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Te Puna o Waiwhetū

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Cover: Brett Brett Graham *Maungārongo ki te Whenua, Maungārongo ki te Tangata* (detail) 2020. Wood, paint and graphite. Courtesy of the artist

Left: Brett Graham *Cease Tide of Wrong-Doing* (detail) 2020. Kauri panels on wood and metal structure. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Neil Pardington

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B.

04

Director's Foreword

A few words from director Blair Jackson.

FEATURES

06

Christchurch and the New Zealand Wars

Vincent O'Malley on the nineteenth-century conflict in Aotearoa.

16

Mediating Reality

Melanie Oliver on the disruptive women photographers of the 1970s and 1980s.

24

Things That Happened at Dawn

5am in Dublin, Lyttelton and Okains Bay with Rebecca Nash.

30

By Spectral Hands

Melanie Oliver tackles need, desire and consumer capitalism in James Oram's work.

40

A Fireside Whodunit

Ken Hall investigates a new work in the collection.

48

Everythingism

Thomasin Sleigh considers Russian artist Natalia Goncharova.

ENDNOTES

54

My Favourite

Roger Collins makes his choice.

57

Pagework no.55

Madison Kelly.

60

Exhibitions

What's on at the Gallery this quarter.

James Oram *Edward's noisy ghost* (detail) 2022. Water bottle, tactile transducer, audio recording of Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*, 1928. Courtesy of the artist

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Director's Foreword

BLAIR JACKSON

November 2022

Welcome to the summer 2022/23 issue of *Bulletin*. Since our last magazine was published I've been enjoying the view from my office window, which takes in a new installation that fills the high void above the Gallery's reception desk. *Tikawe* is the first work the Mata Aho Collective have created with harakeke, braiding 530 metres over several months. An exceptionally beautiful addition to our foyer, it's lovely to watch the shadows *Tikawe* casts move and morph as the spring sun tracks across the sky. My thanks to the W. A. Sutton Trust for funding this new commission and addition to the Gallery's collection.

Behind the scenes at the Gallery, excitement has been building over the last few weeks as we prepare to open three new exhibitions for the summer. *Brett Graham: Tai Moana Tai Tangata* was developed in collaboration with Anna-Marie White (Manukorihi, Te Āti Awa), and first presented at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in Ngāmotu New Plymouth. For its showing in Ōtautahi Christchurch, Brett Graham (Ngāti Korokī Kahukura, Tainui) has created an incredible new sculpture that grounds the exhibition in this place and explores connections with the nineteenth-century New Zealand Wars, including the Crown's invasion of the pacifist settlement of Parihaka in 1881. Brett draws our attention to how these events still resonate here, in particular through the imprisonment of approximately 160 Taranaki Māori on Ripapa Island in Whakaraupō Lyttelton Harbour. For this issue of *Bulletin* we've commissioned an essay from renowned historian Vincent O'Malley, who explores this less well known episode in our colonial history.

More new work is on view in *James Oram: By Spectral Hands*. Ōtautahi Christchurch-based artist James Oram has created an exhibition that he describes as an ecosystem, using four separate sculptural and video works that together examine consumer capitalism and demand, and the marketing techniques that drive them. James focuses on the ideas of Edward Bernays, who is often referred to as the father of public relations—it was Bernays who was responsible for early tobacco advertising campaigns that encouraged women to smoke their “torches of freedom” and helped give smoking an aura of coolness. For *Bulletin*, the exhibition's curator Melanie Oliver examines the ideas behind the show.

Originally scheduled for April 2022, but delayed by Covid, *Turumeke Harrington: Tātou tātou, nau mai rā* will be a playful, interactive sculpture that invites us to think about whakapapa, connections and choices. Turumeke Harrington is a Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington-based Kāi Tahu artist, and in her hands-on, make-your-own-rules show specially designed stanchions create an ever-changing network of pathways for visitors to navigate around. We asked Ōhinehau Lyttelton writer Rebecca Nash to write a piece inspired by some of Turumeke's themes of travel and immigration, such as 'who gets to go where', nostalgic memories of 4am flights and the experience of waiting in airport queues.

The Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery was established in 1971 to support the Gallery, and over its fifty-one years the organisation has made a huge number of generous donations that help us to do

what we do. Most recent among these was the gift of twenty-five works made by women photographers of the 1970s and 1980s, given in recognition of its fiftieth anniversary. A number of these photographs are currently on display in *Perilous: Unheard Stories from the Collection*. Melanie Oliver looks at the way these artists worked to destabilise traditions and undermine patriarchal expectations.

Also on display in *Perilous* is a selection of prints by Russian avant-garde artist and designer Natalia Goncharova. We asked novelist and art writer Thomasin Sleigh to consider the life and work of this ambitious and dynamic figure, for whom the Russian term *vsechestvo*, or 'everythingism', was coined. And curator Ken Hall does a deep dive into *Father's Tea*—a work by Elizabeth Graham Chalmers that the Gallery was recently given by the artist's granddaughter.

Over the years, the Gallery's collection has benefitted hugely from the exceptional generosity of respected researcher, author, retired lecturer and collector Roger Collins. For this issue, we invited Roger to write our My Favourite and he has chosen a work by Charles Meryon. Our Pagework comes from Ōtepoti Dunedin-based artist Madison Kelly, whose drawings of ika come from observing complex and threatened ecosystems in our damaged landscapes.



Vincent O'Malley

Christchurch and the New Zealand Wars

It is often assumed that the nineteenth-century New Zealand Wars fought between the Crown and various groups of Māori were exclusively a Te Ika-a-Māui North Island story. But in addition to the violent clash that took place at Wairau, Marlborough, in June 1843, there is a much deeper, if largely unknown, history of southern engagement with these conflicts. Military settlers were recruited from Te Waipounamu South Island goldfields to fight in the Waikato and elsewhere during the 1860s in return for a share of the confiscated lands, and Ōtautahi Christchurch politicians such as Henry Sewell and James Edward FitzGerald were members of colonial governments that were responsible for directing the later military campaigns and land takings, even while they expressed doubts about the justice of what was unfolding.

Brett Graham *Maungārongo ki te Whenua, Maungārongo ki te Tangata* (detail) 2020.
Wood, paint and graphite. Courtesy of the artist



Brett Graham *The Great Replacement* 2022. Yellow cedar. Courtesy of the artist

There is another aspect to this story with a particular focus on Taranaki. Beginning at Waitara in March 1860, Taranaki Māori were subjected to a relentless series of invasions and attacks that continued to play out more than two decades later. As successive governments sought to implement a policy of “creeping confiscation”, it was at different points considered useful to remove Māori from the area.¹ The Chatham Islands had previously been used to imprison Māori from the Tairāwhiti (East Coast) region. When it came to Taranaki Māori, Te Waipounamu was selected instead.

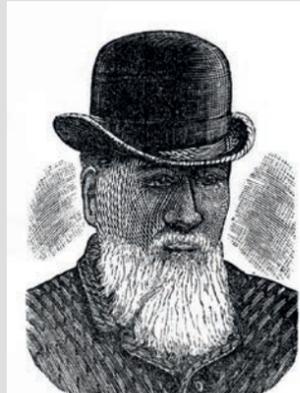
In November 1869 a group of seventy-four men from the Pakakohi tribe in Taranaki, convicted of treason for resisting the confiscation of their lands under the leadership of the prophet Riwha Titokowaru, were sent to Ōtepoti Dunedin. They were sentenced to hard labour and put to work constructing roads, school playing fields, and even improvements to the Octagon, but in the harsh and unfamiliar climate many of the group became ill; eighteen men had died during their captivity in the south before the government finally agreed to commute the sentences of the survivors in 1872. Returning north again aboard the government steamer *Luna* in March of that year, the party made a stopover at Ōhinehau Lyttelton. More than fifty of their number travelled by train to Christchurch, where their appearance was said to have startled several shopkeepers and “caused considerable speculation amongst the citizens”, despite their “modern civilian attire”.²

Seven years later, another group of Māori political prisoners from Taranaki was sent south. In 1879 the government pushed through with a survey of lands that had been nominally subject to confiscation fourteen years earlier, but were in practice occupied and used by Māori. That May, the people of Parihaka began ploughing up surveyed lands in the area in an act of non-violent resistance led by prophets Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi. They had founded the

John Patrick Ward Tohu and Te Whiti 1883. From John P. Ward, *Wanderings with the Maori Prophets Te Whiti and Tohu ... from their arrival in Christchurch in April 1882 until their return to Parihaka in March 1882*. Nelson, Bond, Finney & Co., 1883. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/23012974; /records/23110535



TOHU.



TE WHITI.

settlement of Parihaka in the 1860s as a place of refuge for all those affected by war and confiscation and soon attracted supporters from Taranaki and beyond. But the actions of the Parihaka ploughmen drew an angry response from settlers in the area and by June the government began arresting them. Denied trials, the prisoners were instead sent to Dunedin.

The people of Parihaka remained undeterred. By June 1880 the ploughmen had been replaced by fencers. They, too, were promptly arrested and imprisoned in the South Island without trial. This time there were too many to send to Dunedin alone. While some were taken south to Otago, around forty were imprisoned at Hokitika. And in September 1880 approximately 160 of the prisoners were taken to Whakaraupō Lyttelton Harbour and imprisoned on the small island of Ripapa. In December it was reported that many of the prisoners had been punished for being “unruly and defiant” by having their daily rations reduced to bread and water.³ Meanwhile, within weeks of their arrival, at least one local firm was advertising special excursion trips down the harbour designed to “afford persons an excellent opportunity of viewing the Maori prisoners at Ripa Island”.⁴ Māori misery had become a Pākehā spectator sport: price 1 shilling and 6 pence per passenger.

It is not known exactly how many Taranaki prisoners died during their captivity on Ripapa Island. Buried on Ōtamahua Quail Island, where there were hospital facilities, they were later reinterred at Rāpaki by members of local Ngāi Tahu hapū Ngāti Wheke.⁵ For them, Ripapa Island (which had been used by the government as a quarantine station since 1873) was a wāhi tapu because of the many people killed there during the Musket Wars of the 1830s. In January 1881 the remaining 149 prisoners were moved from Ripapa to Lyttelton Gaol in order to “subject them to more rigid restriction”.⁶ Small groups of prisoners were released in batches over the following months and by June the last of them had been freed.

Back home at Parihaka, prophets Te Whiti and Tohu were no more willing to end their campaign of non-violent resistance to the confiscation of 1.2 million acres of Taranaki lands. The Crown’s response came on 5 November 1881 when, led by Native Minister John Bryce riding a white charger, nearly 1,600 members of the armed constabulary and volunteers (including some from Christchurch) invaded the settlement. One journalist who witnessed proceedings reported that “The whole spectacle was saddening in the extreme; it was an industrious, law-abiding, moral and hospitable community calmly awaiting the approach of the men sent to rob them of everything dear to them”.⁷ Te Whiti, Tohu and several others were seized without resistance and the remainder of the population forcibly dispersed. Many women were raped and the settlement was pillaged and destroyed.

After an inconclusive trial in Ngāmotu New Plymouth, where Te Whiti and Tohu were accused of “wickedly, maliciously, and seditiously contriving and intending to disturb the peace”, it was decided to send the prophets south to Christchurch.⁸ They arrived at Lyttelton on 26 April 1882 to a large crowd of spectators, and were immediately transferred to Addington Gaol, where they were held in the

Josiah Martin Parihaka c. 1880. Albumen silver photograph. Collection of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1997



women’s section. Plans to put the prophets on trial again in Christchurch were soon jettisoned. Instead, the pair were held under what one historian describes as “a form of honourable restraint” and another as “a gentlemanly kind of house arrest”.⁹

An Australian-born Irishman named John P. Ward, who had served in some of the most brutal campaigns in Taranaki and picked up some ability in te reo Māori during his time in the north, was appointed as interpreter and personal jailer to Te Whiti and Tohu (though he never told them of his military service). Ward subsequently wrote *Wanderings with the Maori Prophets*, a colourful if unreliable narrative of the eleven months he spent accompanying the two men before they were finally permitted to return home to Taranaki in March 1883.

Accompanied by Ward, Te Whiti and Tohu were taken to multiple sites across Christchurch and Canterbury, each designed to impress upon them the wonders of western civilisation. One of the first places visited was Canterbury Museum, where the prophets were met by curator Julius von Haast. From there, they travelled across to Christ Church Cathedral, ascending the tower as far as the bells to take in a panoramic view of the settlement below them.



Brett Graham *Maungārongo ki te Whenua, Maungārongo ki te Tangata* 2020.
Wood, paint and graphite. Courtesy of the artist



Brett Graham *O'Pioneer* 2020.
Wood and plaster. Courtesy of the artist



The Parihaka monument
at Rāpaki urupā

Both men were said to have gazed longingly towards the sea visible at a distance. Visits to the Kaiapoi woollen factory, to the theatre, Addington railway workshops, Hagley Park and elsewhere followed.¹⁰ Later asked to name a favourite place visited, Te Whiti opted for somewhere simpler, calling the Ōtākaro Avon River the highlight of his stay.

Te Whiti and Tohu happened to be in Christchurch during the *International Exhibition*, a three-month long showcase of science, technology, commerce, art and civilisation that attracted an estimated 226,000 visitors. There and elsewhere in their travels, the pair attracted a large and often admiring crowd of their own, many following the men as they inspected the art gallery, waxworks, ‘Ladies Court’, ‘Maori Court’ and other exhibits.¹¹ At least one report noted that some of those who had turned out to see the rangatira were Māori.¹² The warm reception they were receiving prompted the *New Zealand Herald* to complain that “Christchurch people are having the gratification of lionising Te Whiti and Tohu, all at the Government expense”.¹³

The two Māori prophets travelled much further afield during their stay in the South Island—including journeys to Hakatere Ashburton, Temuka, Timaru, Oamaru, Dunedin, Tāhuna Queenstown, Waihōpai Invercargill, and around to Te Tai o Poutini the West Coast on steamer, followed by six months housed in Whakatū Nelson. But it seems doubtful if Te Whiti and Tohu came away from their extended stay in Te Waipounamu with any sense of the supposed superiority of Pākehā culture. Upon their return to Parihaka the two men immediately threw themselves into rebuilding the settlement into the vibrant and thriving place it had once been, prior to te rā o te pāhūa (‘the day of the plunder’) in November 1881. Te Whiti and Tohu had never rejected Western technology or ideas—Parihaka went on to become one of the first settlements in New Zealand with electricity

and street lighting—and in this respect their detention in Christchurch and elsewhere in the South Island had not fundamentally altered their outlooks. But it was a compelling chapter in the story of the New Zealand Wars in Te Waipounamu. Today those connections are acknowledged by Ngāti Wheke and the wider community with annual remembrance services at Rāpaki each 5 November, close to a memorial to those held and imprisoned on nearby Ripapa that was unveiled in March 2000, when a 300-strong hiko from Taranaki travelled to the settlement.

Vincent O’Malley is a Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington writer and historian, born and raised in Ōtautahi Christchurch. Brett Graham: Tai Moana Tai Tangata is on display until 19 February 2023.

- 1 James Belich, *I Shall Not Die: Titokowaru’s War, New Zealand, 1868–9*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 14.
- 2 *Evening Star*, 25 March 1872; Ian Church, *Salutary Punishment: Taranaki Māori Prisoners in Dunedin, 1869–72 and 1879–81*, Pātea: Pātea Historical Society, 2019, p. 56.
- 3 *Ashburton Guardian*, 3 December 1880.
- 4 *Star*, 25 September 1880.
- 5 Many thanks to members of the Ngāti Wheke kaumātua group for reading a draft of this article and responding to questions put to them.
- 6 *Nelson Evening Mail*, 20 January 1881.
- 7 *Star*, 7 November 1881.
- 8 Danny Keenan, ‘Te Whiti-o-Rongomai III, Erueti’, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1993, updated November 2012; *Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2t34/te-whiti-o-rongomai-iii-erueti> (accessed 23 September 2022).
- 9 Hazel Riseborough, *Days of Darkness: Taranaki, 1878–1884*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 186; Rachel Buchanan, *The Parihaka Album*, Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2009, p. 50.
- 10 ‘Parihaka and the “civilising influence” of Christchurch’, Christchurch City Libraries, 2 November 2016, <https://my.christchurchcitylibraries.com/blogs/post/parihaka-and-the-civilising-influence-of-christchurch/>
- 11 Jane Stafford, “‘E kore aia e tikaia” Darwin, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai, and Reading the Bible’, *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 36:2, 2018, pp. 19–32.
- 12 *Evening Post*, 6 May 1882.
- 13 *New Zealand Herald*, 9 May 1882.

HE MAUMAHARA TENEI KOHATU MO NGA MAMAE I PANGIA E NGA MATUA WHAEA HE PARURENGA KATOA. NGA WHAEA NEI NA TE MEA, RATOU KO O RATOU TAMARIKI HOKI, I MAHUE KI TE KAINGA KA NOHO ARAIKORE, KAHOE HE TANGATA HEI TIAKI, HEI MANAKI I A RATOU NA TE MEA ANO HOKI, I MOUHERETIA O RATOU HOA RANGATIRA HEI MOKAI KI TE TAKIWA O WHANGARAUPU. I MATE, KA TANUMIA ETEHI O NGA MOUHERE NEI KI TE MOUTERE O OTAMAHUA, ENGARI NA TE IWII O RAPAKI PA I HAHUA NGA TUPAPAKU NEI KA TANUMIA ANO KI TO RATOU URUPA. AHAKOA O TE KAUPARE URUTOMO O TE IWII KI NGA MAHI URUTOMO O TE KAWANATANGA, HE MAHA NGA TANGATA O TARANAKI ME ERA ATU IWII O AOTEAROA E NOHO ANA KI PARIHAKA I MOUHERETIA KI OTEPOTI KI HOKITIKA KAHOE KAU HE WHAKAWAKANGA. HE MIHI WHAKAWHETAI, AROHA NUI KI TE RANGATIRA O RAPAKI, KO TE RANGIWHAKAPUTA TENEI. NANA I POU TE WHENUI MO TONA IWII, KA TAPANGIA KI RUNGA I TE HAPU NEI, I TO RATOU WHARE TUPUNA HOKI TE INGOA O TONA TAMAITI. KO WHEKE TENEI. PAI MARIRE

THIS MEMORIAL STONE TO ACKNOWLEDGE “THE SUFFERING OF MOTHERS” THE MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN WERE ALSO VICTIMS, LEFT BEHIND WITH NO-ONE TO CARE FOR THEIR WELL-BEING OR TO DEFEND AND PROTECT THEM WHILE THEIR MEN WERE TAKEN TO SERVE AS SLAVES IN AND AROUND THE HARBOUR. TARANAKI PRISONERS DIED ON QUAIL ISLAND AND WERE BURIED THERE, BUT THE PEOPLE OF RAPAKI EXHUMED AND RE-INTERRED THEM HERE IN THEIR CEMETERY. INNOCENT PEOPLE FROM TARANAKI WITH MANY TRIBES FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY THAT MIGRATED TO PARIHAKA WERE IMPRISONED WITHOUT TRIAL, TAKEN FURTHER TO DUNEDIN AND TO HOKITIKA.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE TE RANGIWHAKAPUTA CHIEF OF RAPAKI WHO CLAIMED THE LAND FOR HIS PEOPLE. ALSO HIS SON WHEKE WHOM THE SUB-TRIBE AND THEIR MEETING HOUSE IS NAMED AFTER. PAI MARIRE

Melanie Oliver

Mediating *Reality*

In the late 1980s, a significant shift for photography in Aotearoa New Zealand was identified in two art publications. The essays and images in these books showed how artists were utilising new strategies, breaking away from the prevailing documentary photography tradition that was, and still is, widespread in Aotearoa. *Six Women Photographers* (1986) was edited by artists Merylyn Tweedie and Rhondda Bosworth for *Photoforum*; and *Imposing Narratives: Beyond the Documentary in Recent New Zealand Photography* (1989) was the catalogue for an exhibition curated by Gregory Burke for City Gallery Wellington. The artists included in both publications questioned in various ways the assumptions and rules of image making, manipulating the media and making a political move from the standpoint of *taking* a photograph, to *making* one. No longer was a photograph considered a truthful representation of reality. Instead, photography was seen as a product of, and a participant in, current social and cultural values.

Curator and writer Athol McCredie has written about the beginnings of contemporary photography in New Zealand of the 1960s and 1970s as a turn towards personal documentary photography.¹ In the 1980s, however, with the introduction of postmodern and feminist practices and ideas, the construction and subjectivity of photography became paramount. In the preface to *Six Women Photographers*, Tweedie wrote:

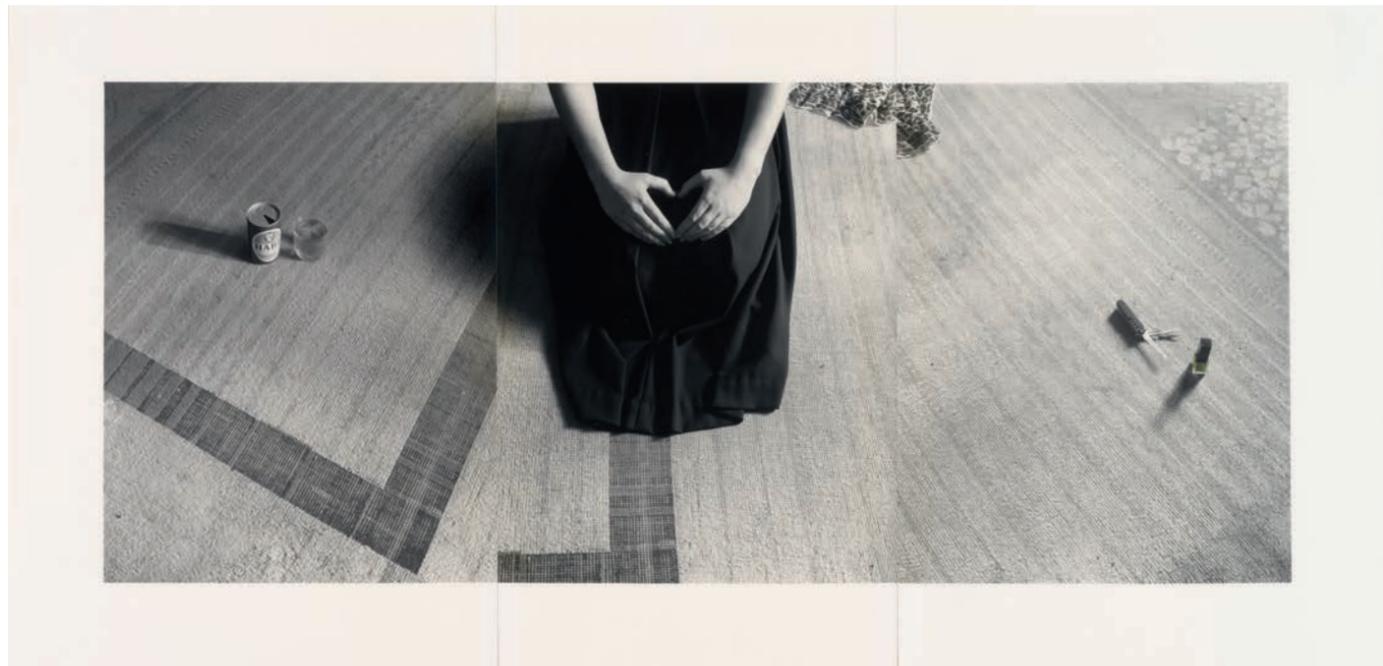
*[The] photograph can be treated as a fact in its actuality and historic specificity or it can be treated as a fictive element where the fact is but the reason of fiction and they [the photographers] make their own statements by coming to terms with the culture they share and using the materials on hand that is their bodies their selves and their lives they establish a means of understanding that culture and their position within it.*²



Margaret Dawson *Consuming the Veneer* 1987. C-type print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery, 2022, in celebration of their 50th Anniversary 1971–2021



Rhondda Bosworth *Memory Vista* 1989. Silver gelatin print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2021



Marie Shannon *St Patrick's Day Manicure, The Wearing of the Green* 1986. Silver gelatin print, selenium toned Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery, 2022, in celebration of their 50th Anniversary 1971–2021

Gregory Burke also saw that the camera activates a fiction and described the subversive role of photography at the time, concluding that, "By bringing us back to the surface, these images seek to speak of and through the play of difference."³

Women photographers in particular were keen to explore alternative methods of representation and to expose the constructed nature of images: to defy the male gaze, to reveal the frame and to undermine the patriarchal societal expectations embodied in a photograph. While we now take for granted that photos are layered, filtered, photoshopped and fabricated into images that can circulate widely in our digital culture, it is important to recognise this awareness as a new phenomenon. The photographers of the 1970s and 1980s were a disruptive and energising force, making work that anticipated our current visual paradigm rather than simply propagating the story of social documentary photography. As curator Sandy Callister has written, they were:

*...harbingers of a new way of both seeing and being. Experimenting with the new media of their time, the artists foreshadow the way in which our identities are currently being filtered by technologies that mediate our desires and inner thoughts. Today, more than ever, reality and consciousness are not only reflected, but produced by images and screens.*⁴

A number of artists who worked during this time to destabilise traditional photographic concepts and techniques were based in Ōtautahi Christchurch and the Gallery has recently acquired examples of their work through a generous donation from the Friends of the Gallery. Our exhibition *Perilous: Unheard Stories*

from the Collection includes a selection of these photographs, which utilise different strategies to mediate reality.

Born in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland in 1944, Rhondda Bosworth studied painting at the University of Canterbury's Ilam School of Fine Arts and lived in Christchurch for several years before returning to Auckland. Bosworth challenged the apparent rules of photography, the dominance of the male gaze and Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of the decisive moment. She is known for a distinct visual language of intimate, high-contrast black and white photographs featuring content that is intense, disruptive and disarming. For example, in her series of self-portraits from 1985 depicting herself in a room empty except for a wire-frame single bed, Bosworth used a wide-angle lens at a high viewpoint to distort the edges of the photographs, generating a sense of claustrophobia and unease.

Focusing mainly on the portrait as still-life, often using her own body, Bosworth incorporated text, re-photographed existing images, and used movement, test strips, collage and reproduction as strategies to create powerful images that retain ambiguity or mystery. By layering her own photographs into narratives that resist a simple explanation, she translates difficult stories or relationships into images that viewers can relate to their own emotional memories. This can be seen in *Memory Vista* (1989) where the artist has cut out photographs, collaged the figures and then re-photographed the scene, disconnecting the subjects from their initial context and transplanting them to an associative landscape that suggests any number of potential relationships. The result is a deftly manufactured and evocative image.

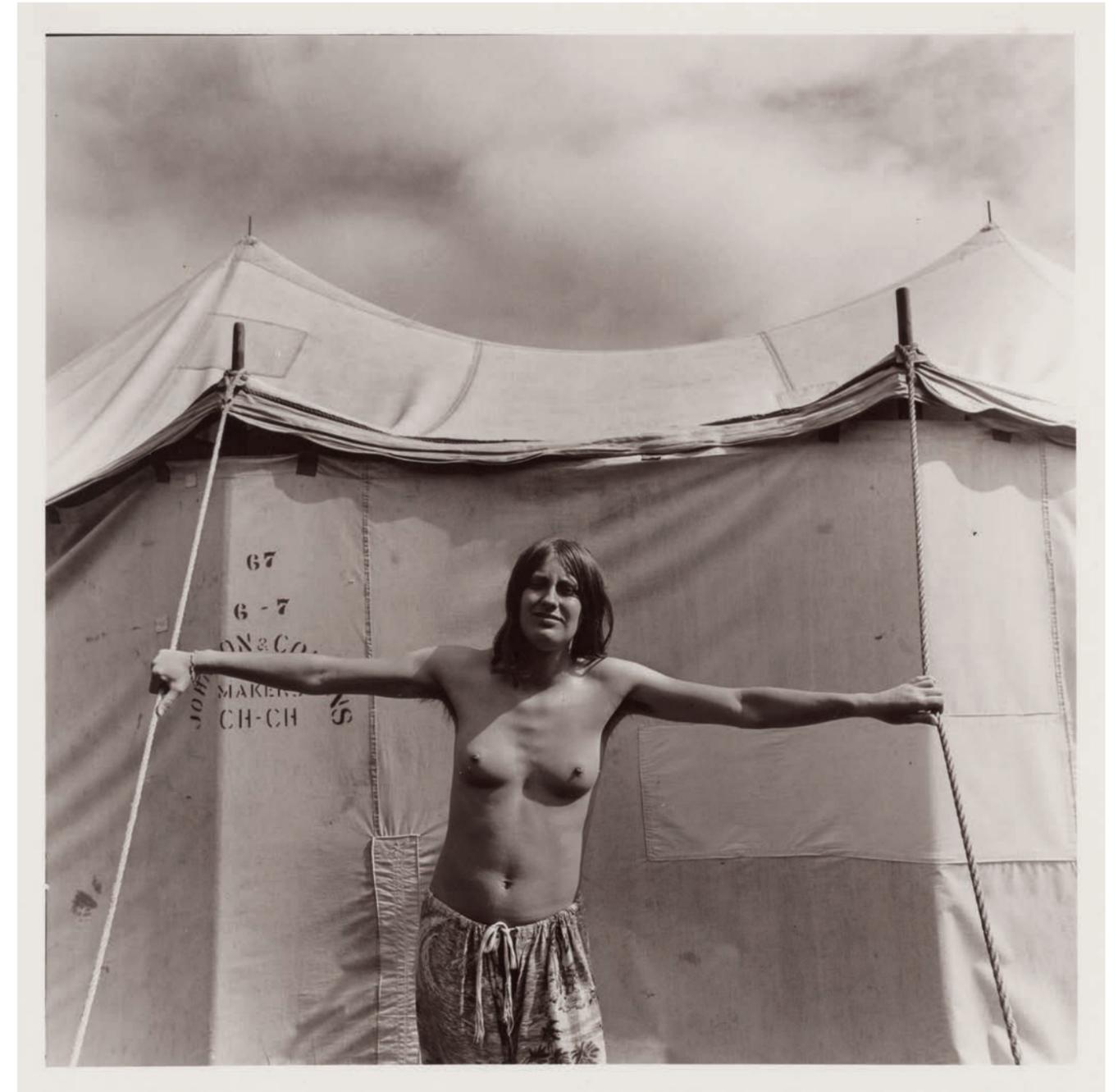
Marie Shannon (b. 1960) reinforces Bosworth's view that self-portraiture is a creative fiction. Speaking in *Six Women Photographers*, she states:

I do not see these pictures as conventional self-portraits no matter how much of myself is shown in them. They are 'pictures of myself' or 'pictures that include myself' but they are not limited to portraiture. I think of these photographs as narrative pictures. To me they are more than visual images. I would like them to be 'read'—backwards and forwards, up and down, with the same sort of build-up of detail you get when you are reading a text.⁵

These views on self-portraiture are taken to the extreme in the work of a photographer who has lived in Christchurch since the late 1970s, Margaret Dawson (b.1950). Her work uses photography as a means to explore identity and gender roles through carefully constructed images of herself and others, usually made in series. In *Consuming the Veneer* and *The Price is Too Great* (both from her 1987 *Marg n. 1. Persona* series) we see Dawson's distinctive use of her own body in different settings or characters as a way to show the mutability of the self and fluidity of representation. First, a woman with a short, punk haircut bites down hard on the auto-release cable for the camera. Snap. In the background we can just make out the headlands of Whakaraupō Lyttleton Harbour, as seen from the Governors Bay wharf. Then in *The Price is Too Great*, a woman is bent over retrieving scraps from the street. Though they are in fact the same woman—herself—she is unrecognisable.

Dawson suggests that those images we see of others are similarly fleeting and unreliable; that we can all be seen in many different lights and perspectives.

Innovative social documentary was made in conversation with these more obviously performed and constructed works. Christchurch-based artist Jane Zusters (née Arbuckle, b. 1951) is well known for her vibrant 1980s paintings, yet has worked across painting, photography and ceramics. Her photographs from the late 1970s capture her bohemian lifestyle and friends in Christchurch, offering new perspectives on gender and identity at this time. The rich colour palette of her analogue prints emphasise an emotional warmth and her compositions are exact, making strong statements on issues of representation. Zusters created several images that are important for Aotearoa's history, such as the four-part work *Portrait of a Woman Marrying Herself* (1978), or the photograph of a 1975 Christchurch pro-choice protest featuring a placard reading 'This Woman Died I Care'—a sign that was later turned into a powerful painting by Allie Eagle (1949–2022). In Zusters' photographs we see artists gathering for a life-drawing session at her house in North Beach, their coffee cups resting on woven mats as they sketch; a topless friend, Margaret Flaws, casually holding the guy ropes of a tent in Punakaiki, her arms outstretched like a crucifix; and a truncated nude figure in the pool, staying afloat by curling her toes under the handrail. Tender details such as these give us a sense of loving relationships and a supportive community, despite the conservatism that also existed in Christchurch.



Jane Zusters *Margaret Flaws at Punakaiki* 1978. Unique silver gelatin print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, gift of the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery, 2022, in celebration of their 50th Anniversary 1971–2021



Fiona Clark *Diana and Sheila at Mojo's, Auckland 1975*. Durst Lambda print from digital master. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery, 2022, in celebration of their 50th Anniversary 1971–2021

Fiona Clark (b. 1954) is one of Aotearoa's most important social documentary photographers. She is known for ensuring the agency of her subjects, incorporating their words into her work and building strong ongoing relationships, particularly within the LGBTQI+ community. In the 1970s and 1980s Clark photographed the gay and drag scene on Karangahape Road and in the clubs Mojo's and Las Vegas Club. The Gallery has acquired two photographs from this era: *Diana and Sheila at Mojo's, Auckland (1975)* and *Diana and Perry at Miss NZ Drag Queen Ball (1975)*. When Clark exhibited photographs similar to these in 1975 as part of *The Active Eye*, audiences were shocked. Today, they give us valuable insights into that time from the perspective of those involved.

Two further photographs by Clark that are new to the collection are of Chrissy Witoko (1944–2002), owner of the Evergreen Coffee Lounge on Vivian Street in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. The Evergreen was a popular late-night entertainment establishment and a safe, accepting environment for the queer community from the 1980s to mid-1990s. Chrissy is pictured in her apartment upstairs from the Evergreen in 1989 and just out of shot is the throne gifted to her when she was crowned 'Queen Christine of Wellington' on her 50th birthday. In the second image, from 2001, Chrissy is shown with family—an important aspect of her life. Clark says:

*My intent is to give people a voice. The photos say, "I am who I am. I'm here. I'm part of your world and I'm going to stay." What's so powerful is the participant's gaze and directness, but there's also a huge sadness. You can see the struggle it takes to keep that personal momentum going. I hope these photos make you feel the human connection we all feel when we look at another person. It's the thread that binds us.*⁶

The history of photography is more diverse and disruptive than it is sometimes portrayed. There are many photographers whose work goes beyond documentary, including Minerva Betts, Janet Bayley, Megan Jenkinson, Fiona Pardington, Christine Webster, Alexis Hunter and others too. Exhibitions like *Fragments of a World: Artists Working in Film and Photography 1973–1987* curated by Callister for the Adam Art Gallery in 2015 are refreshing takes on our art history. Building up this aspect of our collection enables us to tell a broader range of stories and to show these works in relation to contemporary photographers. Looking back, it is obvious that approaches of the 1980s have been foundational for what has followed: especially the insistence on the importance of situated perspectives and interpersonal relationships; and the freedom to treat each image according to the artist's own rules.

Melanie Oliver
Curator

Mediated Reality is on display as part of Perilous: Unheard Stories from the Collection.

- 1 Athol McCredie, *The New Photography*, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2019.
- 2 Merylyn Tweedie, *Six Women Photographers*, Auckland: PhotoForum, 1986, p. 5.
- 3 Gregory Burke, 'An Indeterminate Surface,' in Geri Thomas (ed.), *Imposing Narratives: Beyond the Documentary in Recent New Zealand Photography*, Wellington: City Gallery Wellington, 1989, p. 15.
- 4 Sandy Callister, *Fragments of a World: An Introduction*, Michael Lett, Auckland and Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, 2015, np.
- 5 *Six Women Photographers*, p. 49.
- 6 Fiona Clark, 'Guilty,' in Evan Hazenberg and Miriam Meyerhoff (eds), *Representing Trans: Linguistic, legal and everyday perspectives*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2017. <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover-collections/read-watch-play/history/lgbtqi-histories-new-zealand-aotearoa/i-am-who-i-am>.

THINGS THAT HAPPENED AT DAWN

Rebecca Nash

THINGS THAT

[DUBLIN, 5AM]

I am top and tailing and not-fucking a beautiful eyelashy man who is not my boyfriend. I am struck by how un-sexy he is in his sleep, all farts and feet. No sleep at all. Instead, wondering how long a night can possibly be. Are our stray feet breaking monogamy lore? 5am nausea sets in as I walk to the bus stop. Half-finished housing estates stretch brick and mortar matching far down the road. Ice stills all life. From the grey of my vision comes a Dublin gypsy boy, bareback on a lord-of-the-rings horse. I smoke a ciggie to add my own ephemera to the play. I wonder if I belong here, or out by the shallow port and tussock pier. Bed swirls about me into air and the boy stops. He takes my hand, swings me up, and asks me if I will come and see. The boyfriend in New Zealand is nothing in the face of this authoritarian high lover. But when I show my hand, he turns the horse, fishes a fag out of his Adidas sweats and takes me back to the bus stop. The light shifts to wobbly sun, and children begin to wake. One snuggles in to his mother milkily, warmly and insists she sing the Paw Patrol theme tune at least six times. Another boy pisses on his front lawn in a duffle coat. Some houses are full of pain. Quiet. The children trying to be slippery like currents in the sea. The street recedes through the back bus window, and I begin my journey. A woman in her eighties replaces me at the stop. She smokes into the light, calling on the waifs who exist in the universe slivers outside of time. She knows she knows nothing. I look down. I am nowhere to be seen.

[LYTTELTON, 5AM]

I take the toddler to my tit. 5am and she performs suck-acrobatics. Feet in my face, her hands stroking me in a frankly perverse way. No sleep at all. The dog makes a snort-sigh sound and stretches. Her muzzle is greying and she will only get up for posties or if I put my shoes on and say "Where the fuckity fuck are the fucking keys". We will rise into the dawn and put the kettle on. The toddler will throw her bowl because she's tired and I will yell because I'm tired. Our limbic lizard brains firing hot like two tuatara fucking with each other by tapping on the glass. Mimicking the toddlers who have done the same to them. Tomorrow I will be a gentle parent who takes my child's screams as cries for love and treats them accordingly. I am a web of voices and coincidence and generational repetition of mistakes and triumphs and pain. I cannot possibly tease out all the threads of who I am, let alone of who you are. We are rigged random number generators. Noelle the mother and Alan the father died at 26. The solo parent story is the same, but the melanoma and the motorbike accident are different horrible clashes of happenstance. I love Noelle the daughter but I am tired. Yesterday, I held the dawn suspended in my hands. I let it settle in underneath my flappy breastfeeding titties. I fed the child, warmly, while tuatara were at peace in wildlife preserve cages, slowly, slowly, contemplating fucking. The next generation. I am my mother, I am your mother, I am her mother, I am my own mother. It is very early in the morning.

[OKAINS BAY, 5AM]

Okains Bay in the caravan with the cow print curtains. A much underrated print, as it is horrendous to the point of unsexiness, while, at the same time, bringing to mind huge, fertile udders. The next generation of limited life-expectancy ruminants. The bedding is polyester fleece, barbed by grass seed and the sand of many unexpectedly full bikini tops. The sea breeze is building to gale, and I wish for foundations. The caravan's wheels, granted, are part of the land now, but they remember the road and they retain their wanderlust. No sleep at all. The Kmart gazebo strains and I catalogue each peg; try to calculate the odds of each one losing its hold on the ground. They lose their hold on the ground. The whole thing bends in on itself and crashes into the caravan. 5am. Nude. I do battle with the poles and the canopy-billow. I try to hold something unholdable down. Twenty minutes ago, the poles were flimsy and problematically easy to slip apart. Now they are wrought into impossible dreadlocked strength. An evolution, a shedding of its shape that has, for too long, been held to ludicrous human notions of usefulness and servitude. Now it belongs to itself and has its own, gazebo-centric, ten commandments. The object, nature and I find fucked-up synergy in my naked dawn anxiety dance.

Metaphor is easy. The gazebo is my inner demons, or else, the collective ills of a callous society. I could also speak to mindfulness, and the feeling of giving all my attention to this one moment, to the straining of my back muscles as the gazebo bucks and refuses like an enormous kingfish being dragged out of the sea. Or a stingray as big as an island, or an entire story. But what I feel is hopeless and afraid. I am no Māui. I manage to shove the mangled thing under the caravan and sound and sense come speeding back. The wind. The wind. The sea. The sea. I walk down through tussock to see a string of shells. Wetly on fire from early sun, and where the tide has been. Closer to the horizon, a whole new memory-place flicks its tail and barrels down for fish. I find a web of voices in a seagull flock; in a rockpool. I look down. I am nowhere to be seen.

Rebecca Nash is a poet who lives in Lyttelton. She has an MA in Creative Writing from IIML and an MA in Samuel Beckett from the University of Canterbury. Her book for children, *Wilbur's Walk*, was published in 2021. This text was commissioned to accompany Turumeke Harrington: *Tātou tātou, nau mai rā*, which is on display from 17 December 2022 until 29 January 2023.



James Oram

By Spectral Hands

Melanie Oliver

James Oram *Currency* (video still) 2022. Two-channel 4K video.
Courtesy of the artist



In the American psychological thriller *Severance*, the employees of Lumon Industries undergo a surgical procedure that separates their work and non-work memories. The uncanny plot unfolds into what feels like a terrifyingly accurate portrayal of the power that corporations exert over our lives, and the integration of the self into capitalism. In this fictional world Mark and his co-workers willingly join the corporation, blind to what it is they do as part of the Macrodata Refinement team. The series offers insight into how data has become a core part of capitalism, despite the over-abundance of information in a system founded on scarcity. Further, *Severance*'s data sorters must categorise and file the numbers that appear on their computer screens based on their emotional response to them, rather than applying logic, thereby integrating their feelings to the digital realm.

An awareness of our willing participation in a capitalist system that has swallowed the potential of digital technologies and human emotion also underpins James Oram's *By Spectral Hands*. Oram's sculptural and video works use the marketing techniques and mechanisms of consumer capitalism to offer a physical interpretation of the way that consumer demand is manipulated to generate industrial and commercial profit. The exhibition consists of four aspects, which together form a whole that Oram thinks of as an ecosystem: a tactile transducer sculpture that turns an audio recording of the theories of Edward Bernays into vibrations in water; a brass wireframe divider; cyanotype blueprints of hands; and a two-channel video work of a frozen thumbs-up. Each component has a distinct relationship to the psychology of promotional strategies, from display systems to information architecture, advertising imagery and customer engagement symbols. Yet the works are also based on unstable forms in a state of transition—moving,

fading, melting, freezing or evaporating—and play off one another as a dynamic system of interlocking parts. The free market, which is generally represented as an abstract stock exchange correlating the rise and fall of share prices to real labour, materials and products, is an ever-present yet invisible force that runs through the exhibition. However, Oram also reveals with each work how our bodies, emotions and thoughts are exploited within the capitalist economic system.

Generally known as the father of public relations, American publicist Edward Bernays (1891–1995) wrote his key work *Propaganda* in 1928, and his ideas led to the development of contemporary marketing and communication strategies. The nephew of prominent psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, Bernays saw the potential for his uncle's psychology to be applied to the commercial sector through what he termed “the engineering of consent”. In the early twentieth century he used these ideas to manipulate consumers by manufacturing desire based on human instincts like fear, lust and jealousy, rather than need. One of his earliest campaigns was for the American Tobacco Corporation where he was charged with encouraging women to smoke cigarettes—or, as Bernays called them, “torches of freedom”. He strategically placed cigarettes in the mass media and aligned smoking with power, freedom and beauty, and women across the United States soon adopted cigarette smoking as a fashionable accessory and sign of sophistication. His marketing techniques could have been utilised to change public opinion and behaviour for the better (today one might like to think they would be used to make us respond to climate change or demand a fairer democracy) but primarily Bernays taught companies to exploit the irrational emotions of the masses to sell more products and gain political influence.





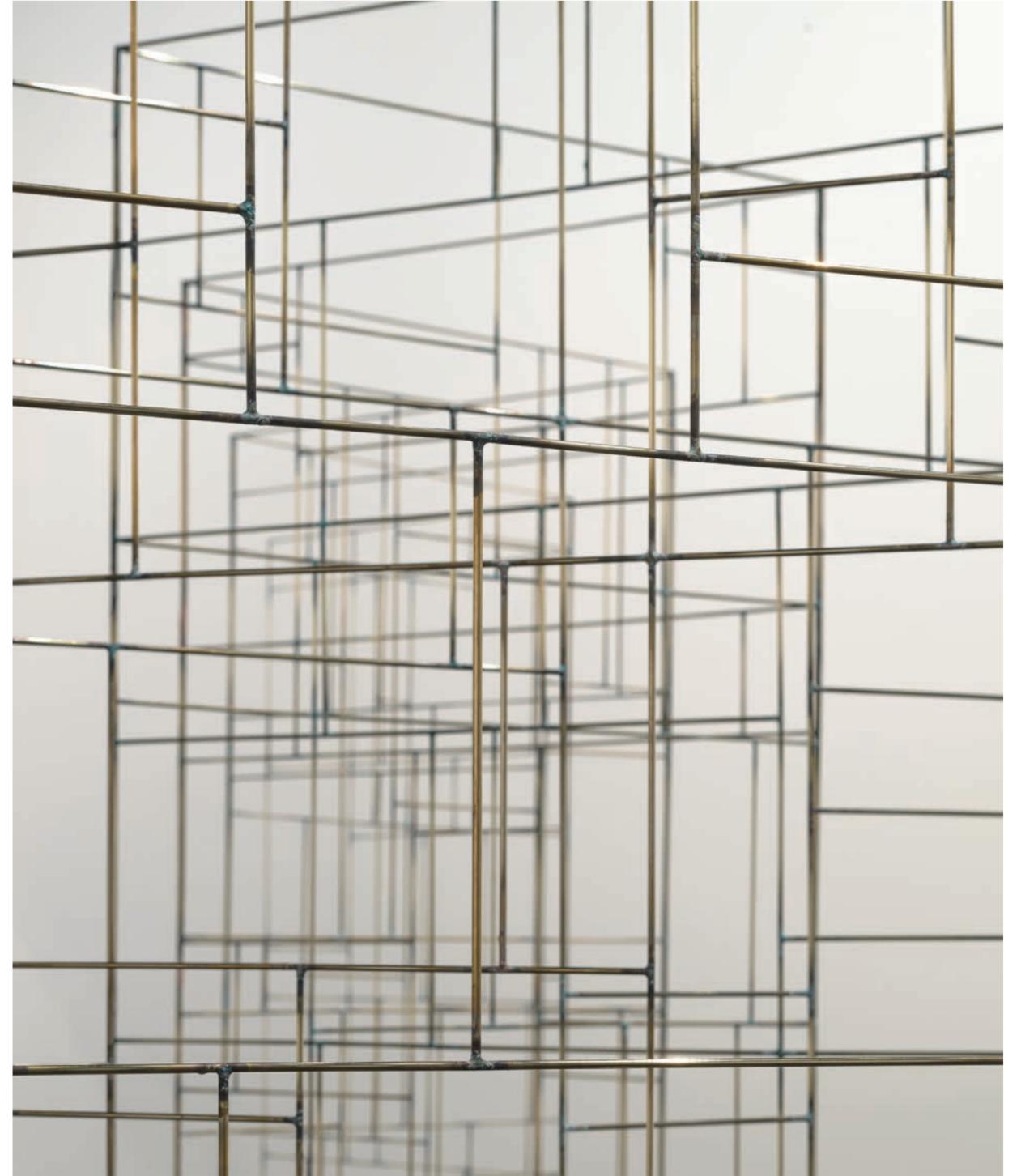
Oram has used images of hands as a motif through which to link popular culture, technology and commerce with the human body and emotions.

A half-full bottle of water rests on a transparent display counter. Inside the cabinet a tactile transducer, a piece of equipment that turns sound into movement, plays an audio of Bernays's theories at a very low frequency, transforming his ideas into vibrations that cannot be heard but are seen as ripples in the water. There is something ominous about this silent movement, since we cannot observe what is causing the disruption. I am reminded of the subliminal messaging used in advertising, those visual or auditory stimuli that we don't consciously perceive, yet influence our behaviour nonetheless. Bottled water carries with it political associations regarding ownership of natural resources and environmentalism. However, as Bernays's words disperse into the water itself, Oram's use of a single water bottle is intended to highlight the manipulation of consumers in relation to even our most basic of necessities.

A brass wireframe sculpture extends across the gallery space, dividing it even though it is not solid. The concertina form is like a privacy screen, but each frame is also characteristic of another type of wireframe—the two-dimensional schematic blueprints for information architecture that are often used to structure a website or determine data processes. These gridded wireframes are simple designs that show how information will flow or be formatted, and the shape of the interface that structures how a user will experience a website or access information. Today, technology is integrated into a broad range of situations, from the courtroom or the supermarket

to our hospitals and schools, and how we exist in the world is largely dictated by these wireframing exercises. While Oram's sculptures physically define how we can navigate the gallery space, the work suggests these sorts of design interfaces impact how we move through the world more generally and that designers possess the power to facilitate or impede what access we have to information. The joins of the brass ooze with blue-green verdigris where the metal interacts with oxygen, reminding us that digital processes and technologies utilise precious mineral resources too; while they appear immaterial, they are based on extractive industries that contribute to environmental degradation.

For several years, Oram has used images of hands as a motif through which to link popular culture, technology and commerce with the human body and emotions. Similarly, in *By Spectral Hands* he has isolated hands from various advertisements and enlarged them to make a series of cyanotypes. Clustered into groups and set behind perspex, Oram's blueprints appear to be schemes or plans too: intentional sets, perhaps gathered through an online image search. We incorporate hand movements into speech to add emphasis or assist in explanation, and in isolating the hands from advertising, with no sign of the background, context or products, we are forced to focus on the gestures as trends in body language. The open palms and guiding fingers gleaned from marketing here point towards an absent product offered for sale and so reinforce the overarching message of desirability. Hands are also about consumer choice in terms of grabbing,



Above: James Oram *Screens* (detail) 2022. Brass. Courtesy of the artist

Left: James Oram *Spectral hands* (detail) 2022. Cyanotype prints of found imagery. Courtesy of the artist

As with any photograph, we are looking at a moment from the past captured and preserved in print; an absence in the sense that they are lingering images of hands, displaced physically from the body and conceptually in time.

holding, having and taking, the ability to select and possess something.

Like the spectral hands of the exhibition's title, these disembodied hands have a ghostly quality, which is enhanced by the monochromatic nature of Oram's blueprints. The cyanotype process relies on UV light and results in high-contrast images that are a distinct watery blue colour. As with any photograph, we are looking at a moment from the past captured and preserved in print; an absence in the sense that they are lingering images of hands, displaced physically from the body and conceptually in time. The spectral hands, in their appearance and process of construction, make reference to what economist Adam Smith termed the "invisible hand" of the free market; the belief that society benefits from individuals acting in their own self-interests through a "trickle-down" effect is a notion that is still used to justify neoliberalism.¹

The ghostliness also draws into the exhibition ideas of hauntology, or the return or persistence of social and cultural elements from the past, which philosopher Jacques Derrida introduced in his 1993 book *Specters of Marx* and cultural theorist Mark Fisher related to popular music and culture. "What haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the twenty-first century is not so much the past as all the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate," Fisher wrote, lamenting our inability to think of alternative futures,

or indeed any way to exist other than capitalism.² Theorists such as Paul Mason have made claims for Postcapitalism and future potential alternatives, yet we remain stubbornly tethered to free market ideology in our daily lives and politics. Oram's cyanotypes visually hint at the trickery of Victorian

photography, of the magic and conjuring associated with this early era of photography, yet the hands emerging out of the deep blue are also part of a contemporary lexicon. As a direct, non-verbal signal they seem to bridge times and cultures, caught somewhat out-of-time, at once no longer and not yet. And spooky all the same.

Another hand appears in a new two-channel video work depicting transitions between different physical states of water. Across the two screens, a frozen sculpture of a thumbs-up gradually melts, evaporates, condenses and refreezes, caught in an eternal loop. The stylised thumbs-up has become ubiquitous in contemporary culture, used liberally to show that we 'like' posts, comments and images online. Oram utilises a model of the sign here to consider our willing participation or complicity in global capitalism through social media; how as we happily endorse or respond to each other, we are simultaneously gifting information about ourselves, our preferences and desires to technology companies. At the same time, as we scroll through these apps, we are consuming a range of sponsored content that proliferates in the online feed generated for us by the computer algorithms that are constantly learning about us and proposing what we might want to see, support and buy. The word 'feed' in particular clarifies that this is a process of consumption, that we are being fed the constant stream of entertainment, products and

opinions that have been collectively provided as digital content, filtered out and regurgitated across various media platforms. We are made aware of the powerful algorithms that drive our behaviour from behind the glossy surfaces and screens of contemporary life.

Oram's video tangibly embodies what Karl Marx wrote in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*: "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind." Marx was comparing capitalism to earlier societal structures to stress that the constant change introduced through a free market economy and private ownership means social orders, hierarchies and forms of social organisation are also in constant flux; that capitalism melts or evaporates all things. The hypnotic simplicity of Oram's translucent, optimistic thumbs-up melting away only to be reformed calls into question the sincerity of the gesture, echoing the conflicting emptiness and connectivity of social media and the precarious nature of contemporary life. So even though he does not necessarily intend to incorporate a Marxian perspective, we are prompted to think about the conditions of our everyday existence and how we relate to each other across both online and IRL experiences.

In the late-1940s, New Zealand economist Bill Phillips made the Monetary National Income Analogue Computer (MONIAC) to simulate economic phenomena and used water flow as the calculating medium. It's a fascinating model that was brought to fame in the art world by artist Michael Stevenson. Oram's work here similarly provides a simplified sculptural rendition of economic ideas in terms of marketing and consumer behaviour, succinctly acknowledging how the information age complicates capitalism; since digital goods and services do not have the same limitations and scarcity as other products, technology companies have had to find innovative ways to control supply in the market.³

The works in *By Spectral Hands* allude to capitalist substructures and our place as consumers within them through watery transitions, blueprints and explorations of marketing strategies. As we face the looming climate crisis and the monumental changes to society that are necessary for our survival, discussion around economics, commerce and governance is more pressing than ever. Why do we still allow the free market to decide all things? Can we as consumers contribute to change? Oram leaves questions like these hanging, not taking sides or offering solutions, but identifying the peculiarities of the current state we have all agreed to live in... for now.

Melanie Oliver
Curator

James Oram: *By Spectral Hands* is on display until 19 February 2023.

- 1 "...neoliberalism is best understood as a particular configuration of state and market, where the state internalises the interests of corporations that dominate the market, to the extent that identification with other value systems is progressively eroded." Sean Phelan, 'It's Neoliberalism Stupid', *Counterfutures: Left Thought and Practice Aotearoa*, vol. 2, 2016, p. 186.
- 2 Mark Fisher, 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1, 2012, p. 16.
- 3 David Parker on Paul Mason's *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, "Economics deals in scarce goods and information is abundant... information is corroding capitalism", *Counterfutures: Left Thought and Practice Aotearoa*, vol. 2, 2016, p. 201.

A Fireside Whodunit

Ken Hall

Father's Tea entered the collection as an unexpected and welcome gift in 2020, together with a small portrait sketch and a larger interior scene by the same artist, both signed 'EC'. Given by the granddaughter of artist Elizabeth Graham Chalmers (1870–1951), the paintings were old and well-travelled, needing the kind of care that galleries can provide. *Father's Tea* also presented an intriguing puzzle around authorship, which has only recently been firmly re-established. As our research continued into 2021, local conservator Olivia Pitts undertook cleaning and repairs in preparation for its inclusion in the 2021–22 exhibition *Leaving for Work*. This included the removal of old varnish, infilling, and repainting areas of loss, and saw its strength vibrantly reinstated. Completing the restoration was the expert repair and re-gilding of the original 'Watts profile' frame by framing conservator Anne-Sophie Ninino.

The lead actor in this charming composition is the girl kneeling in profile by the coal range, a compact study in tones of salmon pink and chocolate brown, her auburn hair offsetting the burning coals. Petite hands on the bellows encourage the glow, subtly reflected in the warming teapot; nestled in front of it is a black kitten whose skewed likeness also appears in the glazing. With the overall composition dividing into bold, near equal halves of light and dark, a dusty

kettle emerges from the darkness at left, set to boil on the cast iron stove. Father is evidently nearby. In the subtle still-life arrangement of white on white behind the girl are two teacups, large and small, as well as saucer, sugar bowl and china milk jug, merging with the tablecloth into the pale blue-tinged wall. *Father's Tea* is a highly skilled and complex work that seems to open a window into everyday domestic life. It also holds concealed tales of family connections.

There appeared at first two possible contenders for the maker of this work, and acceptable reasons to question the inscription at bottom right, 'Elizabeth Graham', as a signature. One was that this painting was unlike any known examples of the work of Elizabeth Graham Chalmers, who had painted sporadically across several decades, held her first solo exhibition in 1928 aged fifty-eight, and became best known as a flower (and occasional London society portrait) painter from that time on. The painting is late Victorian and indicated experience—it seemed difficult to envisage Elizabeth developing such a skill by her late teens or early twenties only then to keep it largely hidden. The painting also strongly resembled the work of Elizabeth's brother-in-law, leading Newlyn School painter Frank Bramley (1857–1915), who first met the Graham family in Cornwall sometime between 1884 and 1887.¹



Elizabeth Graham Chalmers *Father's Tea* 1891. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of Caroline Cameron, granddaughter of the artist, 2020



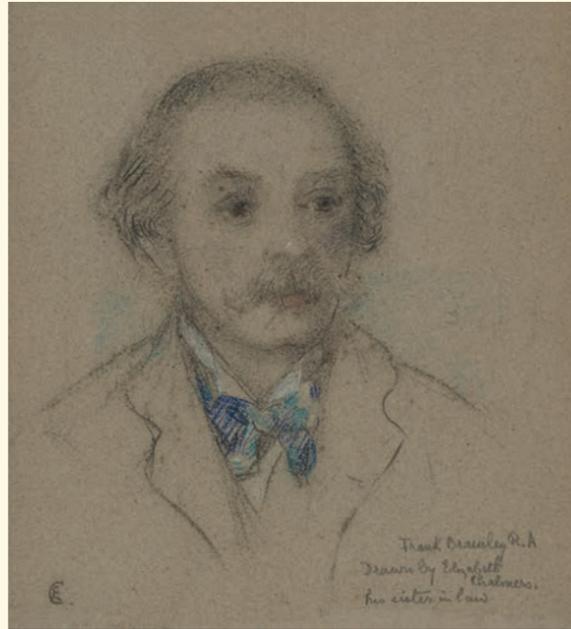
Frank Bramley *Helen Graham Chalmers and her Mother* 1908. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Mr D. M. R. and Mrs H. Cameron Bequest, 1990

Elizabeth was born in 1870, so it seemed plausible that this was a painting of her at about fourteen by Frank, painted soon after he reached Newlyn from Italy in the winter of 1884/85, thereby making the inscription an identifying title. It emerged that her parents John and Jane Graham enjoyed commissioning artworks. And the practice of inscribing a sitter's name was not anomalous in this period: Frank added a similar inscription to a portrait of his wife Katharine—Elizabeth's sister—in 1896. The handwriting was also similar to his: it was possible to check it against his signature on the large 1908 painting of Elizabeth and her daughter, *Helen Graham Chalmers and her Mother*, given to the Gallery by bequest from the same family in 1990.² But why no signature on this one?

The thought that this was Frank's grew stronger when comparing it with works he painted in Newlyn from 1885 on, evidently in the same room. His *Primrose Day* (1885) includes what appears to be the same white china jug, with a similar sense of composition and distinctive square brush treatment, and the same technique of merging dark into light between figure and wall. Another painting, *Winter* (1885), pictures what looks like the same cast iron coal range with identical fireside trivet teapot holder, and bellows hanging on a wall.³ The coal range reappears in *Every One His Own Tale* (1885), a picture of Cornish fishermen and a young girl seated by a hearth.⁴ Frank's *Domino!* (1886) shows two young women seated at a table playing the eponymous game and has a similar approach to arranging and dividing space in the use of verticals, horizontals, angles and foreground treatments.⁵ In common with all of these, the hearthside painting carries the sense of psychological weight and interior space—even sense of melancholy—found in Frank's early Newlyn works. Two well-known paintings—*Saved* (1889) and *For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven* (1891)—also include a similar looking young girl with auburn hair in profile, appearing almost a leitmotif.⁶



Frank Bramley *Elizabeth Graham Chalmers* 1908. Charcoal and pastel. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Mr D. M. R. and Mrs H. Cameron Bequest, 1990



Elizabeth Graham Chalmers *Portrait of Frank Bramley* c. 1911. Pencil and pastel on paper. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of Caroline Cameron, granddaughter of the artist, 2020

All of this seemed to point to Frank, as did comparison with other examples of Elizabeth's work, including the other newly gifted painting, *The Oboe* (1916). This attractive work, also needing conservation, pictures a private musical performance in an upper-middle-class interior, and includes the bright young face of Elizabeth's daughter Helen, who later moved to New Zealand.⁷ It also displays a different, more free-flowing, painterly technique, closer to that seen in her later flower paintings. The paint treatment is thinner, much of it single layered, sometimes overlapping, and its overall psychological tone and approach to using space are different.

Elizabeth's apparently modest early output also seemed to weigh against her. In 1900 she had married Charles Chalmers, a Scottish paper manufacturer who was knighted by George VI in 1918 and died in 1924. Lady Chalmers's 1928 exhibition catalogue, from her first professional show, disclosed that "in her 24 years of very happy family life in Scotland, she only painted by fits and starts, often letting years pass without touching a brush," and lightly mentioned her earlier spending "a winter in Paris studying in one of the Julian studios".⁸ The brief essay mentioned that "Frank Bramley R. A. was her brother-in-law and he always encouraged her and thought she ought to take her painting more seriously; until now opportunity was lacking." It also mentioned that she had "very occasionally exhibited portraits at the Edinburgh Academy, where her work has been very well hung."

Taking this late cue from the 1928 catalogue, it was necessary to check the Scottish Royal Academy's exhibition records. Three entries down from Marc Chagall, we find that Lady Elizabeth Chalmers had exhibited five works in total in 1904, 1907, 1924 and 1945—not a prolific output. Before her marriage in 1900, Elizabeth Graham had shown three works, in 1891, 1895 and 1897. In 1891, her address was 'Newlyn, Cornwall', and the first work she exhibited was *Father's Tea*.⁹ This was the twist we did not see coming; the

turn that immediately dismantles the Frank Bramley argument. Of course, this painting had to have been exhibited somewhere, and what else could it have been called? Or testing this from another angle, for a moment not accepting it as hers: what would a work titled *Father's Tea*, painted by Elizabeth Graham in Frank Bramley's studio in Newlyn in 1891, look like? The answer is that it would likely look exactly like this, particularly if it was made under his personal instruction, encouragement and watchful eye, reflecting the kind of training he had earlier received in Europe.

While the painting reflects Frank's influence, it is Elizabeth's, painted in the period prior to Frank's marriage to her sister Katharine Glenny Graham (1871–1936)—also said to have been studying to be a painter. Frank and Katharine married in October 1891 at St Pol de Léon's Church, the parish church of Paul, half a mile from the Old Manor Farmhouse in Trungle where the Grahams were lodging with a local farmer on the night of the April 1891 census. This was the same time as *Father's Tea* was exhibited in Edinburgh, and suggests that the family's stay near Newlyn was prolonged. The young sitter in the painting was possibly the youngest Graham daughter Georgina Margaret (Madge), who later also became an artist.¹⁰

The direction of the encouragement given and taken shifted between Frank Bramley and Elizabeth Graham Chalmers in the years after her marriage. She and her husband became Frank's major patrons, assisting him and Katharine through financially difficult years and commissioning many family portraits up until a few years before his death in 1915. These include the large *Helen Graham Chalmers and her Mother*, shown at the Royal Academy in 1908, and *Helen, Daughter of Charles Chalmers Esq [also known as Flowers for Nanny]*, shown in London in 1910, another work awaiting conservation treatment.

Father's Tea, painted when Elizabeth Graham Chalmers was twenty or twenty-one, is her earliest known exhibited work, from the beginning of an

uncertain painting career. That she was an artist of potential was recognised by the *Glasgow Herald* art critic: "'Father's Tea', (No.434), by Elizabeth Graham, while a trifle finicking and immature, is a picture of promise, in its careful detail and tenderness of feeling."¹¹ The identification and reattribution has been a vital part of the restoration process, and confirms its place as an exciting addition to the collection.¹²

Ken Hall
Curator

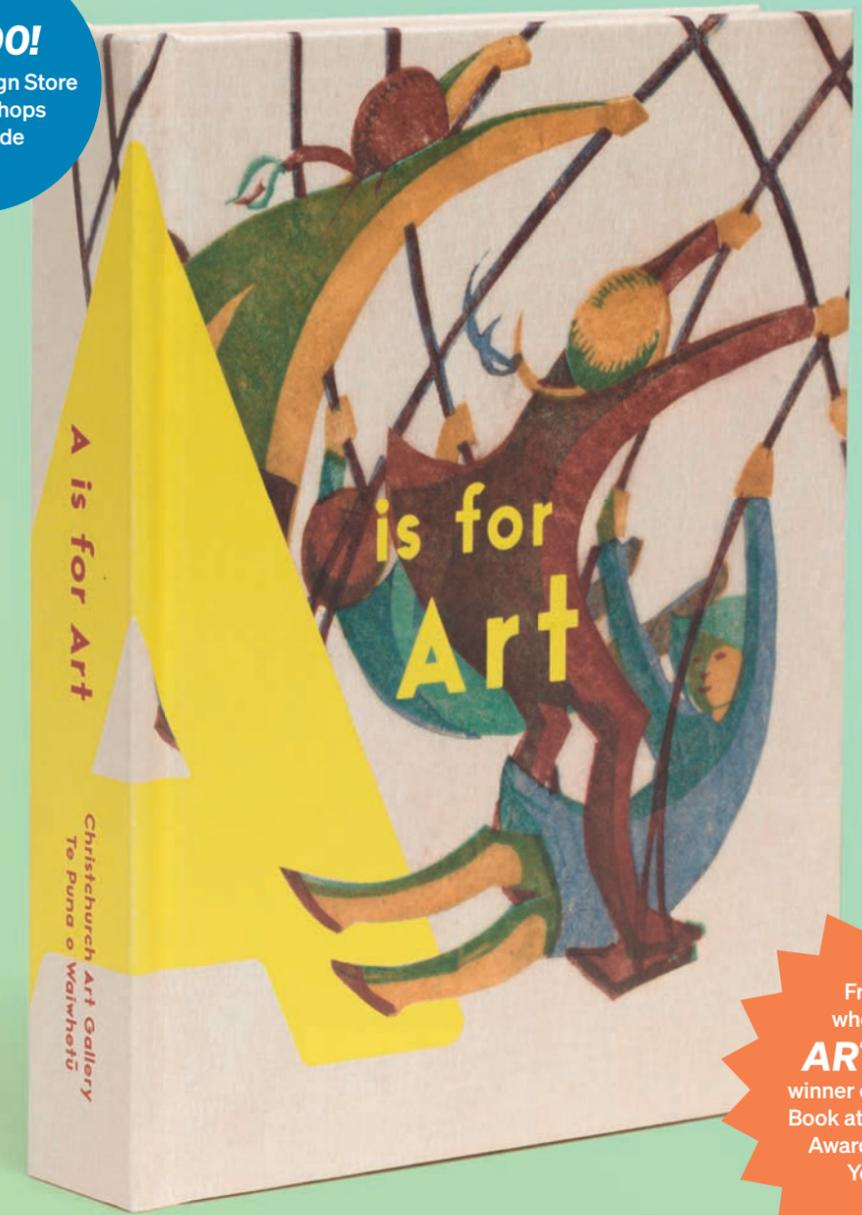
- 1 Frank Bramley married Elizabeth's younger sister Katharine Glenny Graham in 1891. He was 34 and she was 20. The story usually told is that they met when she was a painting student in Cornwall, but Katharine's 1936 obituary suggests it was earlier: "Mrs Bramley, with her sisters, came to Newlyn in her girlhood, and it was there that she met Mr. Frank Bramley, then a rising young artist." Katharine was born in 1871; her 'girlhood' could be said to end in about 1887.
- 2 This work was shown at the Royal Academy in London in 1908.
- 3 Sold through Christie's, London, 1998.
- 4 Sold through Sotheby's, London, 2006.
- 5 Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.
- 6 Durban Municipal Art Gallery, South Africa; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.
- 7 It also encourages the restoration to *The Oboe* when resources allow (if this is something you would enjoy supporting, do please let us know).
- 8 Amelia Defries, 'Note', *Lady Chalmers' Exhibition of Paintings, The Cottars Studio Gallery, 134 Brompton Road, [London], February 21st 1928*. Xerox of catalogue in artist file, Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives.
- 9 Her later address, in 1895 and 1897 was Grasmere, Westmorland; she showed a work titled *The Song* and a pastel self-portrait.
- 10 Madge Graham (c. 1876–1962) became an illustrator and was also mentioned in the 1928 catalogue: "Her sister, Miss Madge Graham, does rhythmic drawing to music and has already had one or two shows in London; the two sisters are presently exhibiting together in Bond Street."
- 11 'Royal Scottish Academy', *Glasgow Herald*, 21 April 1891, p. 8.
- 12 Through the recent gift, Elizabeth's small pencil and pastel portrait sketch of Frank Bramley, made near the time of his election into the Academy in 1911, has also entered the collection.

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Natalia Goncharova *Costume Espagnol (Spanish Costume)* 1919. Gouache au pochoir print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of Anita Muling, 1979

EVERY – THING – ISM

Thomasin
Sleigh

In 2019, the Tate Modern staged a solo exhibition of the work of Russian artist Natalia Goncharova. It was the first time the artist had had a major retrospective in the UK, and the exhibition included her paintings, prints, costume designs and textiles. The exhibition presented reviewers with a twinned challenge: how to talk about an artist who was so little known in the UK, and one who was a woman?

A quick google of reviews of the show reveals the rhetoric that we can expect when the art historical canon celebrates female artists. There is a lot of writing about her relationship to cubism, to fauvism and to futurism—the familiar structures of Western modernism. The show was a “resurrection of Goncharova’s genius”, wrote the *Guardian*, and Goncharova was, “ripe for rediscovery and reappraisal”, said the reviewer in *Apollo Magazine*. *Artdesk.com* effused, “at last the achievements of great women are being acknowledged and celebrated”, and *Artsy.net* said that the show, “seeks to reinstate Goncharova as the leader of the Russian and international avant-garde”.

I didn’t see the show, so I can’t speak as to whether this was the curators’ intention, or if these reviews were off the mark, but the discussion is familiar, as women artists are now regularly being ‘rediscovered’ and ‘reappraised’ in galleries with exhibition histories and programmes long dominated by men. This rediscovery often falls back on the art historical paradigms of leadership, centring and artistic influence that, to me, always feels unsatisfactory or reductive when discussing women artists in the male-dominated twentieth century, and further back in time.

Would Natalia Goncharova have wanted to be a “leader of the Russian and international avant-garde”? Perhaps. She had the confidence and sense of purpose to flout the societal conventions expected of women in Russian society, even in the tumultuous years of the early twentieth century. In 1913, when she was only thirty-two, she exhibited over 800 of her

works in a huge exhibition at the Mikhailova Art Salon in Moscow, and she and her friends at the Moscow College of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture caused a sensation when they paraded in the streets with painted faces and wild costumes to advertise the show.

Goncharova had come to the Moscow College by way of a childhood spent on her family’s country estate in the Tula province, southwest of Moscow. She was born there in 1881 into an aristocratic family whose money came from textile production, though their fortune had been significantly reduced by the late nineteenth century.¹ Her family moved to Moscow when she was eleven, and when she was twenty she started taking classes in painting and sculpture at the Moscow College. Here, she met another student, Mikhail Larionov, who became her partner in work and in life, and a strident promoter of her work.

As a student, Goncharova quickly began exhibiting in Moscow’s salons, picking up and discarding interesting ideas from her artistic contemporaries, both in Russia and Europe more widely. Modernism is notoriously obsessed with the new—the next thing, the first one, the major breakthrough—but Goncharova always looked back in time too, using the bold outlines and compositional elements of traditional Russian icon painting and *lubok*, religious woodblock prints, in her painting and design.

Radical avant-garde sensibilities did not make Goncharova and Larionov immune to the politics of Europe in the early twentieth century. Larionov served early in WWI, but was severely injured and spent three months recovering in hospital before he was discharged, to be cared for by Goncharova, who was at the time working for the Red Cross’s war effort.² In 1915, the pair left Russia for Switzerland to work with Serge Diaghilev and Igor Stravinsky on costume and set design for the Ballets Russes, and early in 1916 Goncharova went with the troupe to Spain, to work on the design for two ballets, *España* and *Triana*.³



Natalia Goncharova and Mikhail Larionov on the background scenery for the opera-ballet *The Golden Cockerel* in the workshops of the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow, 1913. Anonymous photographer from the Russian Empire (before 1917). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Léonide Massine, Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Igor Stravinsky, Leon Bakst. Ouchy, Switzerland, 1915

These ballets were never staged—they remain unseen projects, explored by artists amidst the maelstrom of Europe at war. They had an impact on Goncharova's career, however, as she was inspired and intrigued by the forms, colours, and movements of Spanish dance and culture, and went on to make many works based on the motifs she saw. It's at this moment, in Spain, working on two unrealised ballets, that Goncharova's story begins to intersect with the collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

Art collections really are weird things. They assume a veneer of neutrality hanging on the gallery wall, when really they are assembled through the foibles and interests and grudges of fickle humans—they travel through relationships, off-the-cuff decisions and

serendipitous encounters, and speak to places and experiences far away.

So, how did this collection of Goncharova's prints find their way to Ōtautahi Christchurch? Goncharova and Larionov moved to Paris, where they became permanent émigrés after the 1917 revolution meant they couldn't return to Moscow. In Paris after the war, they staged an exhibition of their work for the theatre, *L'Art Décoratif Théâtral Moderne*, which included a portfolio of prints, produced in an edition of 500, of which 100 were signed.⁴ One of these signed collections was given to a young Russian friend of the artists, Valdemar Muling.

Muling and his wife Anita later lived in Manchuria and then, displaced by the Chinese Communist Revolution, moved to Christchurch in 1949. In 1979,

Anita Muling gifted the collection of prints by Goncharova and Larionov to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.⁵

These aren't the only works by Goncharova to have made their way into an art collection in Aotearoa; Te Papa also has a number of her paintings. Several years ago I was wandering in a collection exhibition there and I walked past Goncharova's *Scene in an Orchard* (c. 1908). I couldn't stop looking at it. I loved its heavy outlines and wild colours. Goncharova's work is in Te Papa because of the acuity of Mary Chamot, a Russian-born art historian and assistant keeper at the Tate Gallery, who, between 1965 and 1975, advised the National Art Gallery in Aotearoa on the purchase of European art. This was mostly British art, but, in the 1970s, Chamot, who would go on to write several books on Goncharova (then almost entirely unknown in England) organised for three early works by the artist to be given to the Gallery, and later, gave four more from her own collection.⁶

These moments in art history always catch my eye: when women are interested in the art of other women, and manage to slip them into the channels of discussion and dissemination; it feels like a gift, a trick of the hand, a potent offering to the future. There's something compelling and powerful to me in this moment of appraisal, between artist and curator, or artist and viewer, because it's not a 'reappraisal' or a 'rediscovery' or a 'resurrection', as we have come to understand these words in contemporary curating. I want to know what it was like, in those moments, just to look at a painting, and know that it was good, and important, and created by a woman.

I wonder what Goncharova would make of her works being exhibited in Aotearoa? I like to think she'd be pleased and interested. She was always a strident nationalist and maintained her interest in the traditional arts of Russia, but like other modernists, she was also excited and inspired by the possibilities of the future. After her huge 1913 exhibition in Moscow,

the term 'everythingism' was coined (in Russian, *vsechestvo*), to try and describe the ambition and range of her work, and its voracious movement across set design, painting, prints, fashion and illustration.

The vibrant print *Costume Espagnole* (1919) in Christchurch Art Gallery's collection captures something of this restless movement. This work began in the mantillas and dresses of Spanish dancers that captivated Goncharova while she was working on ballet designs for Diaghilev. It started in a dance, and was preparation and research for costumes for ballerinas, and then became a print, which then, in turn, became a large oil painting, *Espagnole* (c. 1916). Goncharova's work won't settle down, and from the print's inception it has been on the move, across time and space, to be here, in the Gallery's collection today.

Thomasin Sleigh is a writer and editor with a focus on the visual arts. *Costume Espagnole* is on display in *Perilous: Unheard Stories from the Collection*.

- 1 Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art 1863–1922*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1962, p. 97.
- 2 'Bow Down: Women in Art' podcast, *Frieze*. Accessed 19 August 2022.
- 3 Ken Hall, 'Costume Espagnole' in *101 Works of Art*, Sarah Pepperle (ed.), Christchurch: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, p. 98.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Chelsea Nichols, 'How to collect great art the "wrong" way', <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/document/7922>. Accessed 19 August 2022.

My Favourite

Roger Collins is a widely respected art historian and academic with an interest in early depictions of Aotearoa New Zealand by French artists, in particular Charles Meryon and Louis Le Breton. His monograph on Meryon is the definitive work on the artist. In 2021 he presented over forty prints and drawings by and after Meryon to the Gallery in recognition of the artist's connection with Te Pataka o Rakaihautū Banks Peninsula.

1957 was a big year for me—transitions from a middle-sized hometown to life in a major city, and from high school to university, with an emphasis on courses in French language and literature. And late in that year a new display in the Canterbury Museum allowed my rudimentary interest in New Zealand history, my unstructured interest in the visual arts, and my commitment to things French, to come together around the work of an artist I had never heard of, but who had lived briefly at Akaroa in the 1840s—Charles Meryon.

I later learned Meryon had trained at the French naval school in Brest, and that his formal training had included drawing lessons. During the cruise of the *Rhin* from 1841 to 1843 when it was supporting French interests in the region, he drew his way across the Pacific from Tasmania to Tahiti and from Micronesia to Banks Peninsula—landscapes, seascapes, portraits of members of the Indigenous communities he met, and their buildings and carvings.

After his return to France Meryon slowly extended his active interest in the visual arts, eventually resigned from the Navy, and began etching. His earliest prints date from 1848 and by late 1849 he had begun what would grow into a major series of views of Paris, some

of them devoted to townscapes and major historical buildings, frequently emphasising verticality and often showing sinister streetscapes. What other major artist has chosen to illustrate a morgue? And how perverse am I to feel oppressed by his 1862 view of a narrow street, the *Rue des Chantres*, on a plate 30cm tall but only 14.9cm wide?

In contrast, how do we respond to his Pacific landscapes, often with low horizons and sometimes wider than they are tall? Does it colour our reading of those landscapes to know that Meryon supported France's colonialism as a positive strategy to combat urban poverty and urban crime?

Another thing to consider is his combination of Pacific memories and Parisian realities. To give only one example, how outrageous was it to show a Māori canoe flying above the Place de la Concorde? Instead of being shocked, we should read those hybrid images as interpretations of the city in which he lived filtered through his memories of a better world.

So, why is Meryon's 1863 etching *Pointe dite des Charbonniers* my 'favourite'? Well, certainly not for its full title—*Nouvelle Zélande, Presqu'île de Banks, 1845, Pointe dite des Charbonniers, à Akaroa. Pêche à la seine*, that is: *New Zealand, Banks Peninsula, 1845, the place called Charcoal Burners Point, at Akaroa. Seine-net fishing*—but I'm parochial, having a particular fondness for his Banks Peninsula landscapes, and this one is so rich. In a landscape of beach and rounded hills he evokes a peaceful community—some settlers on the beach, fishermen, diverse watercraft, a stream of smoke from a fire—and his choice of an exceptional format, a surprising 32cm long, emphasises the idealism that imbues this image.



Charles Meryon *Nouvelle Zélande, Presqu'île de Banks, 1845. Pointe dite des Charbonniers, à Akaroa, Pêche à la Seine* 1863. Engraving. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1972



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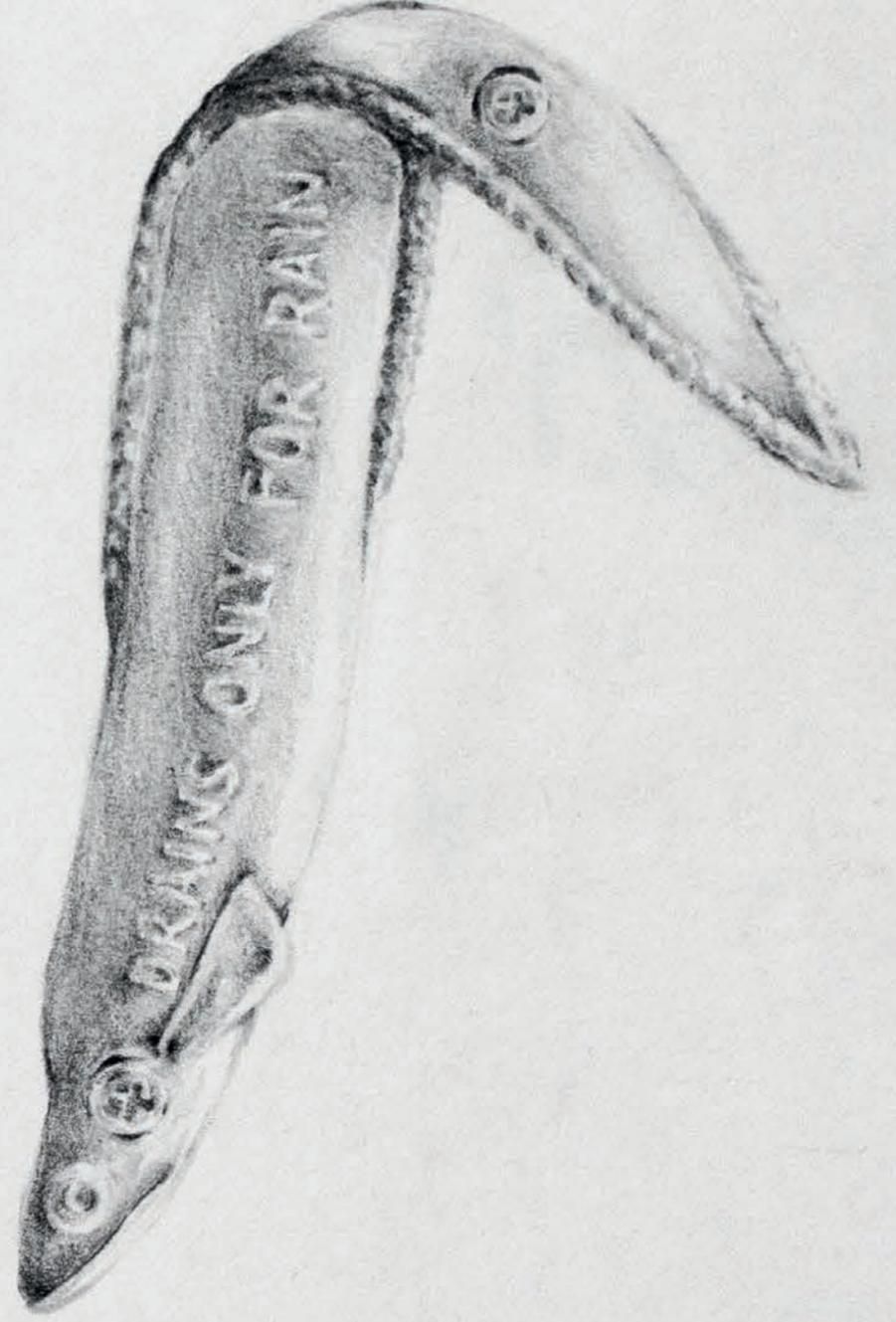
Each quarter the Gallery commissions an artist to create a new work of art especially for Bulletin. It's about actively supporting the generation of new work.

Madison Kelly Heke State 2022. Pencil on paper

In several cities around Aotearoa, small blue plastic fish imprinted with the words “Drains only for rain” have been installed beside the stormwater drains. These ika are intended as a reminder that our drainage systems lead back to local streams or groundwater, and that we should be careful about the pesticides, chemicals, waste and oil that we allow to wash off into our waterways. Ōtepoti Dunedin-based artist Madison Kelly (Kāi Tahu (Kāti Huirapa, Ngāi Tūāhuriri), Kāti Mamoe, Pākehā) noticed these fish while on a residency in Ōtautahi Christchurch, a city that was once a series of swamps and freshwater wetlands. In the nineteenth century, European settler colonisers ignored mana whenua advice that this area was a place to pass across, rather than reside in, and drained the wetlands to build on the land, channelling the waterways into a system of pipes. The 2010/11 Canterbury earthquakes ruptured many of these, with water returning momentarily to old stream lines and swamping areas of land.

Madison often incorporates observation, research, drawing and mapping of human/non-human relationships into her practice, looking at multispecies ecologies and entanglements on our threatened planet. Reflecting on the history and future of waterways in Ōtautahi, in this work she is concerned with tuna heke—eels that migrate to the sea to spawn—and the physiological changes they make in preparation for their six-month journey. The eyes of tuna heke become bigger, fins become larger and darker, heads become flatter and more torpedo shaped, and their colour alters to a lighter grey. The drawing on the left is a study of an existing ika plaque, but on the right Madison speculates on how tuna might further adapt. Research has shown that tuna heke are highly vulnerable to the impacts of increasing drought, warmer temperatures and changes in ocean patterns that are forecast responses to climate change. With freshwater fish stocks having declined on average 76% since 1970, what might future eels do or become in order to survive? And will we similarly need to morph, mutate or transform ourselves to live in a vastly changed environment?

Melanie Oliver
 Curator



Exhibitions

Opening this Quarter

Turumeke Harrington: Tātou tātou, nau mai rā

19 December 2022 – 29 January 2023

The Gallery reimagined as an ever-changing maze. Find your own path through!

Ink on Paper: Aotearoa New Zealand Printmakers of the Modern Era

11 February – 28 May 2023

An exquisite selection of etchings, lithographs, wood-engravings and linocuts made during one of the most dynamic periods in Aotearoa's art history.

Closing this Quarter

Cheryl Lucas: Shaped by Schist and Scoria

Until 4 December 2022

Seductive surfaces and tough issues—these are ceramics made for the eyes and mind.

Brett Graham: Tai Moana Tai Tangata

Until 19 February 2023

Shared colonial histories sound an urgent warning for the present.

James Oram: By Spectral Hands

Until 19 February 2023

New sculptural and video work tackling need, desire and consumer capitalism.

Brett Graham *Cease Tide of Wrong-Doing* (detail) 2020.
Kauri panels on wood and metal structure. Courtesy of the artist

Ongoing

Jeffrey Harris: The Gift

Until 19 March 2023

Paintings and drawings by one of New Zealand's most celebrated painters.

Barbara Tuck: Delirium Crossing

Until 26 March 2023

Ambiguous, floating picture worlds, a restless exploration of painting's promise.

Perilous: Untold Stories from the Collection

Making room for fresh voices, untold narratives and disruptive ideas.

Mata Aho Collective: Tikawe

An ambitious installation that descends from the skylights to zing across the foyer.

Xoë Hall: Kuini of the Worlds

A wild new mural from Kāi Tahu artist Xoë Hall celebrating atua wahine.

Lonnie Hutchinson:

Hoā Kohine (Girlfriend)

An intricately cut-out billboard celebrating supportive friendships between women.

Martin Creed: Everything is Going to be Alright

A completely unequivocal, but also pretty darn ambiguous, work for Christchurch.

Reuben Paterson: The End

A sparkling elevator installation providing an unexpected space for contemplation and connection.

Séraphine Pick: Untitled (Bathers)

Pick's lush watercolour offers a utopian vision in the carpark elevator.

Tomorrow Still Comes:

Natalia Saegusa

A fragmented, poetic temporary wall painting by Natalia Saegusa.

Kelcy Taratoa: Te Tāhū o ngā

Maunga Tūmatakahuki

A vast painting about how we are bound together.

Coming Soon

Salote Tawale

11 March – 18 June 2023

New works from Fijian-Australian artist Salote Tawale exploring cultural identity.

Die Cuts and Derivations

11 March – 2 July 2023

An expansive installation by Peter Robinson sparks a collection-based look at how artists investigate and respond to space, through line, materials and improvisation.

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