



B. *217*

Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū

Bulletin Issue no.217
Spring 2024



B.

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Our thanks to Leon White Design and the Visual Communication Design class at the Ara Institute of Canterbury for designing *Bulletin*.

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Printing: Caxton

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We welcome your feedback and suggestions for future articles.

ISSN 1176-0540 (print)

ISSN 1179-6715 (online)

Cover and left: Amanda Newall *Blue Ted* 2022.
Faux fur, stuffing, velveteen, plastic eyes and nose, plastic tube. Collection of the artist

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PLEASE NOTE: The opinions put forward in this magazine are not necessarily those of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. All images reproduced courtesy of the artist or copyright holder unless otherwise stated.

Above: Leo Bensemann walking on the beach at Wharariki. Photo: Mary Bensemann
Right: Alex Seton *Standing Manikin Target* 2020. Bianco Carrara marble. Collection of the artist, Sydney



Director's Foreword

BLAIR JACKSON

August 2024

As I write this it's a cold and gloomy Ōtautahi Christchurch day and the Gallery is abuzz with a wide range of visitors, family groups and children, taking part in our school holiday workshops and programmes, and filling our spaces with activity, excitement and laughter. It's a lovely warm place to be on a grey day. Hopefully by the time this *Bulletin* arrives in your hand there's a sense that spring is arriving, trees are greening up and the days are longer once again. By then we will have recently opened our major new collection focused exhibition to replace *Perilous: Unheard Stories from the Collection*.

Our new exhibition is called *He Kapuka Oneone—A Handful of Soil*, and we've used this title to suggest the powerful and lasting connections that can exist between people and land. The phrase is written in Kāi Tahu dialect, and recalls a well-known whakatauhākī attributed to Manawaroa, a Te Arawa rakatira who was captured and imprisoned by Ngāi Tuhoe. From captivity in Te Urewera, he longed to return to his place of his birth. Believing he was near death he made this request of his captors: “Tukuna mai he kapunga oneone ki au hei tangi.” Send me a handful of soil that I may weep over it.

He Kapuka Oneone—A Handful of Soil explores the fundamental role whenua plays in the visual language and identity of Aotearoa New Zealand. The exhibition comprises painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, moving image, printmaking and weaving by historical and contemporary artists, all brought together to reveal how land has been a material and subject for art in Aotearoa for hundreds of years.

I'm very excited about *He Kapunga Oneone* as it beautifully reflects one of our key principles, which is to increase Māori representation in collection. To this end it contains a number of important new acquisitions and

commissions—I'm particularly looking forward to seeing Ross Hemera's *Ka moe te whaea i te wai* on the walls. In this issue of *Bulletin* our curators each pick one of their favourite works from the show to look at in greater depth.

This quarter also sees the opening of two new exhibitions that feel like they've been waiting in the wings for a number of reasons. *Dummies & Doppelgängers* is a show that was first proposed over a decade ago, just before the 2010/11 Waitaha Canterbury earthquakes. Put on ice by the long closure of this building, it was again on the table and in development when Covid closed the building, and the country, in 2020. So, it's wonderful to finally be in a position to introduce the exhibition. Accompanied by an excellent publication, the selection of sculpture, video, photography and more from Aotearoa and Australia in *Dummies & Doppelgängers* is a funny, surreal and touching examination the power of alternative identities. Here, the exhibition's curator Felicity Milburn looks at the evolutions undertaken by some of the works it features.

Another exhibition impacted by the earthquakes was *Leo Bensemman: A Fantastic Art Venture*. Opened on 11 February 2011, it was rudely closed just eleven days later by the earthquake of 22 February. So I'm very pleased that *Leo Bensemann: Paradise Garden* will offer another chance to look at one element of the output of a painter who is often overlooked—fingers crossed we have more time to appreciate his work this time. For *Bulletin*, curator Peter Vangioni delves deeper into Bensemann's ongoing fascination with the landscape of the Mohua Golden Bay region.

Outside of this building, our residency programme based at the former home of artist Bill Sutton continues breathing life into the city's Red Zone. Throughout May of this year it was home to artistic duo Edwards + Johann as they worked towards a new exhibition for this building,

which opens in early September. The pair talked to Felicity about their interdisciplinary approach to art-making.

I'm also excited that by the time this magazine is published we'll be much closer to the installation of Yona Lee's *Fountain in Transit* (2024), commissioned by the Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Gallery building in 2023. Part domestic bathroom, part civic fountain, this site-specific sculpture brings a playful but peaceful energy to this building. Using flowing arrangements made from the kind of stainless-steel tubing associated with urban spaces and public transportation, Lee connects us with the history of the Gallery building and site. Gifted by Ngāi Tahu, the building's name, Te Puna o Waiwhetū, refers to the waipuna (artesian spring) beneath this building. The curving lines of its architecture, echoed in Lee's sculpture, acknowledge the sinuous path of the Ōtākaro Avon River through the city. A nearby tributary is called Waiwhetū, which can be translated as 'water in which stars are reflected'.

Fountain in Transit has been a big fundraising project for the Foundation over the past eighteen months and I'm enormously grateful for all the hard work and support they provide the Gallery. Thanks also to Yona Lee, her gallery, Fine Arts, Sydney and all the people who have generously supported the commissioning of *Fountain in Transit*. But don't worry, it's not too late for you to help too! If you'd like to be part of this incredibly exciting new work then please contact me or the Foundation's partnerships manager, Jacq Mehrstens.

Another excellent way to get involved is to join us at the Foundation's annual gala dinner, which will be held in one of our beautiful gallery spaces on Friday 18 October. I don't want to give away too much at the moment, but I can promise that it will be a fantastic night to remember!

A Space for Conversation: Chaos, collaboration and becoming in the works of Edwards + Johann

Ōtautahi Christchurch-based artists Victoria Edwards and Ina Johann have worked in artistic collaboration as Edwards + Johann since 2007. They take an interdisciplinary approach to art-making, combining photography, drawing, collage, performance, video and sculpture.

Curator Felicity Milburn spoke with the pair shortly after their month-long residency at Sutton House, during which they prepared sculptures for their upcoming Gallery exhibition. *Edwards + Johann: Mutabilities—propositions to an unknown universe* will combine these with other works made across the last five years to investigate ideas of response to place, connection and transformation. All of the works carry the indelible resonance of the unforgettable, and tragically unpredictable, geothermal environment of Whakaari White Island, which Edwards + Johann visited in 2018, prior to its devastating 2019 eruption.



Ina Johann and Victoria Edwards
(Edwards + Johann) at Sutton
House, 2024

“There are always many layers to an unknown space or place. We enjoy the perusal and the uncovering, the hidden folds and the threads that open up...”

FELICITY MILBURN: You’ve described your process as finding the work through making, rather than starting with a fixed idea. Can you describe how that has played out for this project?

EDWARDS + JOHANN: Our collaboration is about making work through the process of engaging—with each other and with our lived experiences. And residencies have played a significant role in our growth over the years. This new body of work has developed out of our Volcanic Artist Residency in Whakatāne, which included two visits to Whakaari White Island. So there’s the lived experience and then there’s the moment—the ‘where we are’ at the time, which in this case is Sutton House. A beautiful big studio, one month and the ‘what if’ factor. For us this offered a portal of potentiality, and of course we were excited to engage.

Sutton House also gave us the space to play with scale—how big is too big? It was a testing ground to draw out kernels from some of our two-dimensional work and play them out in three dimensions. Our aspirational idea was to build an environment of objects that enriched, interacted with, and engaged with, the existing two-dimensional works in the exhibition to create tensions and contradictions through the use of colour, form, scale and proportion.

We accepted our physical limitations and wanted to be able to pivot in process when appropriate. So we engaged in a low tech way, using humble materials with a hands-on approach. It is important for us to be close to the process as it allows us to tease out and nurture content and create meaning as the works progress. Our collaborative way of working has

conversational opportunities built in. These are around the practicalities—how the process develops as work evolves—and also broader discussions about what the work is revealing and becoming. We never want to forget that all materials have a voice; as artists we think we can manipulate them astutely and adeptly, and often we can, but at other times they have a life of their own and a will that we need to honour and listen to. They won’t simply do what we want of them, but they will suggest new possibilities, new directions, and we can either follow along with those or not. This is an important part of the ‘becoming’ of the works for us. Of course, we had an idea of what the finished exhibition would include: a mood, a meaning if you will, but it’s important to us to retain a fluidity, flexibility and a spontaneity in the process. It is in this coming together that they reveal themselves—where the research meets the making and from there the content unfolds.

What did it mean to you to be working at Sutton House? How did that environment affect the work?

The place where you are always influences you, but Sutton House was particularly wonderful because we both really enjoyed the view, the garden, the light, the trees—that fig tree is just so beautiful! There are always many layers to an unknown space or place. We enjoy the perusal and the uncovering, the hidden folds and the threads that open up when you spend time in a place that you are unfamiliar with.

The opportunities we had here—supported by the Gallery, the use of this fantastic big studio—meant that we knew we had the freedom to run with our ideas. We could

play and go with whatever happened in the space. That was pretty exciting. There's such a beautiful winter light in the Red Zone and it enters the studio from all directions. We loved that we could open the doors and take the works outside, or use the courtyard to isolate a work so that we could stand back and look at it critically together.

Timewise, the project has been bigger than we imagined (another four weeks would have been great). Living on the property allowed us to work from morning till night, uninterrupted and unencumbered by the demands of our ordinary lives. The Red Zone location offers a unique oasis of peace and tranquillity that is home to some beautiful native trees, and yet still relatively central to Ōtautahi.

The fig tree outside the studio window felt like it was always watching us. Spotlit at night and enjoyed by the birds all day, it has a special and unique presence. In the last few days of our residency we realised we had developed some small affection for that tree. Its sensibility had permeated our perception and production in various tangible and intangible ways. Each residency so far has surprised us by offering loose threads of curiosity that beg to be followed. We intend to return to the garden to make fig tree drawings at a later date.

Have all the residencies you've done had an exhibition of some kind at the end?

Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Sometimes opportunities formed while we were there—our hosts were open to it, but they weren't putting pressure on us, it was something that could be decided. After spending two weeks setting up our survey show from *THE EDGE of SPACES* in Whakatāne in 2018,¹ Whakatāne Library and Exhibition Centre offered us their window space for a first research-based installation. They also took us to Whakaari White Island. We only had two weeks in Whakatāne on that trip, but we had already done a lot of research and made a lot of small objects in preparation, so we were able to set up a display in the museum. We were offered another exhibition of new work after the completion of the main part of the Volcanic Artist Residency.

When we were first in Scotland as the International Artists in Residence for the Perth 800 celebrations we used our time to research and explore the area.² We made a lot of collages, drawings and video recordings, and also spent quite a lot of time in the Perth Museum and Art Gallery's collection. The opportunity to access and research that collection was a wonderful experience for us. The main works that resulted from that residency were showcased later on our return visit. We did a workshop with students and exhibited as part of the Perth 800 celebrations.

Ina Johann and Victoria Edwards (Edwards + Johann)
at Sutton House, 2024





Work in progress at Sutton House, 2024



The fig tree at Sutton House



Work in progress in the garden at Sutton House, 2024

It always depends on the nature of the residency and the set up. Each residency offered us a different framework and opportunities. For the Château de Padies Artist in Residence Programme in Lempaut, France,³ we weren't expected to present work at the time, but we were happy to do so. At the end of the residency they had an open day at the château and we were invited to perform alongside poets, other artists and musicians. We did a costumed performance in the garden and developed an installation in the attic. On returning the following year, we presented a new exhibition and performance.

How we approach those kinds of situations depends on a whole range of factors. It's about navigating and negotiating with people, equipment, situations, available funding—seeing what's possible when you get there. For us, one of the richest residencies was at the Altes Spital in Switzerland, because we had three months there and we were able to explore the place in depth. We were given a lot of freedom and also a lot of support from the institution. We had a train ticket that meant it was free to go anywhere around

Switzerland to see art and discuss what we had seen. But residencies are always beneficial—they mean growth to an artist, whether they are tailored to help you realise a work, or feed into your research, or fill up your bucket of curiosity and wonder so that you can actually go out and explore the world in another way again.

The ever-changing landscape on Whakaari clearly has special resonance for you after having been through all the adaptations of the earthquake years here. What sorts of ideas have been at the forefront of your minds as you make this new work?

There's a lot of chaos in the world. Things are constantly evolving, being there and not there, growing and decaying. You could label a lot of the natural processes that we observe as chaotic. We are part of that chaos and, in a way, trying to make sense of it all the time.

In the 'becoming' of these abstract objects we have contemplated aspects of a biomorphic character, suggestive of something living but not a plant—a leg, or a specific

organism. Elements that suggest simple acts of survival and adaptation.

Was that tree trying to tell us something of resilience, flexibility, guardianship, radical acceptance, the seasons of life? The works are a family or group, an odd bunch. They are like characters from *Waiting for Godot* queueing up in their best clothes with their various stances and expressions; actors in the wings, ready to perform their parts.

While we worked, we listened to the audiobook *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben, and grew fond of his phrase “slightly more active than rocks”. The new forms embrace imperfection and slippages. With their human proportions they embody our relationship to forces in nature. They offer another piece in what we think of as the puzzle narrative of our collaborative practice. As artists, we are humorous and playfully ambiguous, committed to the importance of physically creating our work but drawn to the complex and illusive.

The relative isolation of the residency, as we chose to play it out, allowed us to reflect on the complex, cyclic narrative of

“In the ‘becoming’ of these abstract objects we have contemplated aspects of a biomorphic character, suggestive of something living but not a plant, a leg or a specific organism.”

our practice and the bodies of work we have produced since 2007. Our performative costume-clad bodies engaging in a predetermined three-dimensional space whilst being filmed is a form of sculpture for us. A lot of objects we develop feel animated like characters; sometimes unfaltering, sometimes whimsical. Bill Sutton said in 1974, “All the shapes I wish to use are about me in our natural environment”. In response, we say “this new work made at Sutton House includes all the shapes we wish to make”.

This is an edited version of a conversation between Felicity Milburn and Edwards + Johann from June 2024. Edwards + Johann: Mutabilities—propositions to an unknown universe is on display from 14 September 2024 until 9 February 2025.

¹ Whakatāne Library and Exhibition Centre, Whakatāne, 2018.

² *Maps of Engagement: Pathways and connections:* Artist Residency at Perth Museum and Art Gallery, funded by Perth and Kinross Council/Perth800, May/June 2010.

³ Château de Padies artist in residence programme in France, in association with its CULTURE & CULTURES Festival, Lempaut/France, 2009 and 2010.

Turn Around



and I'm Gone Again

Felicity Milburn



Ah Xian China, China—Bust 28 1999. Porcelain body-cast, hand painted in overglaze enamels.
Powerhouse Museum, purchased 2000. Photo: Richard Weinstein

The public lives of artworks can be occasional and itinerant—they emerge from the cosy sameness of storage into fresh locations and contexts. Many make their first public appearances alongside siblings from their maker’s studio, but later find themselves in very different company. While some resolutely maintain their identity no matter how or where they are shown, others open up to additional associations and meanings. Fittingly for a show about the power of alternative identities, several of the works in *Dummies & Doppelgängers* have evolved over time, shapeshifting into new lives or likenesses.

Scott Eady’s *Boy*—an unexpectedly menacing work that reflects the artist’s ambivalence about the messages our society sends our children—required only a fresh pair of pyjamas from the artist to ready him for his current outing. Other transitions have been more circuitous. Francis Upritchard’s *Eeling in the Ōtākaro* is a sinuous, writhing tangle, steadied by the deep concentration projected by the two human figures in its midst. I say ‘human’, but with their strangely elongated limbs they’re weirder and more wonderful than your typical *Homo sapiens*. Upritchard was inspired by two *yōkai*, or fabulous beings, from Japanese folklore known together as Ashinaga-Tenaga (Long Legs and Long Arms). Ashinaga-jin (足長人) has extremely long legs, while Tenaga-jin (手長人) has extremely long arms. With Tenaga-jin sitting on Ashinaga-jin’s shoulders, they can fish in deeper and more abundant waters than others can reach alone, symbolising the value of cooperative relationships. In Upritchard’s reimagining, they wade in the winding Ōtākaro awa of Ōtautahi Christchurch, and the fish that surround them are its velvety native longfin eels, tuna. Upritchard wanted to emphasise how the city’s difficult recent history of devastating earthquakes and horrifying terrorist attacks has made it more important than ever for people here to try to work together. She made her eelers during the Gallery’s artist residency at Sutton House, a stay that coincided with the Covid pandemic, and they attained an added resonance at a time when cooperation for the good of all was so demonstrably essential to survival.

Eeling in the Ōtākaro was first exhibited in Upritchard’s 2022 exhibition, *Paper, Creature, Stone*. The figures and eels were composed of balata—a wild rubber sustainably extracted from trees in the Amazon in Brazil. This unstable material requires patience, careful handling and an artist willing to embrace unpredictability. The resulting sculptures have a texture that is hard to describe; somewhere between pulled taffy and petrified wood. They’re stringy and springy,

smell like cold, damp earth and are prone to becoming brittle as they dry out. In the months between the packages of balata arriving at the Gallery from Brazil, and Upritchard starting work, they had to be regularly taken from a handling room up to the conservation lab for soaking, leaving a slight whiff of mouldy potato in the air behind them. This process was repeated with the completed sculptures before the exhibition. It wasn’t a long-term solution, however, so in order to bring the work into the Gallery’s collection and ensure its longevity, it was cast in bronze. For this, it was sent by sea to Vincenza, Italy, and the specialist Guastini art foundry with whom Upritchard has established a working relationship. The casting process sacrificed the original balata but retained the nuances of texture and movement that make the work so unforgettable. After being inspected and approved by the artist, *Eeling in the Ōtākaro* was transported back to Ōtautahi and resecured to its boulder to await its new-state debut in *Dummies & Doppelgängers*.¹

Scott Eady *Boy* 2006. Fibreglass, acrylic, fabric.
Courtesy of the artist and the Art House Trust,
Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland



Francis Upritchard *Eeling in the Ōtākaro* 2021–3,
Bronze (from balata rubber), limestone. Collection
of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū,
purchased 2023 with the support of the Ngarita
Charlotte Hounam Johnstone bequest





Ah Xian *China, China*—Bust 39 1999. Porcelain body—cast with yingqing glaze. Powerhouse Museum, donated through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program by Gene and Brian Sherman, 2008. Photo: Richard Weinstein

Ah Xian’s exquisitely surfaced porcelain busts have also travelled between hemispheres, but in their case this distance was central to their conceptualisation. They are part of *China, China*, an extraordinary series of more than eighty individual works the artist began in 1998. They reflect his search for a means of expression that would honour the artistic traditions of his Chinese birthplace while also acknowledging the new context of his adopted Australian home. The *China, China* works shift fluidly between times and places, and between surface and spirit. After seeking political asylum in Australia in 1990, Ah Xian returned to China in 1997 to make this work. He travelled to Jingdezhen, a small town whose skilled artisans have been renowned over centuries for their intricately decorated porcelain, a material so synonymous with the country in which it is made that it is known simply to many Westerners as ‘china’. Ah Xian described his desire to work with the artisans of Jingdezhen, and to commission them to incorporate traditional designs and motifs in the decoration of his body casts, as a way of resurrecting historic artmaking traditions while also working within the new tradition of conceptual art. Unlike the Western archetype of the lone genius, the artisanal work in Jingdezhen is performed by many unnamed hands and Ah Xian’s works acknowledge the value of such collective practice. At the same time they emphasise the uniqueness of each individual life: every bust was cast from a different person, including the artist’s wife Mali Hong (bust 28), his family and friends. Patterns created through varied

techniques such as hand painting, cloisonné and specialist glazes suggest how a person’s cultural background and life experience leave indelible traces, here made visible on the ‘skin’ of each sculpture.

The catalyst for Alex Seton’s haunting *Standing Manikin Target* came as a surprise to the artist. After spending most of 2007 travelling, he returned to Sydney to encounter the central city as he had never seen it, effectively locked down by security measures for the APEC Leaders’ Week conference. A week prior, he had been searched and detained for several hours by police in a London underground station, on high alert following a terrorist attack on Glasgow Airport. Still jarred by that experience, he was horrified to find his hometown also bristling with armed police and rooftop snipers, and a 5km concrete and wire security cordon around the politicians. It was an unprecedented level of intervention that, unbeknownst to the artist, had prompted intense public concern and media debate in the weeks leading up to the conference. Compelled to document the fraught grimness of this unfamiliar environment, Seton walked through and photographed the blocked-off streets, somehow avoiding the attention of police who were confiscating cameras and attempting to shepherd people away from the scene. After standing in front of a vehicle convoy to photograph it and being joined by a swell of protestors, he was forcibly removed. It was later revealed that more than 200 of the uniformed officers present had removed their badges to prevent themselves from being identified for complaints of assault.

Alex Seton *Standing Manikin Target*
2020. Bianco Carrara marble.
Collection of the artist, Sydney





Amanda Newall *Blue Ted* 2022. Faux fur, stuffing, velveteen, plastic eyes and nose, plastic tube. Collection of the artist

Disturbed by what he saw as overreach by the authorities and an excessive show of force that escalated tensions rather than reducing them, Seton returned to his studio. The sculpture he subsequently produced in response was rendered in smooth white Carrara marble—its elegant appearance offering apparent contrast to the visceral physicality of his experience. Yet the simmering violence and sinister atmosphere of that day can be felt in Seton’s meticulously finished work. It is based on a ballistics-gel target dummy that was developed for sniper training by the Australian Special Forces. Carefully designed to represent the size and shape of an ‘average’ human, the original practice dummy contained target sensors and robotics that allowed it to measure, and therefore hone, the accuracy of shooters. Its wide base allowed it to be fixed to a vehicle for moving target practice, while the exaggerated swell of its elongated throat represented the optimal ‘kill zone’ of heart and lungs. In this context, Seton’s customary use of marble attained an

additional association, recalling the sombre stonework of a war memorial or mausoleum. When shown outside as part of a recent exhibition at Contemporary Sculpture Fulmer, near London, the pure white stone of the manikin was set against green spring grass, bearing a chilling resemblance to headstones in a military cemetery.

Our favourite toys are supposed to be comforting and constant, remaining safely anchored in memory when we reach adulthood. Amanda Newall’s childhood companion *Blue Ted*, however, is anything but predictable. He made his first appearance shortly after she did, arriving as a gift from her grandmother to welcome the new baby. Outlandishly oversized and clad in electric blue faux fur, the bear was a powerful presence in her growing-up years, oscillating effortlessly between the real, the imagined and the somewhere-in-between. Years later, as an adult, Newall was shocked to discover his remains disintegrating in a plastic bag on her parents’ property. After such an abrupt and



Amanda Newall *Blue Ted* 2022. Faux fur, stuffing, velveteen, plastic eyes and nose, plastic tube. Collection of the artist

confronting demise, it’s perhaps not surprising that she would eventually decide to resurrect him. While undertaking a residency at Joya: AiR in Andalusia, Spain, in 2021, Newall sewed an accurately scaled and wearable replica from memory, and slipped into the skin of her childhood familiar. In a video taken for her by another artist, she prowls weirdly through the countryside in the baking heat, breathing with difficulty through an internal snorkel and gingerly picking her way over prickly grass and stones in her bare feet. It makes for strange and unsettling viewing—a bedroom bear released into the wild. *Blue Ted*’s black button eyes allow the wearer no view of the outside world and, on his furry belly, six extra noses are lined up like nipples. Newall’s adult legs and arms protrude beyond the furry blue suit, creating a human/bear hybrid that is simultaneously creepy and vulnerable. And yet, if Newall’s reinhabiting of her childhood was uncanny, the world around her was even stranger. The residency took place during the Covid pandemic, against

a backdrop of lockdowns, mass masking, social distancing and global anxiety. Wrapping yourself in the cloak of childhood speaks to an impulse many of us felt then—the yearning for protection and comfort, the attempt to cocoon ourselves by returning to what seemed like simpler times. The awkwardness of the fit acknowledges both the futility of such magical thinking and the impossibility of returning to our childhood selves: our time out in the world reshapes us, and we can’t go home again.

Felicity Milburn
Lead curator

Dummies & Doppelgänger is on display from 2 November 2024 until 23 March 2025.

¹ This acquisition was made possible through a generous bequest by local artist and teacher Ngarita Johnstone.

The Year in Review

23,455

Number of people who attended public programme events including lectures, talks and tours by Gallery staff, Gallery volunteers, invited experts and artists.

1 July 2023 –
30 June 2024

2,771

Number of hours open to the public.

12

Number of exhibitions/
artist projects held at
the Gallery.

12,579

Number of participants who attended
Gallery-led education sessions.

366,627

Number of visitors.

2,505

Number of hours of valued service
given to the Gallery by our volunteer
guides, who helped and informed
approximately **14,500** visitors.

GALLERY PUBLICATIONS

In addition to a range of guides, fliers, posters and newsletters, the Gallery's publishing team produced the following publications:

B.213, Chloe Cull, Ken Hall, Felicity Milburn, Jane Wallace, spring 2023, 64 pages

B.214, Melanie Oliver, Jane Wallace, summer 2023/24, 70 pages

B.215, Chloe Cull, Ken Hall, autumn 2024, 56 pages

B.216, Ken Hall, Melanie Oliver, winter 2024, 56 pages

Te Rā: The Māori Sail, Mat Tait and Ariana Tikao, 2023, hard cover with 36 concertina pages

1 2 3 What Will We See?, 2023, board book with lift-the-flap pages

More than 3,000 Christchurch Art Gallery books were sold around the country.

OTHER WRITING

Chloe Cull

'We were making art, which was what we always wanted to do: Elizabeth Ellis and Mere Lodge', *Sight Lines: Women and Art in Aotearoa*, AUP: Auckland, 2024, pp. 115–26.

Tim Jones

'Eight months in the Cook Islands', *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 58, no. 4, pp. 434–43

Melanie Oliver

'Body Politics: Women and Performance in the 1980s', *Resetting the Coordinates: An Anthology of Performance Art or Aotearoa New Zealand*, Massey University Press: Wellington, 2024, pp. 90–107

'Julia Morison: To the Power of Ten', *Ocula*, 2024

Sarah Pepperle

'Tomorrow will be the same as this, pretty much', *Everything I Know About Books: An Insider Look at Publishing in Aotearoa*, Whitireia Publishing: Wellington, 2023

COLLECTION

Acquisitions: 189 (including 73 gifts)

Outward loans: 39

Inward loans: 393

LIBRARY

The collection of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives now comprises 14,704 items and 124 archival collections.

INVITED PUBLIC LECTURES AND INDUSTRY WORKSHOPS

Chloe Cull

'Te Rā: The Māori Sail', Rāpaki Māori Women's Welfare League, August 2023

'Robyn Kahukiwa: Panel discussion with Māia Abraham and Hana Pera Aoake', Centre for Contemporary Art, November 2023

'Cora-Allan: Encountering Aotearoa', U3A Arts Centre, Riccarton, April 2024

Ken Hall

'Objects from Out of Time', U3A Ellesmere, Lincoln, August 2023

'Eleanor Hughes: Mona Vale to Chyangweal', Christchurch Heritage Festival, 7 October 2023

'Out of Time: Hidden Treasures, Hidden Trails', U3A Malvern, Darfield, November 2023; U3A Pegasus, Mount Pleasant, December 2023

Felicity Milburn

'What Art History Taught Me', University of Canterbury 150 Year Celebration Weekend, October 2023

Eliza Penrose

'Flattening the Friable: Tension drying works on paper with friable media using magnets', XV International Association of Book and Paper Conservators Congress, October 2023

PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Chloe Cull

Panel, Parehuia McCahon House Residency

Panel, Arts and Culture Sponsorship Fund, Christchurch City Council

Chair, The Physics Room Board of Trustees
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Ken Hall

Expert Examiner, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage

Blair Jackson

Trustee, W. A. Sutton Trust
Trustee, Sutton Heritage House and Garden Trust

Felicity Milburn

Judge, Adam Portraiture Prize 2024,
New Zealand Portrait Gallery Te Pūkenga Whakaata
Expert Examiner, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage
Panellist, Postgraduate Research Seminars, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts
Panellist, Tai Tapu Sculpture Commission Competition

Rebecca Ogle

Judge, Arts Canterbury Juried Art Show, Oxford Gallery Toi o Waimakariri

Melanie Oliver

Jury member, Walter's Prize 2023
Judge, National Contemporary Art Award 2023, Waikato Museum
Member, SCAPE Curatorial Committee

DESIGN STORE

101,685 visitors to the Design Store bought 31,349 items. These included 1,907 books, 1,867 greeting cards, and an incredible 8,854 Gallery-branded items.

AWARDS

Felicity Milburn and Kim Paton, *Cheryl Lucas: Shaped by Schist and Scoria*. AAANZ Arts Writing and Publishing Awards, 2023 (winner, Best Small Exhibition Catalogue)

Melanie Oliver and Bridget Reweti et al., *Māori Moving Image*, AAANZ Art Writing and Publishing Awards 2023 (highly commended, Best Art Writing by a New Zealand Māori or Pasifika)

He Kapuka Oneone

—

A Handful of Soil

Our expansive new collection exhibition explores the fundamental role whenua plays in the visual language and identity of Aotearoa New Zealand. Acknowledging Māori as takata whenua, the first peoples to call this land home, themes of kaitiakitaka, colonisation, environmentalism, land use, migration, identity and belonging are considered through collection works, new acquisitions and exciting commissions. Painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, moving image, printmaking and weaving by historical and contemporary artists are brought together to reveal how land has been a material and subject for art in Aotearoa for hundreds of years. Here, the Gallery's curators each take a closer look at a key work from the exhibition that tells us something about our complex relationship with the whenua.

Natalie Robertson *The Blue Slip (Barton’s Gully)*, from *Mangarara Stream* 2023. C-type gloss photographic print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2024

The Blue Slip (Barton’s Gully), from Mangarara Stream

In the Waiorongomai Valley, on the upper catchment of the Waiapu River in the east coast region of Te Tairāwhiti Gisborne, a combination of land erosion and climatic change is contributing to the collapse of hillsides into the river. The source of the flow of sediment downstream into the Tapuaeroa, then Waiapu rivers and out to the ocean is at its most clearly observable from Mangarara, a small tributary that leads into the Waiorongomai River. This ecological catastrophe is the result of over a century of colonial forestry, introduced pests and more recently, sea level rise. The coastal environment has been changed irreversibly, disrupting not only the Waiapu river, but also endemic plants, fish species, and the lives of those who depend on these resources. In particular, Ngāti Porou have fished kahawai from this area for generations and can no longer do so.

Photographer Natalie Robertson (Ngāti Porou, Clann Dhònnchaidh) regularly returns to Waiorongomai to witness and document, generating stories about the impact of the ongoing erosion. With a focus on both cultural and environmental relationships, Robertson creates photographs and moving images that explore mātauraka Māori through

a whakapapa lens, approaching the landscape as interconnected with atua, tūpuna, tākata, pūrākau and mōteatea. Robertson’s whakapapa to this area escalates her distress regarding the devastation and instils in her work an urgency for action to revitalise and repair.

Parawhenuamea, the atua of alluvial waters, is a maker of land, carrying sediment to the ocean as part of the natural ecological cycle. However, in the case of Mangarara, it is colonial, industrial and economic drivers that have intensified the changes to land and ocean—a situation an Indigenous approach to environmental custodianship could have mitigated, and which may benefit future resource management. Robertson writes:

*Indigenous ways of thinking about the intricate interconnectedness of all life on earth and in the atmosphere offer vitally important whole-of-landscape and seascape paradigms that could stimulate creative environmental reinvigoration and reparation internationally.*¹

Back in 2019, Robertson collaborated with conservation ranger Graeme Atkins and moving image artist Alex Monteith to make the multi-channel video installation



Te rerenga pōuri o nga parawhenua ki Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, charting the journey of sediment to Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa the Pacific Ocean and the story of how the extreme coastal erosion impacts the local community—her whānau. For this new work, Robertson has merged several still photographs taken on a medium-format digital camera, producing images of extremely high resolution and sharpness, magnifying and bringing the landscape into detailed focus. Making visible the loss of land, Robertson has come to think of her work as following the form of a mōteatea, a lament, yet she also offers us a sense of hope:

*The riverbed rises, river waters rise, sediment settles in the ocean and the ocean rises. So too, must we rise to these challenges.*²

Melanie Oliver
Curator

Ngāti Porou – tribal group of East Coast area north of Tairāwhiti Gisborne to Tihirau
Kahawai – schooling coastal fish
Mātauraka Maori – Māori knowledge
Whakapapa – genealogy, lineage
Atua – ancestor with continuing influence, god, deity
Tūpuna – ancestors
Tākata – people
Pūrākau – myth, ancient legend, story
Mōteatea – lament
Whānau – extended family, family group

1 Natalie Robertson, ‘Para-Whenua-Mea—Muddy-Soil-Of-Mother-Earth. Personifications of Water in Te Ao Māori (The Māori World)’. AUT: Auckland, p. 264.
2 Natalie Robertson, ‘Swirling currents emerge at the Waiapu river mouth’, *Journal of Environmental Media*, vol.2, Intellect: Bristol, 2021, p. 6.



The Hill Inside

E kore a Parawhenuamea e haere ki te kore a Rakahore.

This meditative two-channel video work by Whakatāne-based artist Sarah Hudson (Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Pūkeko) is informed by the above whakataukī about the interconnectedness of water and rock. Parawhenuamea is the embodiment of water and the parent of silts, sands, and alluvial soils and deposits. Without rock—personified as Rakahore—water does not flow.

This idea has informed many years of research by Hudson into her tūpuna Māori and their use of rocks, clay and soils mixed with water as a material for personal adornment, art making, ceremony and medicine. *The Hill Inside* is the culmination of Hudson's research as she explores the whakapapa of whenua, reconnecting with her body and the land through ritual.

The work consists of two separately titled channels. In *Reconnect* the artist undertakes small rituals of engagement with soil and clay: she applies grey uku to her body, face and hair; she holds rocks and clay in her hands and in her mouth. Water and earth come together to make rich new textures and colours. *Remember* comprises scenes filmed at the river and includes clay objects that bear marks of Hudson's rituals.

Initially commissioned by Bundanon Art Museum in Illaroo, Australia for the exhibition *The Polyphonic Sea* in 2023, *The Hill Inside* is named for the underground location of the Bundanon Art Museum, and the relationship between earth and the body, particularly for Indigenous peoples. For Māori, the ancestral relationships between people and whenua, mauka and awa are established through whakapapa and often reinforced through the burying of one's placenta, also named whenua, in the earth.

Chloe Cull

Pouarataki Curator Māori

Whakataukī – proverb

Tūpuna māori – Māori ancestors

Whakapapa – genealogy, lineage

Whenua – land, placenta

Uku – clay

Mauka – mountain

Awa – river

Pūaotanga o te Ao

The scene we glimpse in *Pūaotanga o te Ao* shimmers between worlds and possibilities. Curving forwards, a back morphs into a mountain that might be the artist’s ancestral mauka, Ngāuruhoe. Behind it, a bare wall becomes a half-lit sky. In the hands of Shannon Te Ao (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Wairangi, Ngāti Te Rangiita, Te Pāpaka-a-Maui), the close, personal and ephemeral transforms into something distant, monumental and timeless. He first made this image for an exhibition he called *Tīwakawaka* after the flitting manu also known as the fantail or pīwakawaka. Well known for its habit of accompanying walkers in Aotearoa New Zealand’s forests, this bird has a special significance in te ao Māori, where it moves effortlessly between realms, passing messages and warnings.

In making this work, Te Ao first created a luminous backdrop from the rear-projected footage of landscapes relating to his whenua and whanauka. He enlisted an actor to perform a range of actions in front of this, which he captured on film. This layered construction lends an appealing indistinctness and fluidity to the resulting photograph. Like many works by Te Ao, it manages to be both specific and expansive—operating in the here and now, but connecting us to the epic and poetic. Though still, it hums with the memory of movement. Though simple, it opens out in many possible directions. Blue is the colour of the sky and the ocean; both vast, endless, and changeable. Here, the shade Te Ao has selected carries with it the suggestion of a particular time and place—the night sky glimpsed from inside a well-lit room. In te reo Māori, te ao can mean world, and pūaotanga is the dawn, so *Pūaotanga o te Ao* also reads as a beginning of some sort. Whether we interpret that as the creation of the world we currently exist in, or the start of a new one, is left up to us.

Felicity Milburn
Lead curator

Mauka – mountain
Whenua – land, placenta
Manu – bird
Te ao Māori – the Māori world
Whanauka – relative, kin

Shannon Te Ao *Pūaotanga o te Ao* 2022. Archival digital print on Hahnemühle photorag paper. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 2023





Edward Percy Sealy Head of the great Tasman Glacier, with Hochstetter Dome and Mount Darwin, Mount Cook District, March 1869 1869. Albumen print. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of Corina Silich, 2022

Head of the Great Tasman Glacier

with Hochstetter Dome and Mount Darwin, Mount Cook District, March 1869

In 2022, the Gallery received a remarkable gift: a collection of photograph albums and associated material including many letters, created and collated by Edward Percy Sealy (1839–1903), a surveyor and photographer closely associated with explorer, geologist and Canterbury Museum founder Julius von Haast. Sealy was the first to photograph Kā Tiritiri-o-te-Moana the Southern Alps, giving particular attention to unmapped peaks and glaciers on his extensive alpine journeys between 1866 and 1870, sometimes in the company of von Haast.

In April 1867, Sealy made his first trip to the Aoraki Mount Cook District, which included visiting the Mueller and Hooker glaciers and ascending the latter to within one-and-a-half miles of the saddle before crevasses halted his group’s progress. He was joined on this excursion by a trainee assistant named Ball, an unnamed ex-pro prospector, and a Māori man named Jim, whom he had met at a nearby station and was particularly pleased about having along, noting that “he had been living for some time in the neighbourhood & knew the run of the Country very well”.¹ In the same letter to his aunt, he conveyed his utter captivation with glaciers traversed:

*Fancy a regular Sea of ice many hundred feet in depth filling up a large valley following its windings like a river and ending with an abrupt face almost a wall from beneath wh[ic]h a good sized river is gushing with tremendous force—You must not suppose that all this ice is however clear & visible, on the contrary it pushes before it & carries on its surface an immense mass of debris from the mountains ... It is as though an army of a million giants had been engaged ever since the creation in tumbling masses of the mountains, titanic rocks varying in size from a cathedral to an egg down into the valley beneath—Even the very ice seems unable to bear the immense burden laid upon it ... as you walk over it constant groans rumblings crackings & reports testify to the internal agitation of the labouring mass.*²

Ken Hall
Curator

¹ Letter to Anna Maria Sealy, 9 May 1867, in Francis McWhannell, *Sealy*, Michael Graham-Stewart: London, 2014.
² Ibid.

Wainui, Akaroa

Just over an hour’s drive from Ōtautahi Christchurch, on the western side of Akaroa Harbour, Wainui hasn’t changed all that much from when Rita Angus visited in January and February of 1943. A few more baches have appeared over the years but it is still a very laid-back, sleepy settlement; a great spot to unwind and a quiet alternative to the tourist-focused township of Akaroa across the harbour. With little to distract you, apart from wandering along the foreshore or up the hills behind the beach for the stunning views overlooking the harbour, it’s the kind of place where you get into the rhythm of the tides and the land.

Against the disruptive and stressful backdrop of World War II, Wainui was a place of refuge for Angus, a haven where she could shelter from the demands being made on her by the Government’s Industrial Manpower Board to undertake essential war work in a factory—a form of conscription that conflicted with her strong pacifist views. Sticking firmly to her beliefs she became one of the few women in New Zealand to go to court for refusing to work in what were viewed as essential wartime industries.

Wainui provided Angus with an opportunity to step back from the intensity of life in Ōtautahi, and in the process she produced some of the most exceptional landscape watercolours to have been painted in this country. The five known watercolours completed from her stay are exquisitely observed and executed. *Wainui, Akaroa* makes me feel as

though I am looking at the landscape through a telescope—from grasses, fences, buildings and pine trees through to the bush on the hill at the end of the beach, everything is so crisp and sharply defined. No broad, loosely applied washes of colour here, just an eye-wateringly beautiful ability to blend watercolour washes in an incredibly subtle manner, the shades of the hills and the sea in the bay. Angus captures something of the spirit of this bay, the change of pace visitors can still experience today.

Rita’s connection with Wainui during her timeout in the summer of early 1943 is highlighted in letters she wrote to her close friends Douglas Lilburn and Fred Jones:

Wainui is charming, the bach is built on a rise overlooking the harbour and opposite Akaroa, and the weather has been rather wonderful.¹ ... I find the bach very comfortable, most of my subjects are near here, I’m indolent, and I fear, putting on weight. Thinking of Leonardo [da Vinci], I’m aware of much I’ve not noticed before, and how very short is one’s life. Again a hermit ... I thought I could be a more simple hermit than I am.²

Peter Vangioni
Curator

¹ Letter to Fred Jones, undated [February, 1943], in Jill Trevelyan, *Rita Angus: An Artist’s Life*, Te Papa Press: Wellington, 2008 p. 140.
² Letter to Douglas Lilburn, *ibid*, p. 140.

Rita Angus *Wainui, Akaroa*
1943. Watercolour. Collection of
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna
o Waiwhetū, N. Barrett bequest
collection, purchased 2010



Leo Bensemann *Evening, Ligar Bay* 1979.
Oil on board. Collection of Burnside High
School. Reproduced with permission

The tide is in and the
sea is like a blue mirror

Peter Vangioni



Left: Leo Bensemann *On the Takaka Hill* 1977. Oil on board. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1983

Right: Leo Bensemann *Rain in the Paradise Garden, Takaka* 1979. Oil on hardboard. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased with assistance from a group of Canterbury artists, 1991

I've always thought that if you're a landscape artist, the working holiday must be the perfect getaway. You get to immerse yourself in an environment that may then become reflected in your art, a manifestation of your response and connection to a place. This was certainly the case for several Ōtautahi Christchurch landscape painters in the twentieth century: Doris Lusk and Onekakā, Bill Sutton and the Port Hills, Ivy Fife and the Canterbury High Country, Rita Angus and Wainui. For their close contemporary and friend Leo Bensemann it was Mohua Golden Bay, a landscape that had a profound effect on him when he holidayed there in the summer of 1965. It was a location he bonded with so much that he returned regularly to holiday and paint most summers for the rest of his life, in the process creating a remarkable body of over sixty paintings of the region.¹

Leo Bensemann (1912–1986) was born in the Mohua town of Tākaka. His Bensemann ancestors were early German immigrants to the Whakatū Nelson region, and he spent his childhood in Mohua before moving to Whakatū aged eight. After settling in Ōtautahi by 1930, he forged a successful career as a letterpress printer, typographer and manager at the Caxton Press while raising a family with his wife Mary. As any full-time job does, his role at Caxton curtailed his ability to make art, but he continued to produce wood-engravings, drawings and paintings.

His 1965 visit to Mohua certainly lit a fire under his creative output, and while he continued to paint other Te Waipounamu South Island landscapes the body of Mohua

paintings illustrate that this area was a major inspiration for him. He painted numerous works of the steep green hills of the Pikikirunga Range to the east of the valley, and views from the beach at Ligar Bay looking out to the Burnett Range to the west. And then there are the numerous paintings focusing on the unique karst marble formations that litter the valley floor and the tops of the ranges that surround it. Given his intense focus on the landscapes of Mohua during the last two decades of his life, Bensemann was truly a regionalist in every sense of the word.

Driving to Mohua from Ōtautahi takes determination and commitment. After driving for most of the day, including up and over the main divide at Lewis Pass then tootling all the way up the middle of Te Waipounamu, travellers are then faced with the daunting drive over the steep and winding Tākaka Hill with its (reportedly) 257 bends to negotiate. I picture Bensemann easing around bends and corners on this part of his annual summer pilgrimage to Mohua: grinding through the gears, pumping on the brakes and keeping a close eye on the temperature gauge of his Austin 1800 as he ploughed on over the hill; the brake shoes cooking by the time he reached the valley floor on the other side. I imagine the sense of relief when he finally pulled up to the Doll's House, the bach he and Mary rented on the beach at Ligar Bay, and turned the hot engine off; the moment when the effort of getting there pays off and he can relax and absorb the views out across the bay he loved so much for a week or so away from the bustle of Ōtautahi.



Leo Bensemann *Hills Near Takaka* c. 1969. Oil on board. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased with assistance from the Friends of Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1985



“I am leaving for Nelson on Saturday and may not get another chance to send you (both) loving greetings from this most beautiful place. And what a night it is—I came over a week ago last Saturday and the days have melted away in swimming, eating, sleeping and quite a lot of good painting.”

The effect this landscape had on Bensemann is often seen in his correspondence. In 1973 he wrote:

I am at the Bay and the day is incredibly beautiful. The tide is in and the sea is like a blue mirror and the only thing wrong is that I have to return to Chch this weekend. [Mary] decided not to come this year—a great pity as she loves this place so much and the weather has been perfect. I have enjoyed being here of course although I must confess I get sick of my own company. I have started a few paintings ... Lawrence [Baigent] and Robert [Erwin] are staying at Collingwood and I may go over and visit them this afternoon and perhaps make one or two drawings on the way. They came over here on Monday and I was very pleased to see them. Both well but Lawrence furious with his new car which has a boiling radiator—and that’s enough to drive anyone insane.²

And the following year:

I am leaving for Nelson on Saturday and may not get another chance to send you (both) loving greetings from this most beautiful place. And what a night it is—I came over a week ago last Saturday and the days have melted away in swimming, eating, sleeping and quite a lot of good painting.³

The hills surrounding and enclosing Mohua captivated Bensemann, especially the Pikikirunga Range, which runs directly to the east alongside East Tākaka, Motupipi, Clifton,

Pōhara, Ligar Bay and Tata Beach. *Hills near Takaka* was likely finished back in his Ōtautahi studio and highlights his use of photographs to develop his landscape compositions. Bensemann here seems just as concerned with the underlying structure and shape of the landforms as he is with what is present above them. Apart from the foreground, all plant life has been stripped back to shades of green and he includes no sign of human habitation.

Marble karst is one of the defining features of the Mohua region. A beautiful grey rock that litters the landscape, it sparkles in the sunlight. Over time, rain and wind weather it to create strange formations that emerge out of the landscape. These appealed to Bensemann greatly, and his many photographs of the rocks later became a rich source of inspiration for the Mohua paintings completed in Ōtautahi. As Bensemann’s biographer Peter Simpson has noted, he relished altering scale in many of his paintings, exploring the symbolic and surreal potential these changes created. Seemingly insignificant rocks often appear as massive landforms in paintings such as *On the Takaka Hill*.

Bensemann’s imaginative and surrealist exploration of the rock forms is seen most effectively in *Rain in the Paradise Garden*, *Takaka* and its companion work *The Dolomite Madonna*. These two extraordinary paintings were inspired



Leo Bensemann and his Austin 1800 at the Doll’s House, Ligar Bay, Mohua. Photo: Mary Bensemann

by a small fragment of Tākaka marble found while he and Mary were walking on Mount Burnett near Collingwood. Enlarged to resemble a sharp pinnacle emerging out of the ground, both versions are evocative of Mohua. *The Dolomite Madonna*, complete with a halo, is depicted before dense dark green bush so evocative of the surrounding hills. The expansive nikau palms enclose the rock—their trunks are reminiscent of the grand pillars of a cathedral and the arch of lighter green behind the rock could be read as a window. Bensemann imbues the rock with a mystical presence.

Bensemann later recounted:
One marvellous summer’s evening Mary and I (with my cousin and his wife and a friend) were up on top of Mt Burnett. The undergrowth was everywhere littered with dangerous pieces of rock and it was there the Madonna appeared and was picked up.

We stayed much too late so it was dark when we came down through the bush past glow worms lighting up and switching off their deceptive paths on the bank of the track. But we got down safely and back at last to Collingwood which seemed brilliantly lit up after the bush and then drove quietly back to Ligar Bay. It certainly was a great night and was to prove so later...⁴

Leo Bensemann: Paradise Garden is a rare and welcome opportunity for visitors to the Gallery to experience an

important aspect of this Waitaha Canterbury painter’s output. Many will remember the excellent but ultimately ill-fated *Leo Bensemann: A Fantastic Art Venture* retrospective—the only major survey of his work to date, it opened at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū on 11 February 2011, just eleven short days before the 22 February earthquake brought it to an abrupt and very unwelcome close. *Leo Bensemamm: Paradise Garden* goes some way to making up for the incredibly short run of the exhibition.

Peter Vangioni
Curator

Leo Bensemann: Paradise Garden is on display from 14 September 2024 until 9 February 2025.

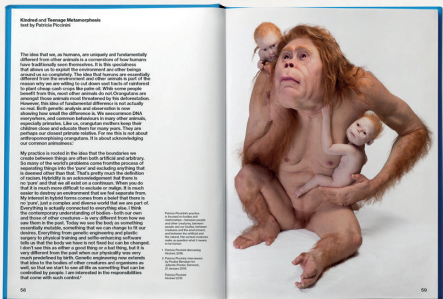
1 Peter Simpson, *Fantastica: The World of Leo Bensemann*, AUP: Auckland 2011, p. 133.
2 Leo Besemann to Caroline Otto, letter sent from Ligar Bay, 31 January 1973, in Caroline Otto, *Leo Bensemann: Landscapes and Studies*, Nikau Press: Nelson, 2006, p. 59.
3 Leo Bensemann to Caroline Otto, letter sent from Ligar Bay, January 1974, *ibid*, p. 81,
4 Leo Bensemann to Peter Simpson, December 1984, *ibid*, p. 89.

NEW BOOK IN-STORE NOVEMBER!

A lively look at bodies in contemporary art from Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

Don't we all feel like strangers to ourselves sometimes? The entity that meets your eyes in the mirror isn't the same version of you that people encounter out in the world, and it's different again from that deeper self that dwells somewhere between soul and psyche. Such slippery, porous territory offers artists a rich hunting ground.

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Revealed!

Our archive collections will soon be revealed.

This November we're opening a new gallery space upstairs, devoted exclusively to exhibitions from our rich archives.

The archive collections contain the letters, diaries, sketches, photographs, interviews—and even artist's palettes—of many prominent Waitaha Canterbury artists, collectors and scholars.



Bill Sutton's palette and brushes, W. A. Sutton Archive, box 25. Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū

My Favourite

Charlotte Gray is chair of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū Foundation and a long-term admirer of artistic talent.

My sister owns a gorgeous Kushana Bush work that I have coveted for some time. I think I had been subconsciously mind-banking her works since seeing it. Then, when I was overseas last year and feeling a little homesick, I listened to an RNZ National podcast of Charlotte Wilson interviewing the artist (Art, Life, Music: Kushana Bush). Kushana's choice of music to accompany the interview was bliss: carefully chosen pieces by Bach, Satie, Britten, Bayaka pygmies and Jack Body.

This set me on a frenzied search, and I found myself ravenously scouring the internet for images of a work I could get my hands on. I went to exhibitions and searched for months, but in vain—I could not locate the 'one' I was looking for. Eventually my energy waned and I stopped searching.

Suddenly, on entering the exhibition *Perilous: Unheard Stories from the Collection*, I spotted it. *Glukupikron* sat quietly alongside works by Rita Angus and Robyn Kahukiwa and it was a beauty—a marvellous scene of human and beast tied-up activity set amongst a rocky coast with billowing smoke and swirling water. Meticulous, romantic, exotic and modern. Some friends of mine were inspecting it and I sidled up with a faux casual interest that hid my astonishment. How did that get there? I guess it's no surprise that the Gallery is far better at finding great artworks than me.

"Why is it good?", asked my teenager teasingly. "It just is, go ask the curator."

My search complete, I left the Gallery bedazzled, but empty handed. It might not be mine to possess, but thankfully and luckily, 'the one' remains in the Gallery, for everyone to enjoy. A loud round of applause for the anonymous benefactor who supported the purchase. They are a person of far nobler intentions than mine own.



Kushana Bush *Glukupikron* 2020. Gouache, watercolour and metallic gouache on paper. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased with funds from an anonymous donor, 2020

GILT

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Pagework no.63

Vanessa Wairata Edwards *Follow me* 2024. Woodcut whenua
block, MDF, woodcut print

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.

Vanessa Wairata Edwards (Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Whakatōhea, Ngāti Kahu, Ngāti Kuri) describes herself as a Māori ink slinger, and is a founding member of the Toi Whakaata Māori Print Collective. Part of an exciting generation of Māori printmakers that has emerged over recent years, she explores tikaka Māori and mātauraka Māori through woodcuts, etchings and letterpress printing techniques. *Follow me* (2024) encompasses all elements involved in her Masters research into the reclamation of text as visual culture. Wairata Edwards says she reframes the text elements utilising kōwhaiwhai principles of rotation, reflection and repetition. The print on the right is photographed alongside the whenua block on the left, highlighting the relationship between the descendant and the tupuna or the origin and the result. Wairata Edwards says:

This image focuses on the kupu 'whaia', which means follow. I rotate, reflect and repeat the kupu. Looking at it from all perspectives allows me to consider what it means to follow, what we are following now as opposed to what we used to follow and what we will be following in the future.

Whaia whaia whaia te uru tapu nui a Tāne
Tāne te waiora
Tāne te pukenga
Tāne te whakaputanei ki te whaiao ki te Ao Marama
Tihei Mauri Ora

Follow, follow, follow the sacred footsteps of Tāne
Tāne the life giver
Tāne the skilful
Tāne the bringer of light to the world
Let there be life

Tikaka Māori – Māori custom, convention, protocol
Mātauraka Māori – Māori knowledge
Kōwhaiwhai – painted scroll ornamentation
Whenua – land
Tupuna – ancestor
Kupu – word
Atua – ancestor with continuing influence, god, deity
Ruruku – band, bond, commitment.
Tāne Mahuta – atua of the forest and all forest creatures.
Te ao Māori – the Māori world

We once looked to our Atua for guidance and followed the signs they provided to sustain life, whose footsteps do we follow now? This ruruku acknowledges Tāne Mahuta and his role in Te Ao Māori.

The whenua block on the left reminds us of our origins and connections to the whenua whilst the resulting print on the right becomes a descendant of the land forever belonging to the original source. We are but reflections of our ancestors and must continue to consider and challenge our purpose and relevance in this world.



Opening this Quarter

Edwards + Johann: Mutabilities—propositions to an unknown universe
14 September 2024 – 9 February 2025
Transformation, unpredictability and magic happen when unrelated worlds meet.

Leo Bensemann: Paradise Garden
14 September 2024 – 9 February 2025
A collection of Leo Bensemann’s extraordinary Mohua Golden Bay landscape paintings.

Dummies & Doppelgangers
2 November 2024 – 23 March 2025
The unforgettable art of being someone else.

Coming Soon

One O’Clock Jump
7 December 2024 – 11 May 2025
Dynamic, colourful and vibrant prints from a fast-changing world.

Closing this Quarter

Edith Amituanai and Sione Tuivailala Monu: Toloa Tales
8 June – 13 October 2024
New video works trace migratory threads across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa as the artists return to their ancestral homeland.

Marilynn Webb: Folded in the Hills
8 June – 13 October 2024
A major survey exhibition of Ngāpuhi, Te Roroa and Ngāti Kahu artist Marilynn Webb (NZOM).

From Here on the Ground
Until 17 November 2024
Twentieth-century Aotearoa New Zealand artists exploring urban, suburban and industrial landscapes.

Ongoing

He Kapuka Oneone—A Handful of Soil
Tākata and whenua, people and land, considered through Aotearoa New Zealand’s art history.

Mataaho Collective: Tikawe
An ambitious installation that descends from the skylights to zing across the foyer.

Lonnie Hutchinson: Hoa Kōhine (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.

Wendelien Bakker: Catching a Grid of Rain
The Gallery’s bunker as a sculptural surface.
See the Gallery website and What’s On guide for our events listings.

Exhibitions



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JULIE KING MEMORIAL LECTURE

Ngarino Ellis:
Blinging Up the Body –
Māori and Adornment

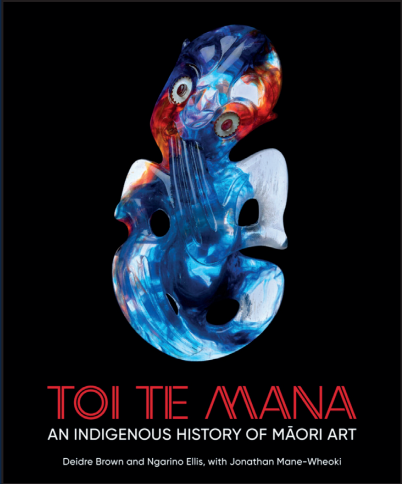
Sunday 29 September, 2pm
Philip Carter Family Auditorium
Free admission

Join us for this year’s Julie King Memorial Lecture, as Ngarino Ellis (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Porou) takes us on a remarkable voyage through all aspects of body adornment across centuries of our Indigenous art history.

Describing her work as a “detective trail, with the joy and thrill of discovery”, Ngarino is an award-winning author, art historian and associate professor in art history at Waipapa Taumata Rau University of Auckland who has published on many aspects of Māori art history including moko, adornment, art crime and gender. Her new book, *Toi te Mana: An Indigenous History of Māori Art*, is a landmark account of Māori art from before the separation of Ranginui and Papatūānuku to contemporary artists in Aotearoa and around the world today. Written with senior art historian Deidre Brown (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Kahu), it includes research by the late Jonathan Mane-Wheoki (Ngāpuhi, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kuri).

Visit christchurchartgallery.org.nz/friends for more information.

Lecture presented by the Friends of the Art Gallery courtesy of the Estate of the late Julie King. Art historian Julie King was Senior Lecturer in Art History at the University of Canterbury and an Honorary Life Member and Patron of the Friends. *Toi te Mana: An Indigenous History of Māori Art* is published by Auckland University Press and available from November 2024.



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TE PUNA O WAIWHETŪ

Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation
In 2023, the Foundation was honoured to receive a significant bequest from the late Sir Miles Warren, a great supporter of the Gallery and himself the subject of a retrospective exhibition in 2009. The bequest helped us to reach the incredible milestone of \$5m in our Endowment Fund for the Gallery’s collection programme. The Foundation is incredibly grateful to Sir Miles for his generosity and foresight in making this gift.

Nothing gets accomplished without support. That’s why we need the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū Foundation. It’s a solid base that helps ground the role of the Gallery and provides important funding to achieve our objectives. We collect, share and inspire, recognising where we’ve been, where we are now and where we’re heading. We need people like you to join us.

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We wish to thank all of our TOGETHER partners, current and previous donors for your generosity and support over the years.

If you would like to discuss partnership opportunities, contact Jacq Mehrrens on (+64) 21 404042 or jacq@christchurchartgallery.org.nz

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