandmother) bike!

The art world here is more layered and labyrinthine than in Christchurch so it took (and is still taking) time to get used to. But I'm starting to get the hang of it.

The art school is separated from the university, which makes collaborations and fun projects a bit more complicated. But this year the curatorship students will get to work with the students from the art school (MAFAD) on an exhibition around the theme of 'debate'. That should be interesting.

The university often works with the Jan van Eyck Academie (famous for its artists, curators and writers residency programme). Recently we worked on a project that brought together MA students and participants at the JVE to think, read and debate (a lot) around the concept of utopia. My favorite part of the JVE is the print studio... they have an A2 RISO! I know a few design geeks in Christchurch that would have loved

the recent RISO Expert Meetings in 2014 and 2016.

Marres is another interesting institution to work with here. Right now, they are focusing on the senses, and organising exhibitions, walks, lectures and workshops that examine the body and the arts, and the knowledge (intellectual and emotional) created by artists and the public.

And throughout the city empty post-industrial buildings allow for some really interesting practices. For example curator Ardi Poels set up De Ridder (a hybrid between a gallery and an institution) in an empty brewery by the river. Her project, the 'Cassini Cruise', was a constantly changing exhibition that acted as a meeting point for young artists, art professionals and collectors. She's now looking for a new building to start again.

This spirit of reconversion extends to any heritage building, and there are many churches here that have been converted into bookstores, bars and restaurants... History is never far away Maastricht.

The support the Netherlands offers to the arts is amazing. Funding is always findable—as long as you know whom to ask and you fill in the paperwork correctly. As a result there is always something going on: from the *European Fine Arts Fair* to *Fashion Clash*; a pop-up exhibition or an opening at the Bonnefanten Museum. Maastricht is at the heart of the Euroregion which means it is close to everywhere: within a two-and-a-half hour train journey you can be in Cologne, Brussels, Amsterdam or Paris.

And I didn't even tell you about the chocolate waffles from Pinky yet...

Exhibition Programme

Opening this Quarter

Shannon Te Ao:

Tēnei Ao Kawa Nei

11 March – 23 July 2017

Tenderness and human longing are revealed in Shannon Te Ao's award-winning video installations.

Francis Upritchard:

Jealous Saboteurs

25 March – 16 July 2017

Exquisitely imagined, startlingly strange works by an internationally acclaimed New Zealand artist.

Sydow: Tomorrow Never Knows

25 March – 23 July 2017

1960s London set the scene for Carl Sydow's playful, op-inspired sculptures.

Don Peebles: Relief

Constructions

8 April – 3 September 2017

Calm, enigmatic and elegant works of art by Don Peebles.

Wayne Youle: Look Mum No

Hands

14 April – 3 September 2017

Full to the brim with high energy, sharp-witted artmaking.

Your Hotel Brain

From 13 May 2017

Energies and anxieties from the threshold of the new millennium.

Closing this Quarter

Energies: Haines & Hinterding

Until 5 March 2017

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

The Devil's Blind Spot:

Recent Strategies in

New Zealand Photography

Until 12 March 2017

Recent photography by an emerging generation of New Zealand artists.

Lisa Walker: O + O = O

Until 2 April 2017

Audacious new works by an internationally acclaimed New Zealand jeweller.

Olivia Spencer Bower:

Views from the Mainland

Until 2 April 2017

A selection of paintings by modernist painter Olivia Spencer Bower.

Above Ground

Until 30 April 2017

This show explores the impact of architecture, imagination and memory.

Beasts

Until 30 April 2017

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

Simon Morris:

Yellow Ochre Room

Until 30 April 2017

A painted room which offers space and time for contemplation.

No! That's Wrong XXXXXX

Until 30 April 2017

Three paintings by Tony Fomison, Philip Clairmont and Allen Maddox.

Bad Hair Day

Until 28 May 2017

The wild and wonderful ways of hair, shaped with younger audiences in mind.

Ongoing

***He Rau Maharataka Whenua:
A Memory of Land***

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

***Martin Creed: Everything
is Going to be Alright***

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

***Tony de Lautour: Silent
Patterns***

An outdoor painting inspired by wartime Dazzle camouflage.

Reuben Paterson: The End

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

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

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

Ronnie Van Hout: Quasi

A giant sculpture on the Gallery roof.

***S raphine Pick: Untitled
(Bathers)***

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

***Marie Shannon:
The Aachen Faxes***

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

He Waka Eke Noa

Colonial-era portraits represent a legacy that illuminates the present.

Beneath the Ranges

Mid twentieth-century artists focus on people working in the land.

***Te Tihi o Kahukura:
The Citadel of Kahukura***

A series of works produced by Bill Sutton under the mantle of Te Tihi o Kahukura.

Coming Soon

Bridget Riley: Cosmos

3 June – 12 November 2017
Celebrating a new wall work for Christchurch.

Kushana Bush:

The Burning Hours

10 June – 15 October 2017
Dazzling paintings that are rich in colour, culture and art history.

Events

Talks

The Devil's Blind Spot

5 March / 3.30pm / meet at the front desk / free

Senior Curator Lara Strongman and some of the young photographers featured in *The Devil's Blind Spot* discuss their respective work and the future of photography in New Zealand.

Shannon Te Ao

11 March / 10.30am / meet at the front desk / free

He's just won New Zealand's most prestigious art prize, now Shannon Te Ao (Ngāti Tuwharetoa) is showing at the Gallery.

Art and Philanthropy at London's Foundling Hospital

15 March / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Founded by a philanthropic sea captain, the Foundling Hospital in London took in abandoned children—and along the way built an enduring relationship with prominent artists. Art researcher Margaux Warne traces its development.

Hera Lindsay Bird and Ashleigh Young

22 March / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Join poet Hera Lindsay Bird ('New Zealand's most exciting young poet'—*the Guardian*) and writer and editor Ashleigh Young (the creator of 'exceptional series of stories and observations'—*Listener*) for a glass of wine and a chat about poetry, writing and life.

Francis Upritchard

25 March / 2.30pm / meet at the front desk / free

A rare chance to explore the extraordinary world of Francis Upritchard's *Jealous Saboteurs* with the artist herself, joined by director of Monash University Museum of Art, Charlotte Day.

Adorned: New Zealand's Jewellery Heritage

29 March / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Justine Olsen, curator of decorative art at Te Papa presents the fascinating history of jewellery making in New Zealand.

Slow Art Day Tour

April 8 / 11am and 2pm / meet at the front desk / free

Slow Art Day is a global event with a simple mission: help more people discover for themselves the joy of looking at and loving art. Join one of our exceptional volunteer guides for a slow and in-depth exploration of five incredible works in our collection.

Art Thieves, Fakes and Fraudsters

12 April / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

New Zealand author Penelope Jackson talks about an often hidden aspect of New Zealand's art history and cultural landscape: art crime. This lecture, based on her meticulously researched book of the same name, will cover some of New Zealand's most scandalous art crimes of the last 100 years—some notorious but others covered up by embarrassed owners and institutions.

Immerse II

Key Moments in European Art:

From Renaissance to Rococo

21 April – 12 May / 10.30am / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / \$75 for the series or \$20 per session

A four-week lecture series presented by Dr Ian Lochhead. Each week will focus on a single work by artists da Vinci, Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Watteau, each of which represented a significant change of direction in Western art or demonstrated a new mode of artistic expression. Bookings required, see the Gallery website for more details.

Tomorrow Never Knows

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

Carl Sydow was a leading light in New Zealand art of the 1960s and 70s—until tragedy struck. Curator Peter Vangioni discusses and illustrates his work and life.

Don Peebles: Abstraction and Innovation

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

Artist and curator Grant Banbury traces the career of Don Peebles (1922–2010), celebrated for his significant contribution to the development of abstraction in twentieth-century New Zealand art.

Films

The Wrong Trousers

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

This 1993 stop-motion animated film sees Wallace and his long-suffering dog Gromit take in an unusual lodger with disastrous results. Fun for the whole family.

Special Events

Gigs at the Gallery: Grayson Gilmore

3 March / 7pm / NZI Foyer / \$15 online, \$20 doorsales

Wellington-based singer, multi-instrumentalist, producer and composer Grayson Gilmore performs material from his forthcoming new album in the NZI Foyer for our first gig of the year. Gilmore is one of the most exciting musicians working in the country today, so don't miss this chance to catch him live.

See the Gallery website for more details.

All About Women: Satellite

5 March / 12.30pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Streaming live from the Sydney Opera House straight to the Gallery, and brought to you in partnership with the Christchurch WORD Festival. We kick things off with Geena Davis in her talk, 'Women and Media'. Next, go backstage with Jessa Crispin in an All About Women Satellite exclusive to explore the ideas in her latest book, *Why I Am Not A Feminist*. Then head back to the main event for the Nasty Women panel, featuring Yassmin Abdel-Magied, Van Badham and Lindy West, who will explore the labels that are deployed to try to put women in their place.

Shades of Sutton

12 March / 2.30pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

If you're interested in Canterbury art history, you won't want to miss this symposium celebrating the centenary of the birth of Bill Sutton, who painted some of this country's most iconic artworks.

See the Gallery website for more details.

The Mix: Garden Party

3 May / 6pm / NZI Foyer / free

Celebrate the end of summer and daylight saving at our first Mix event of 2017. Rediscover the Gallery after dark as it comes alive with a vibrant changing calendar of special events combining people and art with music, great food, beer and wine, pop-up talks and demonstrations, debates, film and live performances.

Poverty and Muse

13 May, 8pm / 14 May, 2.30 and 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / \$35, Friends/TOGETHER partners \$30, students \$21

This play focuses on the life and art of Frances Hodgkins, who we find at the height of her career but still living in poverty. Her life and relationships unfold against the background of World War II and depict the conflicts and statelessness of the expatriate artist, the passion and the sacrifice, obsession and self-doubt, ecstasy and despair. Written by Karen Zelas, directed by Martin Howells and produced by One Man Banned productions and Christchurch Art Gallery.

Bookings required, see the Gallery website for more details.

Drawing Francis Upritchard with Hannah Beehre

24 May / 6pm / meet at the front desk / \$20

Join 2016 Parkin Drawing Prize winner Hannah Beehre for a very special life-drawing class using Francis Upritchard's sculptures as the inspiration.

Bookings required, see the Gallery website for more details.

Family Activities

Workshop: Jealous Saboteurs

25 March / 11am / education centre / free

Kids get creative in this hands-on workshop run by artist Jacquelyn Greenbank inspired by the hugely imaginative show *Francis Upritchard: Jealous Saboteurs*. Bookings required, see the Gallery website for more details. Ages 8+

Art Safari

4 April and 2 May / 10am / education centre / free

Come on an art adventure! Make and look at art with your pre-schooler in this specially designed programme for under 5s. Ages 2+

School Holidays: Pop! Art

19-21, 26-8 April / 11am / education centre / \$8 per child

We're taking a leaf out of Francis Upritchard's book and making some big, bright colourful creature creations. Bookings required, see the Gallery website for more details. Ages 5-12

Kaleidoscope

29-30 April / 10-5pm / NZI Foyer / free

How many panes of glass do we have in our foyer? Come and help us turn the Gallery's glass wall into a massive stained glass window using brightly coloured clear vinyl. A great activity for kids and families on the last weekend of the school holidays.

Drop on In

14 May / 11am / education centre / free

We are kicking it old school and creating some incredible sock puppets inspired by the art of Wayne Youle. Bookings required, see the Gallery website for more details. All ages welcome.



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