

SCULPTURE IN THE GARDENS

26 november 1997 - 5 april 1998

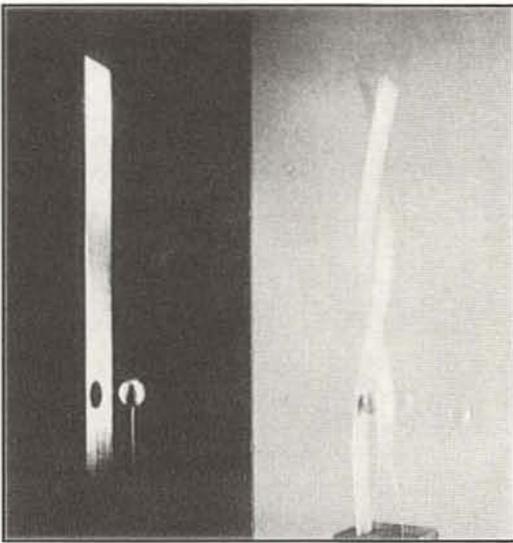
Len Lye
Sam Mahon
Randall Watson
Evan Webb

730.
993
SCU

Len Lye

Born in Christchurch in 1901, Len Lye studied at the Canterbury College of Fine Arts in Christchurch. He left New Zealand in 1921 to live and work in Sydney, Samoa and then London. During his time in England, Lye exhibited his sculptures and completed his first film, a ten minute animation called *Tusalava*. In 1935, his first 'direct' film - made without using a camera by painting and scratching directly onto the emulsion - *Colour Box* was released and received a special award at that year's Brussels International Film Festival. Lye emigrated to the United States in 1951 and returned to developing experimental film techniques, winning the Silver Award at the 1958 Brussels World Fair International Film Competition. Soon afterwards, Lye took up kinetic sculpture. In 1961, his *Tangible Motion Sculpture* was presented at the Museum of Modern Art, and a seven foot version of his kinetic sculpture *The Fountain* was shown at the major international exhibition, *Art in Motion*, at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Lye's sculptures have been included in many major group and solo exhibitions throughout the United States and internationally, and in 1980, the Len Lye Foundation was established in New Zealand. Lye died in the same year at his home in Warwick, New York.

Large Blade



"Blade" 1972-74 by Len Lye. Illustration from *Len Lye-free radical*, catalogue accompanying exhibition at Waikato Museum of Art and History, 1993

All of a sudden it hit me - why not just movement? If there was such a thing as composing music, there could be such a thing as composing motion. After all, there are melodic figures, why can't there be figures of motion? - Len Lye

No celebration of the best in New Zealand kinetic sculpture would be complete without a work by Christchurch-born film-maker, sculptor, painter, genetic theorist and experimental prose writer Len Lye. *Large Blade*, built by the Len Lye Foundation this year after Lye's design, will perform once every day at 12.30pm. Part of Lye's "bounding steel" series, it consists of a highly reflective five metre tall titanium alloy blade which repeatedly hits a ball as it rotates, creating an erratic and beautiful display of sound and shimmering vibration. Lye described the planned work as "a violent, vibrant, rotating affair", intended to reflect the light "like an Aztec monument to the sun". *Large Blade's* cycle begins with a simple harmonic curve, likened to a kiss or a caress, and, as the tempo of the rotations increases, forms a dazzling double helix, or "full embrace".

Large Blade will be installed slightly later than the other *Sculpture in the Gardens* works, and will be in place in early January, 1998.

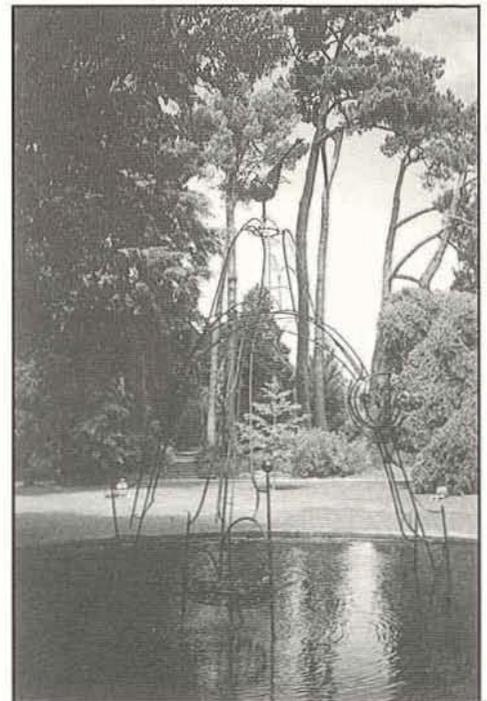
The Robert McDougall Art Gallery gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Len Lye Foundation.

Sam Mahon

Sam Mahon first became known in artistic circles for his painting, but ventured successfully into sculpture in 1995. Since then, he has attained a reputation as one of Canterbury's leading practitioners. Mahon has participated in both solo and group exhibitions, including: *Paintings, Prints*, Bealey Gallery, Christchurch, 1989; *Devices and Desires*, CSA, Christchurch, 1990; *Paintings*, Bealey Gallery, Christchurch, 1992; *Vessels and Vanities*, CSA, 1995 and *The Black Coat*, Dobson Bashford Gallery, Christchurch, 1997. Mahon lives and works in the former Waikari Flour Mill which he has converted into a studio.

Regret

Regret, a spidery moving tower by local sculptor Sam Mahon, is intended to reflect the "messy reality" of human life. Over six metres high and made from steel rod of various thicknesses, the sculpture's insubstantial form is a rueful reference to the ephemeral nature of memory and loss. Depressing the metal handle by the side of the pool sends a burst of water up through the entire structure, spinning the tilted waterwheel and gently flapping the stubby wings of the bird which watches over the pond from the top of the sculpture. Lower down, the revolving procession of enigmatic masks, the water-shrouded face on one of the supporting columns and the partially submerged figure of a man piggybacking a smiling young boy combine to produce a bittersweet evocation of times, and people, past.



"Regret" 1997 by Sam Mahon

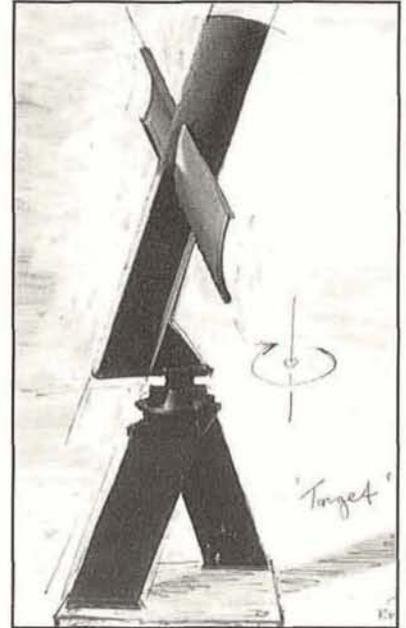
Materials for this project were generously supplied by Fenwick Reinforcing Ltd.

Randall Watson

Randall Watson was born in 1961. He attended the Petone Polytechnic, Wellington, in 1984, graduating with a Trade Certificate in Toolmaking. In 1993, he received a Diploma in Craft Design from the Christchurch Polytechnic, and has been employed as a Technician in Interior Design/ Craft and as a Tutor in Drawing for Interior Design. He is also a tutor for the intermediate Architecture course for the University of Canterbury. Watson received the Fiesta Products award for Craft Design in 1993, and in the following year was awarded a QEII Arts Council New Craft Artist Grant. He held a solo exhibition at the Canterbury Gallery, Christchurch in 1994, and his group shows include: *Christmas Group Show*, Canterbury Gallery, 1993; *Kinetic Art*, Gore, 1997; *Part of the Furniture*, McDougall Art Annex, 1997 and *Kinetic Art*, Forrester Gallery, Oamaru, 1997.

Target

Target, a revolving sculpture made entirely of blood-red steel, was inspired by visions of the harsh metal barricades of war. Fittingly positioned on the Archery Lawn, Watson's edgy work makes reference to the type of person who goes through life consciously, and self-gratifyingly, positioning themselves as a target through their statements, actions and beliefs. The tautly crossed metal spars are confrontational and militant, a raised fist against the world and a bold statement of intent as well as a dangerously conspicuous invitation for persecution. Activated by the wind, *Target's* tight revolution extends to a full 360 degrees, in the acknowledgement that an attack can come from any direction.



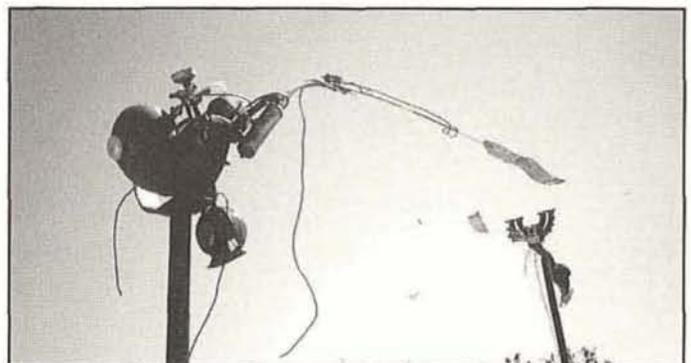
"Target" 1994 by Randall Watson

Evan Webb

Evan Webb was born in 1952. He attended the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, graduating with a Diploma of Fine Arts (Honours) in 1983. Between 1981 and 1986, Webb worked as a Part-time Exhibitions Officer for the CSA Gallery, and between 1985 and 1986 he was employed by the Christchurch Polytechnic as a Part-time Tutor in 3D Design. Webb was appointed as Project Consultant to the Len Lye Foundation and as Curator of the Len Lye Collection for the Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, in 1988 and he prepared and accompanied works from the Lye Collection to the Sydney Biennial in the same year. In 1990, Webb was appointed as a visiting Lecturer in Art Education by the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, a position he held until 1992. He was a founding member of South Island Arts Projects and was elected its Chairman in 1994. In 1997, he became the Director of the Len Lye Foundation. Webb's selected exhibitions include: *Drawing Out of Context*, CoCA, Christchurch, 1996; *After Image/ After Self*, CSA, Christchurch, 1986; *Spare Parts*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1985 and *Kinetic Sculpture Exhibition*, Avago Gallery, Sydney, 1984.

Morris Minor Ford Falcon
(morrisius mynensis) (falco fordii)

Situated on the windy Pine Mound, Evan Webb's work for *Sculpture in the Gardens* consists of two strange birds, made from the remnants of old automobile parts, perched upon welded steel stands - a sly allusion to the human practice of giving birds' names (either accidentally or intentionally) to cars. Attached to each bird is a 'feather' - a small fluke of metal which flutters in the breeze and, when moved with sufficient force, acts as a switch, making contact with the other metal pieces. This completes an electrical circuit, enabling the 'falcon' and 'mynah' to emit their own distinctive cries, calling to each other in a hauntingly unpredictable conversation. Webb has labelled each 'bird' with both its English and Latin names, echoing the didactic labels on the introduced flora surrounding the works. In a continuation of this theme, the black perches can double as museological display stands. By presenting his sculptures as exotic fauna, Webb brings under scrutiny the curious mix of the natural and the contrived that exists in a space such as the Botanical Gardens.



detail of "Morris Minor (Morrisius Mynensis)" 1997
by Evan Webb

Sculpture in the Gardens

During the summer months, the Christchurch Botanic Gardens will provide an idyllic setting for contemporary sculpture by four of New Zealand's leading artists. Held every alternate year, this major outdoor event is a collaboration between the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Botanic Gardens and was initiated to highlight the diversity of contemporary sculptural practice. In contrast to the themes for previous occasions, the inspirations for this summer's event are wind and water, and all four sculptures involve kinetic, or moving elements.

