

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU
CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY

SOUNDINGS
A PAINTING INSTALLATION
ROSS GRAY

TOURING GALLERY B, 23 JULY – 25 OCTOBER 2004



All images (studio photographs of works in progress)
from **Soundings: A Painting Installation** 2004
All panels: acrylic on mdf 300 x 2440 mm
Collection of the artist





Inspirations, works in progress and working drawings for *Soundings: A Painting Installation*

painting as a means of exploration and experimentation. The resulting surfaces are ambiguous, eluding definition, but resounding with echoes of the streetscape: the soft, smoky warmth of old brick walls, the interlocking layers of urban façades, the hum of the city, the past in the present.

As a strong advocate for the preservation of Christchurch's architectural heritage, Gray has often used his painting to draw attention to the destruction of the city's landmark buildings. Previous works have referred overtly to the gradual erosion of the cityscape, sometimes incorporating references to particular buildings under threat of demolition. By its very nature, *Soundings* is much less direct. Open, economical compositions suggest a series of peripheral glimpses,

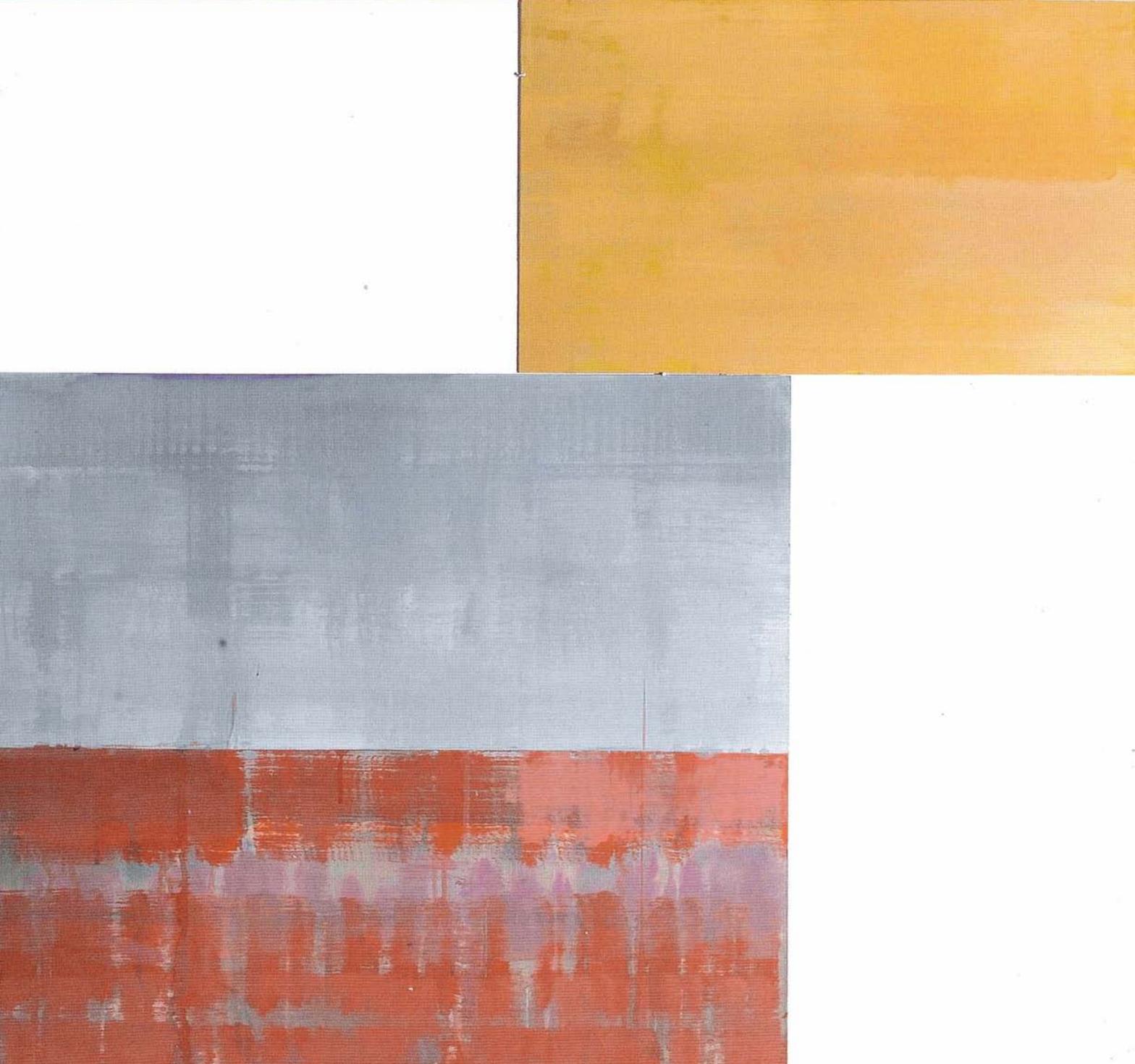
built up from long familiarity with the city, projecting a more general statement about the need to respect our urban fabric. Rather than spelling out his concerns, Gray would prefer to position the viewer as an activator of real and implied architectural spaces: 'I'm working towards a balance between my current approach to abstract painting and the subject matter of these old city buildings.'

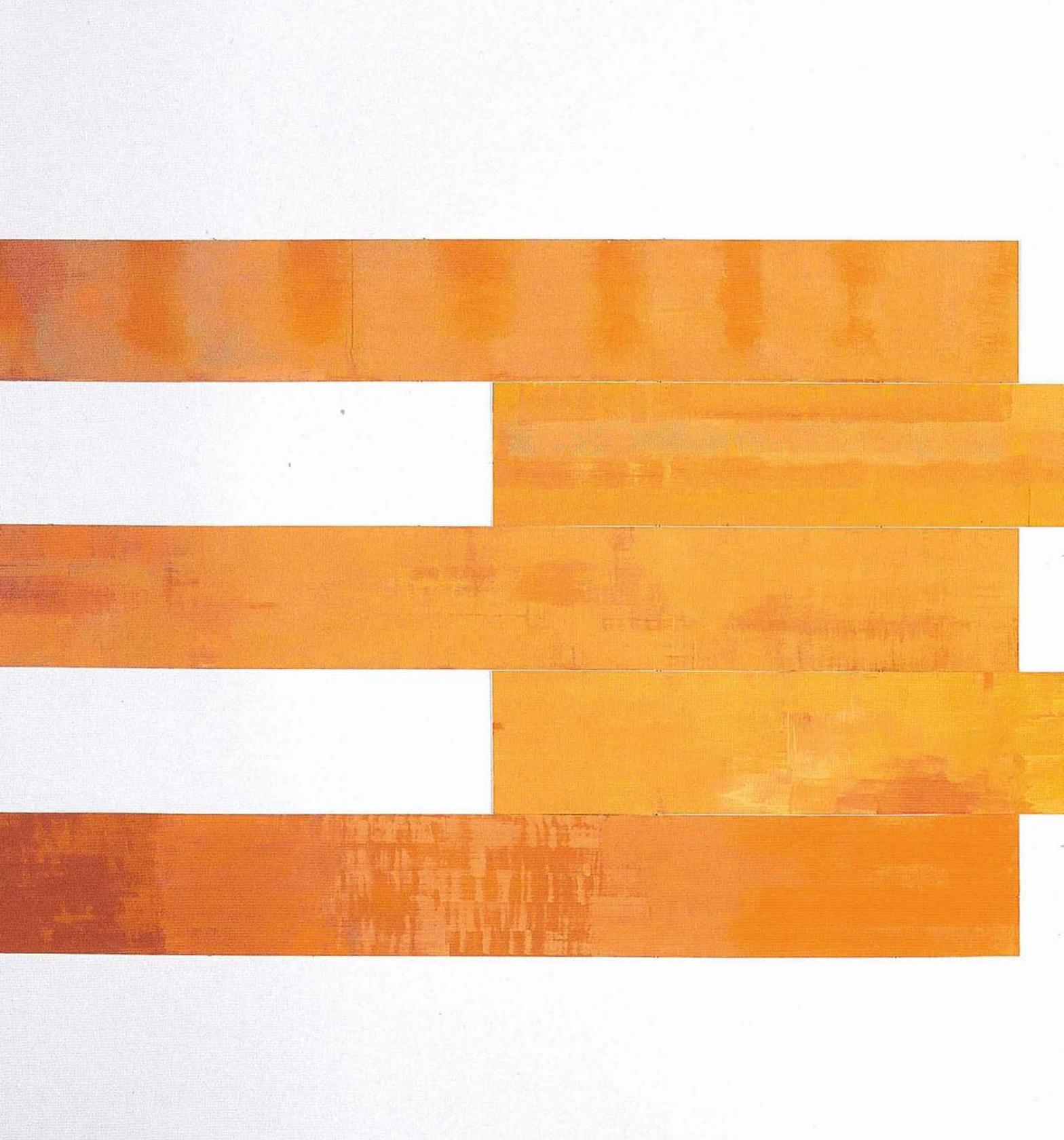
The faded brick wall of an early commercial building dominates the view from a window in Gray's rented inner city studio, a constant reminder of the rich palimpsest in which new structures rise up between and around old ones and buildings are transformed with each new sign and coat of paint. It is this richness that Gray thinks is so important to retain: 'As a citizen of

Christchurch, I'm interested in the resonance and reverberation of our architectural heritage: it evokes the past so strongly and enriches the present. As an artist I would like to be able to explore that through form and colour and, in this case, through the configuration of panels in the Gallery space.'

Soundings has been conceived as a cumulative, encompassing experience. Here are paintings to walk past and be enveloped by – a pulsing, fragmented frieze that evokes a sense of time past and passing, the vital but fragile presence of historic buildings in the life of a city. With lyrical chromatic shifts and subtly layered surfaces that seem to project and recede, reflecting the volumes and voids of the city beyond, Gray gives these silent structures voice.

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Ross Gray

was born in Wanganui in 1945.

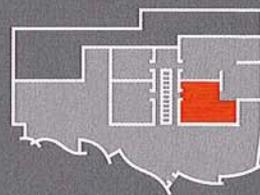
He graduated with a Diploma of Fine Arts in 1967 and a Master of Fine Arts (Distinction) in 2003, both from the University of Canterbury, and completed a Diploma of Teaching from the Christchurch College of Education in 1968. Gray has had a long career as a visual arts educator, teaching art and art history full-time in secondary schools from 1969–95, including a period from 1981 as Head of Art at Cashmere High School. He currently tutors part-time in drawing at the School of Art and Design, Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology.

Gray has exhibited regularly in solo and group exhibitions since 1967. Recent solo shows include: *Shift*, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts Gallery, 2003; *On the Wall*, CoCA, Christchurch, and Bowen Galleries, Wellington, 2002; *Building*, CoCA Mair Gallery, 2001; *Past: Presence*, CoCA Mair Gallery, 2000; *Keeping Time*, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington, 1998; and *Circuit* (survey exhibition, 1971–97), Sarjeant Gallery / Te Whare o Rehua Whanganui, 1997. Recent group exhibitions include: *Look this Way* (Christchurch College of Education Anniversary Art Show), CoCA, 2002; *Canterbury Painting in the 1990s*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 2000; and *Gopas and his Students*, CoCA, and Wallace Art Awards Exhibition of Finalists, Auckland, 1998.

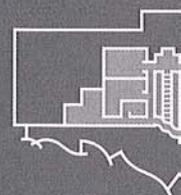
In 1997, Gray travelled to Germany on a Goethe-Institut German Language Artist's Scholarship, and in 1999 he was awarded the CoCA Guthrey Travel Award to Australia. Gray lives in Christchurch, and his work is represented in private collections throughout New Zealand and overseas, as well as in numerous national public collections including: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki; Sarjeant Gallery / Te Whare o Rehua Whanganui; The Suter Te Aratoi Whakatu, Nelson; and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu.



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10am until 5pm. Wednesday until 9pm.
Free guided tours available.

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