The Gallery is currently closed to the public. Our off-site exhibition spaces are at 212 Madras Street and 209 Tuam Street. The Gallery Shop is now open at 40 Lichfield Street.

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B.171

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WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ARTICLES.

Christchurch City Council

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Bulletin
Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu

Autumn
March—
May 2013

Michael Parekowhai
Kiss the Baby Goodbye

powder-coated steel, two parts (1999)
1895 x 2490mm: installation size variable

Provenance
Collection of the artist
Private collection, Auckland. Purchased by the current owner from Gow Langsford Gallery in 2001.

$100 000 – $150 000

Peter Robinson
Painting 1999

oil and acrylic on unstretched canvas
variously inscribed
2145 x 4800mm

Provenance
Private collection, Wellington. Purchased by the current owner from Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington in 1998.

$250 000 – $350 000

Gordon Walters
Tautahi

PVA and acrylic on canvas
signed and dated '71 and inscribed 'Hautana Tuki Waka' (the inscription possibly in another's hand) verso; inscribed Cat No. 53 on original 'Gordon Walters' Auckland Art Gallery exhibition label affixed verso
1520 x 1142mm

Provenance
Private collection, Wellington. Acquired from Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington in 1971.

$400 000 – $600 000

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU
CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY

Cover: Reuben Paterson
Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua
2005. DVD. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 2009. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

Inside cover: Installation view of **Stereoscope #2: Jason Greig**, 2013

Contents

B.171

AS SUMMER SLIPS INTO AUTUMN, we're hard at work planning a celebration. For on 10 May it'll be ten years since Christchurch Art Gallery first opened. Sad as we are that we can't mark the occasion inside our own building, it still needs to be marked, and we're celebrating this milestone with **Populate!**

It's our birthday present to you—a burst of new art in the inner city, with faces and figures as the theme. **Populate!** has propelled our **Outer Spaces** programme into overdrive, taking over as many walls and empty lots, and occupying as many rooms as we possibly can to encourage you to thread your way between the Central Library Peterborough and Christchurch Art Gallery at 212 Madras Street (yes, I know we said we had finished exhibiting there in the last *Bulletin*, but things just keep on changing). You'll find the full **Populate!** programme in the next issue of *Bulletin*, but until then there's plenty to see.

Inside 212 Madras until early March we're offering a real treat—a chance to see new works by important local artists Tony de Lautour, Jason Greig and Bill Hammond. If you haven't been in to see it yet make sure you don't miss out, as chances to see anything from these three have been very limited in Christchurch of late. Also closing in March are **A Caxton Miscellany** at the Central Library Peterborough and **Emily Hartley-Skudder: Showhome**, an exhibition project we're supporting in the Wigram Skies development.

I'm very pleased to be announcing our first show in another new space—209 Tuam Street. It's on the first level of the 1930s Post Office building on the corner of High and Tuam streets, above CI, below the Physics Room and beside Alice in Videoland. Seung Yul Oh will be filling this space, as much of it as possible, with two huge balloons—one red, one yellow. **Huggong** is the perfect antidote to everything grey and dour about the impending winter. And just across the block, Reuben Paterson will be turning the gallery on Madras into a dizzying cascade of light and pattern. We've exhibited **Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua** before, but only on a small screen. This time it's on a glitter-covered wall and almost six-metres wide.

Meanwhile, in Australia Shane Cotton's **The Hanging Sky** closes at Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art in early March and moves to the Campbelltown Arts Centre in south-western Sydney. The exhibition has been a real success at the IMA, so it's exciting to take it to a new audience, particularly in a part of New South Wales with a large Māori and Pacific population. We've also recently confirmed that the next step for the show will be City Gallery Wellington, so local audiences can begin looking forward to the start of the New Zealand tour.

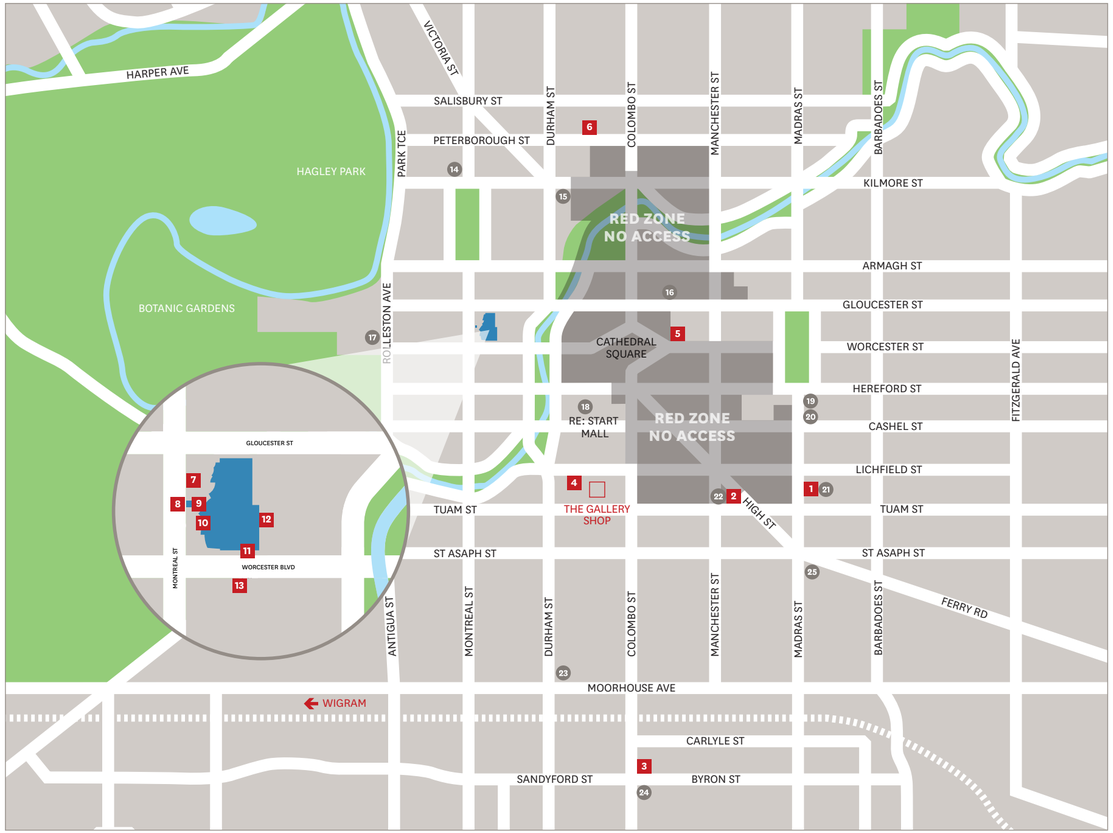
Still on the subject of Cotton, in this issue of *Bulletin* we feature an essay by Justin Paton on Shane Cotton's new works—among them painted baseball bats and ambitious prints. We also hear from Dr Lee Stickells, senior lecturer in architecture, design and planning at the University of Sydney, who investigates at the pitfalls and rewards of community-led urban interventions and the politics of the pop-up. And Michael Lascarides looks at the boundaries of the cultural institution in 2013. Michael was previously employed by the New York Public Library, where he was responsible for a number of innovative online projects, utilising audience participation to enrich the library's knowledge of its own collection. Pagework in this edition is supplied by Auckland-based artist John Ward Knox.

Please note also that this edition of *Bulletin* is simultaneously available in a specially-designed package for the iPad. We're still fully committed to the printed version, but the saturated colour imagery and our ability to include video are wonderful on iPad—and we can easily spread our message to a growing international audience in this format.

Jenny Harper
Director
February 2013

Explore Outer Spaces

The Gallery is closed, so we're bringing art into the city. **Outer Spaces** introduces moments of surprise, humour, colour and wonder to post-quake Christchurch streetscapes.



1

De Lautour / Greig / Hammond

CLOSING SOON

Until 10 March / 212 Madras Street

Christchurch Art Gallery presents new work from Canterbury artists Tony de Lautour, Jason Greig and Bill Hammond. Featuring selections of De Lautour's recent geometric abstract paintings, Greig's exquisitely executed dreamscape monoprints and photo-relief montages and Hammond's iconic morphed birds.

Bill Hammond **Goods and services. Triptych** 2013. Acrylic on stretched canvas. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

1

Reuben Paterson: Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua

21 March – 24 April / 212 Madras Street

It took many jars of glitter to make the backdrop for Reuben Paterson's digital animation. But the most important material in this exhibition is light—projected light that hits the huge glitter screen in dazzling op-art patterns. Inspired by traditional Māori stories of stars, water and transcendence, Paterson's animation conjures a space of infinite depth and endless change.

Reuben Paterson **Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua** 2005. DVD. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery, purchased 2009. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

2

Seung Yul Oh: Huggong

21 March – 24 April / 209 Tuam Street

When sculptors want to fill a room, they generally reach for solid stuff: wood, bronze, stone, steel. But these whopping new sculptures by Seung Yul Oh get there with nothing but air. Squeezed against the ceiling and bulging around columns, Oh's balloons are benign and funny space invaders—big art with a light touch.

Seung Yul Oh **Huggong** 2012. Installation view, Starkwhite. Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite. Photo: Sam Hartnett

3

Wayne Youle: I seem to have temporarily misplaced my sense of humour

Ongoing / Colombo Street, between Carlyle and Byron streets

Wayne Youle's gigantic shadowboard is a homage to all those involved in rebuilding Christchurch, and a remembrance of the many precious things lost in the earthquakes.

Wayne Youle **I seem to have temporarily misplaced my sense of humour** 2011. Mural presented by Christchurch Art Gallery and Gap Filler. Reproduced courtesy the artist

4

Stereoscope #2: Jason Greig

Until 1 April / 26E Lichfield Street

Jason Greig's two larger-than-life oval portraits are drawn from the title characters of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic novel of 1886, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Jason Greig **Mr Hyde** (detail) 2010. Monoprint. Courtesy of the artist and Brett McDowell Gallery

5

Ash Keating: Concrete Propositions

Ongoing / 117–19 Worcester Street

Christchurch Art Gallery has again joined forces with Gap Filler to present a high-impact wall work. Melbourne-based artist Ash Keating has created a huge, abstract painting on a central city wall by spraying and firing paint from fire extinguishers.

Ash Keating **Concrete Propositions** 2012. Acrylic house paint on concrete. Copyright the artist. Courtesy the artist and Fehily Contemporary, Melbourne Australia

Explore Outer Spaces

6

A Caxton Miscellany: The Caxton Press 1933–58

Until 17 March / Central Library Peterborough

From humble beginnings Christchurch's Caxton Press had, within a few years of its establishment in 1933, become one of the most progressive publishers of contemporary New Zealand writing and dynamic modern typographical design of its era. This exhibition examines the relationships between typographers, book designers, poets, writers and artists through a selection of beautifully printed books produced at the Caxton Press over a twenty five-year period. Examples by leading New Zealand writers and artists include Denis Glover, Leo Bensemann, Allen Curnow, Ursula Bethell, Charles Brasch, James K. Baxter, Rona Dyer and E. Mervyn Taylor.

Giovanni Boccaccio, *Nastagio and the Obdurate Lady: A Tale from the Decameron*, Caxton Press, 1940. Peter Dunbar Collection, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Reproduced courtesy of the Bensemann Family

6

Richard Killeen: The Inner Binding

Ongoing / Central Library Peterborough

Laden with associations, but buoyant with possibility, this huge window commission by renowned New Zealand artist Richard Killeen features a richly layered composition that hints at systems of knowledge and classification.

Richard Killeen **The inner binding** 2012. Translucent vinyl. Courtesy of the artist. A Christchurch Art Gallery Outer Spaces project in association with Christchurch City Libraries

7

Matt Akehurst: You Are Here

Ongoing / Christchurch Art Gallery forecourt

Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Damien Hirst, Robert Smithson, Michelangelo… Yes, all the big names can be found on our forecourt.

Matt Akehurst **You are here** 2011. Aluminium, steel, paint, vinyl. Courtesy of the artist

9

Julia Morison: Aibohphobia

Ongoing / Christchurch Art Gallery forecourt

Julia Morison has turned the Gallery's squat grey bunker into a dizzying vision in dayglo green.

Julia Morison **Aibohphobia** 2011. Acrylic paint. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

8

Stereoscope #1: Toshi Endo

Until 1 May / Montreal Street

The kaleidoscopic moving imagery of Christchurch artist Toshi Endo has been stripped of colour and brought to a standstill in *Wolf-Cub*, his contribution to Christchurch Art Gallery's **Stereoscope** programme.

Toshi Endo **Wolf-Cub** 2012. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

10

Tim J. Veling: Bedford Row

Ongoing / Christchurch Art Gallery forecourt

When is a door not a door? That's the wry question posed in this light-hearted architectural intervention by local photographer Tim J. Veling. The entrance he has bricked up opens into Christchurch Art Gallery, but as with so many others in Christchurch it has been temporarily closed by 'recent events'.

Tim J. Veling **Bedford Row, 2012** — from *Adaptation*, 2011–12. Photograph

11

Jae Hoon Lee: Annapurna

Ongoing / Worcester Boulevard

Jae Hoon Lee's immense and oddly surreal landscape glows out from the **Springboard** over Worcester Boulevard.

Jae Hoon Lee **Annapurna** 2010. Digital photograph. Commissioned in 2010 for **Springboard**

12

Kay Rosen: Here are the people and there is the steeple

Ongoing / Worcester Boulevard

This mural project for the Gallery's east rear wall, inspired by the shape of the wall, the words 'people' and 'steeple', the history of the city and the children's finger game, sends a large-scale message about rebuilding a city by, and upon the foundation of, its people.

Kay Rosen **Here are the people and there is the steeple** 2012. Acrylic paint on wall

13

Steve Carr: Majo

Until 30 June / Worcester Boulevard

Steve Carr's strangely mesmerising video shows the artist working a plastic toy bubble, which he inflates then slowly deflates to a 1970s horror movie soundtrack, investing seemingly playful footage with a sense of danger or fright. Showing in an upstairs window of the old house opposite the Gallery on Worcester Boulevard.

Steve Carr **Majo** 2010. SD transferred to DVD, duration 3 min 40 secs. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland

Emily Hartley-Skudder: Showhome

Until 19 March / 49 Sioux Avenue, Wigram

Emily Hartley-Skudder's eerily precise tableaux of everyday household objects play on the idea of the 'artificial ordinary'. For three weeks, they will provide the finishing touches to a furnished showhome at Wigram Skies, fulfilling their ultimate destiny as the aspirational props for a perfect life.

Installation view of Emily Hartley-Skudder **Master Bedroom (Ornate Nightstand with Telephone and Daisies)** 2012–13. Oil on canvas. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

Other places of interest

14 Joanna Langford: *The High Country*
15 Summer Pallet Pavilion
16 Isaac Theatre Royal
17 Canterbury Museum
18 Rachael Dewhirst: *Kaleidoscopic Nights*
19 Cardboard Cathedral
20 Pete Majendie: *185 Empty Chairs*
21 The National
22 The Physics Room
23 Chambers 241
24 Form Gallery
25 Anton Parsons: *Passing Time*

SPEAKING STICKS & MOVING TARGETS

New works by Shane Cotton

The Hanging Sky *brings together Shane Cotton's skyscapes from the past five years. But the core of the exhibition is a big group of freshly made works of art. Senior curator Justin Paton first saw them in completed form during the show's installation in Brisbane. Here he describes his encounters with a body of work 'at once beautiful, aggressive, protective and evasive.'*

Shane Cotton **Paradise Club** (detail) 2012. Acrylic on white ash. Private collection

IT'S DAY TWO OF THE SHANE COTTON INSTALL at the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane, and all through the day big paintings by Cotton have been emerging from their crates and finding their places around the walls. There in the first room is Christchurch Art Gallery's *Takarangi*, with its birds whooshing out into deep space, then the brooding *The Hanging Sky* next door and *The Painted Bird* in the room after that—paintings from different moments that are coming together in one gallery for the first time here. After months of rearranging tiny paper versions of the paintings inside a 1:25 scale gallery model, this is the moment I always look forward to—when the real things arrive in the room, assert themselves physically and start making demands of their own.

What's distracting me at the moment, however, is a table in the quietest gallery, where the conservator, Rebecca, is slowly unpacking a box literally full of surprises: ten painted baseball bats that Cotton completed in New Zealand only days ago. One by one they're withdrawn from their sleeves and laid out for inspection and cataloguing: the *Hit Marker*, the *Myth Smasher*, and the *Paradise Club*. Cotton, it ought to be noted here, is a card-carrying baseball fan, with a painter's special affection for the geometry and visual trappings of the game. And he's clearly had a lot of fun devising a livery or look for each bat. With their airbrushed titles and custom paint-jobs, they look a little like high-end collectibles—the kind of muscled-up artefacts that a baseball obsessive might display in a cabinet in their lounge. But a longer inspection discloses details that push these objects somewhere far beyond fandom. Tipping a bat in her gloved hand and running a torch down its surface, Rebecca illuminates skulls, strange rocks, tattooed Māori heads (of which more later) and the name of a renowned Ngā Puhi chief. Strangest of all, when you've just walked past Cotton's big skyscapes, are the painted birds stretched along the bats—as though someone has reached into Cotton's paintings and begun swiping birds from the skies. The results may be gorgeous, but you have to wonder: whose side are these objects on?

Cotton is by no means the only contemporary artist to conflate sporting conflicts with broader cultural ones. He's one of a number who like to tamper creatively with stuff lifted from the sports store or Physical Education shed. In a world where marketeers seek to ramp up our enthusiasm for sports teams by likening them to warrior tribes, these artists trick out mass-produced sports gear

Shane Cotton **I Die, I Do Not Die** (detail) 2012. Acrylic on white ash. Private collection

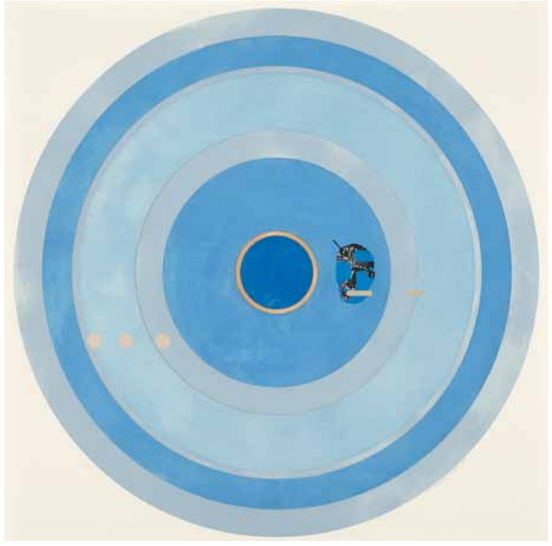
'IMAGINE THE GUARDS AREN'T LOOKING AND YOU LIFT ONE FROM ITS HANGER. NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO SAY?'

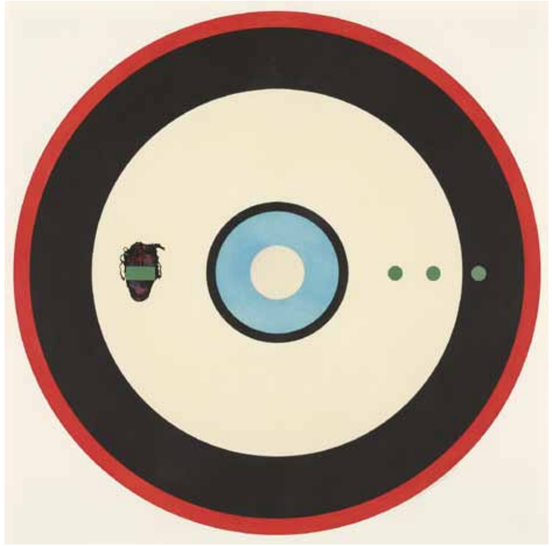
with uncomfortable reminders of real-world struggles. Local artist Wayne Youle has also done baseball bats in works like *The Old Man's Walking Stick* (2006), which evokes the clubs used by gangland leaders as well as the tokotoko used to arresting effect during oratory by senior Māori men. Rangituhia Hollis and Vaimaila Urale recently incised pool cues with Pacific patterns that made them look like sharp-tipped weapons (*Mata Mata*, 2012). And Francis Upritchard has given several kinds of sports gear memorably funny and feeble 'tribal art' makeovers, turning eight hockey sticks, for instance, into ceremonial staffs or spirit sticks (*Jealous Saboteurs*, 2005). In their different ways all these artists have their say in a long-running New Zealand debate about culture, property and power—a debate that has simmered or boiled through the last twenty years and shows no signs of cooling. What should a traditional object look like? Who has the right to make one? Who has the right to tell others they can't? And are these questions of life-and-death significance, or is it all just a game?

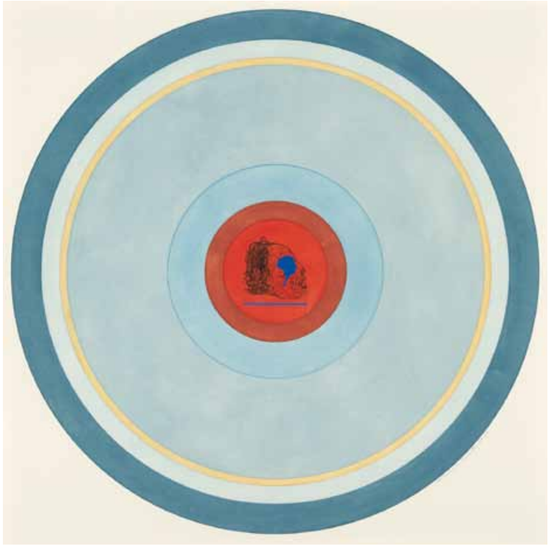
In 2011, the same year that Cotton painted his first baseball bats, the Waitangi Tribunal released its long-anticipated report on Wai 262, the complicated claim designed to protect Māori artistic and cultural works against 'offensive or derogatory uses'. Faced with the bizarre spectacle of Italian actresses performing a garbled haka in a 2006 television advertisement for the car manufacturer Fiat, it's not hard to see why Māori might want to protect precious songs, stories and visual forms from commercialisation without consent. But this kind of cultural protectionism meshes imperfectly, to say the least, with the practices of contemporary art, where artists frequently push and probe towards the edge of what's considered acceptable. And it is this uncertain edge—this foul zone—where Cotton makes himself at home with the bats. *Serpent Garden*, for instance, despite being a bat, is a remarkably traditional-looking Māori artwork, webbed in white lines that mimic the play of light along the surface of a carved weapon; it's no great stretch to imagine this object in a museum case alongside some spot-lit ancient patu or taiaha. But the same can't be said for the harshly named *Coloured Head Crusher*, which seems to wear, along its multicoloured length, the mortal emblems of past 'hits' or 'strikes'—Cotton's version, perhaps, of the bat wielded by the Nazi-killing 'Bear Jew' Donny Donowitz in Quentin Tarantino's lurid war film *Inglourious Basterds*. Far from being content to sit quietly in a museum case, this is an object that seems to want to stir up trouble—to knock out the glass that keeps history at a distance and release all its conflicts and contradictions.

It is this live quality, above all, that makes the baseball bat paintings feel like something new for Cotton. Seeing them later that day in their proper positions, suspended by the handles in one long row, I couldn't help but respond to their decorative richness—particularly the pin-fine rings of colour that Cotton applies while turning the bats in a lathe. But alongside the richness there remains the suggestion that these objects have a *purpose*; that they are made, not to be appreciated at a distance, but picked up and somehow put to use. Naturally, we museum professionals would prefer it if you didn't touch, but the desire to grasp these artworks—to hold and heft them—is central to their effect. And it's surprising what happens to both the bat and its wielder when someone does pick one up. Suddenly that person has the floor; when they speak, you listen. I'm reminded here of things I've heard about Native American 'talking sticks', objects that have to be held by someone before they assume their full power. More than ever in Cotton's art, he seems to be inviting that kind of imagined participation, putting responsibility for how these uneasy objects are used emphatically in our hands. Imagine the guards aren't looking and you lift one from its hanger. Now what are you going to say?

Shane Cotton **Ignorant Rainbow II**; **Myth Smasher**; **Coloured Head Crusher**. All 2012. Acrylic on white ash. Private collection







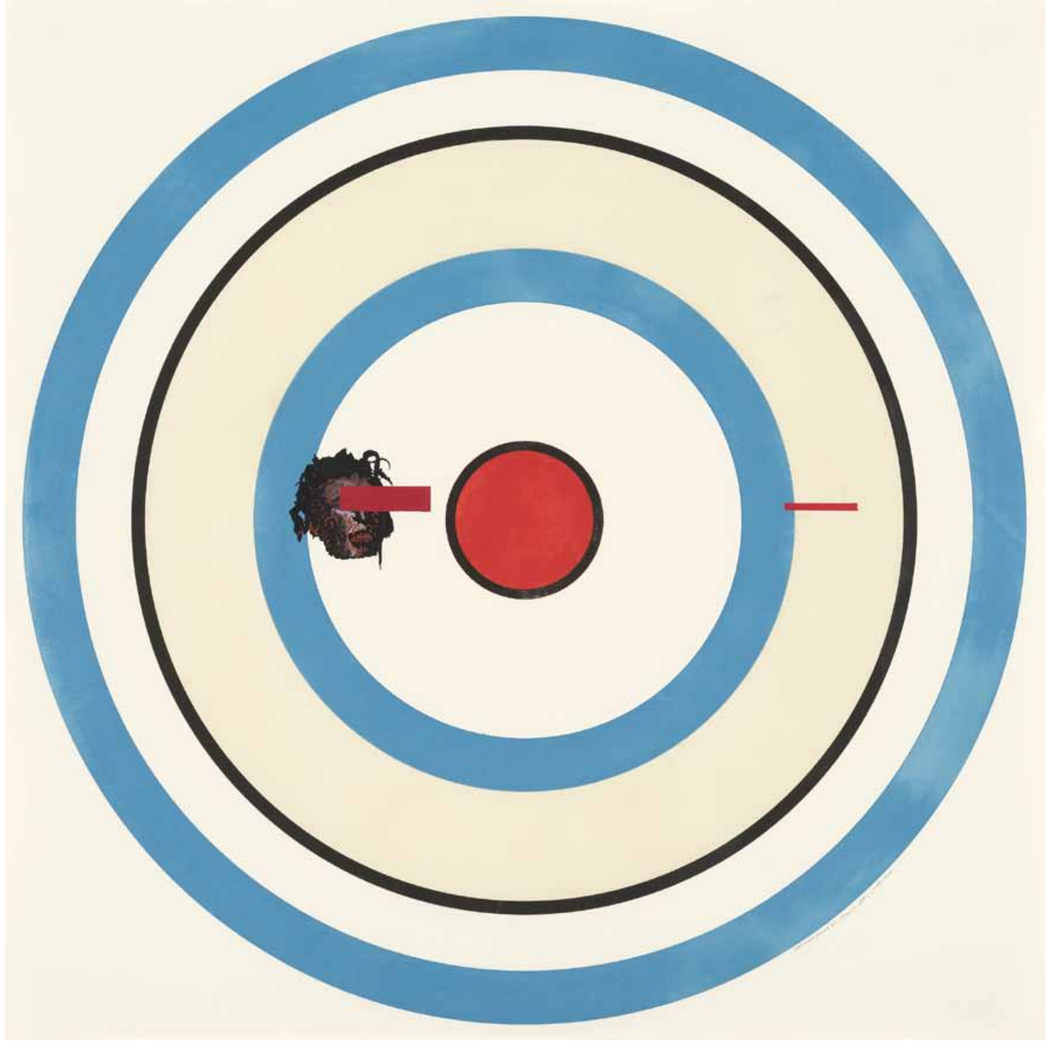
Shane Cotton
Untitled (Head 1); **Untitled (Head)**; **Untitled (Head 2)**; **Hiruhārama**.
All 2009–12. Acrylic, photo etching and aquatint on paper, produced at The Gottesman Etching Center, Kibbutz Cabri, Israel, 1/1. Private collection

Overleaf:
Shane Cotton
Untitled (Head 4); **Untitled (Head 8)**
2009–12. Acrylic, photo etching and aquatint on paper, produced at The Gottesman Etching Center, Kibbutz Cabri, Israel, 1/1. Private collection

This crackle of uncertainty also flows through Cotton's second large group of new works, the series of untitled prints (photo-etchings plus aquatint) that he made in 2009 during a two-week stint at the Gottesman Etching Center in Israel. The prints all feature concentric circles, a classic motif of modern art, and when I first glimpsed them, pinned to the far wall of Cotton's big studio, comparisons jumped immediately to mind: Kenneth Noland's swirling circles, Jasper Johns's targets, and Julian Dashper's drum-skin abstracts (one of which hangs in Cotton's home). Where Cotton's prints declared their difference was in the distinctive softness of their colour, a granular, time-and-weather-worn quality that was only apparent when one got close to the paper. There were overcast greys, sun-faded reds, pale yellows suggesting sand or clay. My favourite encounter during this viewing was with the work now called *Untitled (Head 1)*, where a thin ring of yellow affects the blueness all around it like a chime very lightly struck. Little wonder that Cotton was taking his time before making painted marks on these surfaces. As well as being beautiful, each print was unique; there was no going back in the event of a mistake.

Three years later, here at the Institute of Modern Art, all that chromatic subtlety is still present. But it's been interrupted—at once heightened and troubled—by some painted embellishments. Working very sparingly in thinned acrylic over the aquatint inks, Cotton has populated each of his pristine abstracts with a vivid human fragment—one of the severed and tattooed Māori heads, known today as *toi moko*, that have been present in Cotton's paintings for a decade. With their extraordinarily tangled back-stories (first chiefly treasures and power objects, later grisly currency in the curio trade), these heads are some of the most volatile cultural images that an artist can reach for in New Zealand. And their first appearances in Cotton's paintings in the mid-2000s had the shocking force of a haunting, the faces looming out of blue-black nightscapes like zombie survivors of history—teeth bared, hair blown back, tattoos aglow in their faces. At first sight the new heads don't have that kind of urgency, because Cotton has partially blocked our view of each one with a bar or blot of paint. But the cumulative effect of the works is, if anything, more ominous. Placed inside cool white frames and arrayed regimentally on the wall, what the painted prints suggest irresistibly is a shooting range and its targets. Suddenly we're looking, not at meditative abstracts, but at icons of aggression. And suddenly the act of looking is charged with sinister implications. Those dots and strips of colour may be formalist devices, the kind of thing commonly used by abstract painters to 'tune' a larger field of paint. But they also evoke the terrible abstraction of a telescopic rifle sight: the fine tweaking of crosshairs and range-finding dots as the hunter takes aim at a distant target.

The longer you contemplate these cool and judicious images, the more heated and unstable they seem. Everything in them is carefully calibrated to scramble a clear sense of visual allegiance. It occurs to me, as it has to many observers, that the targets also resemble airforce roundels—the coloured abstract circles containing national symbols that are painted on the side of fighter planes, so that gun-crews on the same 'team' refrain from shooting them down (New Zealand's roundel features a kiwi, for instance, while Australia's features a kangaroo). But what does it mean to emblazon a roundel with a severed head rather than the national animal? Is Cotton proposing that the heads should serve as new national identifiers—true symbols of New Zealand history at its most bitter and tangled? And what, moreover, are we to make of the discovery that the colours in the background are not neutral at all, having been extracted by Cotton from the Israeli, Palestinian and Māori flags and the local landscape? Is mingling those colours the artist's way of noting the bizarre arbitrariness of national boundaries? Or is he rather creating a series of protective roundels for history's many forgotten faces—the Māori heads with their abstract 'blindfolds' now standing in for a larger category of victims? Do those victims all belong, as the gang-patch work *Hiruhārama* seems to be suggesting, to a gang sardonically called 'The Chosen People'? Or alternatively might Cotton be suggesting that these questions are all a bit too serious, given that whoever is taking aim at these targets appears to be using a paint-gun rather than a real one? What we have here, I contend, are political artworks, but of an unusually muted and elusive kind. Political not because they declare one position but because they occupy several positions simultaneously. At once beautiful, aggressive, protective and evasive, they are indeed moving targets.



‘WHEN COTTON DROPS MODELLED FORMS IN FRONT OF THE TARGET, THEY POP OUT FROM THE FLATNESS AGGRESSIVELY—LIKE SEPARATE SOUNDS BOUNCING INTO THE ROOM OFF THE VISUAL EQUIVALENT OF A KICK-DRUM.’

Shane Cotton **Head #!?$**
2009–12. Acrylic on linen.
Private collection

The danger with even a partial survey show like Cotton’s is that it will summarise things all too well, leaving viewers feeling that they know exactly who the artist is and where he’s coming from. But Cotton’s new works—the bats, the targets—seem custom-made to knock such certainties out of the gallery. His biggest hit (so to speak) in this new mode is the painting reproduced on the right, a vast target on which he’s floated a peculiar collection of images: a sparrow, a billiard ball, a skull, another head, a slice of sky with an abstract moon in it. One can start by looking for family ties amongst these objects, focusing, perhaps, on the vanitas qualities of the skull, bird and head—each one associated in some way with the brevity and fragility of life. But the visual effect of the painting works fiercely against this connect-the-dots approach. Painted with great surety in a palette of pinks, greys and clarion blues, the target seems to sit right up on the painting’s surface; it doesn’t recede or open up atmospherically. So when Cotton drops modelled forms in front of it, they pop out from the flatness aggressively—like separate sounds bouncing into the room off the visual equivalent of a kick-drum. Looking longer, what starts to build is an insistent staring quality: all those heads, dots, balls and circles eyeballing you individually; and then, pressed up behind them, the massive ‘eye’ of the target itself. What’s Cotton up to? I think there’s an answer right there on the canvas, where two words spell out the title—*Head #!?$*. As in, ‘head-fuck’. As in, something custom-designed to unsettle our sense of the order of things. The word ‘unsettle’ is crucial. For much of his career Cotton has been known as an artist preoccupied by place: one who grounded Māori stories and imagery afresh in the tradition of New Zealand landscape. But if the new works in **The Hanging Sky** are any measure, what Cotton wants today is to *un-ground* his images: to cast them out into a strange open space where we can observe them without rushing into judgement.

Justin Paton
Senior curator

***Shane Cotton: The Hanging Sky** is on display at the Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney from 23 March until 19 May 2013. Organised and toured by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu in association with the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane.*

IMA
Institute of
Modern Art

Shimmer & Swell

On 21 March we inaugurate a new exhibition space at 209 Tuam Street with an installation by Seung Yul Oh. And at the same time, in our off-site space at 212 Madras Street, we're presenting a dazzling video installation by Reuben Paterson. Senior curator Justin Paton takes a look at both artworks, swerves the word 'about', and discovers some unexpected connections.

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON WAYS of approaching an artist's work is to ask what it's about. Unfortunately, this is also one of the worst ways.

I reached this conclusion in Kassel last year at the five-yearly mega-show *Documenta*, an often-brilliant exhibition that happened to be draped with some of the dreariest interpretation I've ever read. To read the labels accompanying many of the works, you would think that the artists rose each morning to consult a laundry list of their favourite topics, after which they would proceed to the studio and attempt to mash this content into an object. It's an interpretive approach that makes artists sound depressingly like students reading out homework. 'My topic for today is…'

Of course, artists—or good artists, anyway—don't come at things this way. 'Content' for them is a hazier quantity: an inkling, a hunch, a tingle. It may just be a scaffold or starting block: the thing that gets the whole process going. What matters more is the physical thinking that follows that initial thought, and the way the work in progress, in a strange reversal, begins to suggest fresh thoughts to its maker. The best artists, in my experience, are surprisingly unconcerned about locking their own 'concerns' into the object. They're much more interested in what the object can unlock in those who encounter it.

I offer this mild rant as an introduction to Seung Yul Oh and Reuben Paterson, whose works make up a forthcoming **Outer Spaces** double feature at our Tuam and Madras Street venues. If you're only interested in what art's 'about', then Paterson and Oh don't seem to have much in common. Paterson is someone you're most likely to hear discussed in connection with bicultural identity, while Oh might be grouped with Steve Carr or Michael Parekowhai as an artist fascinated by toys and childhood memories.

Start thinking instead, however, about how their works *behave*, and suddenly things get interesting. For both Paterson and Oh, in the works soon to go on show, are energetic activators of gallery space: Oh wants to push right into the room while Paterson wants to launch us right out of it. Both artists work on the fertile edge where abstract shapes turn suggestively lifelike. And both love what American art critic Dave Hickey calls the inarguable 'positivity' of light and colour, whether it's redness bouncing off the swell of Oh's balloon or the shimmers thrown back by Paterson's glitter.

Above all, both imbue their works with a live, urgent quality—a sense that the art, far from being static and certified, is happening before your eyes. You don't stand there wondering what the work's 'about', because you're too interested in what it is doing.

‘Physically speaking, these sculptures consist of almost nothing, but they fill your field of attention to bursting point.’

Seung Yul Oh **Huggong** 2012. Installation view, Starkwhite. Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite. Photo: Sam Hartnett

Seung Yul Oh
Huggong

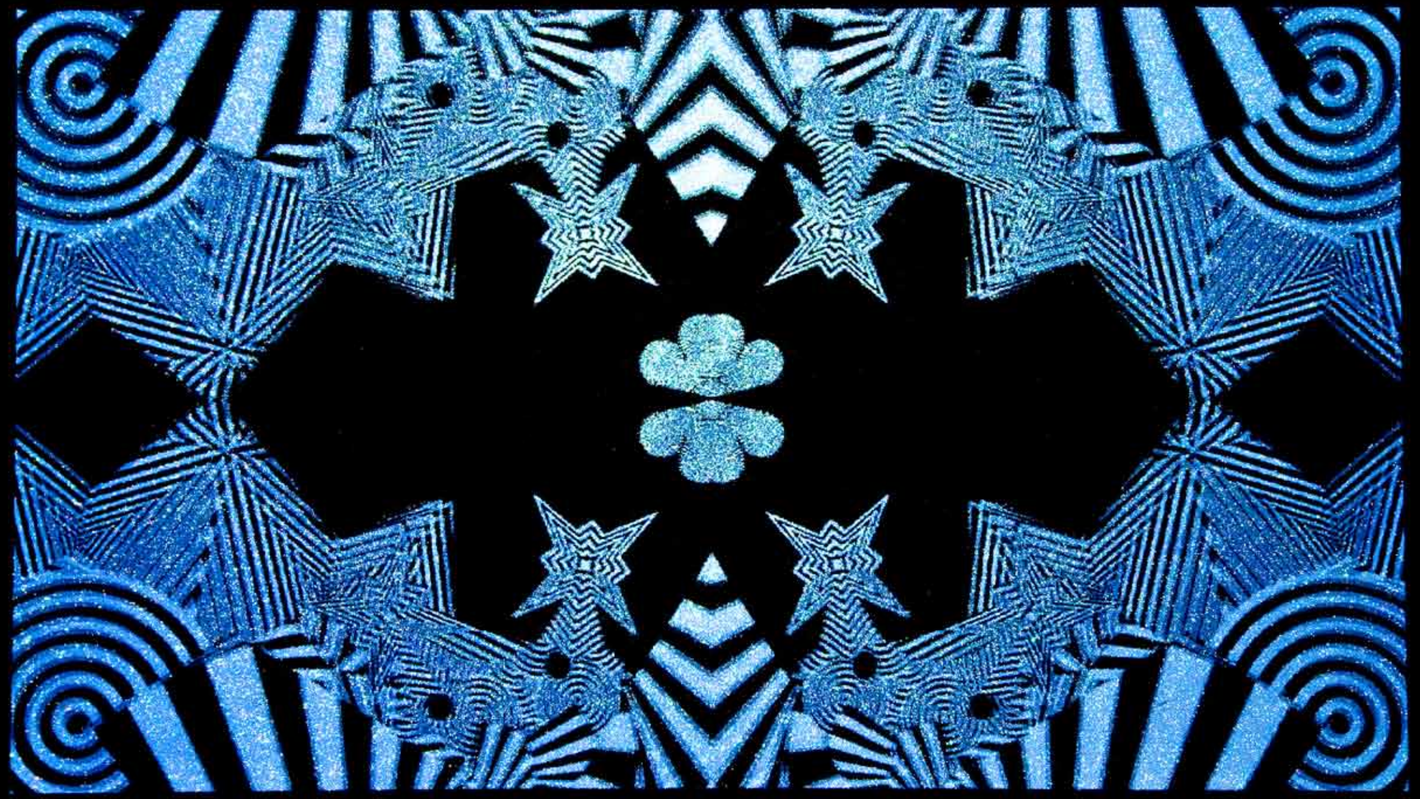
You’ve got to climb some stairs or take a lift to reach our newest off-site gallery. But once you’re there you shouldn’t have too much trouble finding the art in the space. In fact, there’s not much space left over, because the art is hogging it all.

Seung Yul Oh’s *Huggong* (and yes, now I notice it, the title does sound a lot like ‘hogging’) is sculpture in an expansive mode: two rubber inflatables that make the Large-Size Party Balloons you splashed out on for the kids’ last birthday look like mere tiddlers. Swelled up against the ceiling, bullfrogged into corners, oozing peristaltically between columns, Oh’s balloons leave just enough room in the room for visitors to squeeze past, our red-and-yellow reflections riding along the sculptures’ shining surfaces as we go.

When sculpture grows to these proportions it’s usually a heavy business: heavy in materials and heavy in mood. But Oh’s blow-ups are object lessons in how big art can also be light. Partly that lightness comes, of course, from all the things these objects suggest: A herniated blimp? Interstellar butt-cheeks? Brobdingnagian paint-blobs squidged fresh from the tube? But Oh doesn’t force the joke. What wins me over in the end is *Huggong*’s paradoxical physical presence—the way it lays claim to the entire gallery simply by bagging a lot of air that was already there. Physically speaking, these sculptures consist of almost nothing, but they fill your field of attention to bursting point.

Air has everything to do with it. A sculpture in bronze is well nigh indestructible. But we all know what happens to balloons. And the constant knowledge that the *Huggong* balloons might burst is essential to the effect of the show. Those space-invading bulges look awfully vulnerable to encounters with something sharp. And their massive vulnerability is noisily emphasised by the video that goes with the show—a violently funny record of dozens of artworld denizens as balloons blow up in their faces.

It may seem a stretch, but I find myself thinking of the soap bubbles that appear in seventeenth-century genre paintings—delicate spheres of liquid and air that reminded viewers of the brevity of art and life. We feel that transience and urgency in *Huggong* too. This thing might pop, so *look*.



Reuben Paterson
Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua

Good art rises from strong feelings: strong liking, strong disliking, or strong ambivalence. And Reuben Paterson is one of the most energetic 'likers' in New Zealand art. Across the past fifteen years he's laid out a visual world of relentless optimism and positivity—a place where every shape, colour, texture and pattern seems to be saying 'more' and 'forever' and 'absolutely'.

Paterson's manifesto of moreness and foreverness is *Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua*, a digital animation that he released in 2005 as a very large and very inexpensive edition. That in itself is an interesting indication of Paterson's unconventionally affirmative way of thinking. In an art market where it's all-too-predictably assumed that the best work is the rarest and dearest, Paterson made an effort to make one of his own best works widely and cheaply available. And the result (overpricers, take note) is one of New Zealand art's most widely acquired and exhibited videos.

Christchurch Art Gallery bought the video in 2009 and first showed it in a very modest setting—on a television screen built into the top of a sleek black plinth. Encountering the work, you found yourself peering down into a virtual well, where white patterns rippled endlessly outward like stylised light on dark water. But in Christchurch soon, this world of light will unfold on a much larger backdrop—a six-metre-wide screen coated all over in Paterson's trademark medium, glitter.

The video starts with nothingness: blackness in a blacked-out gallery. Then shards of light or space-dust rain towards us—the beginning of something cosmic. Thirty seconds later there's a starburst of shapes and suddenly it's chocks away, as you're plunged forward through what feels like the entire history of pattern: paisley, kowhaiwhai, Op Art, Islamic tile work, seventies disco graphics and more. No sooner do you try to name a pattern than it turns into something else, the whole thing ceaselessly budding and bursting before your eyes.

The result is a journey that seems to lead simultaneously towards the sensual and the spiritual. On one hand the installation begs to be read as an all-out celebration of earthly pleasures, with its suggestions of fashion, gay glamour, nightclub decor, and silver screens full of 'shining stars'. On the other hand, however, it launches us into a space more celestial than earthly—a realm evoked in the loose translation of its title, 'the meeting place of the stars'.

Paterson is too interesting an abstract artist to commit himself to either possibility. But, if we asked him, I suspect he'd have an answer ready for us nonetheless. Sensual or spiritual? Absolutely.

Justin Paton
Senior curator

***Reuben Paterson: Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua** and **Seung Yul Oh: Huggong** will be on display in the Gallery's off-site spaces at 212 Madras Street and 209 Tuam Street respectively from 21 March until 24 April.*

Reuben Paterson **Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua** 2005. DVD. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 2009. Reproduced courtesy of the artist. Photo: Adam Art Gallery/Robert Cross

Printing Types at the Caxton Press

Peter Vangioni

THE REALISATION THAT THE LEO BENSEMANN retrospective exhibition *An Art Venture* would not be reopening at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu after the February 2011 earthquake was a great disappointment to many. Open for just twelve days, the show was the first time that key examples from Bensemann's full œuvre had been brought together in a public gallery. While I enjoyed Bensemann's paintings and exquisite pencil drawings, I found myself spending just as much time in the back rooms of the exhibition, surrounded by his work as an illustrator, typographer and book designer for the Caxton Press.

Experiencing the Caxton Press material in the context of the Bensemann retrospective led to the Gallery's Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives developing a collection of representative examples of Caxton Press titles; this was substantially enriched by the acquisition of many key titles from the Peter Dunbar collection in late 2011. As Bensemann's biographer Peter Simpson noted:

[The] importance of The Caxton Press extends well beyond providing an outlet for some of New Zealand's best writers. … Caxton contributed significantly to stimulating the production of quality writing, to raising the standards of printing and book design, to building an audience for New Zealand literature and art, and to the creation of an infrastructure for local printing and publishing which others could benefit from…[1]

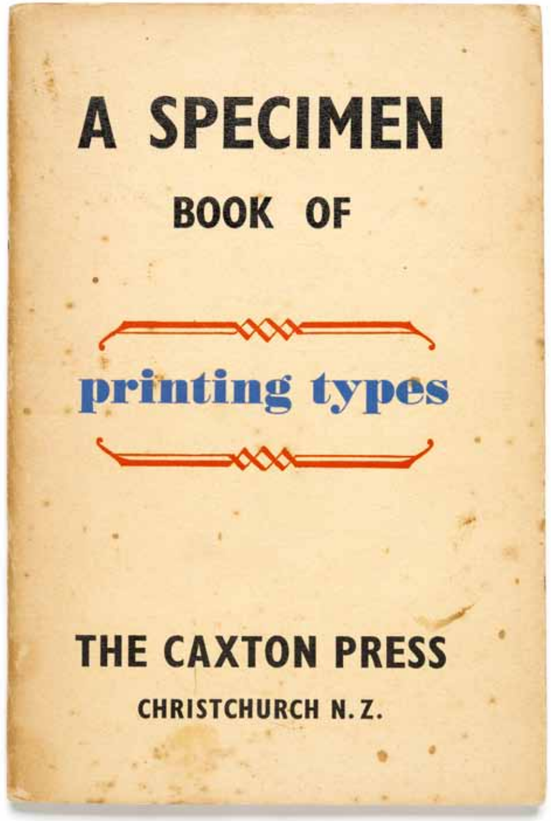
The Caxton Press, originally a student-run venture known as the Canterbury College Caxton Club and later the Caxton Club, was established in the basement of the law students' lecture room at Canterbury College by Denis Glover in 1933. Glover's first printing press was a small table-top Kelsey hand platen, acquired through Bob Lowry in Auckland. This type of press, often used by hobby printers, was the perfect vehicle for Glover to introduce himself to the intricacies of letterpress printing. Being a self-taught, and within a few years, self-employed printer, enabled Glover to be more adventurous and expressive in his typographical layouts than would have been possible had he begun his printing career as an apprentice for an established firm.

John Drew, one of Glover's early partners at the Caxton Press, provides a fascinating insight into how the Press operated in the early days:

The scene was a dark old wash-house in the muddy back of that broken down old boarding house at 903 Colombo Street, city. In these unpromising surroundings my friend, and partner-to-be, Denis Glover and I, agreed to set up the Caxton Press as a commercial venture … I remember, on that momentous morning, finding the now famous poet and printer with his rusty old hand press balanced on a set of rickety wash tubs. And he was hand-setting one of his notable early poems from a couple of dusty, borer-riddled, second-hand type cases.[2]

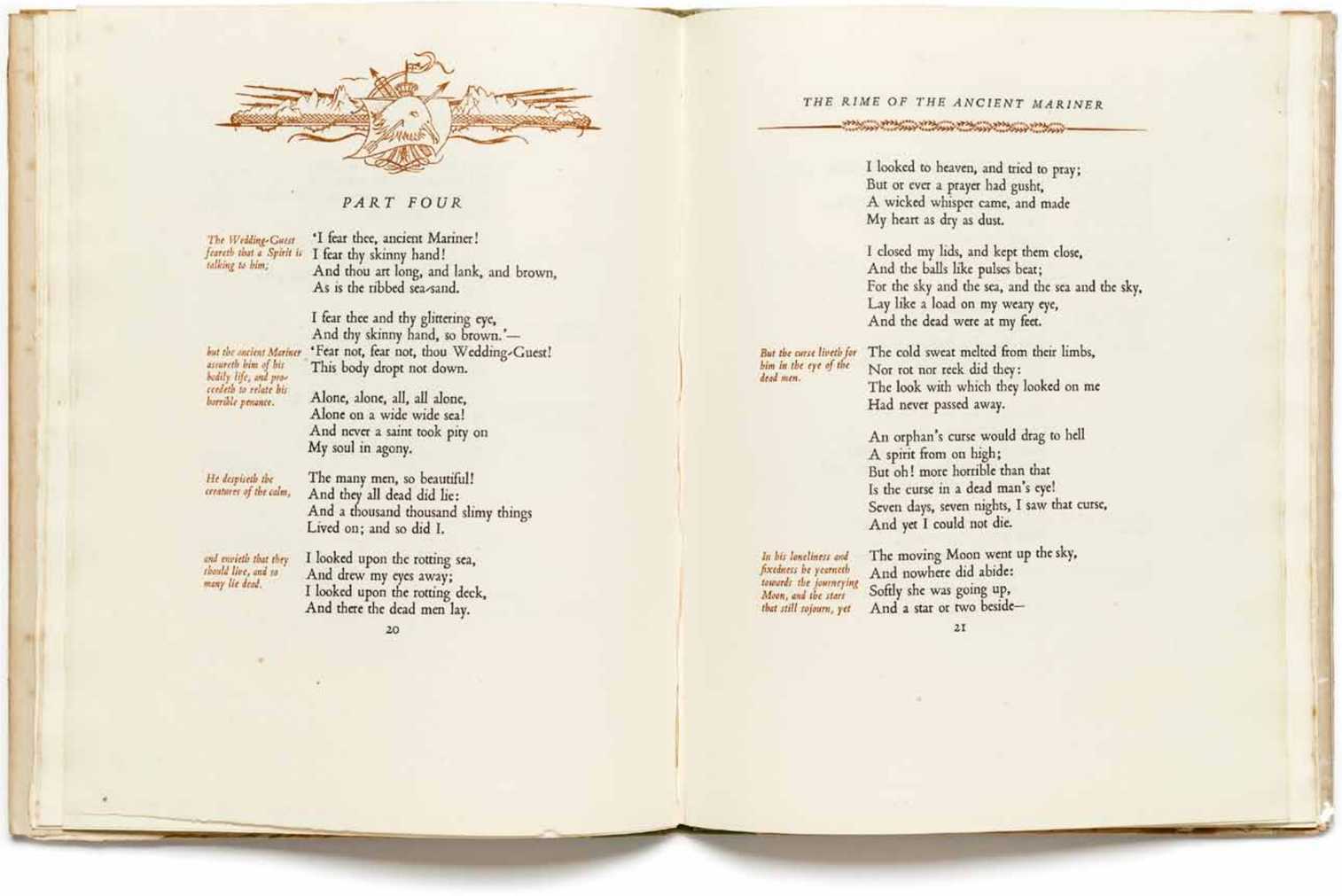
Lowry urged Glover to 'read anything by Eric Gill and Stanley Morison',[3] two of the most influential typographers of the twentieth century; early efforts from the Caxton Club/Press are not stunning examples of hand-printing by any means but they do highlight Glover's modest embrace of modern typographic principles espoused by Morison and Gill. One of Caxton's mottos might well have been from Morison himself: 'Typography may be defined as the craft of rightly disposing printing material in accordance with specific purpose; of so arranging letters, distributing the space and controlling the type as to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text.'[4] Indeed this typographic call-to-arms was included in the first type specimen book to issue from the Caxton Press.

With the layout of the title page for *Sirocco*



A Specimen Book of Printing Types 1940. Peter Dunbar collection, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased with assistance from the Dunbar Family and the J.L. Hay Charitable Trust

Samuel Taylor Coleridge
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner 1952. Peter Dunbar collection, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased with assistance from the Dunbar Family and the J.L. Hay Charitable Trust



PART FOUR

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him;

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—

but the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

'Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm,

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

and envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

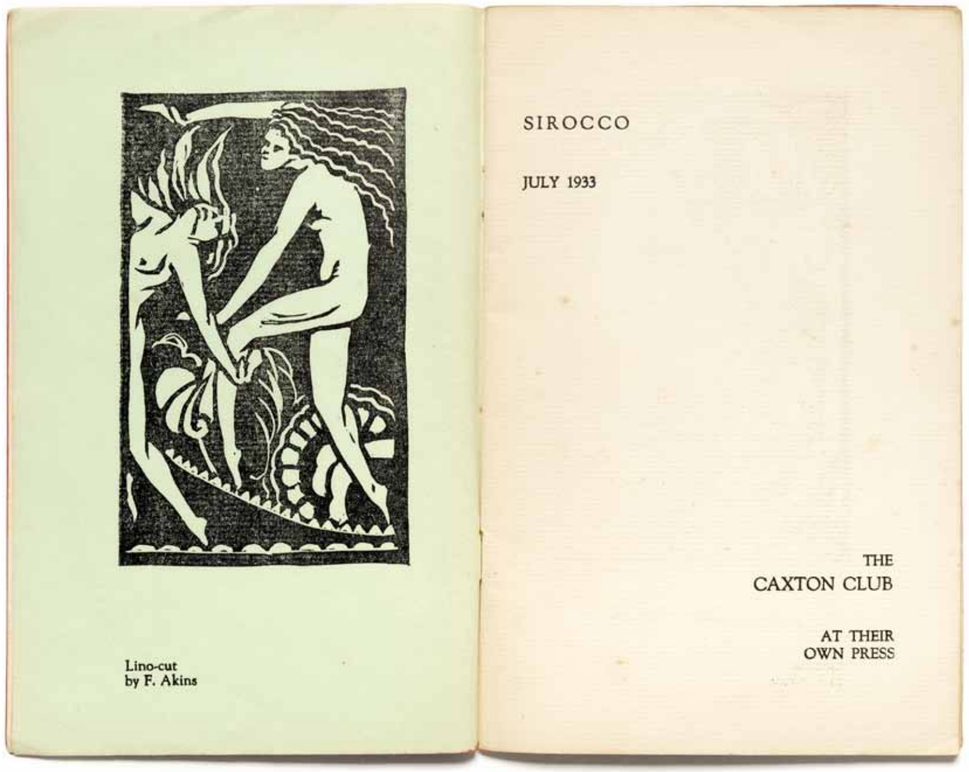
But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—



(1933), the second book published by the Press, Glover aligns the text firmly to the left and right as opposed to centrally as was more traditional. But of more interest to the art historian is the fact that early Caxton Club publications not only included texts from individuals who were to become some of New Zealand's most important twentieth-century writers, they also included illustrations from contemporary artists. Linocuts by Canterbury artists Florence Akins, Rita Angus, Leo Bensemann and John Oakley were used to illustrate *Oriflamme* (1933; the first publication from the Press) and *Sirocco*. Bensemann went on to join the Caxton Press in 1937.

Glover and Drew soon moved on to a larger automated platen press and began taking on a steady stream of jobs, 'printing stationery and visiting cards … circulars, paper bags, account forms, envelopes, printed tags, prospectuses, letterheads, programmes, cards, wedding invitations, church service sheets…[5] It was bread-and-butter work but it paid the bills and supported the publication of the Caxton Press titles.

If there is one book printed at the Caxton Press that never fails to impress me, it is the 1952 edition of Samuel Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. It is a perfect book. Firstly it's a riveting read and the actual materials on which the book has been produced—marbled cover boards and Hayle Mill handmade paper—are a joy to handle. Then there are the absolutely superb illustrations and titling, all designed and hand drawn by Bensemann, and the way in which his illustration of an albatross head pierced with an arrow sits perfectly with the type at the beginning of each part of the poem. And lastly, the text, elegant Poliphilus and Blado types selected and laid out by Glover and impeccably printed in two colours, black for the poem and a light brown for margins. These factors combine to make a book to rival any high-quality printing produced overseas at the time. Glover's biographer, Gordon Ogilvie, remarked that *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was the highpoint of the collaboration between Glover and Bensemann: 'The combination of [Glover's] typographical skill and Bensemann's artistic talent produced one of the most beautiful and eye-catching volumes ever to come from a New Zealand printing press.'[6]

By the 1940s the Caxton Press had really struck its stride, and books such as T*he Rime of the Ancient Mariner* serve to illustrate its adherence to Morison's almost mantra-like definition of typographical layout: '… the craft of rightly disposing printing material in accordance with specific purpose…' This book is truly a remarkable transformation from the early days of the Caxton Press, when Glover, Drew, Dennis Donovan and Bensemann—all self-taught letterpress printers—were printing ephemeral items such as paper bags and wedding invitations. They were now leading the way in twentieth-century New Zealand publishing.

A Caxton Miscellany: The Caxton Press 1933–58 includes key publications and ephemera from the first twenty-five years of the Caxton Press. Drawn extensively from the Peter Dunbar collection it is entirely appropriate that this small exhibition takes place at the Peterborough Street library given that the majority of the objects on display were created in the same neighbourhood—Colombo, Peterborough and Victoria streets.

Peter Vangioni
Curator

A Caxton Miscellany: The Caxton Press 1933–58 is on display at Central Library Peterborough until 17 March.

NOTES

1. Peter Simpson in Noel Waite, *Adventure and Art: The Caxton Press*, Wellington, 1998, p.4.
2. 'Gordon Ogilvie, *Denis Glover: His Life*, Auckland, 1999, p.80.
3. Ibid. pp.54–5.
4. Stanley Morison in *A Specimen Book of printing types*, The Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1940, unpaginated.
5. Gordon Ogilvie, *Denis Glover: His Life*, Auckland, 1999, p.86.
6. Ibid, p.274.

Sirocco 1933. Peter Dunbar collection, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased with assistance from the Dunbar Family and the J.L. Hay Charitable Trust

Robin Neate **Paysage** (detail) 2012. Oil on board. 250 x 200mm. Reproduced courtesy of the artist. See this image in full at bit.ly/W2CxPK

Museums beyond museums

In this networked century, where does a museum begin and end?

Michael Lascarides

BEFORE THE INTERNET and before digitised collections, it seems that where the boundary of a museum, library or gallery lay was just understood: within its walls, curators decided what cultural artefacts were worthy of preservation and interpretation; without, the curious and the academic eagerly accepted the curators' invitation to come inside and have a look. But, perhaps due to a long institutional memory of violent sackings, museums have famously protected access to their collections with fortress-like buildings, a sharp divide between public and private space and an implied guiding principle: use equals decay.

It has pretty much always been thus.

But now, for the first time, the revolutions in electronic communications afford different means of engaging with a museum collection. Every week, seemingly, brings a cheaper, better mobile device for our pockets, faster connections, and more content in digital form. Floating on this torrent are a number of interesting questions for museums and galleries.

When every relevant fact, artist's biography, audio guide or hyper-detailed image from a museum's collection can be delivered to a user's pocket anywhere in the world, do visitors still need to attend in person? Even if *your* answer is 'Yes, of course', are there others for whom a fully digital experience may suffice? And if so, how many?

If the museum building and the physical objects it contains could be separated from all of the ideas, inspiration and conversations that those objects generate, what, then, does each side of that divide truly represent? More succinctly, does the soul of the institution lie in the stuff, or in all of the knowledge about the stuff?

Or, as one museum professional recently put it to an audience of his peers, 'What's up with the building, really?'

For most, the experience of visiting a great museum in person to see, hear, touch, and smell great works is not replaceable. Sensate animals that we are, we are wired to seek out physical experiences. We will always desire an audience with the Real Thing, and with one another. Even so, there are interesting changes starting to happen around, before, during and after the visit.

The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart, Tasmania, brackets a patron's visit with online interactions: an email lets her know how to get there and what to expect, a smartphone app offers her details about the artworks during the visit (there are no physical labels in the gallery to distract), and a compendium of deeper details about her favourite artworks is delivered after the visit is over, courtesy of the app and the museum's website.

This sort of hand-holding is a smart, humane use of the available technology, and will likely be commonplace at museums worldwide in a few years' time. Outside of the lucky few with the means, geographic location and time, the typical museum-goer does not show up very frequently; often, each institution is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But deep engagement with patrons on either side of the visit is now a welcome possibility.

Museum collections themselves have been finding new, networked expressions with a potentially global reach. From the Smithsonian Institution to the Victoria and Albert Museum to the New York Public Library, institutions are radically opening up their databases and putting everything they know about parts of their collection online. Others are successfully engaging their patrons to participate in the labour-intensive cleanup of data by transcribing a manuscript, locating where a photograph was taken on a map, or even helping to decide which works in the collection are most 'important'. Liberated by cheap digitisation, some of the rarest, most fragile treasures no longer need to be hidden; quite to the contrary, they are improved with use.

These digital artefacts can perforate the walls of the museum, enabling new views of the collections from any browser. The best of them can become collectible in their own right. With the Google Art Project, the search giant is making scans of both the interiors of major galleries and a selection of their works available on the web. The highest-resolution of these views, as a colleague of mine noted, constitute *an entirely new kind of experience* in and of themselves. Being able to zoom into Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* until every brush stroke is visible—skimming over its surface as if flying over a landscape—is an utterly novel way of seeing this most familiar of images. It is a view that would not be available to you even if you were standing in front of the painting itself. Your eyes just could not focus that precisely.

Such incredibly detailed representations will never supplant the original. But neither should we expect them to. To envision what might actually happen, consider the current state of the electronic book. For some readers, the only real books will always be those printed on paper. But for an ever-growing number of others, the convenience of carrying a hundred favourite novels in a pocket at all times is a liberating new way to read. Some books are being written that will never see print, but find an audience nonetheless. Meanwhile, great numbers of new books will still find their best expression on paper. Our relationship with museum collections is poised to undergo a similar evolution of roles.

The true revolution of digital technology's effect on culture is not that it replaces what has gone before, but that it shatters it like a supercollider, reconstituting the fragments into many different forms, some familiar and some completely new. Ideas that previously would have only lived in the printed word or the museum exhibit may now find better expression in the app, the blog, the game or the website.

Museums will continue to preserve culture and tell human stories to their patrons. Some museums will decide to remain as they are, unchanged. But other museums long to be something else, something now enabled by new technologies and networks. We should be filled with impatient wonder for what they will become, like cities after the invention of the electric light: deeply transformed by deeply complementary technologies, making them more vibrant, effective, raucous, and alive.

Michael Lascarides is the former head of the New York Public Library's web development team, the author of the book Next-Gen Library Redesign, *from ALA Press and a contributor to the forthcoming book* Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage. *He currently lives in Wellington.*

Robin Neate **Paysage** (detail) 2012. Oil on board. 250 x 200mm. Reproduced courtesy of the artist. See this image in full at bit.ly/W2CxPK

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Museum collections themselves have been finding new, networked expressions with a potentially global reach. From the Smithsonian Institution to the Victoria and Albert Museum to the New York Public Library, institutions are radically opening up their databases and putting everything they know about parts of their collection online. Others are successfully engaging their patrons to participate in the labour-intensive cleanup of data by transcribing a manuscript, locating where a photograph was taken on a map, or even helping to decide which works in the collection are most 'important'. Liberated by cheap digitisation, some of the rarest, most fragile treasures no longer need to be hidden; quite to the contrary, they are improved with use.

These digital artefacts can perforate the walls of the museum, enabling new views of the collections from any browser. The best of them can become collectible in their own right. With the Google Art Project, the search giant is making scans of both the interiors of major galleries and a selection of their works available on the web. The highest-resolution of these views, as a colleague of mine noted, constitute *an entirely new kind of experience* in and of themselves. Being able to zoom into Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* until every brush stroke is visible—skimming over its surface as if flying over a landscape—is an utterly novel way of seeing this most familiar of images. It is a view that would not be available to you even if you were standing in front of the painting itself. Your eyes just could not focus that precisely.

Such incredibly detailed representations will never supplant the original. But neither should we expect them to. To envision what might actually happen, consider the current state of the electronic book. For some readers, the only real books will always be those printed on paper. But for an ever-growing number of others, the convenience of carrying a hundred favourite novels in a pocket at all times is a liberating new way to read. Some books are being written that will never see print, but find an audience nonetheless. Meanwhile, great numbers of new books will still find their best expression on paper. Our relationship with museum collections is poised to undergo a similar evolution of roles.

The true revolution of digital technology's effect on culture is not that it replaces what has gone before, but that it shatters it like a supercollider, reconstituting the fragments into many different forms, some familiar and some completely new. Ideas that previously would have only lived in the printed word or the museum exhibit may now find better expression in the app, the blog, the game or the website.

Museums will continue to preserve culture and tell human stories to their patrons. Some museums will decide to remain as they are, unchanged. But other museums long to be something else, something now enabled by new technologies and networks. We should be filled with impatient wonder for what they will become, like cities after the invention of the electric light: deeply transformed by deeply complementary technologies, making them more vibrant, effective, raucous, and alive.

Michael Lascarides is the former head of the New York Public Library's web development team, the author of the book Next-Gen Library Redesign, *from ALA Press and a contributor to the forthcoming book* Crowdsourcing Our Cultural Heritage. *He currently lives in Wellington.*

MAKE A DONATION, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Following the Canterbury earthquakes, Christchurch Art Gallery needs your support more than ever. By becoming a supporter of the Christchurch Art Gallery Trust you can help the Gallery continue to grow as an internationally recognised centre of excellence, providing a stimulating and culturally enriching experience for all who visit in the future.

WAYS YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION

The Christchurch Art Gallery Trust welcomes all contributions and offers a number of ways you can make a donation.

Annual Giving

Our three-tiered programme for making annual donations allows you to choose the level that best suits your circumstances. Each level of giving confers a number of exclusive benefits, including private dinners and cocktail functions, personal invitations and special viewings of the collection.

Patrons' Circle ($10,000 and above)
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Collection Development

The Challenge Grant and Challenge Grant Response Fund

The Challenge Grant is a ten-year commitment by Christchurch City Council to supplement the collection development budget by matching dollar-for-dollar any amount raised by the Trust up to a set amount per annum.

Target 2012–13: $211,000 to be raised by 30 June 2013
Raised to date: $152,400
Still to be raised: $58,600

Special Donations

Making a special donation means you can stipulate what you would like your contribution to be used for.

Bequests

This is your opportunity to leave an inspirational legacy for the future by including the Gallery in your will.

Christchurch Art Gallery formally acknowledges the major donors who contributed to the building of the Gallery.

Hon. Margaret Austin, Kiri Borg and Brian Henry, Hon. Philip and Mrs Ros Burdon, Philip Carter, Ben Danis, Sir Neil and Lady Isaac, Neil and Diane McKegg, Monica Richards, Robert and Barbara Stewart, Sir Robertson and Lady Stewart, Stout Trust, W.A. Sutton Trust, Sir Angus and Lady Tait, Adriaan and Gabrielle Tasman, Jim and Susan Wakefield. Many continue to support the Gallery and we thank them.

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Theo and Janet Giesen
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Tax Status—The Christchurch Art Gallery Trust is a charitable trust registered with the Charities Commission. The Trust has tax charity status as defined under the Income Tax Act 2007.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Bill Culbert in Venice

AS *BULLETIN* READERS KNOW ALREADY, I'm a long-standing and ardent supporter of New Zealand's presence at the Venice Biennale of Art. Established in 1895, it's the oldest and largest of the world's mega art shows and, while these are now numerous and varied, Venice still seems key. Perhaps that's in part because it's the only time visual artists get the chance to 'represent' their country in an official government-to-government invitation. And, aside from the eighty or so national presentations, there are many approved and fringe collateral exhibitions and events in this extraordinarily busy city.[1]

This year, New Zealand has chosen to present the work of senior artist Bill Culbert, and I'm delighted once more to have been appointed commissioner by Creative New Zealand, who provide the main funding and project support.

Christchurch residents may recall Culbert's astonishing work *Blue* (2000), which pierced the window and catapulted colour across the concrete wall of our now-demolished Convention Centre. Culbert's larger-scale *in situ* works are always fashioned with a space and context in mind, so it was extremely important for us to secure a venue for his work in Venice in good time.

Luckily, we were able to appoint the artist early and visit the 2011 Biennale before it closed. That way, New Zealand was at the top of the queue for city venues (needed also by about fifty other countries). Culbert looked at a number of sites, some in use, others new—there's always interest among locals when a new location is opened for use during the Biennale, however temporarily—and we were thrilled to secure Istituto Santa Maria della Pietà. La Pietà is a prime location beside the main lagoon; with its own vaporetto stop, it's almost equidistant between San Marco, the main city square, and the Giardini, an area at the end of the peninsula where longer-established national pavilions are located.

The deal done, Culbert could now begin defining his task in earnest. As a venue, La Pietà is a mixture of new and used, redolent with history, particularly a long corridor-like entrance space beside the church, in which Vivaldi once taught violin to pupils at the orphanage of the same name. Here, Culbert is planning a 20-metre 'chandelier' of neon tubes and miscellaneous objects to light the way through this never-before used space to a sequence of other rooms (one used at the 2005 Biennale by the et al. collective), inside and outside courtyards and even a side canal. *Front door out back*, as his presentation is titled, will be an unfolding journey, a series of atmospheric presentations which I can't wait to see revealed to the admiring and critical eye of Biennale-goers from late May right through to November 2013.

There's still much to be done before the official opening on 1 June. Making and assembling; determining weight loadings; packing and shipping from France (where Bill lives) and New Zealand; appointing venue attendants to engage with visitors and mind the work. There's a website to maintain and a catalogue to prepare.

Christchurch Art Gallery is proud to once again be associated with New Zealand at the Venice Biennale and, with our continuing closure this year, several staff are involved. Justin Paton is working closely with Culbert as curator, Peter Bray is designer and exhibitions and collections team leader Sean Duxfield will assist with the final installation and train venue attendants in the daily care of the work. John Collie has provided photographic services and—with other galleries in New Zealand—we'll present a public programme here in Christchurch and support Te Papa to provide education resources for schools when the Biennale begins. The staff development opportunities afforded by the Biennale are reason enough for our involvement, but ultimately not as important as our conviction that it's a crucial international art fixture to support where and as we can.

Anything visual has huge competition in Venice; it's simply one of the hardest places on earth to stand out and be interesting. There's the city itself but, as during any art biennale, there's also the presence of other artists, who know they have to grab your attention or be gone forever. However, New Zealand has built up a distinctive presence and reputation on this key international stage since our first official appearance in 2001 and I'm convinced Bill Culbert's work will add additional momentum to the history of New Zealand at Venice. *Front door out back* will positively glow, holding its spaces with authority and the marvellous 'down under' inventiveness we have come to expect from our foremost sculptor of light.

Jenny Harper
Director

The Venice Biennale is on from 1 June to 24 November 2013. For more information see: www.nzatvenice.com

Bill Culbert **Lustre with two chairs** 1997. Fluorescent tubes, office chairs. Musée Calvet, Avignon

NOTE

1. In this context, I'm delighted to note that Christchurch artist, Darryn George, will make a work for an approved collateral exhibition at Palazzo Bembo during the 2013 Biennale.

Sian Torrington

Wellington-based artist Sian Torrington is currently working with the Gallery on a site-specific sculptural installation for Christchurch. She talks with curator Felicity Milburn about that project, her process, and about the residency she recently undertook in Samoa.

Sian Torrington in her Wellington studio. Photos: John Collie

FELICITY MILBURN: ***Many of your previous installations, such as* Soft is Stronger than Hard *(exhibited in* The Obstinate Object *at City Gallery Wellington in 2012), have had a deliberately adaptive, unstable and provisional quality, actively responding to, and drawing upon, the spaces and architecture around them. Adaptation and provisionality, of course, are especially relevant for Christchurch at this moment—is that one reason you are keen to make a project here?***

SIAN TORRINGTON: 'When I look at your work it makes me think about how sometimes life is so chaotic and mixed up and your work is like that but it's beautiful too and it makes me feel really reassured.' That's a comment from an eighteen-year old in response to *Soft is Stronger than Hard*. Along with the images my Christchurch-based sister has been sending me of the sites that now occupy the central city, it made me begin to consider this project. It is easy to think that art is not the most important thing at a time like this, but when I visited Christchurch and saw Michael Parekowhai's incredible installation, I felt the powerful need for art in the community.

When I met with you in Wellington you said 'We've forgotten how it feels to be stable'. You were talking about buildings, but when taken as a sentence it also talks about us, our response to the huge losses that have occurred in Christchurch. My work stands up for itself on spindly, unlikely, indeed provisional legs, but it still stands up. It has the ability to fit in anywhere, to find a handhold and begin to grow, to respond, raise a flag, reach across gaps with the humblest of materials. This is what I hope to be able to draw and build in Christchurch.

I always look for the 'gaps' in structures that appear sealed, upright, decided firmly upon. I have researched abandoned buildings for projects, looking at the idea that once a building is no longer fit for its intended use, it becomes open as a metaphor or starting point for a new form. Georges Perec writes that we should change the pictures in our homes constantly so that they do not become invisible. I think this is also true of our cities; we become so used to our urban environment that we no longer perceive it as a present, conscious collection of metaphors relating to our physical existence in these buildings, our bodies. In Christchurch this comfort in the known environment has been violently interrupted, and this provides openings for the kind of sculptural metaphorical language I am interested in.

FM: ***You've worked with a range of media—sculptures made from found materials, small and large-scale drawings and also text. Do you find that certain ideas lend themselves to particular approaches, or do all of these elements contribute to a multi-layered whole?***

ST: I joke that I always need to work on eight things at once, but it's true. I tend to work across a range of media, and I think this approach is partly about not getting stuck in one area and overworking things. My work has a gestural and energetic quality that is easy to lose if I look too hard at one part—it's always a fine balance and I find I will move between media to find the next step to take. Often words and language can show me what I need to draw, or sculpture can lead to poetry. I see the process as a form of excavation where different tools are needed to keep sparking what is discovered.

My poetry and writing comes alongside the making; I always have paper at hand to note down thoughts, found phrases or conversations. These become an authentic documentation of the process of making that may create titles or text to accompany the work. The small sculptures I see as condensed versions of the larger installation work. My materials have a patina which they acquire from being used more than once, finding many forms and eventually being condensed down to a smaller form where they rest.

'… once a building is no longer fit for its intended use, it becomes open as a metaphor or starting point for a new form.'

‘… I see myself as a kind of crucible through which fragments of experiences, photographs and conversations can be forged into something new; I’m excited to find people to begin talking with.’

FM: ***Your Christchurch project will encompass a number of stages—the collection of materials and ideas about the city, the development of these into sculptural elements and the presentation of the installation in a city location—and many of these will involve the participation of others. What does this collaborative aspect bring to your work that would otherwise be missing?***

ST: I think that without community collaboration this project could not be authentic. I live in Wellington and I need to connect with the experiences people want to share in order to find the right language and approach. In terms of materials, it seems crazy to buy or bring materials when so much is available in the city, and I want to feel that the materials come from this place and this time.

I recently collaborated with Joan Fleming and Rachel O’Neill on a project for Blue Oyster Gallery in Dunedin, *Caves are made of rock but not this cave*. Joan is based in Dunedin and so was able to send me descriptions of the underground gallery space, which was a key part of the proposal. It was a new experience for me to invite others into my usually very private making process, and I found the way I was moved, challenged and supported in the conversations we had incredibly enriching. The work became something none of us could have anticipated or made alone.

In terms of this project, I see myself as a kind of crucible through which fragments of experiences, photographs and conversations can be forged into something new; I’m excited to find people to begin talking with.

FM: ***You recently spent five weeks in Samoa as the result of a scholarship, which included running drawing workshops for teenagers, deaf students and the general public at the Tiapapata Art Centre, near Apia. Did this experience affect how you view your own practice?***

ST: The effects of this experience have been deep and various and I am still processing what it has meant and done for my work. I wrote a huge amount and made new drawings there, but mainly I want to develop new performance pieces from my experiences. The workshops I taught were very much based in my own work, including blind and experimental approaches to drawing, which I would like to develop as part of my teaching. I was very excited to go and spend time on a Pacific island, which is so much a part of what Aotearoa is, and also displace myself from my comfort zone of studio practice. The experience gave me rich ground to investigate my whiteness, my ideas of community, my queerness, as well as my sense of time, action and displacement.

I was also there just before the cyclone hit, which made me feel like an extremely privileged, wealthy white person in ways I had never felt before. I was able to escape, to jump on a plane, while a woman who lived nearby had no tarpaulins to cover holes in her home or protect her precious second-hand book collection. It made me feel helpless and over privileged in the same moment, and I have much to write, make and say about this experience. I am currently involved in some fund-raising projects in Wellington, which will include performance work developed from the residency.

Sian Torrington’s installation will be presented from late May in a central Christchurch location. See the website for updated information and related blogs.

Showhome

A true home: four bedrooms with computer nook, two bathrooms and a walk-in pantry, and the decorating is already done for you.

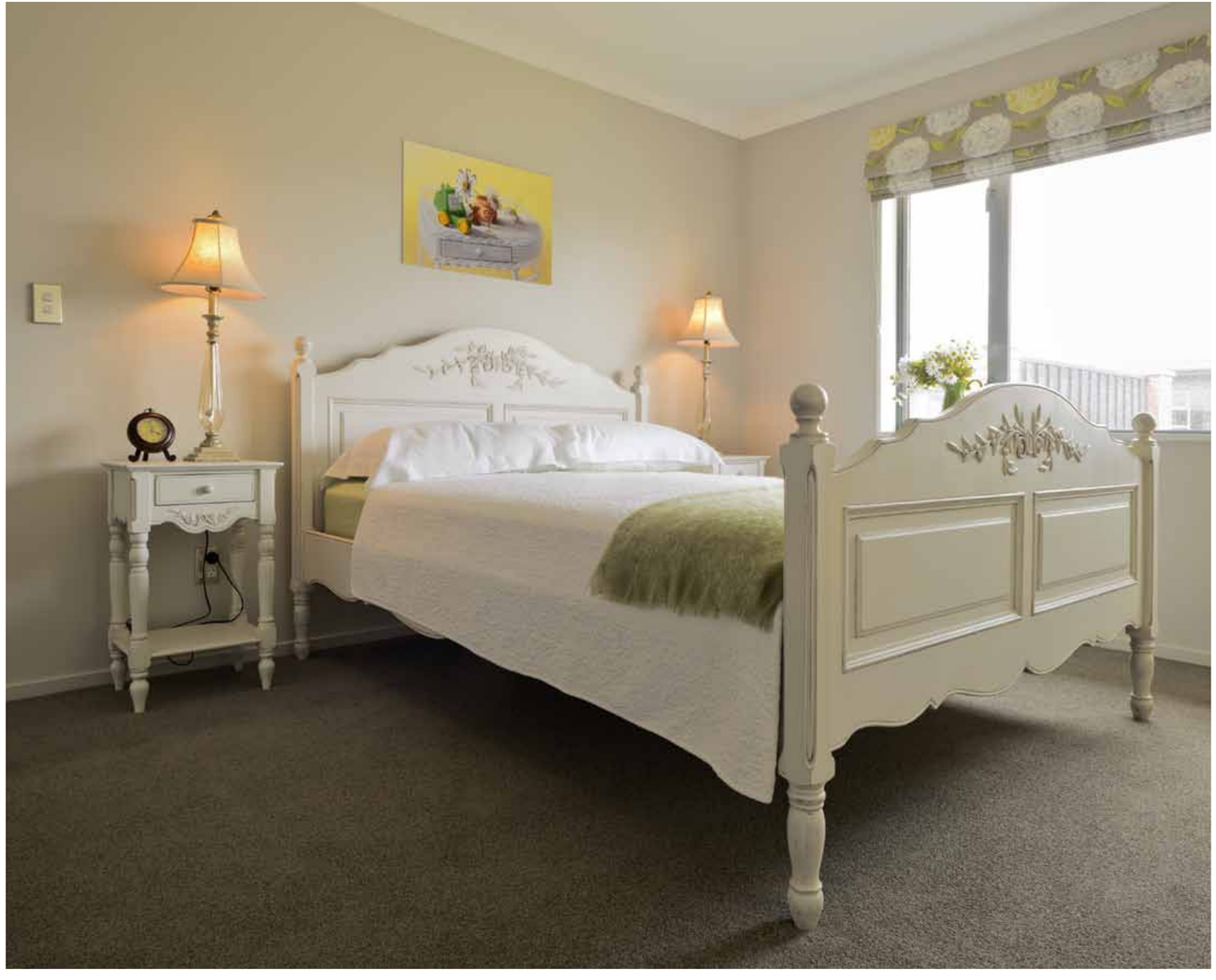
EVENT

SUNDAY 3 MARCH
Floortalk: Emily Hartly-Skudder
2pm / 49 Sioux Avenue, Wigram Skies / free

The inviting descriptions, judiciously staged photography and meticulously detailed floor-plans that grace the sales packages produced by housing developers promise picture-perfect visions of the consumer dream. Fully furnished and lavishly personalised with coordinated décor, the accompanying showhomes lack only a lucky buyer to turn the key and bring the dream to life. For three weeks this year, however, visitors to 49 Sioux Avenue, located within the Wigram Skies development in Christchurch's south-west, will get a little more than they may have anticipated. In the place of the usual, scrupulously neutral, 'wall art', they will find instead a series of paintings and miniature arrangements by recent University of Canterbury graduate Emily Hartley-Skudder. Drawing on the traditions of conventional still-life painting and the miniaturised perfection of a child's doll's house, Hartley-Skudder's eerily precise tableaux of household objects—fruit, crockery, even a jaunty rubber duck—play on the idea of what she calls the 'artificial ordinary', referencing and doubling the highly choreographed interior of the showhome in unexpected and sometimes unsettling ways.

Felicity Milburn
Curator

***Showhome** is on display at 49 Sioux Avenue, Wigram Skies development, Christchurch until 19 March 2013. Supported by Orange Homes. Open 12–4pm, Tuesday to Sunday.*



Installation view of Emily Hartley-Skudder **Master Bedroom (Ornate Nightstand with Telephone and Daisies)** 2012–13. Oil on canvas. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

Installation views of Emily Hartley-Skudder **Family and Dining (Coffee Table with Bottles and Pears)** 2012. Oil on canvas. Reproduced courtesy of the artist

Beyond The Pop-Up Art & Urban Regeneration

Dr Lee Stickells

COMMUNITY GARDENS; LANEWAY MURALS; mobile libraries; outdoor living rooms; pop-up cinemas, pools, parks, cafés, discos and galleries; giant birdcages; sidewalk furniture; sound installations and image projections. Public art projects with a social focus are a burgeoning phenomenon in Western cities. Comprising permanent or temporary works, either physical or immaterial, on sites that have open public access and are located outside museums and galleries, these projects often intersect with architectural, landscape, urban planning and activist practices. In this way, they exemplify an imperative towards social concern and engagement in many contemporary art projects, but also an integration in spatial development planning and practice. Artists are now seen as key players in the urban development game.

Christchurch has its own prominent example of this phenomenon in the Gap Filler organisation. Its response to the depressing swathes of empty urban lots in the wake of the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes exemplifies some of the most valuable aspects of what is often termed 'Guerrilla' or 'DIY' Urbanism. Through a sustained commitment to creating projects reclaiming the city's empty spaces for its citizens, Gap Filler aims to temporarily activate vacant sites to create a more dynamic city. Its focus is on community benefit: 'to demonstrate that the city can grow in important ways without large capital expenditure or major construction.'[1]

Gap Filler projects such as the Dance-O-Mat or Cycle Powered Cinema have generated creative, compelling interventions, but also sustained connections between landowners, community groups, residents, artists and politicians. The network of projects and people established through Gap Filler's work has opened up a space in Christchurch for conceptualising how art-making processes can contribute to the development of urban policy and to social change. I would suggest it has also encouraged elected officials, community leaders and the general public to think of artists as potential partners in a variety of circumstances.

A current project in Melbourne provides a contrasting initiative. A St Kilda terrace house—a former squat—is soon to be demolished and the site redeveloped. The new apartment block will be named 'Art-House'. But before that process commences, the house has been transformed into a publically accessible temporary exhibition—*Fallow: between abandonment and rebirth*. Three artists have created installation works relying primarily on materials found in the house. After demolition, a further interpretive work using materials from the house will be installed in the lobby of the new apartments. Funding for *Fallow* comes from a foundation created by a director of the architectural practice responsible for the new apartments. Visitors to the Art-House website can find details about the exhibition as well as register for information about buying an apartment in the new development. It is difficult to avoid the sense that the artistic interventions have been deployed as a means to shift discussions of the redevelopment away from questions of gentrification.

The distinctions between these two projects highlight the varying terms of engagement that exist between such contemporary art practices and urban planning and development processes. New opportunities and challenges have emerged for artists engaged with urban revitalisation—from long-term community initiatives and those operating beyond the cash economy to artists embedded in government, industry and electoral politics; from the branding of artist districts to festivalisation and local policies based on cultivating, promoting and clustering 'creative industries'. However, the self-conscious harnessing of creativity as a deliberate strategy for economic renewal and cultural revitalisation raises many questions. By whom and for whom are such projects made? To what extent is socio-spatial inclusion or exclusion by way of such projects intentional? What is the relationship between temporary projects and their institutional, political and policy contexts? In New York, during the summer of 2010, a soft drink company sponsored the short-term installation of a repurposed dumpster in a number of locations, creating a temporary pool. The City of Sydney organises and funds an annual set of 'pop-up' installations in its laneways. Such initiatives are increasingly being proposed by institutions and governments as opportunities for reinventing neighbourhoods and reoccupying urban space with new uses. However, who really benefits? We might ask, to what degree are prestige art projects within the scope of city marketing privileged by urban planners, as compared to art in neighbourhoods that is aimed at social cohesion and cultural empowerment?

In beginning to consider such issues, we could very simply ask, do these projects consume or contribute to the places they inhabit? Writing about the broader concept of 'creative placemaking', the community researcher Neeraj Mehta argues that equity is a critical part of the discussion in order to develop a clearer sense of who benefits: 'if we're working in communities that are distressed, poor or have been historically populated by communities of color, then we need to make sure that whatever strategies we design, or investments we

Cycle Powered Cinema 2012. Photo: Gap Filler

Dance-O-Mat 2012. Photo: Gavin James

NOTES

1. http://www.gapfiller.org.nz/about/ [accessed 20 December 2012].
2. 'Neeraj Mehta, 'The Question All Creative Placemakers Should Ask' http://nextcity.org/daily/entry/the-question-all-creative-placemakers-should-ask [accessed 5 November 2012].
3. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, Verso, 2006.
4. Martha Rosler, 'Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III' http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-iii/ [accessed 5 November 2012].
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Sara Muzio (ed.), *Southwark Lido*, Gattacicova, 2009, p.3.
8. Arjun Appadurai, 'The Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination', *Transurbanism*, V2 Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2002, p.34.

make, are creating benefit for them."[2] For artists (and others, such as architects) engaged in creative practices that intersect with urban regeneration (such as Gap Filler and the Art-House), such questions become very relevant. Beyond the immediate, ephemeral effects (and affect) of conviviality and aesthetic play that are key for much of this arts-led urban intervention, engaging with the public realm in such ways requires confronting a project's deeper effects.

It is tricky ground. One criticism that can be made of many urban interventionist practices is that they underpin an arts-based revitalisation process focused on real-estate driven strategies for commercial district and neighbourhood improvement. Arts-driven placemaking—which often deploys 'guerrilla' projects—is a tactic initiated by organisations that use such techniques as forms of landbanking, or by those who seek to actively draw new populations to areas that they hope to gentrify.

Another tension lies in the way that provisional DIY and guerrilla initiatives (often unsanctioned) can potentially feed degeneration rather than regeneration. The success of such opportunistic practices can sometimes encourage major landholders and government to avoid responsibility for making more comprehensive forms of community investment. This point has been raised in terms of the plethora of arts-based projects pitched at helping to renew depressed, shrinking cities such as Detroit in the US. It extends an argument made by urban theorist Mike Davis in his book *Planet of Slums*.[3] Davis suggests that many self-help housing projects in Latin America can have a counter-productive long-term effect: they might start out as community-driven urbanism but can be quickly co-opted by proponents of disinvestment.

The artist Martha Rosler, in a series of essays for the journal and website *E-Flux*, has been particularly concerned with such consequences for artistic practices. Describing a series of projects centred on Detroit (that largely correlate with the above description of interventionist projects), she suggests that:

[They] represent a movement within art, and architecture, to institute projects in the larger community, in the built environment or in reference to it, surely as part of the 'go social,' community-oriented imperative. Is it troublesome that such works stand in contradistinction, implicit or explicit, to 'political art,' to work directly concerned with access to power?[4]

Rosler is particularly concerned to point out 'the relatively easy co-optation of artists as an urban group in cities that simply allow us to live and work in ways we find conducive to our concerns'.[5] She argues (I think harshly) that a younger generation of artists 'raised on images and virtual communication' fails to understand the long-term, intense commitment required for 'community immersion'. The new urban interventionist and social practices are often media-friendly and attractive to municipal authorities, especially through their tendency towards the fostering of convivial, pleasurable aesthetic experiences. Rosler sees this as frequently 'rendering invisible the patient organizing and agitating, often decades long, by members of the local communities'.[6]

Having raised these issues, however, I want to conclude this brief discussion on a more optimistic note. I see many positive outcomes possible through awareness and negotiation of the tensions discussed above. Coming back to the question of consumption or contribution, I see the value of interventionist projects in the way that they suggest the city's potential. They often provide a means of identifying crucial ruptures and gaps in society, pointing us toward the frameworks around us that are unstable, that shape how we live and how we treat one another. In this way they bear the promise of producing not simply sites of spectacle (although this is a danger for transient constructions), but rather, crucibles for improved quality of life.

The French collective EXYZT—who studied together at the Paris La Villette School of Architecture—formed a practice in 2002 around the idea of 'building and living together'. This approach means that they not only design their projects but also build them; erecting temporary structures and creating social spaces that are programmed in consultation with local user groups. As they put it: 'we defend the idea of architecture not as a simple act of design and build but a tool that needs to be combined with other skills and practices to create new forms and strategies of building and living in the city."[7]

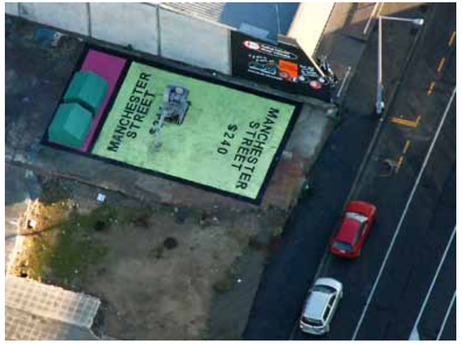
I think that EXYZT's approach is very relevant to the broader set of practices I have pointed to here. The potential for arts-based practices engaged with cities, although they often form very modest and ephemeral interventions, is their affordance of collaboration with others in the production of 'experimental utopias' that allow us to test other ways of living together.

That testing of other ways of inhabiting and using cities—of living together—can be also be a spur to enacting changes in the world through the empowerment of others. I suggest that the most powerful projects in this vein of socially engaged, urban interventions (and I would include Gap Filler here) are those that encourage and afford others the opportunity to 'take control' over their environment; projects that are participative without being opportunistic. The theorist Arjun Appadurai, addressing the cultural implications of globalisation, has argued that the 'production of imagination' is a social act, and he emphasises the right of all citizens to participate in 'the work of the imagination'.[8] The best interventionist practices have the potential to make valuable contributions in this regard—providing the impetus for gathering and encounter, and provoking the collective imagining of alternative futures.

Dr Lee Stickells

Dr Lee Stickells is director of the Master of Architecture program at the University of Sydney. He is also co-editor of Architectural Theory Review *and a board member of the not-for-profit organisation Make-Space for Architecture.*

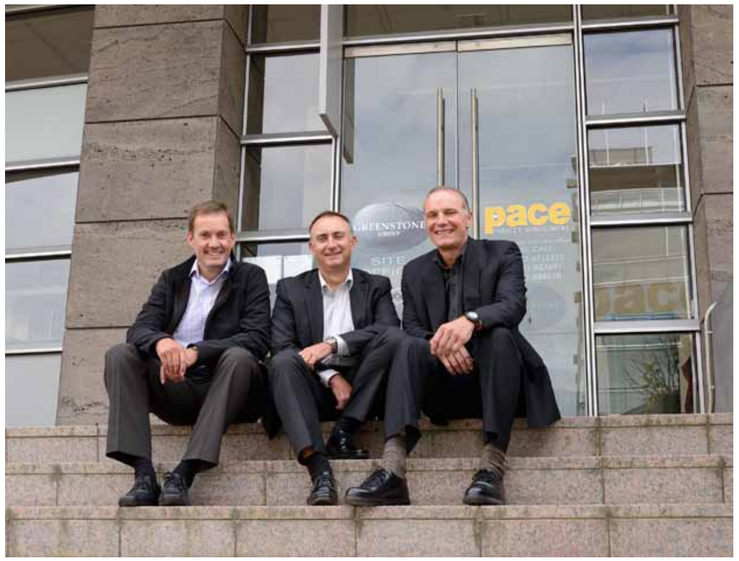
'They often provide a means of identifying crucial ruptures and gaps in society, pointing us toward the frameworks around us that are unstable, that shape how we live and how we treat one another.'



Monopoly 2012. Photo: Geof Wilson

Press image for **PARK(ing) Day** 2010. Photo: Rebar

STAFF PROFILE



From left: Andy Christian, Shane Davis, Miles Romanes

Greenstone Pace

The subjects of this quarter's staff profile are not Gallery staff in the strictest sense, but we'll be seeing a lot of them over the coming year or so. If you've passed the Gallery recently, you will have seen the Greenstone Pace banners on the façade—Greenstone Pace is a local business alliance, recently appointed the project management contract for the repair and reinstatement of the Gallery.

The project is a large and complex one and involves the management of the earthquake repairs and capital works to the Gallery building. Works will potentially include the re-leveling of the structure and seismic base isolation—a process where the main structure is separated from its foundations on large rubber or lead isolation devices that dissipate energy, protecting it from shaking caused by earthquakes and the earthquake repairs.

Overseeing this for the Gallery are Andy Christian, team leader, Shane Davis, project manager and gallery specialist and Miles Romanes, project manager. Each brings twenty years or more of building experience to the job. In particular, Shane was involved in Auckland Art Gallery's recent successful restoration and extension, so comes to this project with an awareness of the specific needs of an art gallery.

Base isolation is a technique invented in New Zealand, and has been compared to adding suspension to a car. Here, its effectiveness was demonstrated by the way that Christchurch Women's Hospital—the only base-isolated building in the South Island—emerged almost undamaged from the earthquakes. We've talked before of the importance of a perception of safety in our building—we are after all a storehouse of precious objects. So it's good to know that the planned reinstatement works are expected to ensure the building is around 150% of the new building standard for Christchurch. The confidence that this gives is important, in allowing us to borrow works of art and attract exhibitions to the city.

Andy says, 'The Gallery is one of the few projects in Christchurch that will be repaired and it is one of the most well-known buildings. The repair and base isolation is a very interesting, complex project—it's the first building in Christchurch, and only the fourth in the country, to have base isolation retrofitted, We are delighted to be able to assist with the reinstatement of such a significant and iconic public building.'

Thomas Jones, project director for Christchurch City Council who awarded the contract said, 'The Gallery is a key asset for the city and we are delighted that we now have the skills and expertise in place to assist in the process of reinstatement and upgrade and to provide a safe place for the city's people and its important art collections.'

Work on the Gallery is already being tendered and is expected to start in the near future. We can't wait!

PAGEWORK #17

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

JOHN WARD KNOX

When I saw the 2011 *Prospect: New Zealand Art Now* exhibition at City Gallery Wellington, the work that stayed with me longest was an untitled sculpture by Auckland artist John Ward Knox. One half thin steel rod, the other a length of chain, it traced a taut but delicately flexing line between the side walls of a large gallery space.

That sculpture might not seem to have much in common with the photograph Ward Knox has contributed as this issue's 'Pagework' (overleaf), but the feeling I get from both is very similar. The objects the artist has put before us are, again, simple and familiar—so humble, in fact, that we might wonder why he has chosen to draw them to our attention at all. And again, it reminds me how full an apparent emptiness can be. Ward Knox offers up a very literal absence—a white plate holding only the remnants from a meal of watermelon—but the longer we look, the more we see; the moon-like, mirrored surface of the wet plate, the fleshy, tooth-sculpted remnants of fruit, the painterly forms of the objects behind.

As Ward Knox has noted, the photograph's horizontal format also invites us to read it as a kind of landscape: 'In a way it is the classic New Zealand tourism style of photo—fiords and clear water. Except the verdancy of the traditional imagery has been replaced by the fecundity of a landscape in soft pink. And yet it remains simply a documentation of the remains of a meal. I think it is an interesting reflection of the way we treat the landscape here, as a sort of shorthand salvation from the worries of the world.'

Felicity Milburn
Curator

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

John Ward Knox 2013. Photograph

Petrus van der Velden **The Dutch Funeral 1875**. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, gifted by Henry Charles Drury van Asch 1932.

MY FAVOURITE

Dudley Benson (Ngāti Pākehā) is a composer and performer currently interested in making pop that explores the relationship between New Zealand people and the land.

IF I DON'T WATCH AT LEAST three films a week, my life starts to feel unsettled. Five is a good average to see me through, but above all at least one of these films must be terrifying. Being scared by a movie is a great pleasure to me, much to the earnest concern of friends and family. I can only justify this need by the knowledge that I've been regularly engaging my adrenal glands through horror films since I was seven. At the video store my father had a parental responsibility blind spot in his filtration system of my selections—there was no filtering. By the time I was eight I'd seen the *Hellraiser* trilogy, most of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films, and of course the sicker stuff which never made it to DVD. In conjunction with growing up on the Port Hills and in the neo-gothic architecture of Christchurch, I think I've been darkened somehow, and as an adult I'm able to manufacture a connection to my childhood by being scared in a controlled environment. Incidentally, these days I favour psychological horror with disturbing images and moralistic agendas taking precedence over token gruesomeness.

I remember first being introduced to *The Dutch Funeral* as a teenager, probably during my Danish horror phase. My art history teacher was Robyn Peers. Her classes were one of the strongest and most memorable parts of my education, teaching me how to observe and kōrero about artwork—skills that have influenced many other parts of my life. Since then I've forgotten almost everything I was told about van der Velden and the background of this painting, but *Funeral* continues to haunt me, its image still searing fifteen years later.

The Dutch Funeral
Scenario for a psychological horror
by Dudley Benson

The small and devoutly Christian town is known far and wide for its meat. Enjoyed in the finest kitchens, their cuts of beef and lamb are the envy of other villages. But over the years their success has afforded them pride and arrogance, leading first to a disregard for the care of their livestock, and eventually to a total abuse of animal husbandry. One morning the villagers wake with alarm to discover their horses vanished from the stables, the pastures of grazing cattle deserted, and where sheep and lambs were bleating, only a foreboding silence. It is inexplicable. A rural and isolated community, their livelihood and purpose are represented in the animals, and without them they face an encroaching winter of unimaginable hardship. The weather turns and snowfall blocks the village on all sides; the stores diminish and slowly the people begin to starve. The first victim is a child. Yet on the morning after her funeral, five cattle reappear in their paddock. Similarly, a handful of lambs are returned following the burial of another villager. Eventually the people realise their unwitting and macabre bargain with this unknown hand. They must reflect, and they must decide.

Dudley Benson

BACK MATTER

Taonga Returns

On 14 December last year, Jenny Harper attended a memorable Te Arawa ceremony at Rotorua Museum and Art Gallery to welcome back a pare with a rather complicated and controversial history.

Originally part of large number of items donated from the then British Empire to establish the Imperial Institute, London, as part of the celebrations around Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1887, it had passed into the care of the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum—now closed. And then our top sleuth, curator Ken Hall, spotted the pare in an auction catalogue in 2011 and identified it from a 1950s photograph taken at the then Commonwealth Museum. Ken discovered that it had been de-accessioned in unfortunate circumstances some time in 2009—questions were asked, whistles were blown, and the process of its return to public ownership in New Zealand began. As well as Jenny and Ken, a network of people were connected to the idea and dedicated to seeing it through, with a huge contribution from the Commonwealth Education Trust in London and latterly, staff from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Te Papa Tongarewa.

This has been a happy ending, but there are likely to be many 'orphan' collection items and loose ends for a while to come as trustees of the former BECM and staff at Bristol Museum work through issues of cataloguing and inventory.

Te Arawa elders stand proudly behind their returned taonga.

Bill Culbert **Pacific Flotsam** (detail) 2007. Fluorescent light, electric wire, plastic bottles. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 2008. Image courtesy of Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth.

Bill Culbert Awarded Honorary Doctorate

Leading New Zealand artist Bill Culbert is to be awarded an Honorary Doctorate at the University of Canterbury in April and the Gallery is delighted to join UC in congratulating him. Culbert, one of New Zealand most celebrated sculptors, is the first person to be awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts, which was added to the University's suite of honorary doctorates last year. Accolades and recognition, both national and international, of Culbert's artistic excellence are numerous as well as significant. He was invited by Creative New Zealand to represent New Zealand as its artist at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013. Jenny Harper, Gallery director and Commissioner for New Zealand at the Biennale, said 'Culbert makes marvellous work, constantly reinvestigating how light works and refreshing how we think of it'.

Culbert attended the School of Fine Arts at the UC in the 1950s; his studio work is done in the south of France and London, where he lives. He exhibits worldwide, including frequently in New Zealand, and his major sculptures in public spaces are found in many places. Some of his best-known works in New Zealand have been collaborations with noted artist Ralph Hotere.

Nathan Pohio Exhibiting in Santa Fe

Exhibition designer Nathan was back in Santa Fe in February, three months after a two-month-long residency he undertook late last year. This time he was visiting to install **Spyglass Field Recordings: Santa Fe.** The exhibition title is taken from an ongoing series Nathan is developing that refers to instruments used for observation and includes new works he developed during a residency at the Santa Fe Art Institute. The exhibition was curated by Megan Tamati-Quennell, curator of contemporary Māori, indigenous art at Te Papa Tongarewa. **Spyglass Field Recordings: Santa Fe** is Nathan's first international solo show and the first show of contemporary Māori art to be shown at MoCNA.

Openings...

In December we opened **Shane Cotton: The Hanging Sky** at the IMA in Brisbane. Unfortunately most of us couldn't be there. But from the photos it looks as though a good time was had. Rather neatly, the opening coincided with the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane's QAGOMA, and the IMA's annual Christmas party, which is a fairly big event in the Brisbane social calendar.

Closer to home, in February we opened **De Lautour / Greig / Hammond** at 212 Madras Street. Beer was provided by Three Boys, there was a (short) speech, and art was appreciated. Cheers.

... and Reopenings

We were thrilled to see the Physics Room making a return to its premises on the corner of High and Tuam streets in February. The reopening programme kicked off with the exhibition *World, Business, Lifestyle, Sport* by Louise Menzies. With CI and Alice's downstairs and us on the first floor, that's yet another great reason to visit the old Post Office building.

Award Winners

Congratulations to Miranda Parkes, whose exhibition **Keep left, keep right** with Tjalling de Vries featured in the **Rolling Maul** programme, on being awarded the 2013 Olivia Spencer Bower Foundation Art Award. And congratulations to Kazu Nakagawa, another artist represented in the collection, who won the Westpac Merit Award at the *Headland Sculpture on the Gulf* event for his work, *A Play 'CATWALK'*.

The exhibition was named on the *New York Times's* 'must-see list' for 2013.

Miranda Parkes **Boomer** 2012. Acrylic on billboard

Staff Development

Our librarian Tim Jones is now one third of his way through a Masters in Digital Heritage at the University of York in England. Tim took advantage of the Gallery being closed to do this course but continues to contribute to the Gallery library's work by buying and cataloguing books, doing research in the UK and posting regularly to our blog. 'The course is a great combination of the theory of heritage management and museology, together with practical technical skills', Tim says. He is expected back in Christchurch in June.

Outer Spaces Public Programme

Emily Hartley-Skudder: Showhome

Join Emily Hartley-Skudder for a floortalk of her eerily precise installation of still-life paintings in a furnished showhome in Wigram.

Sunday 3 March / 2pm / free

49 Sioux Avenue, Wigram Skies development, Wigram. Map available online.

Imagine: A Year in the Life of Anish Kapoor

This film is an insight into one of Britain's most accomplished and popular sculptors. With exclusive access to his studio, Kapoor talks candidly about his childhood in India, his early years as an artist and his creative process.

55 minutes

Wednesday 13 March / 6pm / free

All that Glitters...

A unique opportunity to hear Reuben Paterson, a dynamic artist known for his creations in glitter and diamond dust, and see how his traditional Māori and Scottish ancestry and non-traditional materials reinvigorate and extend Māori expression in his art.

In conjunction with **Reuben Paterson: Te Pūtahitanga ō Rehua**

Wednesday 20 March / 6pm / free

WEA, 59 Gloucester Street

Bacon's Arena

This film was nominated for an international Emmy and is widely acclaimed as the definitive biographical documentary on legendary painter Francis Bacon.

95 minutes. M—contains violence, offensive language and nudity

Wednesday 10 April / 6pm / free

Pictures of Susan

Susan Te Kahurangi King, a sixty-one-year old autistic Auckland woman, picked up her pencils again after twenty years and found international fame as an artist. An inspiring and thoughtful film by Dan Salmon.

86 minutes

Wednesday 24 April / 6pm / free

All films are shown at Alice Cinematheque, Tuam Street. For more information see our website or tel: (03) 941 7382

School Holiday Programme

Clay With Me

Young clay whizz-kid, Ellsie, invites you to make some fabulous creations—from cupcake charms and jewellery to racing cars and dinosaurs.

Ages 4 +

Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 23 April – 3 May / 10–11.30am / $8

WEA, 59 Gloucester Street. Book online or tel: (03) 941 7382

Scott Jackson 2012

COMING SOON

POPULATE!

Throughout the city from 10 May

On 10 May this year Christchurch Art Gallery turns ten. And to celebrate, the Gallery is inviting a vivid cast of characters to town. **Populate!** is a new wave of artworks in the public spaces of the city—from painted cartoon figures stampeding across a wall and an enigmatic face on a billboard, through to a sculpted figure standing high on a rooftop and a very heavy metal gnome. As well as marking the birthday occasion, **Populate!** responds to the post-quake setting, bringing faces and figures (and some bursts of humour and strangeness) to the depopulated inner-city.

Gregor Kregar **Large Wise Gnome** (detail) 2007. Mirror-polished stainless steel. Courtesy the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery