



# IMPLANTATIONS

**AN INSTALLATION BY DENISE COPLAND**

AT THE McDOUGALL ART ANNEX, ARTS CENTRE, CHRISTCHURCH, 7 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER 1991

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# IMPLANTATIONS

“Implantations” is an installation of twenty-three new works by local printmaker Denise Copland. The linkages and contrasts between Man - essentially symbolic of all humanity - and the Tree - similarly representative of the forest - are explored by four separate suites of prints: the indigenous suite, the human impact suite, the exotic suite and the avifauna suite. Nature’s cycle of birth-death and regrowth is indicated by the changing hue of each suite - initially deep green (the natural, primordial state of the tree/forest) through to brown (the human influence wrought upon the forest and avifauna, altering the natural course of change) and finally grey-green. The calm half-dark gallery interior, with its accompanying wooden neo-Gothic canopy, helps recreate the tranquil, enclosed atmosphere of the indigenous forest.

This relationship between mankind and tree has always been a precarious one - at once a revered, spiritual embodiment of ancestry (as viewed in Maori myth), yet simultaneously an expendable, utilitarian tool for colonisation. Nonetheless the idea of a tree as an anchor to the past permeates European and Maori thought (for instance the biblical Tree of Jesse, or Tane Mahuta, the Maori god of trees and fertility). The tree itself provides history in the rings of its trunk, just as humankind relies on a ‘family tree’ for its genealogy. Yet not only is the figure of man negligible in size to the tree, his life span is significantly shorter.<sup>1</sup>

However, this has not prevented man from dominating his environment through the clearing of native bush to make way for large-scale exotic plantations, destroying the natural habitat of the indigenous avifauna. (Similarly William Sutton explored the

intrusion of commercial pine plantations on the local Canterbury landscape in his “Plantation” series of the late 1980’s). The introduction of animals, like the cat, possum, dog, stoat, and rat by the early settlers of New Zealand (both Maori and European), not to mention the predatorial instinct of the colonisers themselves, has had an irreparable impact on the native avifauna, causing the extinction of the moa and the huia while placing the kakapo on the brink (as indicated by the cut out areas of loss in the later prints).

*Meredith Hart*

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*The kauri trees of the north are approximately between 1600-1800 years old, while the totara is relatively younger at 1000. (“Native Forests and Trees” G. Ell, Bush Press, Auckland, 1988).*

## SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

- 1952 Born in Timaru
- 1971 Certificate of Graphic Design, Christchurch Polytechnic
- 1977 Solo exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch  
Diploma of Fine Arts with Honours in Engraving, School of Fine Arts,  
University of Canterbury, Christchurch
- 1978 Group exhibition, Aigantighe Gallery, Timaru
- 1978-80 Part-time tutor in Advanced Printmaking, Christchurch Polytechnic
- 1980 Group exhibition, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin  
Solo exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
- 1981 Solo exhibition, Decor Upstairs Gallery, Timaru  
Group "**Figure**" exhibition, Gingko Gallery, Christchurch  
Solo exhibition, Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington
- 1982 Appointed Visiting Lecturer in Engraving and Drawing, School of Fine Arts,  
University of Canterbury, Christchurch  
**Women and Arts Festival**, group exhibition, Lennox Gallery, Australia
- 1983 Group exhibition, Gingko Gallery, Christchurch  
**Three South Island Printmakers**, group exhibition,  
Portfolio Gallery, Auckland  
Invited to exhibit at **Intergrafik '84**, International Triennale, Berlin, Germany
- 1984 Nominated for prize at **XXIII premi internacional de dibuix Joan Miró**,  
Barcelona, Spain  
**Apertures**, group exhibition, C.S.A Gallery, Christchurch
- 1985 Artist-in-Residence, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin  
Selected by international jury for **Small Forms of Graphic Arts**, Łódz, Poland  
**Pins and Protection Prints**, with Marilyn Webb, Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington
- 1986 **Peace of Art for Peace**, group exhibition, Robert McDougall Art Gallery,  
Christchurch  
Invited to exhibit at **Sixth Mini-Print International '86**, Taller Galeria Fort,  
Barcelona, Spain  
Invited to exhibit at **Printmakers of Australia and New Zealand**,  
Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.
- 1987 Invited to exhibit at **Intergrafik '87**, International Triennale, Berlin, Germany  
**Internationaal Exlibriscentrum van de Stad Sint Niklaas**, group exhibition,  
Stedelijk Museum, St Niklaas, Belgium  
**Denise Copland and Bing Dawe**, Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington  
N.Z.I Corporation bookplate commission
- 1988 **Arboreal**, solo exhibition of etchings, Carnegie Galleries, Dunedin  
**Drawings**, group exhibition, Canterbury Gallery, Christchurch
- 1989 **Nicaragua must survive**, group exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch  
**Surviving the Acid Test**, solo exhibition, Portfolio Gallery, Auckland and  
Gingko Gallery, Christchurch  
Invited to exhibit at **18th International Biennale of Graphic Art**, Ljubljana,  
Jugoslavia
- 1990 Invited to exhibit at **Small Graphic Forms**, Łódz, Poland
- 1991 Invited to exhibit at **International Print Biennale**, Bapha Varna, Bulgaria



## Artist's Statement

Trotter's Gorge and the Podocarp Loop in Otago, Stewart Island and Peel Forest are indigenous environments which offer me solitude, tranquillity and inspiration. These places provided the impetus for some of the arboreal images in the 'Indigenous', 'Human Impact' and 'Avifauna Suites'.

The 'Avifauna Suite' was inspired from reading various books, and Don Merton's accounts of the New Zealand endangered species, in particular, the Kakapo, the mysterious and secretive night parrot. I would like to dedicate this exhibition to Don Merton for the years he has spent working on behalf of the threatened species in New Zealand and the enrichment he has added to our lives by his actions.

"You know, we could be looking at the last live Kakapo left on earth!"

*Don Merton  
Wild South -  
Saving New Zealand's Endangered Birds  
Rod Morris/Hal Smith*

The Canterbury Museum's collection of birds also provided inspiration to draw from. I would like to thank the museum and Geoff Tunnicliffe for his help and knowledge regarding the collection.

Herbert Forest in Otago and Bottle Lake Plantation in Canterbury provided the impetus for the 'Exotic Suite'.

Since 1986 the underlying concern in my work has dealt with the linkages and relationship between Man and Tree - real and imagined. The contrasts and similarities in growth and structure - visible and invisible. The gradual and dynamic changes that both encounter through deliberate intervention or by the laws of nature. Reality not reproduced but relocated and recreated through these linkages.

"A tree is a living being, but its life is completely different from that of an animal."

*Michel Tournier  
The Fetishist.  
Tom Thumb Runs Away*

'Implantations' continues to investigate this Man/Tree relationship expanded to encompass various avifauna. Unlike previous arboreal images 'Implantations' specifically relate to New Zealand - past and present. The central idea is about various phenomena, it is about cause and effect. Specifically the Human Impact upon the indigenous forest, detailing the introduction and subsequent development of the exotic plantations and the consequences to the avifauna - endangered and extinct.

"In recent times, it is the human element which has disrupted the ancient world of the birds, created the difficult conditions they now face, and turned them into endangered species."

*Wild South -  
Saving New Zealand's Endangered Birds.  
Rod Morris/Hal Smith*

My intentions for 'Implantations' were not to rely solely upon the conservation aspect. More importantly the images seek to capture the atmosphere and my involvements in these two distinctly different but related environments - the indigenous forest and the exotic plantation. This was the driving force behind committing the images to plate, block, ink and paper.

The plates and blocks used for the images in 'Implantations' were drawn, processed and printed by myself with little regard for, or being tightly bound to the reproducible aspect of printmaking.

Pulling large editions from an etched plate, cut block, stone or screen is not what interests me about printmaking. Instead I prefer to consider drawing and the entire process and involvement with producing a print as a creative, open-ended and unrestricted activity. The techniques, including the printing, are always at the service of the image.

All the images are unashamedly from limited editions not exceeding ten, in some cases three, from any one plate or block. The three printing papers used in 'Implantations' are 'Vélin Arches 300qsm', 'Vélin Cuve BFK Rives 300qsm' and 'Vélin Cuve BFK Rives 270qsm'.

*The artist would like to acknowledge the assistance of the  
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