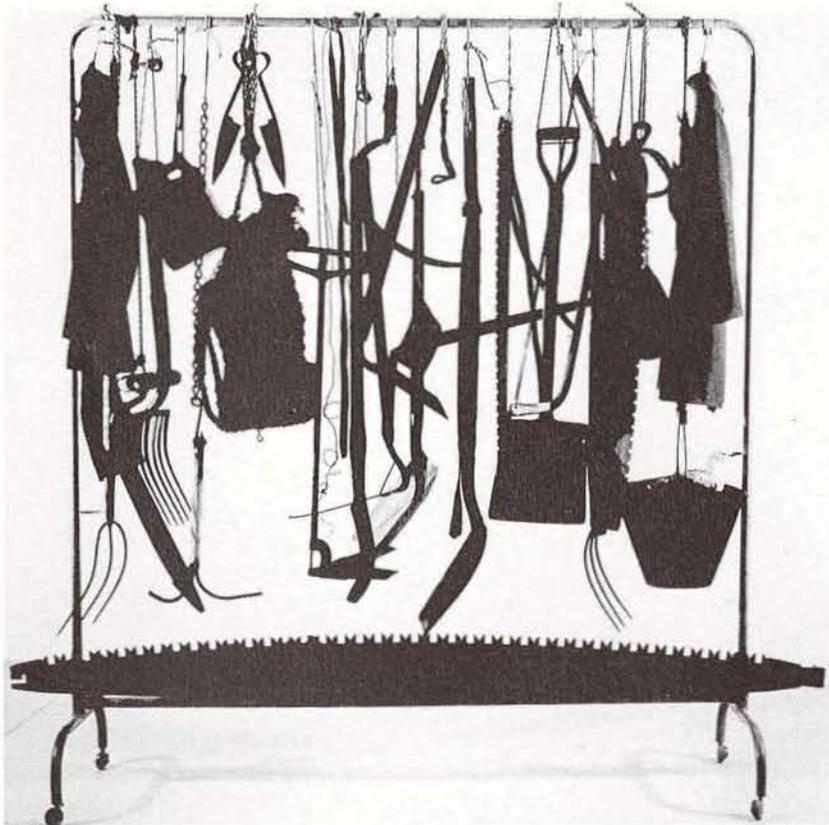


# SPARE

THE FOUND OBJECT IN NEW ZEALAND ART

# PARTS



*"Tied Tools" 1985 Don Driver*



**Robert McDougall Art Gallery**  
Christchurch City Council

in association with  
New Zealand Express

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# SPARE PARTS

## The Found Object in Contemporary New Zealand Art

### FOREWORD

The ambiguity between appearance and reality has been one of the central concerns of artists over the century. Trompe L'oeil painting could convince the viewer that a solid wall could magically dissolve into an extension of the space and objects of a room. A hand might be raised to brush away a fly perched on a painting to find the fly itself a painted image. The eye was fooled by the artist's sleight of hand.

The Dadaist declaration that the artist's decision could change a manufactured object from its utilitarian functional role to being formal, elegant, symbolic made it possible for artists to utilise the industrial detritus surrounding them to create a visual poesy for the twentieth century. Now the mind could respond to the unexpected switch of meaning — a kind of mental "double-take".

It is this metamorphoses of the object which has made collage, assemblage, objet trouve among the most utilised modes of creating art this century. Not only artists, but craftsmen, designers, folk artists and school-children have been fascinated by the possibilities of giving new context and meaning to the familiar or unappreciated object, providing it with a fresh existence and identify as an art object.

"Spare Parts" presents the work of 26 artists whose art in some way utilises found objects. The exhibition indicates of the range of assemblage art created by New Zealand artists in recent years.

The Gallery is very grateful to the New Zealand Express Company whose generous assistance has made this exhibition possible.

JOHN COLEY  
*DIRECTOR*

### SPARE PARTS ARTISTS

BOOTH, Chris  
BULLMORE, Ted  
COLEY, John  
DIBBLE, Paul  
DRIVER, Don  
EDWARDS, Victoria  
FRENCH, Di  
FUMPSTON, Rodney

GREGORY, David  
HAMMOND, Bill  
HANSEN, Julia  
HAROLD, Bryan  
LE GROVE, Lesley  
LEE—GOBBITT, Diana  
MAHON, Sam  
PERRY, John

RITCHIE, Ross  
ROWE, Cath  
SUNDERLAND, Eddie  
VERDCOURT, Ann  
WAIBEL, Jurgen  
WEBB, Evan  
YOUNG, Martin  
ZUSTERS, Jane

EXHIBITION CURATOR Roger Smith, GRAPHIC DESIGNER Robin Neate,  
PHOTOGRAPHS Peter Bannan/Margaret Dawson, CATALOGUE RESEARCH  
Virginia Vuleta, Printed by Pegasus Press. This exhibition, is organised by the  
Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch and sponsored by N.Z. Express  
Transport Ltd.

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What are they, these 'spare parts' we reach for when things break down; these manufactured components that not being needed when bought, were put aside for a later occasion? Can they also be fragments of abandoned refuse, rural or urban, which have been taken as 'natural' materials to be recycled as portions of artworks? Can they even be pieces of drawings, painting or sculptures, hoarded in an artist's workshop after they have been trimmed off other works?

Usually 'spare parts', in everyday terms, are industrial products which are bought in shops. When they are items made on the production line of one factory, often for the assembly line of another, there are always at least two available and so they are interchangeable. Outside the gallery their efficacy depends on their remaining unused until required, and after they are worn out, they are then discarded and forgotten.

Thus normally rejected or ignored 'spare parts' suddenly come under our scrutiny when, as in this exhibition, they are elevated into permanent fixtures within a group of artworks.

Each of them has its own history and point of origin. As we move around them we can speculate on the processes which led to their being displayed as 'parts' or parts of 'parts' in this gallery. We can consider the making of the actual art object itself, or the specific histories of the different fragments which make up that object. We can also ponder over some of the historical antecedents which have led to the embracing of these 'sub-aesthetic' materials as 'art-worthy', and how the various ideas contained in these antecedents can, like the physical aspects, be recycled and interchanged.

The use of materials other than applied pigment, carved wood or stone, and cast metal, has long been prevalent in American and African cultures, as well as those in the East. For over a thousand years the Japanese have written poems on collages, made of torn, delicately tinted paper, which depicted landscapes and animals. Certain Chinese and Japanese artists also selected stones which they found fascinating, and turned them into works of art by engraving or painting their names on them.

In the seventeenth century the Germans and the Dutch began to make heraldic coats of arms and family insignias by cutting out shapes in paper and cloth. Feather mosaic pictures and cloaks, brought to Austria from Mexico by Jesuits, made an impact, and images began to be made from such disparate materials as beetles, corn kernels, coffee beans and fruit stones. Even butterfly wings were used by nuns in convents during the eighteenth century to make delicate collages.

The advent of mass production and the technologies of the machine age during the nineteenth century provided new materials for collage, such as postage stamps and cigar labels, and with the invention of photography, and the growth of advertising and lithographic reproduction techniques, photomontage became known through periodicals and postcards.

It was not until this century that collage began to be understood as a legitimate art form. It was through the activities of the Cubists in 1912 and 1913 that the gaps between "High Art" and mass produced materials were bridged.

In Picasso's and Braque's studios, the walls were adorned not with art, but with musical instruments, dishes, masks and carvings; objects which had appeared in their 'Analytical' Cubist paintings. Because the fragmented, multiview-pointed imagery of their previous works created a continuum where there was little distinction between objects and spaces, the few identity clues which referred to the original subject matter began to disappear, while the paintings themselves began to achieve a self-sufficient identity.

Instead of depicting clues such as a lock of hair, or a playing card, they began incorporating strips of newspaper bearing lettering which were related to the subject matter. With this technique these artists were not only concerned with the physical tactile values of the cigarette packages, bits of cloth and wallpaper that they introduced to emphasize the flatness of the picture plane, but they also wanted to maintain a connection with the material world as it is experienced. The real objects they introduced as 'quotations from the world', provided that connection.

Whilst Picasso developed *collage* so that any extraneous material could be incorporated on to the picture plane, Braque reinvented *papier collé* where strips or fragments of paper were used for more formal, less descriptive purposes than collage. Their reasons were not to substitute a portion of the actual object for a copy of it, but rather to mock the pretensions of art in the fashionable salons and galleries. Braque's father and grandfather were housepainters, and so he openly used the tradesman's methods of marbling paint and combing it so it looked like woodgrain. In his *papier collés* he also used *trompe l'oeil* wallpaper for imitative effects.

Jean Cocteau lauded Picasso as the "King of the Rag-Pickers". However this salutation might now be applied more accurately to the Hanover Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, whose work even more than Picasso's, bridged the gap between art and life, in that his materials were less art-conscious. The objects and pieces of paper he incorporated in his 'Merz' collages were all bits of detritus accidentally discovered, rather than items which had been deliberately sought out.

Unlike Picasso, Schwitters did not use found fragments to depict other objects, but rather to expose the material itself as the essential carrier of meaning.

Oddly however, Schwitters regarded his 'Merz' pictures as self-related entities in which the materials lost their characteristics ("their personality poison") and had no outward relationship to the sources in the world which formed them. His work contradicts this, for Schwitters regarded art as an extension of living, an expression of patterns of personal behaviour. He once remarked "Everything the artist spits is art".

With his architectural sculpture ("Merzbau") Schwitters transformed five rooms of his Hanover house during a period of over eighteen years. In the main column ("The Cathedral of Erotic Misery") he enshrined evocative items from his friends such as fingernail clippings, a broken denture, a bottle of urine, and a neck-tie. These could almost be taken for 'spare' bodily 'parts'

As one of the Dadaists who appeared in Germany in the period immediately after The Great War, Schwitters obsessively used the despicable qualities of rubbish as anti-art. By this means the notion of the artist as being the servant of the bourgeois community could be attacked. However, whereas the Dadaists used objects to reflect an ironic posture before the consecrated forms of art, the Surrealists which grew out of them, aimed at the objectification of the activity of dreaming, in order to bring about a passage from the artist's inner world to external reality. They wanted this to occur by rendering the mechanisms of reasons inoperative.

When in 1925 the Surrealist movement appeared as a splinter group of Dadaist artists and writers, their concern was to develop techniques of disorientation by the seemingly random juxtaposition of unrelated images; hence the expression by one of them, "As beautiful as a chance meeting on a dissection table of a sewing machine and an umbrella." The absurdity of the unexpected combinations added a magical quality to the images, an effect entirely different from say the *trompe l'oeil* effect of many Cubist *papier collés* with their ersatz woodgrain wallpaper.

The Surrealists used the expression "found objects" (*objet trouvé*) for those objects added to the image, such as the feathers which Francis Picabia added as trees to a landscape. When a single object was enhanced with artificial touches, such as Man Ray's iron with a row of tacks positioned down the middle of its plate, it became an *objet trouvé aide*.

Joseph Cornell, the American Surrealist who in the 1940's became well-known for his box constructions, once said of his materials, "Everything can be used — but of course one doesn't know it at the time. How does one know what a certain object will tell another?" When we consider the *readymades* of Marcel Duchamp, the 'other' is the gallery itself, which is being asked how that 'certain object' came to be presented in such a space.

Because the manufactured items he selected to be art objects during 1914–15 were items the making of which he

had absolutely no control over, other than inscribing his signature, Duchamp's "Bottle Rack" and "In advance of a Broken Arm" (a snow shovel) cannot appear as coming directly from the emotions or beliefs of the artist. They seem to deny the existence of a casual chain which links the artworks to the operations of the artist's intellect. Instead of holding the art object up for scrutiny, they examine the act of aesthetic transformation itself. They are interested in just what is it which alters an object to make it art.

In selecting these objects, Duchamp was not interested in providing something aesthetically beautiful. Rather, he wanted to make a gesture which provoked an examination of the gallery as a cultural institution, for the gallery provides a formal buffer between the work and the outside world. These *readymades* were what he called 'brain facts', and their existence as art depended on what he as an artist determined art to be. They had no values such as beauty or craftsmanship, except within the contexts of mental events.

Two variations on the *readymade* theme also amused Duchamp. One was a *readymade aided* in which some small detail was altered, such as some letters added in the wording of a billboard. The other, a *reciprocal readymade*, was only imagined, and involved using a painting by Rembrandt as an ironing board.

Duchamp once wrote, "Since the tubes of paint used by the artist are manufactured and readymade products, we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are *readymade aided* and also works of *assemblage*".<sup>1</sup>

The word *assemblage* was first used by Jean Dubuffet in 1953 when referring to his small standing figures made of wood, papier mache, sponge and other materials. While it often refers to groups of objects in a box, it can be seen to range from the *combine paintings* of Robert Rauschenberg in the 1950's (extensions of Kurt Schwitters' collages and the Surrealist sculptures of Joan Miro) to the *accumulations* of Fernandez Arman, which were variations on the *readymade* theme.

Rauschenberg's *combine paintings* have paint encrusted surfaces that are packed with a vast range of salvaged materials, including tatters of cloth, art reproductions, stuffed animals and parts of magazines. Often the forms of urban debris used represent the last stage in the processes of planned obsolescence, where objects from the assembly line outlive their usefulness and become waste. The objects are usually presented undisguised so that their origins are obvious, and while they may be dirty, the images on pasted paper are usually kept intact and seen frontally.

Many of the images are collected impartially, with no internal or narrative sequences of meaning intended. The works are open-ended in meaning, so that individual viewers can interpret differently the various associations and

juxtapositions. They emphasize the multiplicity of unconnected events happening around us.

Perhaps more than that of any other artist, the work of Fernandez Arman exemplifies the use of 'spare parts'. In the early 1960's he began to tip the contents of rubbish tins directly into glass boxes. These he sealed and displayed as artworks called *poubelles* (trashcans). Unlike Duchamp's *readymades* there is nothing baffling about these works, for the function of the glass box is understood immediately. In Paris, in 1960, he extended this idea by filling up an entire gallery with truckloads of refuse from the dump.

Arman's work developed from his *poubelles* into a more specialized kind of *readymade*, his *accumulations*. With these he began to embed cogs, car parts and money in blocks of polyester, and clusters of monkey wrenches in synthetic marble. He also worked with factory-fresh Renault parts, and welded them into sculptures of overlapping forms. Other works have used squashed tubes of paint, with lines of squeezed out colour preserved in the transparent perspex.

Duchamp's earlier comment about tubes of paint causing all paintings to be *readymade aided* emphasizes the store bought origins of the materials in most artworks, but sometimes artworks themselves are just as palpable as materials.

Theoretically any artist could declare the entire "Spare Parts" exhibition to be his or her artwork. Daniel Buren, Louise Lawler, Michael Asher, and others have used well-known paintings (not copies) as part of their installations, and Rauschenberg has exhibited a de Kooning drawing he erased, as a work. Like Duchamp and Joseph Cornell, Rauschenberg has also used many reproductions of paintings in his art. Picasso once joked about his "Bull's Head" sculpture being thrown on the rubbish heap and some fellow taking away the seat and handlebars for his own bicycle, so art can be dismantled to suit the immediate needs of the living, just as it can be reconstructed to make more art. It can work both ways.

Rauschenberg sees the artist's job as to "act in the gap between art and life", and that the artist is "part of the density of an uncensored continuum that neither begins or ends with any decision of his."<sup>2</sup>

The Italian critic Achille Bonito Oliva, one of the leading champions of the New Expressionist movement (what he calls the 'Transavantgarde'), claims that today's artists can now recover painting styles "as a sort of *objet trouvé*, detached from their semantic references as from every metaphysical association. . . . The work is an organic segment that melts down the scrap of art, transforming the rough slag into a gentle constellation".<sup>3</sup>

While many artists are currently scavenging from art history images and styles that they can reuse in new

combinations, it is possible for any creative endeavour to be regarded as a text into which other earlier texts are woven, just as one *assemblage* can contain fragments of other previously dismantled *assemblages*.

The first collages made by Picasso and Braque often used newspaper cuttings in which the lettering provided puns which referred to other images in the paintings. These, and the word ridden Futurist collages, along with much more recent works such as Rauschenberg's "Rebus", have an obviously textual content. However it can be claimed in broader terms that all art is textual because our knowledge and interpretation of it is firmly rooted in language.

If this is so, then all art, including art before Cubism, is intertextual and may be "a new tissue of past citations", with "bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages etc all passing into it".<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, unlike works using 'found objects', the intertext is a "general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located: of unconscious or automatic quotation, given without question marks".<sup>5</sup>

The multiple writings making up a text are drawn from innumerable centres of culture and they may enter into "multi relations of dialogue, parody and contestation,"<sup>6</sup> in a similar way that 'found objects' within an artwork may "annotate each other, comment upon, memorize and recite, interogate, deny and reaffirm each other".<sup>7</sup>

Let us pause for a while and forget about the specific physical materials, the particular visual and tactile ingredients that we see in the works of this exhibition, and consider the real 'spare parts' which make up their compositions; those ideas and historical sources which have influenced the making of each object. Just how much are these earlier texts absorbed?

Pierre Machery argues that "the writer, as the producer of a text, does not manufacture the materials in which he works. Neither does he stumble across them as spontaneously available wandering fragments, useful in the building of any sort of edifice".<sup>8</sup>

This is because these 'spare parts' are "not neutral transparent components which have the grace to vanish, to disappear into the totality they contribute to, giving it substance and adopting its forms. The causes that determine the existence of the work are not free implements, useful to elaborate any meaning. . . they have a specific weight, a peculiar power, which means that even when they are used and blended into a totality they retain a certain autonomy".<sup>9</sup>

The 'spare parts' in a text may retain their autonomy, but this text too has an independence within the broader textuality of this catalogue and exhibition.

It is obvious that this writer has been moving around the subject of this show, and not at all around the actual objects

on display. He, not being the curator, is the willing provider of an accessory text which can never promote or criticize the individual works, or elucidate on the presentation or the aims of this exhibition, but only attempt to elaborate on some aspects of the historical origins in a neutral sense.

Yet the world is a text. "Nothing stands behind. There is no escape. Here in the prison house of language".<sup>10</sup>

If it is possible that "all facts, data, structures, and laws are assembled descriptions, formulations, constructions — interpretations. There are no facts as such, only *assemblages*. There is always only interpretation",<sup>11</sup> then such neutrality is impossible. For "all interpretative orderings . . . are acts of willed mastery. Interpretation drives to control, insists on order, demonstrates authority".<sup>12</sup>

In a sense then, 'spare parts' have in this text semantically drifted into a metaphor for the composition of thought, with language as a fictional mediation, a substitution, which denies the transparency of art, and which acknowledges its own self reflexivity.

"There are two attitudes toward art. One is to view the work of art as a window on the world. Through words and images, these artists want to express what lies beyond words and images. Artists of this type deserve to be called translators.

The other type of attitude is to view art as a world of independently existing things.

Words, and the relationship between words, thoughts and the irony of thoughts, their divergence — these are the content of art. Art, if it can be compared to a window at all, is only a sketched window."<sup>13</sup>

Drawing erased lines . . . . . mending broken windows . . . . . Edifices, fabrications . . . . . forgeries forged from slag heaps . . . . . the language of fragments . . . . . (s)(p)(a)(r)e (p)(a)(r)t(s) . . . . . "Car Parts and Accessories" . . . . . when things brake down.

John Hurrell

1. **The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp** ed. Sanouillet & Peterson. Thames and Hudson 1975 p 142
2. Laurence Alloway. **Topics in American Art Since 1945** Norton 1975 p 130
3. Achille Bonito Oliva **The International Transavantgarde** Giancarlo Politi Editore 1982 p 58
4. Roland Barthes "Test, Discourse, Ideology" in R Young ed **Untying the Text** Routledge, Boston, London 1981 p 39
5. *ibid* p 39
6. Roland Barthes 'The Death of the Author' **Image — Music — Text** Glasgow: Fontana/Collins 1977 p 148
7. Nelly Richard 'Body Without Soul' **Art and Text No 12** Melbourne 1984 p 96
8. Pierre Machery **A Theory of Literary Production** Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978 p 41-42
9. *ibid* p 41-42
10. Vincent Leitch **Deconstructive Criticism** Hutchinson 1983 p 58
11. *ibid* p 58
12. *ibid* p 58
13. part of Viktor Shklovsky's novel 'Zoo, or letters not about love' found in Terrence Hawkes **Structuralism and Semiotics** Methuen 1977 p 143



"Parts of Speech" Bill Hammond

## CATALOGUE

### CHRIS BOOTH

1. *Hei Hakari Mo Aramoana*  
Manuka, Bones and Shells  
900×640×2000mm

### EDWARD BULLMORE

2. *Hikurangi Series (London)*  
Mixed Media  
1880×890×150mm

3. *Astroform No 10 (London)*  
Mixed Media  
1330×1330×500mm

4. *Construction (London)*  
Mixed Media  
750×300×500mm

5. *Astroform Descended (London)*  
Mixed Media  
900×500×500mm

6. *Mamaku Series Earth & Sky (London)*  
Mixed Media  
750×500×250mm

### JOHN COLEY

7. *Blue Superman 1978*  
Mixed Media  
520×360×45mm

8. *Reconstructed Cabinet 1978*  
Mixed Media  
600×460×145mm

### PAUL DIBBLE

9. *Earth Relics 1984*  
Mixed Media  
2333×2333×1333mm

### DON DRIVER

10. *Tied Tools*  
Mixed Media  
21250×600×20500mm

11. *Ladder and Garments 1984*  
Mixed Media  
19750×28000mm

### VICTORIA EDWARDS

12. *Duet*  
Mixed Media  
760×560mm each (2 parts)

### DI FFRENCH

13. *The Opinion*  
Mixed Media installation

### RODNEY FUMPSTON

14. *Home Decorating — Grid*  
Mixed Media  
480×480 each (4 parts)

### DAVID GREGORY

15. *Mitate Time Walker*  
Mixed Media  
700×150×150mm

**BILL HAMMOND**

16. *Parts of Speech*  
Mixed Media  
450×800mm

**JULIA HANSEN**

17. *Stick Bag Painting*  
Mixed Media  
2000×1500mm

**BRYAN HAROLD**

18. *Untitled*  
Mixed Media  
630×320×250mm

19. *Untitled*  
Mixed Media  
630×320×250mm

20. *Untitled*  
Mixed Media  
630×320×250mm

**LESLEY LE GROVE**

21. *Forgotten Shelter*  
Mixed Media  
300×300×300mm

**DIANA LEE-GOBBITT**

22. *Taranaki Dipstick*  
the artist acknowledges  
**Mudrovich Engineering,**  
Auckland  
Steel & Enamel  
432×470mm

**SAM MAHON**

23. *Phonograft*  
Metal & Wood  
1650×900×600mm

**JOHN PERRY**

24. *"Catch 22"*  
Mixed Media  
315×265mm

25. *"Untitled Assemblage"*

- Mixed Media  
315×265mm

**ROSS RITCHIE**

26. *White Bread*  
Mixed Media  
1500×1200×150mm

**CATH ROWE**

27. *Timespan*  
Mixed Media  
1000×1200mm

**EDDIE SUNDERLAND**

28. *Hellcart With Three Ducks*  
Mixed Media

**ANN VERDCOURT**

29. *Untitled*  
Mixed Media  
1380×550×550mm

**JURGEN WAIBEL**

30. *Caldaria/Cauldron*  
*Regeneration*  
Mixed Media assemblage  
1500×600×500mm

**EVAN WEBB**

31. *Store Below Zero*  
Ice and found objects  
variable dimensions



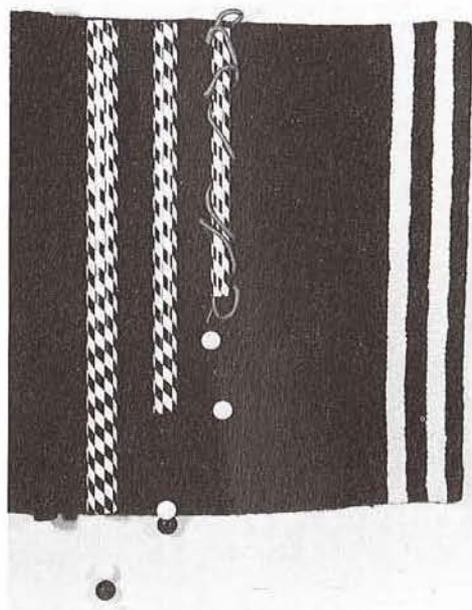
"Construction (London)" Edward Bullmore

**MARTIN YOUNG**

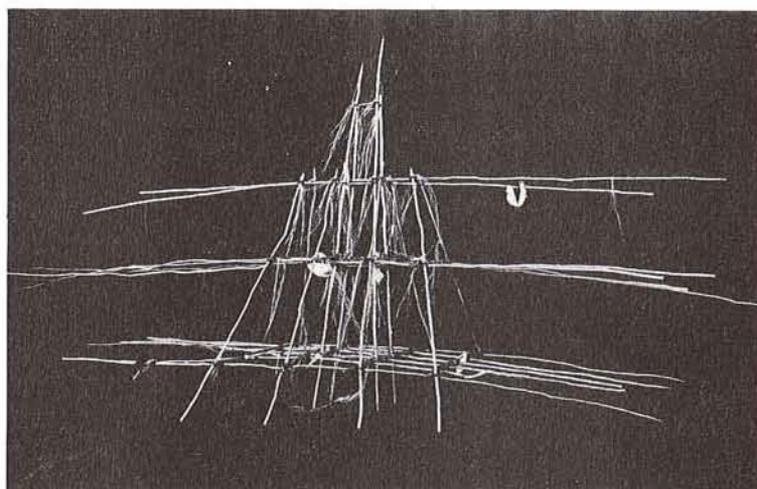
32. *Life*  
Totara, Metal, Perspex  
2050×1450×1450mm

**JANE ZUSTERS**

33. *Under The Influence Of*  
Mixed Media  
332×312×210mm



"Timespan" Cath Rowe



"Hei Hakari Mo Aramoana" Chris Booth