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TE PUNA O WAIWHETU
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ART GALLERY

B.162

Bulletin
Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu

Spring
September—November
2010



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Andre Hemer *Things to do with
paint that won't dry* (detail) 2010.
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TE PUNA O WAIWHETU
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ART GALLERY

Cover: Ron Mueck *Still life*
2009. Silicone, polyurethane,
aluminium, feathers, stainless
steel, nylon rope, ed. 1/1. Anthony
d'Offay. © Ron Mueck courtesy
Anthony d'Offay, London. Photo:
John Spiller

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WELCOME TO THE SPRING EDITION OF BULLETIN. As this issue arrives with you, we’re in the last few days of our two spectacular current exhibitions: **Andrew Drummond: Observation / Action / Reflection** and **Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar**. Both shows are spellbinding in differing ways and both have been hugely successful in the Gallery. The wonderful new publication that accompanies the Drummond exhibition is available now and will remain on sale in the shop as long as stocks last; it makes a worthy addition to any bookshelf.

At the beginning of October, we are very proud to be the only New Zealand venue for what has been the biggest solo show in Australia in recent times—**Ron Mueck**. Fresh from record-breaking runs at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (who organised the exhibition) and the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, this extraordinary exhibition will be on display across the entire ground floor of the Gallery from 2 October until 23 January 2011.

The term ‘blockbuster’ is overused and a bit passé these days, with every cinema proclaiming its latest offerings loudly as such. But, with audiences for **Ron Mueck** reaching a staggering 300,000 across its last two venues—an extraordinary feat for a sculpture exhibition—this is one exhibition that can certainly lay claim to that mantle. We fully expect the exhibition to do as well here in Christchurch as it has in Australia.

This is because there’s so much more to Mueck’s work than the hype. His sculptures, with their disorientating shifts in scale, invite quiet contemplation and I was very struck with similarities in their appearance with the religious statuary of the Spanish Golden Age, which I saw last year in *The Sacred Made Real* in London’s National Gallery. Mueck deals in the big issues like birth and mortality—from the small-scale but oh-so-real *Dead Dad*, which first brought him to public attention in 1997, to the statuesque *Pregnant woman*, from the collection of the National Gallery of Australia. **Ron Mueck** is certain to be a popular show, but from September you can purchase tickets online and skip the queues, through our new website.

Addressing Mueck’s work in this issue of *Bulletin* are senior curator Justin Paton, Australian writer Anne Manne, and Janice Slater, registrar at the National Galleries of Scotland. Justin interviews Anthony d’Offay—one of the most influential figures in the artworld today and Mueck’s long-time dealer—and also ponders on Mueck’s famously media-shy nature and the role of this shyness in his work,

in a beautifully written essay full of fresh insights. Anne writes engagingly on the maternal in Mueck’s art, and infants feature again in Janice’s piece as she gives us a fascinating insight into just how you transport a five-metre-long newborn baby around the world.

Also at the Gallery this quarter, **Roger Boyce: The Illustrated History of Painting** is an engagingly offbeat look at an alternative version of the development of art as we know it. And in the Tait Electronics Gallery there’s a chance to see a work from the Gallery’s collection from the artist whose show was one of the standouts at the Gallery in 2008. Daniel Crooks’s *Pan No.2 (one step forwards, one frame backwards)* is a mesmerising video piece constructed through his unique ‘timeslice’ technique—if you want to find out more about the technical wizardry behind it the Gallery’s publication on the artist is available in the shop.

Submitting his favourite for your consideration in this issue is Roy Montgomery, a veteran of the New Zealand music scene as well as an active performer and sonic artist. And Jae Hoon Lee is our ‘Pagework’ artist. Jae Hoon’s work has featured on the **Twinset** screens in the past, and can currently be seen in **Blue Planet**, so it’s excellent to see him again in *Bulletin*.

Lastly, I am very pleased to present to you, our key stakeholders, the Year in Review (see p.48). I think that it is clear that our gallery is going from strength to strength, and that Christchurch can be very proud of this public facility.

Jenny Harper
Director
August 2010

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 2010

ANDREW DRUMMOND: OBSERVATION / ACTION / REFLECTION

Until 5 September

Andrew Drummond: Observation / Action / Reflection is the first comprehensive survey exhibition of this acclaimed New Zealand sculptor. Focusing on the period between 1980 and 2010, this spectacular exhibition features sculpture, photography, installation and a new kinetic sculpture, installed in the Gallery foyer.

Gallery foyer, Touring and Borg Henry Galleries

Exhibition publication and iPod audio tour available

TARYN SIMON: AN AMERICAN INDEX OF THE HIDDEN AND UNFAMILIAR

Until 5 September

Inspired by rumours of weapons of mass destruction and secret sites in Iraq, Taryn Simon decided to address secret sites in her own country. From an underwater nuclear-waste storage facility to a Scientology screening room, these images provide an extraordinary record of a never-before-seen side of the contemporary USA.

William A. Sutton and Ravenscar Galleries

ROGER BOYCE: THE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF PAINTING

Until 14 November

In this new series of paintings, Christchurch painter and lecturer Roger Boyce reimagines the history of his chosen medium as a succession of outrageous stunts, tragicomic mishaps and wild endeavours. While poking fun at the hopes and ambitions of painters, Boyce’s series—100 paintings in total—is itself a work of serious comic ambition.

Monica Richards Gallery

DANIEL CROOKS: PAN NO.2 (ONE STEP FORWARDS, ONE FRAME BACKWARDS)

Until 27 February

Acquired by Christchurch Art Gallery in 2008, *Pan No.2 (one step forwards, one frame backwards)* by Daniel Crooks offers a view of the contemporary city like you’ve never seen—with pedestrians, buildings, traffic and skateboarders stretched and morphed into mesmerising patterns.

Tait Electronics Gallery

BLUE PLANET

Until 20 February

Blue is a feeling, a place to dream and the colour of our amazing planet as seen from space. Looking at the ways artists have used the colour blue, **Blue Planet** celebrates imaginative art making and thinking, as well as different cultural and global perspectives. Shaped with younger audiences in mind.

Burdon Family Gallery

RON MUECK

2 October – 23 January

Astounding in their realism and emotional power, Ron Mueck’s sculptures are some of the most evocative of our time. Christchurch is the only New Zealand venue for this must-see exhibition, which ranges from the startling *Wild man* to the poignantly tiny *Dead Dad* to the larger-than-life *Pregnant woman*.

A National Gallery of Victoria Touring exhibition Touring, Borg Henry, Sutton and Ravenscar Galleries

Exhibition publication and iPod audio tour available

UNCANNY VALLEY

19 November – 27 February

The fifth in the Gallery’s emerging artists series, this exhibition presents new work by seven young New Zealanders. The uncanny is the paradoxical experience of encountering something that is both familiar and uncomfortably strange. These artists use ordinary subject matter to create imagery edged with melancholy, otherness and abjection.

Monica Richards Gallery

THE COLLECTIONS

From Ngāi Tahu treasures to European landscapes; ceramics to video art, **Brought to Light: A New View of the Collection** is your chance to get up close and personal with hundreds of extraordinary works of art. For any art institution charged with conserving the past, registering the present and offering suggestions for the future, the challenge to ‘bring to light’ is at once daunting and inspiring. This exhibition is our response to that challenge.

iPod video tour available

OUTER SPACES

A programme featuring works of art in spaces beyond the traditional exhibition galleries. Featuring *The prow of the Charlotte Jane* by Fiona Pardington on Worcester Boulevard, *A wall, and other thoughts* by Fiona Jack on the carpark bunker, and *Things to do with paint that won’t dry* by Andre Hemer in the water feature on Worcester Boulevard.

SUBSONIC

The spring Subsonic programme features a variety of sounds from artists including Marco Fusinato and Nathan Thompson.

*Ron Mueck's
Inner Worlds*

JUSTIN PATON

SHYNESS



SCULPTURE

Reporters like to begin their stories about Ron Mueck by noting that he is famously media-shy. Since television and newspapers thrive on personality, celebrity and ‘direct access’ to the stars, journalists clearly feel it necessary to explain to their audiences that they won’t be hearing from the artist himself. Beyond this, however, not much more gets said about Mueck’s reluctance to talk. It’s treated as a minor difficulty, something to be mentioned in passing before moving on to the artworks. And for that reason, surely it’s not the kind of thing I should be bringing up in an official essay...

But I have a suspicion there’s more to it.

I started wondering about the role of shyness in the sculptures earlier this year during a face-to-face encounter with Ron Mueck. Not with the man himself, but with the astonishing sculpture he made of his own head in 2002. Drawn in from across the gallery by the sight of this colossal, lone, sleeping face, I could see the pull of gravity on his cheeks, glimpse the shine of saliva inside his mouth, and trace—whisker by fastidiously implanted whisker—the swarm of stubble on his chin. If I came close enough, I felt sure I might hear the whistle of breath through the lips. Here, it seemed, was an example of self-portraiture at its most extreme—a sculpture that tells us everything there is to know about this person and then some; an act of complete and unflinching self-exposure.

Yet the more time I spent with the work, the less certain I felt about what exactly was being exposed. After all, whatever Mueck is thinking or feeling in this sculpture is hidden behind those closed eyes. And the sense of concealment is heightened by the fact that he’s not just lying there but deep in sleep, that state in which our identities turn oceanic and we are no longer fully ourselves. All this is compounded by the surprise that waits when you walk behind the work and discover that it’s hollow—no storehouse of self, no inner workings, just a scooped-out shell of resin. And finally there is the work’s title, which is not ‘self-portrait’ or ‘me asleep’ but rather *Mask II*—a title which tells us in no uncertain terms that something is being hidden by this face.

Ron Mueck *Mask II* 2002.
Polyester resin, fibreglass,
steel, plywood, synthetic
hair, second edition, artist’s
proof. Private collection.
© Ron Mueck courtesy
Anthony d’Offay, London





Ron Mueck **Two women** (detail)
2005. Polyester resin, fibreglass,
silicone, aluminium wire, steel,
wool, cotton, nylon, synthetic hair,
plastic, metal, ed. 1/1. National
Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Purchased, Victorian Foundation
for Living Australian Artists, 2007.
© Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony
d'Offay, London

‘If traditional figure sculptures are exhibitionists, eager to be seen by one and all, Mueck’s figures are introverts, who seem to respond to being placed on public view by retreating into themselves.’

Slowly but surely, by means of these small hints and clues, Mueck turns the self-portrait idea inside out. Far from being an act of self-exposure, the sculpture strikes me now as an assertion of privacy and dreaming inwardness. Made three years after Mueck’s arrival on the British art scene, at a time of intense media interest in the man behind these extraordinary objects, it’s a sculpture that marks the limit between what we can see of someone and what we can know of them—and as such it’s a kind of manifesto of Mueck’s art. With Mueck, I think, shyness is not just a side-issue to note before moving on to the sculptures and their dazzling technique. It’s a key to the works themselves, and one of the reasons Mueck goes to such lengths. Rather than simply being media-shy, Mueck is an artist of shyness—a sculptor who wants to describe, using resin, microfilament, hair and paint, the mysterious threshold between the way we look to the world and the way we feel to ourselves.

– O2 –

You could argue that sculpture is the least shy kind of art there is. Unlike paintings, which hang flat on walls and permit us to walk right past them, figurative sculptures occupy the same space as we do and demand to be noticed. Heavy, hard to move, and frequently larger than life-size, they’re artworks that literally get in our way. That’s especially so with figure sculptures of the public-spirited, civic-minded kind, which rise up in the centre of communal spaces and deliver their messages to one and all. Usually created to mark an epic victory, mourn a great loss, or celebrate an official achievement, these are sculptures that speak loudly and clearly on their chosen topics—and assume that they are going to be heard. There’s nothing shy about them. That is why walking into a gallery populated with Ron Mueck’s

sculptures is so startling. At first glance what’s before you doesn’t look so different from a traditional sculpture hall, with human figures of different sizes arrayed through the space on plinths. But beyond that, everything is different. Instead of the sheen of bronze or the hardness of stone, there’s the mottled vulnerability of painted skin. Instead of grand messages and public allegories, there are private narratives and submerged psychologies that are sensed rather than fully revealed. If traditional figure sculptures are exhibitionists, eager to be seen by one and all, Mueck’s figures are introverts, who seem to respond to being placed on public view by retreating into themselves.

Look through Mueck’s career and it’s striking how many sculptures appear to retreat in this way—to take cover from inquisitive gallery-goers. *Man in a sheet* shrouds himself and stares down, forcing viewers to crouch to see his expression. *Man under cardigan* is equally reclusive, looking out gloomily from a comically inadequate shelter. *Big man* is a behemoth who tries but fails to hide his bulk in a corner of the gallery and slides us an accusing gaze, as if we’re responsible for putting him there on display. The adolescent girl in *Ghost* seems to shrink from our gaze even as her body pushes tyrannically upwards—seven-foot high and still growing. Meanwhile Mueck’s *Two women* lean together and fashion a small space of privacy for themselves, as if suspicious of our presence and hopeful we’ll soon leave them in peace. Of course, since this is a gallery and they are all just artworks, we don’t leave any of these figures in peace, preferring instead to linger and stare as closely as we can at their skin, their fingernails, their hair. But it’s impossible to do so without a faint sense of trespass, of seeing more of someone than they would want you to.

Ron Mueck **Wild man** (detail)
2005. Polyester resin,
fibreglass, silicone, aluminium,
wood, horse hair, synthetic
hair, ed. 1/1. McClelland Gallery
+ Sculpture Park, Langwarrin,
purchased by the Elisabeth
Murdoch Sculpture Foundation
and The Balnaves Foundation
2008. © Ron Mueck courtesy
Anthony d’Offay, London.
Photo: Mark Ashkanasy





Ron Mueck **Pregnant woman** (detail) 2002. Polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, aluminium, synthetic hair, ed. 1/1. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased with the assistance of Tony and Carol Berg 2003. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London

Opposite page:
Ron Mueck **Wild man** (detail) 2005. Polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, aluminium, wood, horse hair, synthetic hair, ed. 1/1. McClelland Gallery + Sculpture Park, Langwarrin, purchased by the Elisabeth Murdoch Sculpture Foundation and The Balnaves Foundation 2008. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London. Photo: Mark Ashkanasy

In other words, Mueck is not just making convincing sculptures of how people look. He's making sculptures about how it feels to be looked at. And no one in his cast of characters appears to dislike the experience more than *Wild man*, who I first saw rising up above crowds of well-heeled (and very un-wild) people at the opening of Mueck's Melbourne exhibition. We all know exhibition openings can be awkward occasions, but *Wild man* looked like he was having an especially uncomfortable evening—his nostrils flared, his toes clawing the ground, his huge head and beard semaphoring panic. Four metres tall if he stood up, *Wild man* is as big as the statues of popes and generals that once populated churches and public squares. But Mueck's genius in this work is to make bigness do the very opposite of what it does in older monumental statues. Far from signifying power, *Wild man*'s bigness evokes the sensation we've all had in grim social situations, of feeling too prominent, too visible, too large—of wanting to shrink from public view and disappear. It's telling that viewers respond to *Wild man* not with revulsion but with a smile; I think they recognise his predicament, and sympathise.

With *Wild man* the eyes have it; he seems to see us and panic. But for me the most moving of Mueck's figures are those that do not see us viewers at all—figures that seem conscious and lifelike precisely because they do not meet our eyes. Take the sculpture *In bed*, with its colossal reclining woman. Despite her size, she's removed from us by the mountainous rise of her bedspread. Once we stand beside her, what we want instinctively is connection, recognition, eye contact. But her gaze goes right through us and rests instead on some distant, unspoken worry. And her gesture—fingers pillowed in the skin of her cheek—enforces the sense of separation, as if she's absently comforting herself rather than reaching out to someone else. Standing beside this enormous woman, each viewer takes the part of a child standing at their mother's bedside and realising she has something else—something other than you—on her mind. We can hatch our own stories about the source of her worries—an illness, or loss, or just an unpaid bill—but in the end there's no way of knowing. This is a sculpture about intimacy and distance, about how close you can go and still not know, and how giddyding the not knowing can feel.

Mueck's boldest combination of intimacy and distance is *Pregnant woman* from 2002. A sculpture of a naked woman

about to give birth would be extraordinary enough at life-size. But at this size, over eight-feet tall, it's almost hallucinatory—her belly booming outward, her back buttressed against its weight, her feet planted with awesome solidity. We can see her popped navel, the shining centre-line of her stomach called the 'linea negra', the crepey skin of her armpits, the faint sheen of sweat on her brow. In fact there's almost nothing we can't see. But the marvel is that a figure so emphatically there is at the same time somewhere else. Her eyes are closed, her gaze focused on some inner horizon, intent on a flood of bodily signals. She's only a few feet away from us, but feels like she's miles away. *Pregnant woman* has been praised as a modern Mary, a celebration of the universal beauty of motherhood, but that strikes me as too bland and comforting. Rather than celebrating motherhood as a known and universal condition, this sculpture testifies to the incredible otherness of pregnancy for those of us who are only onlookers at the event.

As a sculptor drawn to extreme life experiences, Mueck seems to answer to two impulses. On one hand there's his burning desire to capture such experiences, right down to the last wrinkle and follicle. On the other, there's his humble recognition of the limits of what even the most detailed hyper-realist sculpture can capture. The problem with a lot of realist art is that it's too confident in its construction of the world. It assumes that describing someone is knowing someone; get the outside right, the logic goes, and the inside will declare itself. Mueck is different. His formidable command of surface—every hair individually inserted, every goosebump carefully imprinted—is inseparable from his anxious awareness of all that's hidden or unknown about a person. Each sculpture is an attempt, he has said, 'to try to imagine what it's like to be in someone else's place'. The time and effort he spends making each work is a metaphor for the labour involved in any effort of fellow feeling.

– 03 –

'I can't imagine' we sometimes say, upon hearing of other people's life events and emotional journeys. Pregnancy, for example, tests the limits of your imagination if you haven't yourself experienced it. But there is one common event that defies all of our imaginations, and that is the experience of death. Although it comes to everyone, the experience is utterly and mysteriously private, and there are no reliable



‘By permitting his characters to keep their secrets, he draws out the other crucial figures in any sculptural equation—the ones standing and looking at the sculpture.’



Ron Mueck *Old woman in bed* (detail) 2002. Silicone, synthetic hair, cotton, polyester, second edition, artist's proof. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, purchased 2003.
© Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London.
Photo: Jenni Carter

reports. As a sculptor of human privacy and inwardness, Mueck meets his greatest challenge—and takes the greatest risks—when he attempts to come to grips with this moment. From the tiny grey figure of *Dead Dad* to the gasping form of his *Old woman in bed*, Mueck has pursued the matter of life and death with unironic, almost medieval directness—as if determined to find out whether a modern sculpture, in a secular gallery setting, can comprehend a subject traditionally addressed by sacred and religious sculpture. In a sculpture seen for the first time in his current exhibition, Mueck poses this question on fascinating new terms.

A man on a lilo floats on a background of blue—middle-aged, lightly tanned, without even a drink or a book to distract him. Mueck's *Drift* was inspired by a photograph of a friend resting in a swimming pool, and it's easy to complete the scene—to picture the deckchairs nearby, the wobbly blue light of the pool, the figure's fingertips trailing in the water. But in the same instant, a different image comes to mind, one that jolts this sculpture out of the contemporary world. Suspended on the wall with his arms flung wide, Mueck's drifting man vividly recalls the carved wooden crucifixions that hang high in churches, in particular the sensationally lifelike crucifixions made in Spain in the seventeenth century. Complete with glass eyes, real hair and wounds fashioned from bark, the mission of those crucifixions was to make the Passion story shockingly physical, placing you at the foot of the cross staring up into Christ's sorrowing eyes. So Mueck, it seems, is offering a contemporary variation on these harrowing historical objects—a crucifixion that seems to rise out of the material world of the early twenty-first century.

But the word 'seems' is important. Because even as I say all this, common sense is tugging my sleeve and insisting that I calm down. Surely this is just a moment of middle-class leisure and contentment? Surely the puffy lilo and bright shorts undercut any hints of torture and

transcendence? Yet the historical echo is unmistakable, and a sense of pathos persists. Something in the angle of the head creates a feeling of farewell and acceptance, as if this man is looking back one last time. There are fine webs of wrinkles around his wrists and ankles, and a suggestion of exhaustion in his downturned mouth. Most compelling of all, there's his smallness relative to the sea of blue around him. Even when you go in very close he seems to be a long way off, gliding up the wall and away from us on an unseen current. And this tallies with a little-publicised fact about the friend who inspired this sculpture, which is that he died, unexpectedly young, a year before Mueck began the work. It's as if Mueck has glimpsed, in a small drifting moment from his friend's life, an intimation of a much larger human transition.

So what will it be in the end? Is the man simply floating in a backyard pool, or drifting off toward some appointment with mortality? Is he killing time in the sunshine, or embarked on a larger life journey? With his eyes concealed behind dark sunglasses, the figure doesn't offer a conclusive answer—and by rights that ought to feel frustrating. But it doesn't, because his silence and reserve is exactly what makes us lean in closer and look for answers. For me this shyness is the key to Mueck's extraordinary sculptures, the secret source of their hold on us. By permitting his characters to keep their secrets, he draws out the other crucial figures in any sculptural equation—the ones standing and looking at the sculpture.

Justin Paton
Senior curator



Ron Mueck *Drift* 2009. Silicone, synthetic hair, polyester resin, fibreglass, polyurethane, aluminium, plastic, fabric, ed. 1/1. Anthony d'Offay. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London. Photo: John Spiller



INSPIRATION AND CONSOLATION

ANTHONY D’OFFAY IN CONVERSATION WITH JUSTIN PATON

IN 2002, AFTER TWO DECADES as one of the world’s most influential dealers of contemporary art, Anthony d’Offay closed the doors to his commercial gallery in Dering St., London. The years since, however, have been anything but quiet for him. In 2008, Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland acquired more than 700 works from d’Offay—a collection worth more than £125 million at the time, but acquired for the British public at its original cost price of around £27 million. Including works by Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys, Gilbert and George, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, Agnes Martin and Anselm Kiefer, the line-up is remarkable. Just as remarkable is

the way the works are now being presented, in the form of more than fifty ‘Artist Rooms’ which travel not just to high-profile metropolitan institutions like Tate but also to small and often underfunded regional galleries—so that viewers might encounter Diane Arbus in Nottingham, or Ed Ruscha in Inverness. In addition to his work curating the Artist Rooms, d’Offay has continued to work closely with just one artist from his Dering St. stable—Ron Mueck. Senior curator Justin Paton spoke with d’Offay about Artist Rooms, his own formative gallery-going experiences, and his thoughts on Ron Mueck and his sculptures.

Anthony d’Offay with Ron Mueck’s **In bed** 2005. Polyester resin, fibreglass, polyurethane, horse hair, cotton, second edition, ed. 1/1. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, purchased, Queensland Art Gallery Foundation 2008. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d’Offay, London

JUSTIN PATON: *What have you been up to? Which Artist Rooms have you installed most recently?*
ANTHONY D'OFFAY: Well, we've installed a new Andy Warhol room at Tate Modern, which is extraordinary. There's a big four-part camouflage painting, which is a masterpiece. There are six skulls, six self-portraits, a large dollar-sign painting, and a diptych from 1972 of dealer Alexander Iolas who worked with Andy all his life and commissioned the famous Last Supper paintings. And finally two large gun paintings, which are so important because, of course, they are of the same type of gun with which Andy was shot.

JP: *Clearly it's exciting for viewers to see these works for the first time, but this must also be the first time you've seen some of these works in many years, and certainly in these new groupings?*
AD: Yes, many of the works I bought five, ten, fifteen years ago have been in storage, so one is seeing them, in many cases, afresh. It's very exciting to see works of art which look stronger and stronger every time they come out.

JP: *Why do the Rooms exist? What do you want them to do?*
AD: Well it's very simple. We want them to be seen by young people, who should begin to ask themselves questions about the meaning of the works, which stimulates them to ask questions of themselves. For instance, how is it that you and I are talking? I dare say that we had, when we were relatively young, experiences with art that made us ask questions of ourselves and perhaps got us to apprehend truth in some way—got us to find some strong ground to stand on for the first time. In my case, I began to see the world in terms of the experiences I had in my local museum as a young man, and that was something on which I was able to build. It was some sort of inspiration and consolation. Very often, I think, children experience intense unhappiness, as teenagers especially, and encounters with works of art can take that sort of experience into a different realm.

Ron Mueck *Still life* 2009. Silicone, polyurethane, aluminium, feathers, stainless steel, nylon rope, ed. 1/1. Anthony d'Offay. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London. Photo: John Spiller

JP: *So where did those moments of inspiration and consolation occur?*
AD: I was brought up in Leicester, a medium-sized city in the English Midlands, and they had a really wonderful museum there with early twentieth-century German painting, painting by Francis Bacon, eighteenth-century pottery and porcelain, and stuffed animals and Egyptian mummies in the basement—a range of things to think about which were very important.

JP: *And these things were transformative?*
AD: They gave me some sort of basis on which to know myself, know who I was. I became very interested in looking at things, comparing things, and trying to work out why one was more powerful than another. As a child I was very interested in the Egyptian antiquities, and made models of them at home. And I was enormously impressed by the fact that there was a painting by Francis Bacon in the museum, and that it was by a living artist. That a living artist could be in a museum seemed an extraordinary thing.

JP: *In public galleries today there's often an anxiety that complex works of art will prove difficult for young audiences to digest—that they need to be explained or made entertaining. How does that tally with your own early experience?*
AD: It was important that the museum was free, and one could go again and again. I never went on museum visits with schools, I just went on my own. My mother sort of parked me there when she went shopping. In some way I felt that I made friends with the works of art; that the works of art were very strengthening—I certainly felt that. And, you know, you can buy a postcard and take it home and feel that you possess it. It's amazing how many people's lives have been changed by looking at postcards after museum visits.

JP: *You have spent your life since then working with art and artists. When you are going to see new works today, what do you hope for? What do you want from the experience of art?*
AD: Well I think that all of us who are involved with contemporary art want that extraordinary breakthrough experience of falling in love with a young artist, or even falling in love with an older artist who one hasn't totally appreciated properly before. Because that

is such an intense experience. It's a sort of revelation of knowledge.

JP: *So tell me about your first experience of a Ron Mueck sculpture?*
AD: It was very simple. It involved going to the exhibition *Sensation* at the Royal Academy in 1997, where Charles Saatchi had commissioned Ron to make some new sculpture, and standing awestruck by the sculpture *Dead Dad*. I asked Charles how to reach Ron, then made a date and went to see him, and made friends really. There's a great innocence about Ron. He has no guile. He's not worldly in the sense that Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst are. He's a very retiring person. His world is really his life at home and what happens in the studio—those two things.

JP: *And that sense of concentration and intensity is present in the sculptures.*
AD: Absolutely, yes. He's an extraordinary artist. It always feels like an honour to be involved in helping him to make exhibitions round the world and encouraging him, I hope, to make new work.

JP: *He is the one artist you have continued to work very closely with since closing your gallery in 2001. Why is that?*
AD: I would like to think it's because we're very good friends and trust each other. And maybe that trust was more important to him than having high-profile dealer shows. In fact, pretty much most of the time there's a museum exhibition of his somewhere in the world, and I've been involved in helping to make those things happen. The work, when it's sold, usually goes to museums, and I think Ron appreciates that.

JP: *Across the thirteen or so years since the breakthrough sculpture Dead Dad—a surprisingly short time when you reflect on it—how would you say his work and his concerns have evolved?*
AD: I think that he always takes risks, always makes something new, something he's never made before. Just think for example about the recent sculptures. *Drift* is completely unlike anything else he's ever made, and the same is true of *Youth* and *Still life* and *Woman with sticks*.





Ron Mueck **Dead Dad** 1996–7.
Silicone, polyurethane, styrene,
synthetic hair, ed. 1/1. Stefan T.
Edlis Collection, Chicago. © Ron
Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay,
London. Photo: Michael Tropea

JP: *I was very struck, visiting Ron’s London studio, by how incredibly small and modest the setting is. I’m not sure what I was expecting—somewhere larger and more clinical.*

AD: I always think that it must relate in some way to the place where he made toys and puppets when he was a child in Melbourne.

JP: *And not only how small the space is, but how intensely hands-on and observational and even intuitive Ron’s making process is. Do you think this makes him unusual among contemporary artists, where work is often outsourced or put in the hands of other makers?*

AD: I think that he stands alone as an artist, in the same way as you could say the painter Lucian Freud stands alone as an artist. And interestingly enough, both of them have come from German origins, were brought up speaking German and have some kind of relationship, however vague, with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* or New Objectivity artists of the 1920s, and perhaps even with German romanticism.

JP: *And a ‘northern’ pallor and sombreness...*

AD: Yes, a Northern Renaissance feeling to the work. There’s a show of Lucian Freud at the Pompidou at the moment which makes him feel extremely German in a very French atmosphere.

JP: *Ron’s exhibition in Melbourne received an extraordinary number of visitors by any standards—and his shows do this wherever they open. Why do you think this occurs? What accounts for the extraordinary reach of the work?*

AD: If you take the trouble to speak to people in Ron’s exhibitions, and ask them how they came to see the show—Was it because they read a review? Was it because they saw advertising? What was it?—they all say pretty much the same thing, which is that a friend told them that under no circumstances must they miss

Ron Mueck Youth 2009
Silicone, polyurethane,
steel, synthetic hair, fabric,
ed. 1/1, Anthony d’Offay
© Ron Mueck courtesy
Anthony d’Offay, London.
Photo: John Spiller



this extraordinary experience. You know as well as I do that if a friend says you’ve absolutely got to read this book, or you absolutely must not miss this film, then one takes that seriously. I think also that Ron bypasses that rulebook for understanding the development of twentieth-century art—that is to say, the idea that you have to know about abstraction and cubism and surrealism and all those categories. I think, with Ron’s work, you can respond to it in an immediate way because it speaks to you at a deep level. People feel moved immediately by the sculpture, because it draws out strong emotions, very often to do with fear, loneliness, melancholy, daydreaming—things which people experience all the time but don’t always speak about. I can’t think of another artist who investigates those territories so thoroughly.

JP: *When Ron emerged as part of the controversial Sensation exhibition he was discussed alongside the other so-called Young British Artists of that moment, Damien Hirst chief among them. A decade and more later, do you think he still sits with that group, or do other connections now seem more relevant?*

AD: I don’t think he really sits with that group at all. I think he’s an artist apart. He comes from his own place. As we’ve said, he seems to belong to, if anything, that Northern European world of feeling. There are two ways of thinking about European art. One is the warm Mediterranean—voluptuous nudes, a guitar and a bottle of wine. And the other is, if you like, German painting, which is much colder and harder and hits in a much more sensitive place.

JP: *When you returned to London from Ron’s exhibition in Melbourne, you were planning to visit Sacred Made Real, the National Gallery’s exhibition of hyper-realistic seventeenth-century Spanish religious sculpture. Did you see the exhibition?*

AD: I certainly did. And it was impossible not to see some parallels with Ron’s sculptures. If you consider that Ron’s sculpture is all secular, and that the Baroque show was all to do with the spiritual world, it made a very interesting contrast.

JP: *There are overt references to historical Christian art in several of Ron’s new sculptures—to crucifixions in Drift, to the wounding of Christ in Youth, and to imagery of sacrifice in Still life. What do you think Ron is saying in these works about the relationship between contemporary art and matters of faith and belief?*

AD: I think one of the things art must do is address the human condition. And mortality is something one comes back to again and again—the meaning of life, and the brevity of life, and the suffering that people have to endure. I think that the only difference about being older is that people grow more used to suffering; not that suffering lessens or ceases. And Ron seems more conscious of that in his recent works. That suffering is part of the power of the works.

JP: *And strangely, human suffering seems especially present in the one work where Ron portrays a non-human subject—Still life.*

AD: What a daring work to make. What an extraordinary idea, and to be able to bring it off. The work is truly shocking, isn’t it?

JP: *It is. And while being a simple still-life subject, it seems also to be about all manner of larger things—amongst them violence and even war.*

AD: It seems to relate to us in a very real way. And it also has extraordinary sexual overtones or undertones. It’s

one of those works of art, and I think it’s characteristic of Ron when one says this, that once you’ve seen it it’s with you for the rest of your life. You’ll never forget it. Ron is so clear, so focused, so right. You can imagine that sculpture going wrong half a hundred times. But he’s incredibly sure-footed.

JP: *This is a rather cruel question to end with, but if you were forced to do without all but one of Ron’s works, which would you stay with, and why?*

AD: I know which work I’d stay with, and that is *Mask II*, the sleeping self-portrait, which is a work we are always lending to museums—twelve months a year. And that is because, according to my own understanding, it is the artist making his work. He’s dreaming his dreams. He’s dreaming the sculpture. He’s going to wake up and say, ‘I’ve got a good idea’. And there’s something very beautiful about the way you look at it from the front and it takes your breath way because it’s so lifelike, even though it’s colossal, and then you walk around the back and you see how it’s made—that it’s just a made thing. Come round the front again and it’s almost breathing. It’s a miraculous thing.

Ron Mueck Mask II 2002.
Polyester resin, fibreglass,
steel, plywood, synthetic
hair, second edition, artist’s
proof. Private collection.
© Ron Mueck courtesy
Anthony d’Offay, London



A Girl, in Transit

Janice Slater

*If you have ever travelled with a baby you will know that, in order to ensure a safe and pleasant trip, it's essential to plan and prepare in advance. But even then there are often hiccups to contend with on the way. It's really no different when travelling with the National Galleries of Scotland's baby, Ron Mueck's **A girl**—she just happens to be a little bigger...*





Weighing in at a healthy 740kg, she measures 110.5 x 501 x 134.5cm from head to (very) big toe! And she's certainly a popular girl—since her acquisition in 2007 she has travelled from Pittsburgh in the USA, to Kanazawa in Japan and to Aberdeen in the north east of Scotland. It was from Aberdeen that she started her journey to Christchurch, via London, Frankfurt, Dubai, Hong Kong, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

The National Galleries agreed to lend *A girl* to the **Ron Mueck** exhibition during the summer of 2009. Prior to our agreement, while the conservation department checked that she was in good enough condition to withstand the rigours of transport half way around the world, here in the registrars' department we requested and reviewed information on the environmental and security arrangements at each borrowing venue. All this information helps us determine how the artwork will travel, and what arrangements need to be put in place en route and at the exhibition venues to minimise any risk of damage or loss.

A girl is constructed from a variety of media including fibreglass, polyester resin, silicone and natural hair. Unlike many large sculptures, it cannot be taken apart and moved in sections, and so has its own custom-built crate, designed not only to keep the sculpture safe from the potentially damaging effects of the outside world, but also to provide ease of access for unpacking and installation. Together with colleagues at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, we agreed on the most appropriate transport schedule and route, taking into consideration a bewildering range of factors. These included the overall length of the journey, potential changes in temperature and humidity en route, the number of times the work would have to be moved from one mode of transport to another, the levels of security

available throughout, the reliability of the transport and, not least, the exhibition budget.

Moving delicate and valuable works of art is a specialist and expensive area. Vehicles must be fitted with air-ride suspension, environmental management and security systems to avoid damage or theft. Any aircraft we use must be able to carry palletised or containerised freight, ensuring the crates cannot move around in the aircraft hold, and we have to have access to secure storage facilities at the airport.

The larger the artwork the more limited our options are, and a sculpture the size and weight of *A girl* can only travel across continents by commercial freighter. But unlike passenger aircraft, freighters do not necessarily operate on a daily basis, they frequently change route or schedule at the last minute; no matter how carefully we had thought out our journey, we needed a plan B. (Livestock bookings usually take precedence on a freighter, and in the past some of our shipments have been cancelled to accommodate horses and their grooms, and even a consignment of pigs!) *A girl* was booked onto a freighter scheduled to fly from Heathrow to Melbourne on 8 January, arriving on 11 January via stops in Hong Kong and Sydney. But first we had to get her to London.

The exhibition at Aberdeen Art Gallery closed on 31 October and as *A girl* was due to set off from Heathrow in early January, we decided it would be best for her to spend Christmas in the fine art store of our London shipping agents. This kept the amount of movement and handling to a minimum—and had the added bonus of reducing transport costs since there were other works in the show travelling to London at the same time. In the meantime, we continued to finalise arrangements for her onward journey to Australia, and her arrival and installation at the NGV.

'A girl is constructed from a variety of media including fibreglass, polyester resin, silicone and natural hair. Unlike many large sculptures, it cannot be taken apart and moved in sections, and so has its own custom-built crate, designed not only to keep the sculpture safe from the potentially damaging effects of the outside world, but also to provide ease of access for unpacking and installation.'



As the journey and installation involved a number of complex moves, one of our fine art technicians, Ian Thompson, would travel with *A girl* to ensure she was moved and stored appropriately, to assist with the installation in Melbourne and to troubleshoot any unexpected problems. The extreme weather in the UK during early January quickly presented Ian with his first problem. Due to depart Heathrow on the evening of 8 January, that very morning we were advised that the connecting flight from Hong Kong had been cancelled; the next available flight would be a day later than planned. The shipping agents in the UK, Hong Kong, and Australia quickly reorganised bookings and ensured Ian would have an additional night in a hotel in Hong Kong (not something he was too worried about). However, just five hours later we were advised Heathrow had run out of antifreeze and the freighter Ian and *A girl* were due to fly out on had been diverted to Manchester, 200 miles north. The freighter would now also stop in Frankfurt and Dubai en route to Hong Kong. This change of route meant our shipping agents had to jump into action again and arrange for supervision at Manchester, Frankfurt and Dubai in addition to Hong Kong. As a further precaution arrangements were also made that *A girl* would be loaded at the tail-end of the aircraft to ensure that she was not offloaded during the stopovers. Ian and *A girl* finally departed the UK on Saturday 9 January.

Having spent a number of hours supervising loading in a cargo warehouse and out on the tarmac in freezing conditions, Ian boarded the aircraft—his home for the next three days. With only six seats and no inflight entertainment, being a passenger in a freighter is definitely not luxury travel. Ian thoroughly enjoyed himself sitting in the cockpit whilst flying past the world's tallest building in Dubai, and coming in to land over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. He was also surprised to be handed a high-visibility jacket and torch by one of the pilots during the middle-of-the-night stopover at Frankfurt and asked to help the crew check under the 747 for fuel leaks. Much of his time though was spent reading, eating and popping down to check our crate hadn't shifted during the course of the flight.

Ian and *A girl* finally arrived safely in Melbourne on Tuesday 12 January. After clearing customs and a thirty-minute drive to the National Gallery of Victoria, the journey was almost complete, but not quite. We already knew she was too big to enter the gallery through the loading dock, and so before Christmas had agreed on a solution. The NGV created a template of the crate and 'walked' it through

the gallery, checking which doorways could accommodate its dimensions, and where it was possible to turn it. The NGV had also organised collection from the airport in a climate-controlled, air-ride curtain-sided vehicle—ensuring offloading could be done by forklift truck, and the crate moved directly into the gallery space through a second access point in the building.

After a well-deserved rest, Ian assisted with the unpacking of the crate and condition checked *A girl* to confirm she had arrived without any bumps and bruises, before the team of fine art technicians carefully placed her on her plinth. It takes six to eight technicians to lift *A girl* and they need to be aware of the more fragile areas. For example the umbilical cord and lower hand can't be used as a lifting point due to how they are joined to the body. They also need to know in advance how the weight is distributed: her head is noticeably heavier than her feet.

Once in place on her plinth, like any baby she needs lots of care and attention. The plinth is designed to visually frame *A girl* but also to provide a necessary safety barrier—we have found people tend to want to get as close as possible to her surface. While on display, she is prone to collect dust and so a conservator at each venue will lightly dust her using a combination of soft-haired brushes and light suction from a special vacuum cleaner. She may also have her hair carefully brushed, but only in the direction it falls.

Having moved again to the Queensland Art Gallery in April, we are now in the process of finalising arrangements for the transfer to Christchurch. Once again we're reviewing the options available, including this time a sea crossing via sealed climate-controlled container—a first for us as normally this mode of transport is ruled out due to the length of the journey and an absence of environmental control. Our friends and colleagues at NGV are looking after her en route to Christchurch and will ensure she is safely delivered and installed. *A girl* has become an international ambassador for the National Galleries of Scotland, continuing and developing existing relationships with museums and galleries like the NGV and creating exciting new links with cities, art galleries and museums to which we have never lent before, such as Christchurch Art Gallery.

Janice Slater

Janice Slater is registrar at the National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.

‘While on display, she is prone to collect dust and so a conservator at each venue will lightly dust her using a combination of soft-haired brushes and light suction from a special vacuum cleaner. She may also have her hair carefully brushed, but only in the direction it falls.’

Artwork installation at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Photos: Christian Markel



From left:
Roger Boyce *Short Stack* and *Agua Libre*,
from *The Illustrated History of Painting*
2008–10. Oil and water-based mediums
on hardwood ply. Reproduced courtesy
of the artist, Brooke Gifford Gallery,
Christchurch and Suite, Wellington

Senior curator Justin Paton interviews
Roger Boyce about his 100-part series,
The Illustrated History of Painting

BEING WRONG

JUSTIN PATON: *So, The Illustrated History of Painting. That's a large title for a large series—100 paintings, no less. What got you thinking so big?*

ROGER BOYCE: It started out small. TIHOP, as you've dubbed it, was haplessly begun. The first paintings weren't anything more than droll thrusts at unfavourable personal events. At the work's inception I was hardly robust enough to undertake, or imagine, anything even remotely ambitious.

Pure habit saw to it that one picture followed another—and at about painting fifteen the title arrived unbidden. I literally laughed out loud when it—*The Illustrated History of Painting*—came to me. To attach a long and pretentious title to my limping procession of small pictures seemed the perfect absurdity.

JP: *There's a terrific sense of the absurd in the series, but it feels less like the bleak, slow-moving, Beckettian brand of absurdity than a freewheeling, take-no-prisoners, vaudeville variety—all pratfalls and potshots. Why is the absurd to the fore in your recent paintings?*

RB: My sense of the absurd was well and truly shaped before I knew anything of Beckett. Film and television comedians I was exposed to, and relished, as a child, had previously been vaudeville circuit veterans. The Marx Brothers being the most famous. What these folks specialised in was creating a cracked-mirror contrast to starched society types, barging kinetically and noisily into airless cultural salons and fomenting all manner of unconventional social chaos.

When I first came in from the cold (culturally speaking) as a young artist I often felt like the proverbial skunk at a garden party—even if the event had been organised in my honour. I recall hearing about how Warhol, having come from a similar working-class background, once found himself at a loss about dinnerware at a formal artworld dinner party, and, in a successful bid to turn the situation to his advantage declared, disingenuously, to one and all, that he 'only ate candy'.

I'd guess that the absurd holds sway in my work, and in my general world view, for the sake of gaining advantage. Advantage in a life that seems ripe with the possibility of humiliation and failure.



‘Practicing artists are born rag pickers. The bigger the pile of rags the happier they are.’



In *The Illustrated History of Painting* the conventional furnishings, settings, and activities connected to my profession are turned to unconventional purpose—the failure and humiliation of the pictures’ wee protagonists becomes my tiny comic triumph.

JP: *And has a sense of the absurd always been there in the work? Like most New Zealanders, I don’t know the work of your American years well.*

RB: There hasn’t always been a detectably absurd sensibility. But now, looking in retrospect, from a promontory of years, I’d have to say that the stuff I’m fondest of has a distinct strain of absurdist comedy. My earliest and latest undertakings are the most markedly funny of the bunch. Second childhood?

JP: *At the same time that you dip into low comedy, there’s a lot of high-art culture feeding these works. I’d list illuminated books of hours, Renaissance panel paintings, and perhaps even Rajput miniatures. All works with jewel-like, intricate surfaces...*

RB: The three examples you’ve mentioned may obliquely contribute—particularly when it comes to scale. I did spend an appreciable time, while in graduate school, looking at and borrowing from Persian and Rajput miniatures. That being said, I think it apparent that my work suffers technically by comparison. One-hair brushwork exceeds my level of quasi-sane commitment.

While not at all interested in being *faux-naïf*, I’ve a long history of purposefully dialling back technical finesse in my figurative work—cultivating a calculated clumsiness. Lately though I’m finding it harder and harder to resist the sleazy ooh-aah fun and ego gratification of indulging in showy technical competence. *TIHOP* is a seriously mixed-bag of style and polish—so, as with Shakespeare’s plays, there’s something there for sophisticated season-ticket holders and cheap-seat rabble.

JP: *What else from the history of art has informed your painted History?*

RB: I’m an art fan-boy. So, Beckman’s nonpareil composition, Grosz and Dix’s ruthless grotesques, Daumier’s social caricatures, Mexican broadside artists such as José Posada and a whole host of popular illustration and cartooning genres, from early circus to hand-painted African movie posters of the 1980s—they’ve all had some visual say. Garbage in, garbage out, as early computer wonks were wont to warn.



From left:
Roger Boyce *Dumb Like a Painter, False Starts or Death* by a
Thousand Cuts and *Contemplative*,
from *The Illustrated History of Painting* 2008–10. Oil and water-based mediums on hardwood ply. Reproduced courtesy of the artist. Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch and Suite, Wellington



JP: So you're willing to admit you're having it both ways—in love with the history you're skewering?

RB: I'm deep in love with a frightening range of art historical examples but have a harder time with the bloodless, professionally immobilised and rouged corpus of art history as a discipline. But then it's our fault now, isn't it—considering the fact that Vasari, the first art historian, was an artist.

JP: Glad you're willing to take the blame! But is that one of the challenges or problems for a painter today—the 'frightening range' of examples? I mean, if you're an eighteen-year-old eager to become an artist, the sheer number of ways to be one—galaxies of options just a mouse-click away—could well be paralysing rather than liberating. Quite a few of your little painter-protagonists seem to be suffering badly for their ill-advised stylistic choices...

RB: Problem, what problem? Practicing artists are born rag pickers. The bigger the pile of rags the happier they are. The history of art is this immense midden. Even the stuff art historians had once discarded (late de Chirico, late Picabia, or even Bouguereau and buddies for Pete's sake) is worth looking at.

When sorted and cross-correlated, the artists we're looking at turn out to have remarkably similar solutions to the visual problems they've chosen for themselves. What may, at first blush, look to be a vast and unintelligible galaxy of aesthetic possibility becomes—after some thoughtful viewing—a readable atlas of radiant constellations by which an artist can chart their own independent course.

JP: You're not telling me there are no problems, though? Wouldn't that put you out of business as a lecturer in fine arts?

RB: The real problem for your proverbial eighteen-year-old painter—and for young contemporary artists of all stripes—is premature partisanship. A sort of callow affiliation with received (academic, theoretical, genre-specific) notions that have little, if anything, to do with the task of expanding ideas around visual possibility and delight, and everything to do with proprietary ring-fencing and parochial limiting of visual possibility, for whatever reason.

Moving on. My painted protagonists do indeed, as you say, suffer as a direct result of their own stylistic choices. I haven't given them immunity, in their sovereign little worlds, from the one immutable law of the universe—all God's children gotta suffer. But at least their suffering follows from individual stylistic volition.

JP: Is that the attraction of the studio for you—not that you get to escape from problems, but that you get to choose which ones you'll tussle with? I know you're a fan of novelist Philip Roth and thought you might like his comment that 'Writing turns you into somebody who's always wrong. The illusion that you may get it right someday is the perversity that draws you on.'

RB: Otto Rank, in his book *Art and Artists*, forwards the idea that artists and neurotics both view the world as a problem. Fortunately, for artists, only a portion of world-as-problem

From left:
Roger Boyce *Rococo*, *Yves*,
Great White and Burden of Dreams, from *The Illustrated History of Painting* 2008–10. Oil and water-based mediums on hardwood ply. Reproduced courtesy of the artist, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch and Suite, Wellington

'Otto Rank, in his book Art and Artists, forwards the idea that artists and neurotics both view the world as a problem. Fortunately, for artists, only a portion of world-as-problem can be fitted through the studio door and dealt to.'

can be fitted through the studio door and dealt to. So, unlike the poor neurotic, who's left outside to futilely grapple with problems of unmanageable (and unimaginable) proportions, an artist is forced, by the very circumstance of having a studio practice, to choose which part of the problem is essential to solving it. I suspect that having to choose is the liberating fact of creative life.

I think you've teased out a wonderfully telling bit of Roth's art-about-art. The sentence you've selected is enunciated by Roth's alter ego, the writer Nathan Zuckerman—the quintessential doubter. Zuckerman is offering a hard-won paradoxical understanding to another regular in Roth's standard repertory of characters—the guy who can't shed his finite, self-fostered, ideology-of-rightness long enough to admit, into his own life, the limitless possibilities of being wrong. I concur with the author that being wrong—or at least admitting its possibility—is a cardinal virtue when it comes to enhancing the prospect of making good art.

Roger Boyce: The Illustrated History of Painting is in the Monica Richards Gallery until 14 November 2010.



EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER

Artist Talk / Roger Boyce
Join senior curator Justin Paton and artist Roger Boyce as they talk about painting's many 'deaths and rebirths', and Boyce's provocative new show *The Illustrated History of Painting*.
6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free
Sponsored by The Press

OLD NEW BORROWED BLUE

Tailored largely for younger audiences, **Blue Planet** is a gathering of works featuring the colour blue, and a rich introduction to different types of art-making. Spanning geography, history and philosophy, it brings together painting, photography and video, collage, ceramics and printmaking. **Blue Planet** also combines collection works, significant loans from private lenders and other public collections and works of art made especially for the show.



Helen Calder **B40-097-275** (detail)
2010. Acrylic paint skin and stainless
steel fittings. Collection of the artist.
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and
Antoinette Godkin Gallery



Amongst these new works are Helen Calder's *B48-102-250* and *B40-097-275* (both 2010), two shining hanging paint skins installed side-by-side, and testing their own weight across fine stainless steel rods. A local artist with a growing reputation for her ability to ask tantalising questions about paint behaviour and our expectations, Calder's latest paintings function without canvas or stretcher support. Evidently they are part of an ongoing, stripped back inquiry into the nature of painting—a reading that seems reinforced through Calder's selection of titles for her works. Being equally essential, their origin is in Resene paint chart colour codes: 'The first digits denote the colour's luminance, with 0 being approximately black and 100 being approximately white. The second set of digits denotes the saturation or purity of the colour. The last set of digits tells you where the colour sits on a wheel of colour 0–360 degrees.' The rationality of this explanation belies the enigmatic nature of Calder's results.

Another new addition to **Blue Planet** is also the oldest: a courtly gentleman painted in 1735 by leading London portraitist Joseph Highmore (1692–1780). Until recently, the sitter's identity had been unknown,

but new investigations have resulted in the discovery of his name and his fascinating story—more on that in a later issue. For the present, the placement of the resplendent blue-coated Thomas Budgen alongside Helen Calder's works creates a strange and interesting marriage. Highmore's purpose in 1735 was to celebrate the standing and refinement of his sitter, something he achieved while also making a bravura display of skill and luscious, painterly effects. Obviously different, but constructed by equally refined means, Calder's luminous, folding paint-works belong to a project that, while poles apart from representational or illusionistic aims, draws the eye through the convincing power of colour and form. As an art lesson marking two very different places on a timeline of the history of painting, it is also reasonable to say that these works are far from the beginning or the end.

Ken Hall
Assistant curator

Opposite page:
Joseph Highmore **Thomas Budgen, MP for Surrey 1751–1761**
1735. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 1977

Left:
Helen Calder **B48-102-250** (detail)
2010. Acrylic paint skin and stainless steel fittings. Collection of the artist. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Antoinette Godkin Gallery

BLUE PLANET IS IN THE BURDON FAMILY GALLERY UNTIL 20 FEBRUARY 2011.

*Other artists featured in **Blue Planet** are Len Castle, Max Gimblett, Gavin Hipkins, Jae Hoon Lee, Megan Jenkinson, Colin McCahon, Peter Madden, Richard Maloy, Eileen Mayo, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Reuben Paterson, William Robinson, Francis Upritchard and Rohan Wealleans.*



THE EDGE OF LIFE

BY ANNE MANNE

WHEN WE FIRST SAW Ron Mueck's sculpture of *A girl*, my companion bent down. She stood back startled. 'I thought I heard her cry,' she said. Later she wept over what she had seen. Being moved so deeply was not a response to the shock of the artisanship which created such uncannily life-like figures. Rather it was to do with a different kind of shock—that of recognition of the depiction of an interior emotional world. She felt she might just have had an encounter with the human soul.

To understand what is truly original in Mueck's work one has to see what he draws on but transcends. His sculptures *Pregnant woman* and *Mother and child* clarify the ways traditional representations of the Madonna involved a kind of erasure. The Madonna has been a strangely sexless, disembodied creature. The body is composed, clothed, limbs gracefully arranged to keep anything of nature's harsh fingerprint on the body hidden and concealed. The gaze in such portraits is turned outwards, displaying self-consciousness of the Other, observing being observed. The face is so often turned, not towards the baby as the mother's gaze actually is in real life, but towards the male viewer. In these iconic images there is sentimentality, and a disembodied ethereality, a fiction about motherhood not grounded in the truth of the raw, visceral, confronting yet profoundly moving bodily experience which is pregnancy and birth. Not just Immaculate Conception, but Immaculate Birth.

And yet... those traditional portrayals were trying to capture something true, of the sacred in the maternal,

the awe at the creativity of giving birth, and the profound meaning of new life, the sense of revelation in encountering a new human being. That sense of the sacred embedded in those portraits could not be more different from the postmodern emotions of fractured ambivalence, even hostility, so often expressed towards motherhood. The maternal experience is presented as a lack, a loss of what is truly valued: the desired identity of professional worker, so eagerly and quickly returned to. That ambivalence is also shown by our uneasiness over a mother breastfeeding her baby in public. Despite our visual world being saturated with the ubiquitous images and display of women's breasts in a sexual context—'the porno-ization of our culture,' Ariel Levy called it—the suckling baby frequently results in an ugly sensation.

How radically different an achievement from both these strands—of worship and ambivalence—are Mueck's sculptures *Pregnant woman*, *Mother and child* and *A girl*. They are genuinely something very new. They have resonances with those older iconic images, but transcend the disembodied and sanctifying sentimentality. He also steps past, seemingly without glancing at, the muddled sensibility and ambivalence at the heart of contemporary thinking about the maternal experience, born of postmodernity's unbearable lightness of being. Mueck's sculptures reveal, with a shocking power, just what is erased in both those visions.

Mueck's inventive play with scale works to convey meaning. This is seen in the smallness of the father after death in *Dead Dad*, and the huge size of the

'TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS TRULY ORIGINAL IN MUECK'S WORK ONE HAS TO SEE WHAT HE DRAWS ON BUT TRANSCENDS. *PREGNANT WOMAN* AND *MOTHER AND CHILD* CLARIFY THE WAYS TRADITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MADONNA INVOLVED A KIND OF ERASURE.'

Ron Mueck *Pregnant woman* (detail) 2002. Polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, aluminium, synthetic hair, ed. 1/1. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased with the assistance of Tony and Carol Berg 2003. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London



baby in *A girl*, which confronts us with the disparity between the tiny form of the newborn and the enormity of the presence that so transforms the family. Likewise, *Pregnant woman* defies the monumental in scale, looming above us, stark naked. Yet it also has a strange tenderness; there is an intimacy in Mueck's sculpture showing her vulnerable humanity in every detail—pulsing veins and beads of sweat, bodily hair and swollen ankles. Her mouth is open, lips parted. Stay silent in front of the sculpture for a moment and you can hear her breathe. We see here not a fragile femininity, but instead a womanliness of great strength, as we see the felicity of nature's design in her pelvic structure, a perfect scaffolding supporting her enormous belly. Yet that strength is not sentimentalised either, because of the expression on the woman's face.

The expressions on Mueck's sculptures are perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his work. In *A girl* for example, the baby's face shows both the shock and tension of birth, underscored by the clenched fists at her side. Yet, it is more complex than this, for remarkably enough there is also evident just a trace of a much older self, of the person this baby will become. *Pregnant woman* is no different. There is a powerful sense of interior life in the sculptures, their feeling and emotional world. In *Pregnant woman*, the face is strained, effortful, mindful, eyes closed, concentrating on the baby within, seemingly preparing herself for the new person she is about to meet. It has physical suffering in it, and exhaustion, yet if one stops and suddenly glances back over one's shoulder, there is more than the ghost of the relaxation after sex in the face, perhaps the sex that created this baby. Glance again and one sees a face that has loved, and will love this baby, and in that love we see the traces of a soul. It is perhaps that ability to render so expressively the feeling world of his subjects, that led the cultural critic Marina Warner to remark that 'his work often extends into the idea of love itself, which is a hard subject in our tarnished times' and that he takes us 'to the edge of life'.

‘THE BABY’S FACE SHOWS BOTH THE SHOCK AND TENSION OF BIRTH, UNDERScoreD BY THE CLENCHED FISTS AT HER SIDE. YET, IT IS MORE COMPLEX THAN THIS.’

If the embodied reality of pregnancy is so raw and present in this sculpture, it coexists with something else; the depth of the emotional transition as a woman turns inward, towards the life within, preparing herself for the effort of birth and nurturing the child she bears into the world. It is that delicate coexistence of elements which makes it so deeply moving. As with other of Mueck's sculptures dealing with the profound intensity of birth, life, and death, we are taken closer to a sense of the sacred, while simultaneously confronted with our own messy humanity. The edge of life indeed.

Anne Manne

Anne Manne is an Australian writer and essayist for The Monthly. Her most recent book is So This Is Life: Scenes from a Country Childhood, Melbourne University Publishing 2009.

Ron Mueck *A girl* 2006. Polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, synthetic hair, synthetic polymer paint, second edition, artist's proof. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, purchased with assistance from The Art Fund 2007. © Ron Mueck courtesy Anthony d'Offay, London. Photo: Antonia Reeve



SCAPE 2010

24 September – 7 November

THE INNER CITY IS BOTH the site and subject of the SCAPE 2010 Christchurch Biennial of Art in Public Space. As Christchurch, like many cities all over the world, looks to new urban planning and development models to create a more livable, populated and environmentally sustainable inner city, the biennial will see seven new large-scale temporary public works of art join four of the city's permanent works to form a public art walkway in central Christchurch.

The curatorial group, comprising Blair French (convenor), Julia Morison and William Field, has developed the strategy and selected this year's artists. According to Field:

The current planning debates about urban consolidation, amenity and sustainable development were an early discussion point for the group. This seemed to correspond directly with the move towards SCAPE itself becoming more intensified within the inner city, and the potential for artists to contribute to the broader urban planning discourse in ways that were perhaps not being considered by other disciplines involved. This discussion provided a starting point for us to think about artists whose practice related to these issues and who might, as a group, provide a broad response to the complexities of urban environments.

Joanna Langford's SCAPE 2010 project is set to challenge, focus and enhance our experiences and future projections of the inner city. Creating her first new public artwork specifically for SCAPE 2010, Langford's installation *The High Country* is an aerial futuristic city that will appear floating above an empty lot on high street. Perched atop vertical towers on raised platforms, clouds of plastic silage wrap support a model city constructed

from plastic milk bottles housing sequenced LED lights. The work alludes to utopian fantasies of progress, giving the appearance of a fantastical city rising above the ground, allowing for alternate perspectives of a future city in relation to its surrounding environment.

In this large-scale installation—twenty metres at its highest point—Langford will work with Leighs Construction to explore forms, ideas and new possibilities for building industry processes and materials. By utilising found or recycled materials, her artwork will emphasise the impact consumerism can have on the physical environment. The result promises to be a magical, whimsical miniature world to inspire our own everyday environments or our own dreams of transformation.

Julia Morison, curatorial group member, says of SCAPE's relationships with industry partners:

SCAPE is possibly quite unique from other art events in New Zealand in that while it does form necessary partnerships with existing art institutions and organisations, it operates independently in public sites that are not art sanctioned. While dependence on business and industrial partnerships and negotiating for sites within the public domain makes the realisation of projects considerably more complex, it also enmeshes the projects more immediately with the public—both in production and reception.

SCAPE 2010 will include a comprehensive series of keynote talks, events and activities. You can access a full programme of events via the visitor information hub at the centre of the SCAPE 2010 public art walkway in Cathedral Square, or online at www.scapebiennial.org.nz.

Joanna Langford *The Howling Country* 2010. Mixed media. Courtesy the artist and Mary Newton Gallery. Photo: Jeff McEwan

1 JULY 2009 – 30 JUNE 2010

If the 2009–10 year was dominated by one project, it was **Brought to Light**. The design and renovation of our upstairs collection spaces and the rehang of the collections took a huge amount of effort and staff time. And I am in awe of this when I consider that Gallery staff delivered our standard quarterly changes of temporary exhibitions and other projects such as a new website and nine demanding publications as well.

The results speak for themselves as once again we have well surpassed our target of 370,00–410,000 visitors per annum, attracting the largest number of visitors on record for the last five years.

Everyone here was involved one way or another in **Brought to Light**. Curators selected, researched and wrote labels; conservators, registrars and exhibition teams moved, installed and lit works of art in well-designed new spaces; project staff managed differing demands and deadlines; visitor services staff and guides were trained to cope with new questions and lead new tours. And, of course, we were delighted with the peer recognition gained for our efforts when Christchurch Art Gallery was awarded the Exhibition Excellence Award by Museums Aotearoa at its annual conference in April.

Reimagining our exhibition spaces is something that we should expect to do every ten to twelve years or we will simply not keep up with artists and what they make. But this opportunity to look hard at the ways in which our collection, and our thinking about it, has progressed, has allowed us to develop and enhance the visitor experience for all. **Brought to Light** has been incredibly rewarding and I thank all involved in this most successful special project in what has been a great year overall.

Jenny Harper
Director

470,074

visitors to the Gallery (up 3.12% on the previous year and the equivalent of 126% of Christchurch's population).

THE GALLERY WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR 2,840 HOURS

GALLERY PUBLICATIONS

Four editions of *Bulletin* (B.158, B.159, B.160 and B.161)

Séraphine Pick

The Vault: Neil Pardington

Provocations: The Work of Christine Webster

Ronnie van Hout's Who Goes There Puzzle Book

Critical Remarks on the National Question

OTHER WRITING

Ken Hall

'Ansel Adams (1902–1984)', *Ansel Adams, Fotografier*, Gl Holtegaard, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2009 (first published by Christchurch Art Gallery, 2005)

Contributions to Whakamiharo Lindauer Online, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2009–10, www.lindaueronline.co.nz

Jenny Harper

'Pushing Back the Boundaries', *The Press*, Christchurch, GO magazine, 11 December 2009, pp.10–11

'Seen in the Right Light', (review of *Bill Culbert: Making Light Work*), *New Zealand Books*, vol.20, no.1, issue 89, autumn 2010, p.25

'The Good and the Bad', *Eyeline: Contemporary Visual Arts*, Eyeline Publishing, no.71, 2010, p.77

Tim Jones

'Julia Mavrogordato', *Print Quarterly* (London), vol.xxvii, no.2, June 2010, pp.157–60

Justin Paton

'Jenny Holzer', *Art & Australia*, vol.47, no.4, winter 2010, p.684

'In the Air: Recent work by Shane Cotton', *Shane Cotton: To and Fro*, Rossi and Rossi, London, 2010

'Taking the Weight' and 'A Man in Time', *Ron Mueck*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2009, pp.55–9 and 101–5

'The Weight of Paper', *Ricky Swallow: Watercolours*, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, 2009, pp.33–6

'Somewhere Else', *Inner Landscapes: 15 New Zealand Artists with Canterbury Connections*, Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2009, pp.9–17

Thirty-one entries in *Beloved: Works from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, 2009

INVITED PUBLIC LECTURES AND INDUSTRY WORKSHOPS

Lynn Campbell

'How Safe is Your Hard Copy?', conference organiser, Christchurch Art Gallery, July 2009

'Disaster Preparedness for Museums', workshop for Auckland Art Gallery, December 2009 and Canterbury Museum, April 2010

'National Services Te Paeringi', workshops in Auckland Wellington and Dunedin, June 2010

'Care of Photographs', tutor, Sumner Library, June 2010

'Paper Repair Workshop', tutor, Christchurch City Libraries

Jenny Harper

'Recovering Grace after the Fall', Australasian Registrars' Committee [ARC] Conference, Christchurch, 26 February 2010

'By the Numbers: Benchmarking for Success', Museums Aotearoa Conference, New Plymouth, 15 April 2010

'Tradition and Change: Embracing Diversity', Zonta Conference keynote address, 2 May 2010

'The Venice Biennale: Surviving the Olympics of the Art World', Athene Club, Auckland, 30 June 2010

Gina Irish

Australasian Registrars' Committee [ARC] Conference organiser, Christchurch, February 2010

Blair Jackson

'MLI: The Museum Leadership Institute', The Getty Leadership Institute, Los Angeles, 11–31 July 2009

Justin Paton

'Missing Persons: The Place of the Figure in the Art of Ron Mueck and Ricky Swallow', lecture, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 11 February 2010

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Lynn Campbell

Consultant, Grubb Cottage, Lyttelton, March to June 2010

Ken Hall

Advisor, Ministry of Culture and Heritage, applications for export of protected items

Member, Board of Your Studio Trust

Jenny Harper

New Zealand Commissioner, Venice Biennale of Art 2011

Adjunct Professor, University of Canterbury

Member, External Advisory Group, College of Arts, University of Canterbury

Selector (purchase prizes for UC collection), School of Fine Arts end-of-year exhibition, October 2009

Member, Public Art Advisory Group

Board Member, Museums Aotearoa

Member, National Museums Training Council ATTO

Editorial Board member, *The Journal of New Zealand Art History*

Gina Irish

Council Member, Australasian Registrars' Committee, 2008

Committee Member, New Zealand Registrars' Network

Advisor, Artworks Committee, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology

Justin Paton

Governor, New Zealand Arts Foundation

Member, Public Art Advisory Group

Judge, Ripe: ANZ Bank and *Art & Australia* Contemporary Art Award

Member, Editorial Advisory Board, and Contributing Editor, *Art & Australia*

Peter Vangioni

Advisor, Ministry of Culture and Heritage, applications for export of protected items

EXHIBITIONS

19 exhibitions opened during the period, of which 17 were organised by the Gallery. The **Outer Spaces** project has featured 7 foyer and exterior works, 6 video works for **Twinset** and 6 sound art pieces for **Subsonic**.

4 exhibitions toured to other galleries: **Miles Warren: a life in architecture** (Gus Fisher), **Séraphine Pick** (City Gallery Wellington and Dunedin Public Art Gallery), **Graphica Britannica** (Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery) and **The Vault: Neil Pardington** (Otago Museum)

COLLECTION

45 new works were accessioned into the collection (32 purchases, 8 gifts and 5 transfers from Banks Peninsula District Council)

23 paintings, 60 works on paper and 10 frames were treated in the Gallery's conservation laboratory

14 outward loans travelled to other galleries and institutions

628 inward loans came from private lenders and other galleries and institutions

Approximately 5,000 object files created as part of the object file archiving project

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

425 books catalogued

1,019 collection works geo-tagged

Inventories created for Robert McDougall archive and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Plan, Design and Build archive

Canterbury Society of Arts annual exhibition catalogue (1912–61) and newsletter (1961–95) digitised and published

FRIENDS

192 new members made a total membership of 1,516

43 events to enjoy, attended by approximately 1,925 people

GALLERY SHOP

This year's bestsellers were:

13,031 Gallery cards

1,555 copies of Dick Frizzell's *Mickey to tiki Tu Meke*

778 copies of *Séraphine Pick*

260 copies of *The Vault: Neil Pardington*

187 copies of *Bill Hammond: Jingle Jangle Morning*

IMMERSE

28,093

PEOPLE ATTENDED ADVERTISED PUBLIC PROGRAMME EVENTS

EDUCATION

12,256

PEOPLE ATTENDED EDUCATION EVENTS

VOLUNTEER GUIDES

3,409 HOURS

OF VALUED SERVICE TO GALLERY VISITORS

AWARDS AND PRIZES

Silver, BeST Awards 2009, Editorial and Books (won by Strategy Design & Advertising for *Bulletin*)

Bronze, BeST Awards 2009, Identity Development (small scale) (won by Strategy Design & Advertising for the Gallery's identity refresh)

Bronze, BeST Awards 2009, Spatial/Exhibition/Installation/Temporary Structure (won by Base2 and Minty Architecture for *Miles: a life in architecture*)

Winner, New Zealand Museum Awards, Selecon Award for Exhibition Excellence (for **Brought to Light: A New View of the Collection**)



Dans mon rêve, je vis au Ciel un VISAGE DE MYSTÈRE.



Roy Montgomery is a senior lecturer in the Environmental Management Department at Lincoln University. From time to time he releases guitar-based album recordings either as solo projects or in collaboration with others. His most recent recording is a collaboration with Nick Guy under the name the Torlesse Supergroup, due out on the Chicago label Rebis before the end of 2010.

Odilon Redon **Dans mon rêve, je vis au ciel un visage de mystère. (In my dream I saw in the sky a face of mystery)** 1885. Lithograph. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased with assistance from the Olive Stirrat Bequest, 1986

My Favourite

Roy Montgomery

I found out about Redon in early 1979 via a thinking person's post-punk band from Manchester by the name of Magazine. They used Redon images for picture sleeves on their early singles (*Shot By Both Sides* and *Give Me Everything*) and their debut album *Real Life* sported a cover by Linder Sterling that she later said was an homage to Redon. The local licensee for Virgin at the time—the imaginatively named R(ecord) and T(ape) C(ompany)—was generally too stingy to reproduce the artwork, so one had to rely on the advertisements in *New Musical Express* and *Sounds*, which arrived by what might as well have been packet steamer every few months. However, eventually—trainspotter that I was then—I obtained original 'pic sleeve' copies of the early singles.

When I travelled to the UK and Europe in 1982 I was keen to see more of Redon's work. I managed to find a few examples in galleries and museums and found I generally preferred the black and whites to the colour pieces. So it came as a very pleasant surprise to see this work lurking in the McDougall in the late 1980s. For all sorts of reasons it seemed to belong. It suited the catacomb-like atmosphere of the McDougall and if one hadn't known anything of its origins one could have sworn that it had been posed for in the old University across the road in the 1970s

(I see the background not as sky but as a vaulted alcove), using a carefully groomed Philip Clairmont for the occasion (he once lived nearby on Hereford Street), done by Tony Fomison, because... God knows... In any case, like much of Redon's work it seems to me as if it could have been done in the late twentieth, rather than late nineteenth, century. That said, in terms of what the piece itself evokes it always brings to mind Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*—in fact I'm surprised Penguin Books hasn't used it yet.

The expression on the man's face is simultaneously hopeful and pathetic. Why are you waiting, and for what? The attire suggests a religious figure. Maybe it's a moment of doubt. Or perhaps he is simply trying to dislodge a piece of apple skin stuck between his teeth. He doesn't face the same physiological challenges as other Redon subjects, which are often part-human part-fish, spider or cactus or simply a hypertrophied organ but he seems troubled nonetheless. To be honest I can't recall where it has been sitting since the move from old gallery to new but the present address seems apt, particularly being a couple of doors along from Jason Greig. Whoever had the presence of mind to use the bequest for this purchase—good call.

Staff Profile
Armourguard Security



When the Gallery’s security staff were told that they were to be the focus of this quarter’s staff profile the response was immediate: ‘We know. Do you think there’s anything that goes on in this building that we don’t know about?’

Security in the Gallery is contracted to Armourguard, but the security personnel themselves are very much a part of the Gallery team. When questioned, most feel that the term ‘security’ doesn’t really cover the full extent of their work at the Gallery, which varies from being a first point of contact for members of the public and assisting in the plantroom to liaising with external contractors and protecting the Gallery’s artworks. Is there a bank of monitors somewhere being constantly watched? Of course there is. But most feel that the smiley face and welcome they can offer visitors is equally important.

They are certainly an eclectic group—from a trained hairdresser to a Vietnam veteran—but all bring a desire to provide a professional and reliable service to the Gallery. It’s about providing peace of mind to all Gallery staff, artists and patrons.

But back to that wall of monitors, and the things people do in dark gallery spaces when they think they can’t be seen...

From left to right:
Ainsley Taylor
Richard Jeffs
Bill Jump
Ray Mullins
Lee v.d. Merwe
Tony Wright
Mike Malone

PAGEWORK #8

JAE HOON LEE

The following double-page spread is given over to the eighth instalment in our ‘Pagework’ series. Each quarter the Gallery commissions an artist to create a work of art especially for *Bulletin*. It’s about actively supporting the generation of new work.

Plenty of artists like to get up close and personal by photographing human skin. But Jae Hoon Lee likes to go even closer by scanning skin directly. In the past he’s digitally stitched together hundreds of these scans, joining different skin-tones, blemishes and physical features in one big body of evidence. For this issue’s ‘Pagework’, Lee has focused these ideas in an image of one hand—but a hand like none seen in real life. With its pigmentation altered and wrinkles digitally removed, this hand seems to belong to someone of no fixed identity. In many religious traditions, a raised and open hand

signifies peace, compassion, and tranquillity. But in criminal science, hands are scanned to create permanent evidence of a criminal’s physical identity. Sacred or sinister? Lee’s hand hovers between these extremes.

Jae Hoon Lee was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1973. After graduating from the San Francisco Art Institute with a BFA in 1998, he has gained an MFA from the University of Auckland. He has exhibited throughout New Zealand as well as Australia, Korea, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States. He is currently working towards a DocFA at the University of Auckland.

‘Pagework’ has been generously supported by an anonymous donor.



Over page:
Jae Hoon Lee *a Hand of Dr Abraham* 2010. Digitally collaged photography. Courtesy of Starkwhite Gallery





De-Building

5 February – 15 May 2011

An exhibition inspired by a moment usually hidden from gallery-goers—when a show ends, the doors close, and the ‘de-build’ begins. Brought together from New Zealand, Australia, Europe and the United States, the artists in this exhibition make the gallery itself part of the art—puncturing walls, adjusting and aggravating the architecture, and revealing spaces usually hidden from view.

Van der Velden: Otira

11 February – 15 May 2011

The wild, untouched natural splendour of the Otira Gorge has long been a source of inspiration for artists. **Van der Velden: Otira** brings together for the first time a comprehensive selection of paintings and drawings from Petrus van der Velden’s celebrated *Otira* series, illustrating his intensely personal and powerful vision of the region’s beauty.

Petrus van der Velden Jacksons,
Otira c.1893. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Christchurch Art
Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu,
purchased with assistance from
the Olive Stirrat Bequest, 2003

Leo Bensemann: An Art Venture

11 February – 15 May 2011

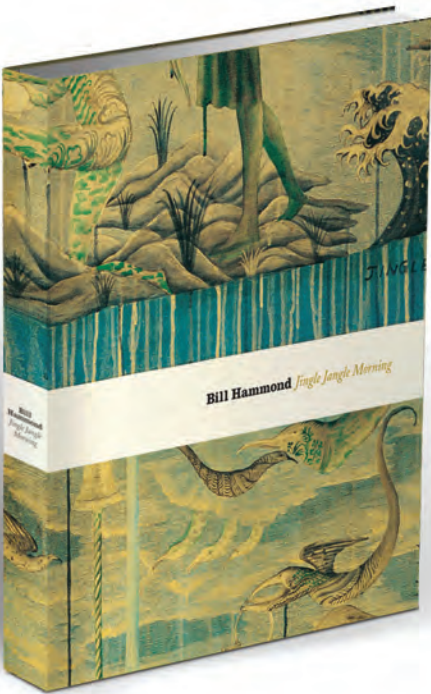
A comprehensive retrospective of an influential and talented Canterbury artist and designer. A painter of portraits and landscapes and a prominent member of The Group, Bensemann (1912–1986) is equally well known for his significant contribution to New Zealand graphic design and typography through his work with Christchurch’s Caxton Press.

10 Down: A Survey Exhibition. Wayne Youle

19 February – 8 May 2011

Ten years of sharp-witted art making by North Canterbury artist Wayne Youle. Of Ngāti Whakaeke, Ngāpuhi and European descent, Youle tackles matters of race, religion and cultural diversity with humour and energy. This survey presents more than fifty-five works in many media in a dense salon-style hang that contains plenty to amuse, offend and inspire.

Toured by Pataka Museum

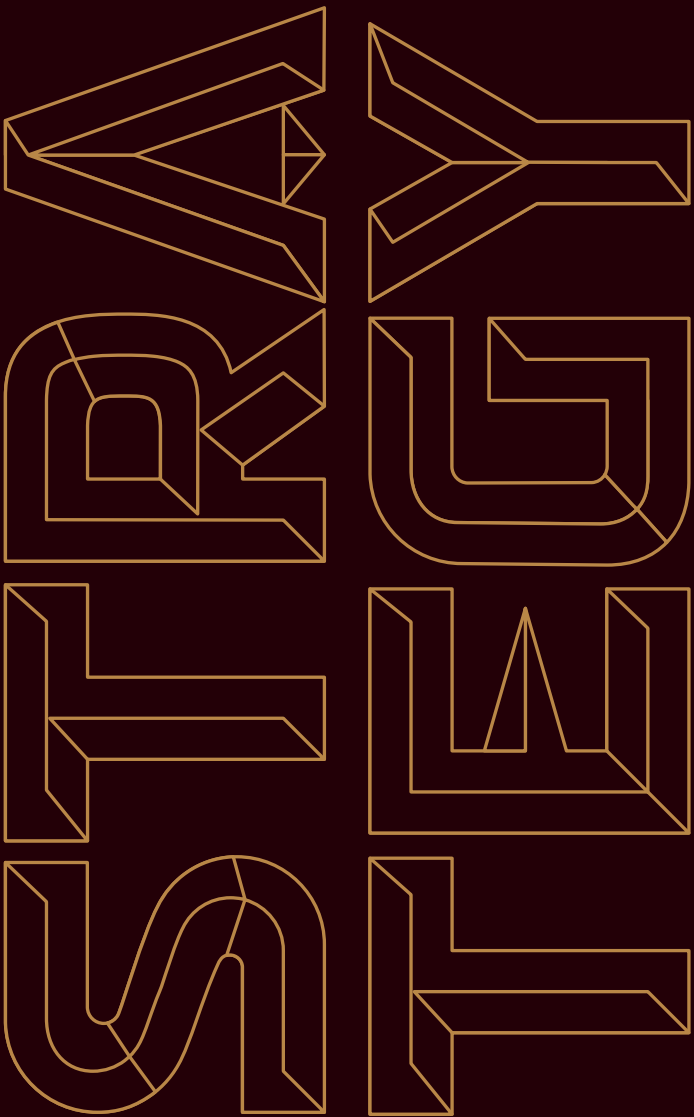


Bill Hammond: Jingle Jangle Morning
Winner: Illustrative Section, Montana Book Awards
BPANZ Book Design award winner



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New York-based New Zealand artist Max Gimblett with Christchurch Art Gallery curator Peter Vangioni, selecting a gift of the artist's works on paper for the Gallery, New York, July 2010

Back of House

Excerpts from our blog

26 JULY 2010 / POSTED BY JENNY HARPER NEW YORK

Curator Peter Vangioni and I have been in New York City since last Wednesday, selecting a gift of works on paper from New Zealand artist Max Gimblett, who has been resident in New York for some 35 years. It's been an extraordinary and rewarding task; the first day of reviewing a few works from each 'pile' will stay with me for some time. Max is making his work available to several selected public art galleries (Queensland Art Gallery and Auckland Art Gallery have preceded us), because of the great attraction and importance he placed as a young person on visiting museums and seeing collections [...] We've looked at a vast range of work, from his earliest years through to the present, seen the impact of American abstract art on his own development—and the very striking impact of Zen Buddhist art on his oeuvre. Peter has done more hours than I and we've made good progress—we've been decisive and are probably a bit ahead of where we expected. The final review of the gift will happen early next week. Peter has bought a tape recorder and will interview Max as we review for our archives [...]

23 JULY 2010 / POSTED BY JUSTIN PATON LIGHT READINGS

[...] My crush on my favourite Australian museum, Heide, only got stronger last week on a visit to a big exhibition there by Sydney-based Malaysian artist Simryn Gill, who gathers human objects so worn by time and use that they look like pieces of nature [...]

7 JULY 2010 / POSTED BY TIM JONES WE'VE BEEN GEO-TAGGING

We've started adding geo-tags to the works in our collection that show a real place. However, we're stuck on a few and we'd love to hear from you if you know where any of the locations are [...]

CHRISTCHURCHARTGALLERY.ORG.NZ

B.162

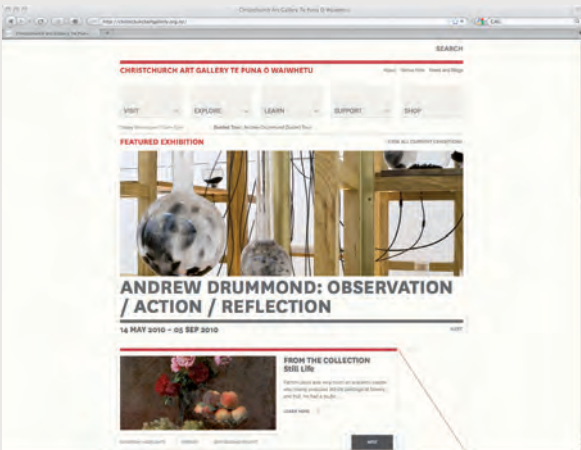
“I spent a lot of time at [Christchurch] Art Gallery [...] without a doubt the best art gallery in the country. New Zealand art on the walls, plenty of it. Unbelievable. Completely blown away by it.”

Marcus Lush on Radio Live, May 2010

New Website Launched

Our new website is now live and receiving great feedback. One of the main ideas behind the new site was to bring the Gallery's collection to the fore—our new 'browse' facility includes images of most works, allowing you to find information on a particular work without knowing the title or artist.

The site also forges connections between exhibitions, books, collection articles, related works, events and so on, making exploring the site a rewarding experience. Online shopping, event ticketing and signing up to the Friends are also now offered online. It's now easier to keep up with what's happening in the Gallery with improved blogging and news feeds. Have a look around, and let us know what you think—info@christchurchartgallery.org.nz.



Oh Baby, It's Art turns 1!

In July the Gallery celebrated the first birthday of **Oh Baby, It's Art**, our free guided tours for parents and babies. With over 360 parents and babies attending our first year of tours, **Oh Baby, It's Art** has proven to be a great success and an opportunity for parents to enjoy a tour before the Gallery doors open for the day. A different exhibition is toured each month, followed by coffee and conversation in Alchemy. Cupcakes were an added extra at our first birthday celebrations to thank our loyal participants for their support.

First Thursday of the month / 9.30–10.15am / free / buggies welcome / enquiries tel: 941 7347

99% Visitor Satisfaction

The results from the Gallery's 2010 Visitor Survey are out, with 99% of respondents saying their experience was good, very good or extremely good—a fantastic outcome. Some other key findings:

- 45% of visitors were from overseas, while Christchurch locals made up 35% of all visitors
- Half of those surveyed were first-time visitors, while 27.5% were returning customers from Christchurch
- Posters and billboards were the Gallery's most effective means of advertising, although our Press ads were a popular source with visitors aged 50 and over

Gallery Gifts

The Rakehelly Man and other verses is a small book of A.R.D. Fairburn's poetry which was recently donated to the Gallery's library by volunteer guide Kay Malcolmson. Published by Caxton Press in 1946 it is illustrated by Robert Brett but the layout and design bear the unmistakable fingerprints of Leo Bensemann. The title page is a particularly extravagant assembly of fonts and decorative elements.

Kay's parents ran the Heathcote Arms Hotel, where Fairburn, Denis Glover, Albion Wright and John Dolman were regular customers. Fairburn himself gave this volume to Kay's mother, Rani Wallace, who had great literary interests, sometime in the 1950s.

Gallery librarian Tim Jones says, 'I am always happy to receive donations which have a story to tell or which add to our knowledge and understanding of the art collection. Kay's gift does all of these things handsomely.'



School Holidays

RECYCLABLE CITY ART WORKSHOP

Be inspired by the work of artist Joanna Langford and construct part of a miniature city.

27 September – 8 October / weekdays / 10.30am – 12pm / \$5 / bookings essential tel: (03) 941 7382



Joanna Langford **Up from the plainlands** (detail) 2009. Recycled plastic bags, bamboo skewers, sushi grass, 12 volt LED lights, fans and electrical wiring. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery

EXPLORE AND DRAW

Explore the Gallery with this fun activity sheet.

25 September – 10 October / 10am – 4pm / free

Event Highlights

ALASTAIR GALBRAITH / FLAME ORGAN

Alastair Galbraith has led a team of glassblowers, physicists and engineers on a quest to develop the flame organ. See Alastair play this extraordinary instrument and try a few chords yourself.

26 September / 2pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free



GAYLENE PRESTON FILM RETROSPECTIVE

Check our website for a selection of events with film director Gaylene Preston, including screenings of her latest film *Home by Christmas*, *War Stories* *Our Mothers Never Told Us*, and *Bread and Roses*. Also features question and answer sessions with the director and a panel discussion with Gaylene, Dr Mary Wiles from the University of Canterbury's Cinema Studies department, and Dr Bruce Harding of the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies.

13, 16 & 17 October / free

MUKA PRINTS

This national travelling exhibition, which may only be viewed by children aged 5–18, returns to the Gallery. Forty limited edition original lithographs by prominent artists will be on display and available for purchase.

12–14 November / education centre / enquiries tel: 941 7382 / \$65 per print

FILM AND LIVE PERFORMANCE / THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC

This stunning silent film, produced in France in 1928, is based on the trial records of Joan of Arc. The screening is accompanied by Christchurch's leading ensemble musicians. In association with Canterbury Film Society.

14 November / 7pm / foyer / \$15 doorsales from 6.30pm