SCULPTURE

1986

ASPECTS OF RECENT NEW ZEALAND ART

AUCKLAND CITY
ART GALLERY

Introduction

Sculpture 1 is the first of two group exhibitions of contemporary sculpture projects in the series *Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art*. Included in the exhibition are works by Paul Cullen, Neil Dawson, Morgan Jones, Peter Nicholls, Terry Stringer, Marté Szirmay and Greer Twiss. The second exhibition, *Sculpture 2*, which is planned for October 1986, brings together a larger group of sculptors whose work exhibits a common concern with this land, its Pacific-ness and the indigenous cultures of the region.

The artists comprising this first group do not so readily lend themselves to thematic categorization – there is no obvious thread connecting the one with the other. All do, however, celebrate the materials with which they work. Whether it is the pewter-like richness of lead in the hands of Greer Twiss, a metal that is amazingly ductile, dense and rich when cast or used in sheet form, or the massive timber beams notched and stacked by Peter Nicholls, the polished and patinated bronze of Terry Stringer, or the once unremarkable mesh, clipped and formed to become illusory walls and three-dimensional forms in the works of Neil Dawson; all celebrate their materials.

Sculpture in New Zealand is diverse and exciting. These two exhibitions will draw together the work of most of our prominent sculptors in a way that has not been attempted before, and will demonstrate that quality and diversity. In so doing we will, in large measure, produce a statement on the "state of the art" (to restore that phrase). The shows will, together, form a benchmark for New Zealand sculpture, and the assembled brochures published on each sculptor will constitute a useful single reference on current work.

Mindful of the value of these two collections as a statement on the state of sculpture in the mid 1980s, the Auckland City Council is proceeding to purchase all, or almost all, of the works from the exhibitions. The Gallery has a rich collection of earlier twentieth-century international sculpture and valuable holdings of New Zealand works. It is our policy to reinforce these strengths with purchases of significant current work, both international and national. The acquisition of the *Sculpture 1*, March 1986, and *Sculpture 2*, October 1986 exhibitions will constitute a keystone purchase in that programme.

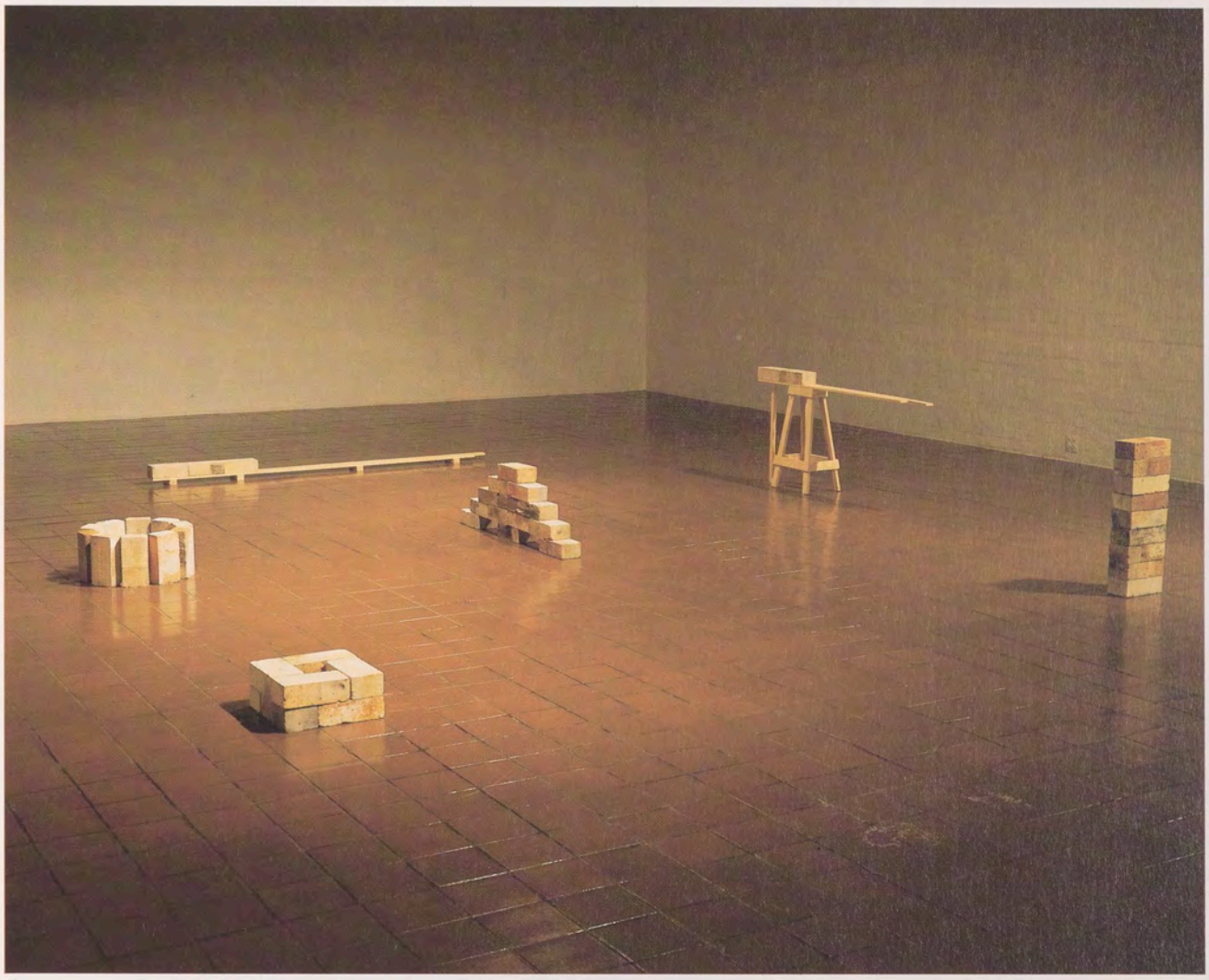
We would like to record our gratitude to the artists for their support in this 'acquisition exhibition' and to the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council for funding assistance. The Auckland City Council, our parent body, must also be congratulated on its far-sighted decision to divert income from a recent, popular international exhibition to the acquisition of many of these sculptures.

T. L. Rodney Wilson
Director

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Paul Cullen



Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Paul Cullen

Paul Cullen's works are about construction and the combination of ideas and materials which is part of sculpture and architecture, language and society. Yet these small stacks and arrangements of bricks and wood are far from being ostentatiously constructed or crafted. They are surprisingly simple, visually easy to comprehend, calmly undemanding and, in their symmetry and balance, very satisfying. Cullen combines ordinary materials, bricks and wood, in very basic ways. In all his works there is a quietness and reticence about the personality and presence of their maker. His ideas are central to the works, but Cullen has no interest in displaying his technical skills and abilities – the sculptures are obviously very simply made – and the question then becomes: why did he make them? and what can we, the viewers, make of them?

Ever since his years at Art School in Christchurch, Paul Cullen has made sculptures from simple materials gathered in his vicinity. Sometimes things which had been used before for other purposes – old window frames, bits of demolished buildings. In all his work he has combined these materials in straightforward ways. Bunches of long sticks bound together, stacked against each other and against walls, in symmetrical groupings, stones piled on each other; objects held together in precarious balance – a stone weighting the end of a string which is held taut, supporting an upright piece of wood. Some of his South Island works were made in the dry bed of the Waimakariri River, using the sticks and stones which lay around. The work in this exhibition is made principally from fire-bricks which Cullen salvaged from a kiln in the old brick power station building where he and his family live. It is an impressive building with large interior spaces – brick walls and timber ceiling – and in one of these Paul Cullen makes his sculptures.

Building and Logic

So using ordinary, easily found materials, Cullen explores the way we approach the business of building, using the word in its broadest sense. Cullen is interested in architecture and building as metaphors for all kinds of human activities. We are all builders and we link ideas together into structures of thought which help us make sense of the world. Our languages are built up from words which express our ideas, and our physical selves are the result of biological (logical) construction processes. In order to analyse these building processes we can attempt to reduce them to their most basic components. In architecture there are some elementary shapes and forms of construction which are represented in this work, *Constructing the process/logic by which we build.* Cullen includes us as builders by using the word 'we' in his title. We all take part in the process consciously or unconsciously. Here we have bricks put together to form a square, a circle, a tall stack, and with wood, a straight line along the ground and a straight line precariously balanced in the air. In the centre of all these is a triangular stack which is perhaps an entranceway and lintel. (There are of course apparently illogical processes of building too as evidenced in Antonio Gaudi's architecture.) These forms have appeared across the thousands of years in which humankind has made shelters and temples. They are archetypal forms, made from simple units, and Cullen's temporary construction methods ensure that the possibility of rearranging the elements is always present.

A Structural Situation

Paul Cullen works in series and the installation here is related to two others shown in February 1986 at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Hamilton. They are called *A Structural Situation* and *Site work/logical construction*. One work is made mostly from stacked bricks and the other from strips of wood glued and laminated together.

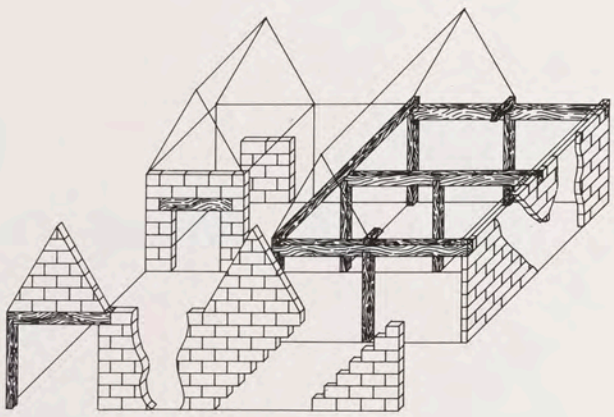
In *A Structural Situation* a central entranceway/lintel construction is at the centre of a circle of five smaller constructions which are like smaller entrances or parts of walls. The scale of the work is small, dictated by the size of the bricks – you can only balance so many of them without mortar. This is an austere, formal, and oddly satisfying arrangement, with a sense of the monumental about it. Fanciful associations spring to mind – if we were one centimetre high this would be like Stonehenge. (American artist Charles Simmonds has made whole cities from miniature bricks, half an inch long. The cities are the remains of a civilization of invisible "Little People" whose society Simmonds is exploring.)

Cullen has explored scale and our expectations of it in other works, principally made from wood. These constructions seem at times to be maquettes, models for much larger works. Although in some of them their holding together relies so much on precariously balanced elements, a larger scale could be alarming.

Drawings

Paul Cullen's drawings, though related to his sculpture, are not working drawings for sculpture. Cullen makes drawings alongside the sculpture, working through similar ideas in different materials and, as the sculptures become simpler and more reduced to essentials, the drawings become increasingly complex. The drawings are paradoxically more 'crafted' than the sculpture, more highly finished, and some of them are in three dimensions. If you draw small cardboard bricks and plinths you can construct imaginary architecture which is far more varied than real bricks will allow. Cullen's drawings have the charm of models, and appear satisfyingly neat and complete, although they also seem to pose the question: what other combinations of these materials, what other archways are possible? Can you think of others?

The ink drawings have the look of serious architectural studies – Cullen even signs and names



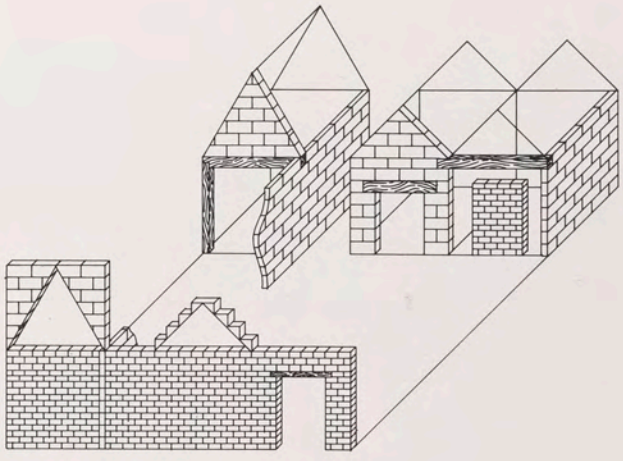
Constructing the process/logic by which we build 1986
ink and pencil on paper
500 x 652mm (paper)

them in the manner of an architect. Yet close inspection reveals them not to be just about architecture, but again about building in that wider sense; putting objects and ideas together in a variety of ways, following through a wide range of alternatives. There is an edge of wit and humour in these drawings which was also evident in some of Cullen's precariously balanced constructions of the late 1970s. These plans could not be followed with ease, these buildings could not be constructed, they are exercises of the mind, teasing our perceptions. The logic by which we build seems more and more illogical the longer we look at these works. In architecture the possibilities for building are limited by the physical properties of materials, whether we are building a wattle-and-daub shelter, a stone cathedral or a whare runanga. Ideas, however, can be less hampered by conventions. We can challenge, question and change the structures of our thinking or at least be aware of them, to avoid stagnation, to maintain growth.

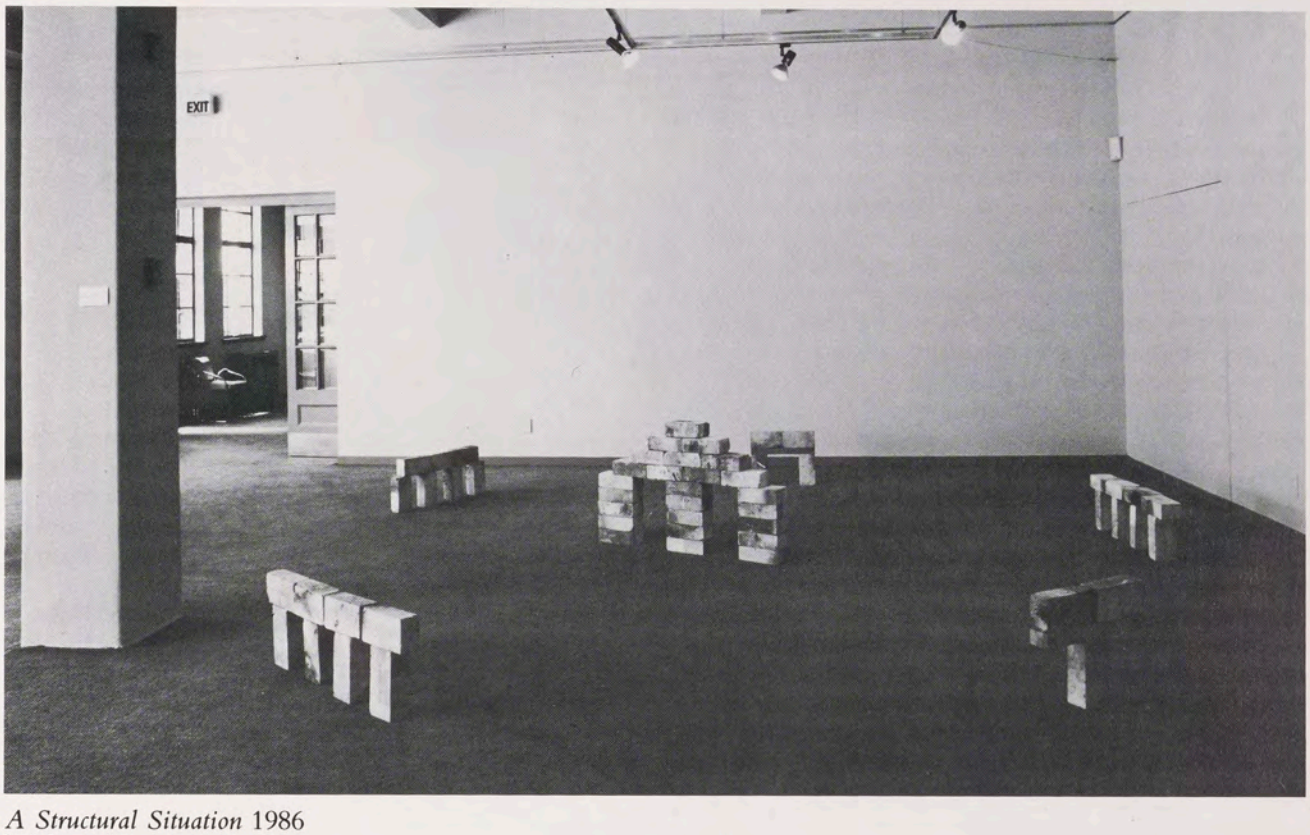
Paul Cullen's works encourage a meditative mood, they are a starting point for our imagination. Though complete and harmonious in themselves his sculptures offer possibilities for change. They are the traces of his thoughts and can trigger new thoughts in us.

Cullen explores processes of thought in drawing and sculpture. The conventions and processes of architecture and building provide the structures within which his explorations are made.

Alexa M. Johnston



Constructing the process/logic by which we build 1986
ink and pencil on paper
500 x 652mm (paper)

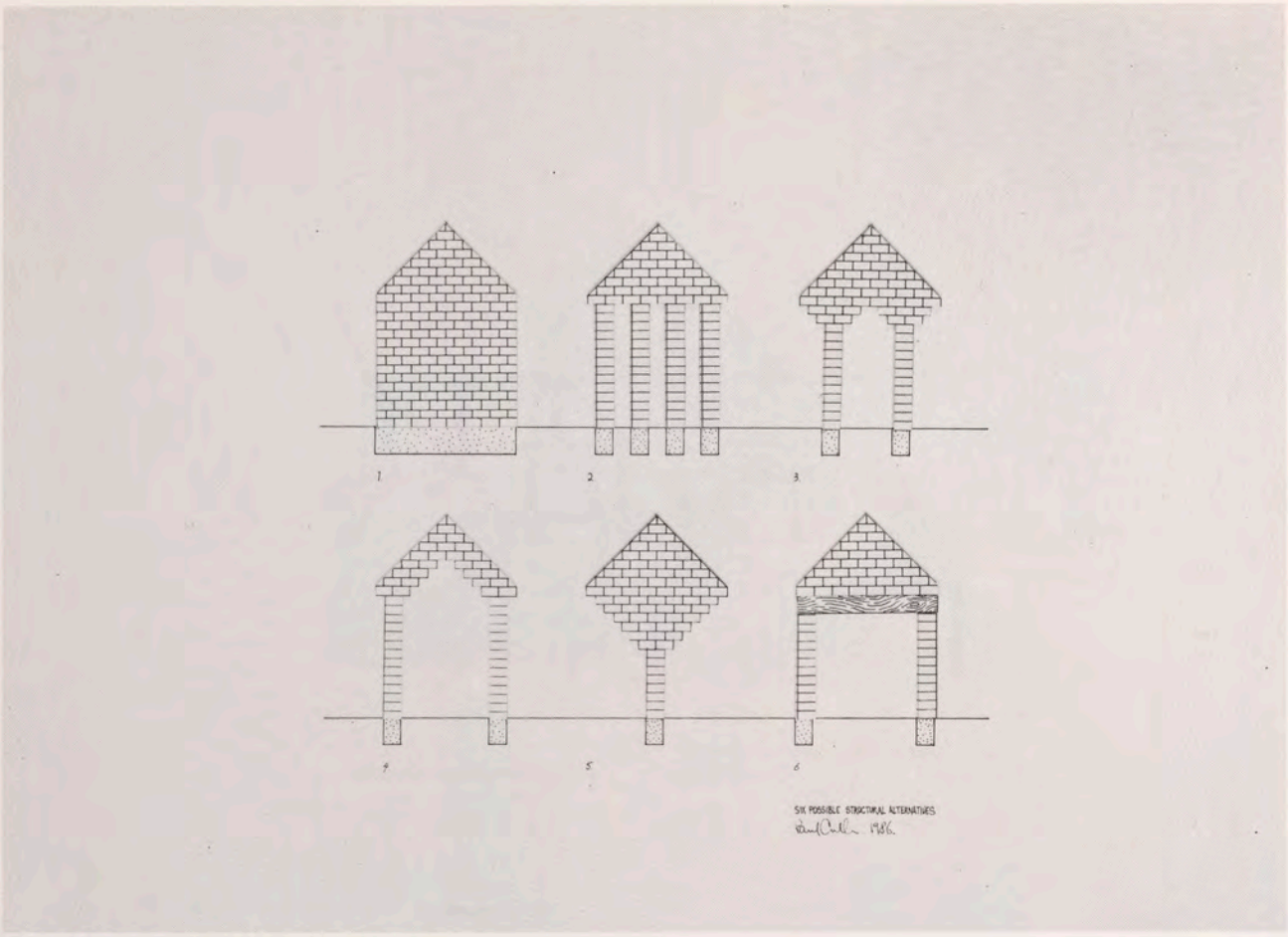


A Structural Situation 1986
bricks, pine
750 x 4000 x 5000mm
installation at Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton

Constructing the process/logic by which we build (detail)

Front page

Constructing the process/logic by which we build 1985–1986 bricks, pine
750 x 4000 x 5000mm



Six possible structural alternatives 1986
paper relief: ink, pencil, watercolour
500 x 652mm (paper)

Biography

1949	Born Te Awamutu, New Zealand
1971	Graduated B.Sc., University of Auckland
1975	Graduated DFA (Hons) University of Canterbury, School of Fine Arts
1976	Moved to Auckland where he has since worked making furniture
1984	QE II Arts Council grant

Exhibitions

1975	First solo exhibition, Centre Gallery, Christchurch
	Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1976	*New Zealand Drawing*, Auckland City Art Gallery
1977	Solo exhibition, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
	Young Contemporaries, Auckland City Art Gallery
1978	*Auckland Artists*, Auckland City Art Gallery
	Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Victoria, Australia
	New Zealand Sculptors at Mildura, QE II Arts Council national tour
1979	*Building Structures*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1980	*Hansells Sculpture Award*, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1981	*ANZART*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1982	*On Construction*, RKS Art, Auckland
	ARTEDER '82 International Drawing Exhibition, Bilboa, Spain
	Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton, national tour
1983	*Table Series*, RKS Art, Auckland
	Table Series (disjunctions), Brooke-Gifford Galleries, Christchurch
	Concerning Construction, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1985	*Structural Situations*, RKS Art, Auckland
	ANZART '85 Artists' Books Exhibition, Auckland City Art Gallery

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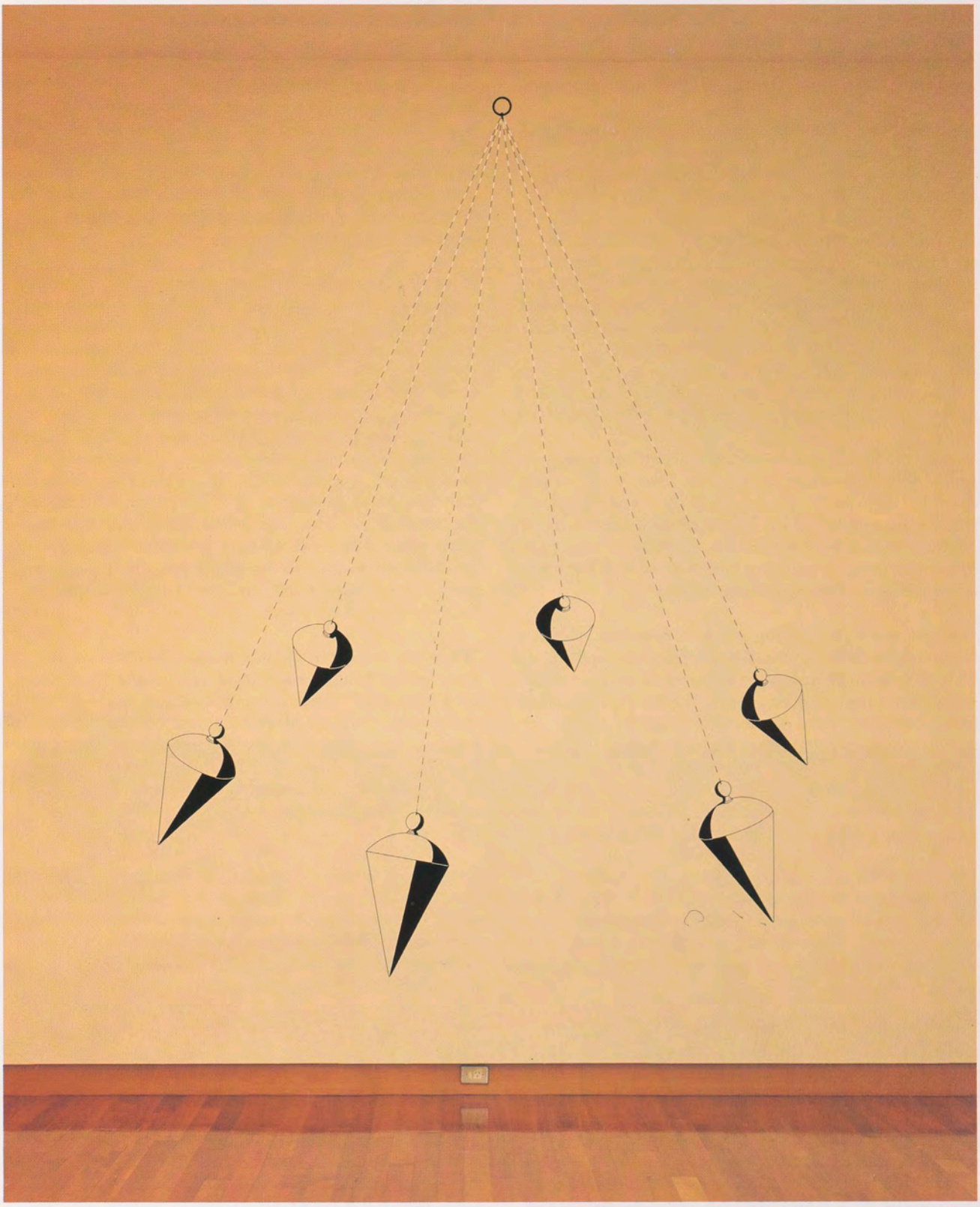
Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Neil Dawson



Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Neil Dawson

Sculptors, it is commonly thought, produce 'real' objects, 'actual' things which occupy space.

Painters, by contrast, are those who fake space, kid us with illusions of spatial form on two-dimensional surfaces. At least they did within the European tradition until quite recently.

Sculptors, even those who abandon representational form, are by and large faithful to the three-dimensionality of their world, seldom introducing ambiguities of space or volume.

For Neil Dawson, by contrast, the exploration of space and the development of sophisticated spatial illusions have been recurring concerns through more than a decade of sculpture-making. His ideas, at first complexly stated in installation works such as *Black Holes*, at the C.S.A. in the mid seventies, suddenly simplified, coalesced, and leapt into maturity with the *Seascape* project at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1979 and the contemporary *House Alterations* series.

Since then Dawson has often produced intriguing spatial illusions, witty spatial fibs. That is not to say that Dawson has been content to play sophisticated spatial and optical tricks, but in developing his highly personal works he has been consistently fascinated by the limitations of, and distortions produced by, our interpretation of three-dimensionality.

Seascape was a compelling work. Consisting of six cones suspended at a raked angle from the ceiling and wall, it contained tiny boat hull and mooring-stakes shapes on a film of green mesh. The hulls and stakes were seen as positive forms resting on the water surface or as reflected negative images beneath it; sometimes as both. The sculpture was the product of acute observation and the regular recording of changing illusions of real and unreal at a Christchurch mooring site seen from the top of a neighbouring hill.

The sculpture, first shown with its preparatory studies and models, was immediately popular. It was a subtle and perceptive reworking of the shifting illusion and reality known to everybody, and was accessible and absorbing for all. It was a 'public' sculpture in a way that few are.

Shortly afterwards, in 1981 – developing the ideas present in the *House Alterations* pieces made at the same time as *Seascape* – Dawson erected a huge aerial linear perspective drawing in the North Quadrangle of the Christchurch Arts Centre. Seen from the principal entry gate, *Echo*, a gable-ended building with door and front steps repeating the Art Centre's architecture, asserted itself as a three-dimensional form in the air – Brunelleschian linear perspective at its most impressive. The illusion was complete. Complete that is, until viewers moved off, deeper into the quadrangle. Then the real 'drawn' image dissolved before their eyes into a tangle of stainless steel wire and fibreglass tube, a gradually more and more meaningless network of lines.

Of course *Echo* had never been the image the viewer received on first impression. It was what it was, and the viewer's image was purely the product of several centuries of visual conditioning.

To a large extent Dawson's sculpture can be described as a three-dimensional drawing. He draws with wire, mesh, tubing, even corrugated iron, in two-dimensional planes and in three dimensions, but his drawing describes a continuous series of artificial situations. And it is this tension between the two-dimensional (or near two-dimensional) reality and the three-dimensional illusion that excites, intrigues and mystifies the viewer.

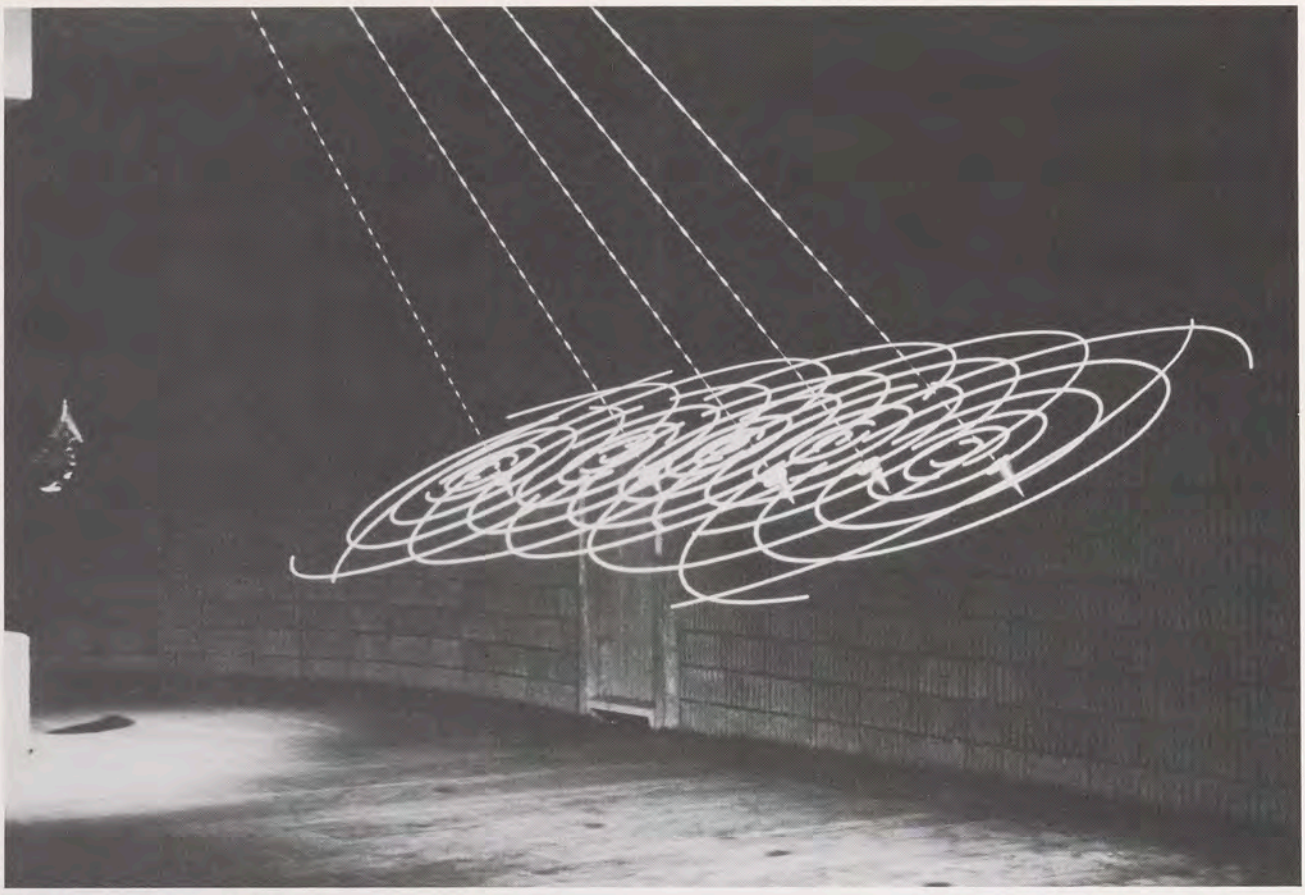
Ideas finally realized in Dawson's sculpture are often long in gestation. Ideas are noted down as drawings and thumbnail sketches and stacked away among many others. From time to time an older concept will suddenly reappear and be considered again, at other times the sculptor sorts through his material, separating possibilities from ideas unlikely to be realized, taking from the pile studies which fit current concerns. Drawing performs various functions for Dawson. Ideas are recorded by drawing and ideas are elaborated and developed. It allows visualization of the work at full scale and *in situ* and it functions as plans upon which works may be built, but never does he elaborate an idea to the point that the making is merely a mechanical act, the construction of an idea fully developed on paper.

When the largest of his works yet constructed, the huge green boulder suspended against the black façade of Wellington's Bank of New Zealand, was developed, drawing played a prime conceptual role in first giving a general form to the idea, shifting then to provide a sort of visual 'thinking aloud'. Because of the magnitude of the structure, scales of 1:100, 1:25 and 1:10 were introduced as a further visualization aid.

Employing a time-honoured boat-building practice, Dawson finally drew 'lines' on a rock's surface; a series of three sets of straight lines at right angles to each other. These contours were then lofted out, rather as they would be for the building of a hull, and the lofted lines formed the patterns for shaping the sets of half-inch stainless steel tubular contours which make up the grid-like surface of the final suspended rock.

After the rigours of the Bank of New Zealand project, a project in which the sculptor's role became one of a critical member in a creative team of designers, engineers, consultants and assistants, he began a series of less formal *Rock Constructions*. In these direct and spontaneous works he beat sections of corrugated iron over the faceted surfaces of an actual rock, and formed shift mesh and copper to follow its contours.

Whether suspended or, more commonly, projecting from a wall, Dawson's sculpture floats freely in space,



Untitled installation 1985
no. 8 fencing wire, cord, brass
New York University Graduate Centre

defying gravity and apparently weightless (despite the frequent inclusion of illusionistic rocks, brick walls and other weighty shapes). Simplicity, the elimination of all that is not absolutely essential to each sculpture's intention, a finely crafted finish (note for instance, the cones of support cables and their fittings for the BNZ Rock) and a floating weightlessness are characteristics of Dawson's work over recent years.

In January 1985 Dawson showed a number of works at the Graduate Centre, New York City University. Installed in a covered, but exposed outdoor walkway, these sculptures contained all the ideas present in his work since *Seascape* and the *House Alterations*, but revealed also his ability to adapt his methodology to suit changed circumstances.

Costs prohibited the transport of existing sculpture to New York. So, armed with ideas, materials (including a roll of no. 8 fencing wire) and a soldering iron, Dawson returned to New York to build the works on site in the biting cold of a New York January.

The fencing wire was already pre-shaped in its rolled form to the requirements of a rippled water piece. Going back to *Seascape* for its source, this work consisted of concentric rings of wire suspended from the roof and raked at an angle to one of the walls. The ripples, the rings formed by dropping a stone in water, were the natural circles of coiled wire sprung in or sprung out to the dimension required.

An illusionistic, free-floating perspective staircase, which takes a turn as it ascends, picked up on the Christchurch Arts Centre's 1981 *Echo* – this time constructed in fibreglass rod. The installation at New York City University came at just the right time in Dawson's career. The ideas present in those works were part of a continuum of ideas that go back a very long way in the pile of drawings and notes, and which had fine sculptural precedents in the works of a year or two before. They summarized much of Neil Dawson's achievement to date.

These sculptures embodied the structural issues and the spatial illusions of the recent work. They were, however, somewhat freer as a result of the need to move from welded to soldered structures. This technical change forced on him by the practical requirements of working in the university walkway, has been retained in the successive 1985 and early 1986 work. Dawson sees it as a liberating move that has eliminated some of the technical constraints and allowed a more fluid-making process.

The spatial illusions and structural concerns of the last few years have gradually driven colour out of the work. The New York pieces were purely monochromatic – red, blue, green or white drawings in space. More varied colour would have been inappropriate, indeed would have had the effect of cancelling the other issues with which the works were concerned. It would have confused the tonal effects of

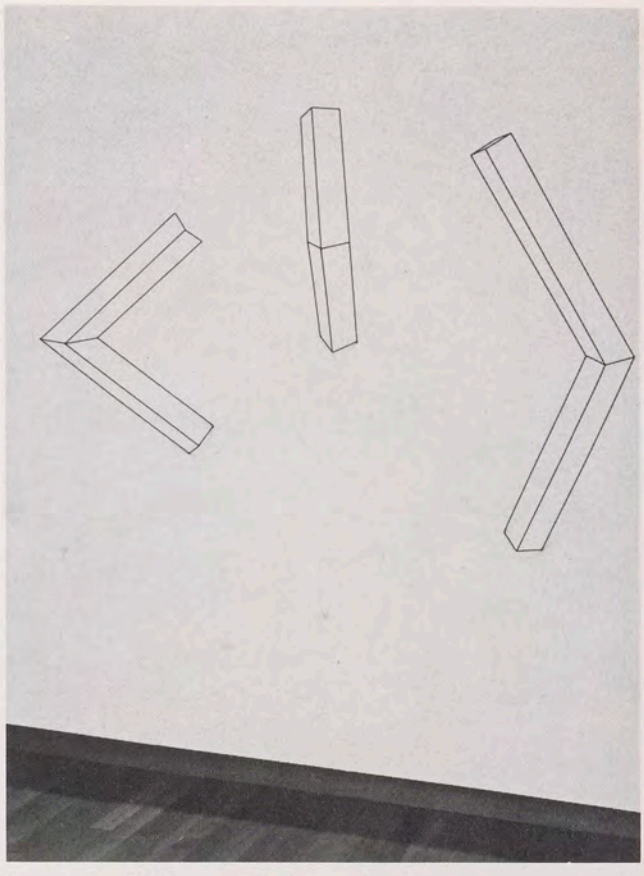
expanded mesh and the textural spatial issues central to the works.

In the newest work Dawson is reintroducing colour, not colour applied to sculpture conceived without it, but colour which has been developed as an active component, along with all other aspects, from the outset.

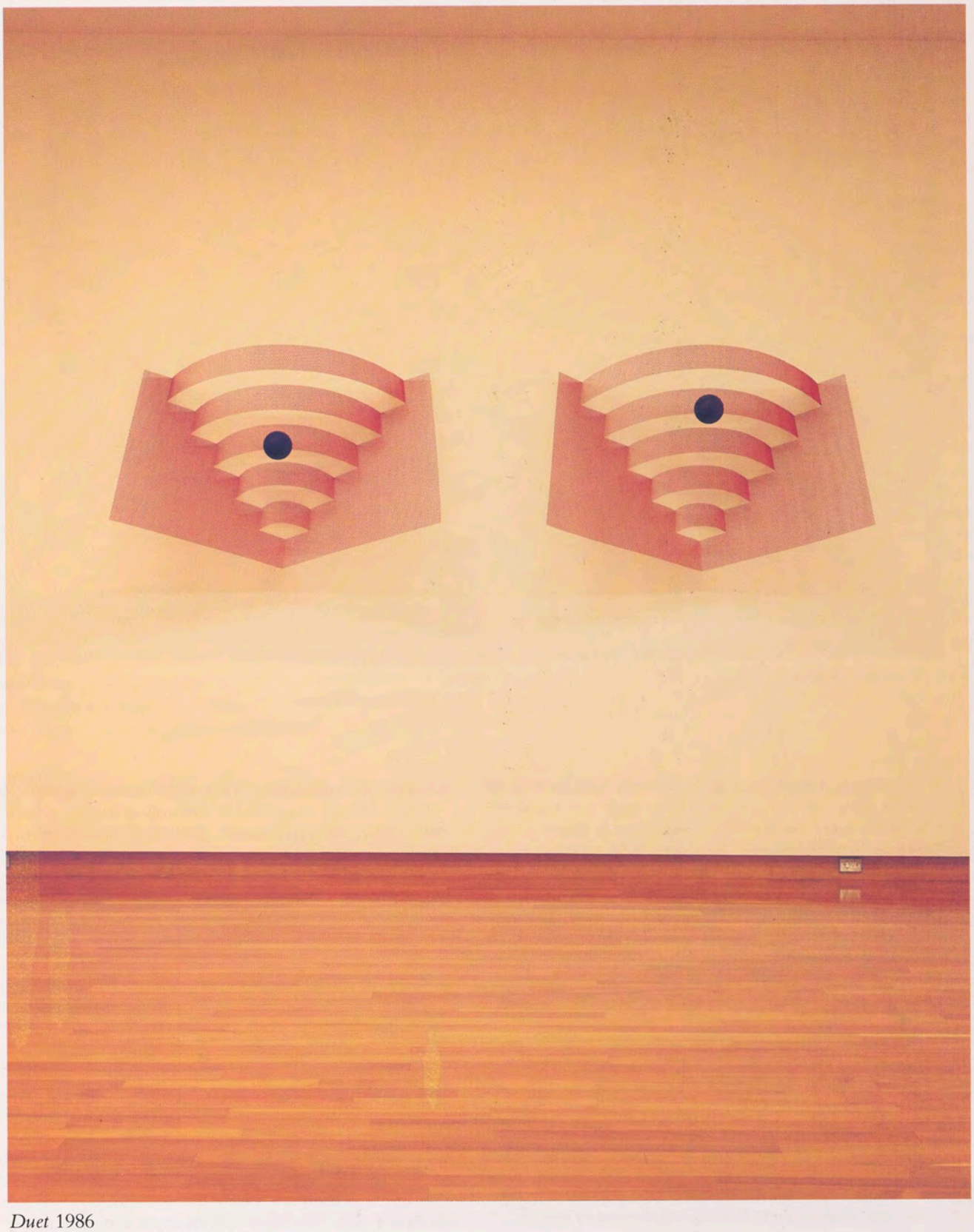
Reflection, implied movement and magnification, a grid seen through droplets of water magnifying and distorting, are further new concerns present in current work. And Dawson has also been flirting with a panoramic format for some time, wanting to produce a work which invites viewers into it and once there includes their peripheral vision.

It is on this desire to involve the viewer that I will conclude, for Dawson has not only become one of our most intelligent, most witty, most individual and creative artists, but he has also become one of the most accessible. His work explores the mysteries and ambiguities of our perception of the world about us. His concerns are not esoteric, removed from common experience, but are the minute-by-minute observations we all share. For that reason he captures his public's enthusiasm. He is one of those fortunate artists who are privileged to reveal to us things with which we are surrounded but which we have hitherto taken for granted or overlooked.

T. L. Rodney Wilson



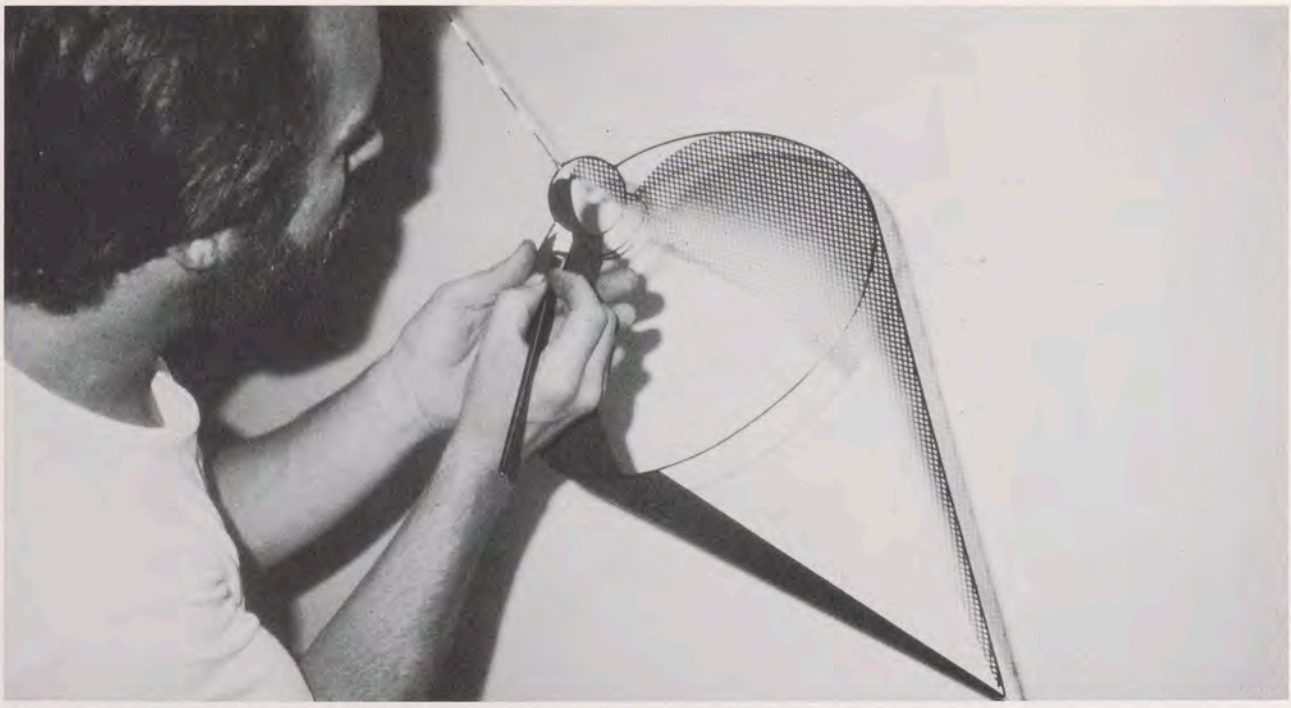
Persuasion 1986
wire
3000 x 2500 x 500mm



Duet 1986
steel mesh, brass and plastic
1500 x 3500 x 500mm

Front page

Swinging the lead 1986
metal and cord
3000 x 3000 x 1500mm



Gillian Chaplin

Neil Dawson, January 1986

Biography

1948	Born Christchurch, New Zealand
1960-65	Secondary education, Hastings Boys High School
1966-70	Studied sculpture, University of Canterbury, School of Art, Christchurch, DFA (Hons)
1972-73	Studied sculpture, Victoria College of Art, Melbourne, Australia
1974-75	Part-time demonstrator of sculpture, University of Canterbury, School of Art, Christchurch
1975-82	Tutor in three-dimensional design and drawing, Graphic Design section, Christchurch Polytechnic
1978	Guthrie Travel Award, Canterbury Society of Arts
1980	QE II Arts Council Travel Award
1983	Full-time sculptor
1985	QE II Arts Council Award

Exhibitions

1972	Pinacoteca Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
1975	*3 Black Holes*, Canterbury Society of Arts, Christchurch
1978	*House Alterations*, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1979	*Seascape*, installation/documentation, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
	Interiors, Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington
	Order/Chaos, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
1980	*Here and There*, New Zealand Embassy, Washington DC, 11th International Sculpture Conference
	Recent Series, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1981	*Echo* installation, Christchurch Arts Centre, North Quadrangle
	Solo exhibition, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Escapes, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
	Vanishing Points, Auckland City Art Gallery
	Reflections, installation, National Art Gallery, Wellington
	Boundaries, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1982	*Holes*, Robinson/Brooker Gallery, Christchurch
	Land Escapes, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1984	*Sunset Constructions*, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Rock Constructions, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1985	*5 Large Works*, Graduate Centre Mall, New York City University, New York
	Sculpture '85, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
	New Wall Works, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Six New Zealand Artists, Perspecta '85, Steve Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Exhibited in various group shows throughout New Zealand, Australia and the USA, including the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, the Hansells Sculpture Exhibition, and the Corcoran Show.

ISBN 0 86463 139 1

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Morgan Jones

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Morgan Jones

Morgan Jones is an outsider. He is not a formally trained sculptor. He has frequently eschewed exhibiting in conventional contexts, choosing instead to make his works for isolated rural sites. Prior to this exhibition, he has not shown in Auckland.

Morgan Jones is one of the few artists practising in New Zealand who has turned to the farm, the rural countryside and the trappings of agriculture as content for his work. In 1978 or thereabouts he began to make sculptural pieces from the detritus of the farm – old harness straps, eroded blue-gum palings from fences and gates, frayed ropes, pieces of old farm machinery – assemblages.

In subsequent works he moved away from the 'picturesque', from objects rendered 'beautiful' through the processes of time and decay, to modern materials, farm materials found in everyday use – grain bags emblazoned with purple lines, baling twine and tanalised stakes of the kind used to support tomato plants.

The final inclusion, and the one which signalled the completion of this transitional phase for Jones – a transition from early carved wood pieces and subsequent constructions in plywood and fibreglass to the landscape-orientated works with which he is still concerned – was large greywacke boulders recovered from South Island riverbeds. The boulders were introduced as counterweights, lashed with baling twine.

Jones's venture with environmental installations employing wood, lashings and counterweights was not entirely without precedent. While there were examples enough abroad (and, in a different way, Chris Booth in the North had been similarly involved), Christchurch sculptors had explored the theme extensively. Dawson's works of the mid seventies used it, Paul Cullen's "Honours show" at the Centre Gallery in August 1975 employed it with considerable conviction, Stephen Clarke expressed the same concerns in a very refined and precise fashion and Bing Dawe developed the idiom (and continues to develop it) in a highly individual and personal way. For Jones, it was a passage through which to pass to things more his own.

In 1979 Jones was invited to participate in the Hansells Sculpture Exhibition in Masterton. The theme was "Earth, Wind, Fire and Water" and artists were encouraged to use the Wairarapa landscape. Jones's project, entitled *Gap*, was located on the bed of the Waingawa River at the southern approach to the town.

The water flow in the Waingawa at the time *Gap* was built was about six metres wide. On either side Jones built a large, open-ended tanalised pine box. These he filled with river-stones until they spilt out of the boxes into the riverbed at about a forty-five degree angle. Between these two large 'blocks' of rocks the river flowed.

The night after the completion of *Gap* there was heavy rain and the river flooded. *Gap* disappeared, burst and dispersed by the force of flood waters. Jones observed, "For the first time I saw how to relate sculpture to landscape, no matter how fortuitous the elements might or might not be. I also saw that for sculpture to stand easily in the landscape it stood a better chance of relating to its surroundings if it was actually made there, using the materials of its surroundings." He became sceptical about metal sculptures, industrial and urban in style and origin, "plonked down amongst trees and flowers and ornamental pools".

From *Gap* onwards Jones's primary concern has been how his sculpture relates to the landscape, or how the landscape affects the sculpture. He has also attempted to involve the viewer in the work in a tangible way. Since 1981 all works have incorporated the use of steps.

Since childhood he has been intrigued by steps, enjoyed the rhythm of ascending and descending stairways. He recalls that in his youth he liked to leap down them and that, when working for a London bank, he was able to leap entire sets of steps which wound around the four sides of a lift shaft. Holding the handrail for balance, it gave him, momentarily, the sensation of flying.

Jones also attaches a symbolic significance to steps: "They lead, up away from the earth. When you reach the top you have exhausted the finite set of [a] particular set of steps: it is not difficult to visualise them progressing into an infinite, more ethereal set. The descent is an anti-climax, a coming down to earth."

At a certain point Jones saw the materials he was using in a different light: political authoritarianism. Tanalised timber, galvanised nails and bolts, barbed wire and corrugated iron are not only the materials of the farm, but also those of the concentration camp. Justice and imprisonment were themes that he had touched upon in the early carved works. Now they reappear consciously as a second thematic concern: stairways marching up the side of a hill or approaching a dunny-sized shed raised on legs from four exactly similar quadrant staircases. A sublime ascension into an elevated spiritual state – or, Piranesi and Escher-like staircases forever ascending without end, without direction and purpose, the ascender imprisoned in a constant and unrelenting tread.

The recent works probe the idea of personal imprisonment. The individual is both the prisoner of the society in which he chooses to live and a prisoner within his own body. True freedom is very much a fantasy, an abstraction existing within the mind. How we treat one another, both in the political and humanitarian senses, and how, finally, we resort to spiritual means to resolve our predicament has been his consistent concern for the last five years.

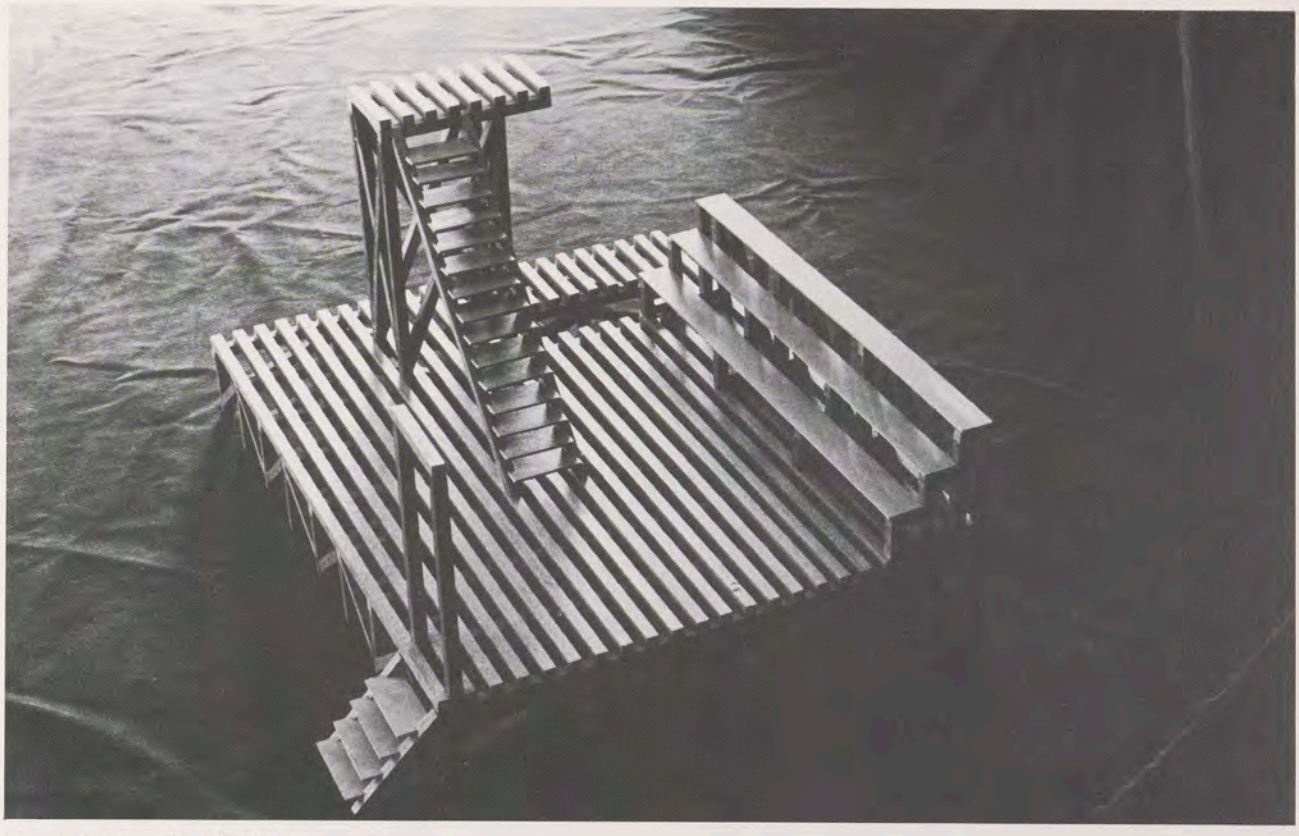
Eric Feasey

300 Steps installation, Mount Gray, South Canterbury, 1982

Here and there (1986), Jones writes, "attempts to make a statement about the limbo of our everyday lives. It is about journeys and decisions, the object of them, whether they indeed have an object, a destination, or an outcome. It is about the present and the future. HERE, stencilled on the cover over the illusory shaft at the start of the sculpture, is now, the present. The challenge is to follow the arrows on the installation's gratings and climb the two sets of steps to the window in the door above which is stencilled THERE. A mirror at the back of the window – on the wall at the far end – presents you with your own reflection, a prisoner of not only the past, but also the present and the future.

"On a purely technical level I planned this sculpture to not only fit into a cube but to also be asymmetrical. Many of my works have been equally balanced and symmetrical. I wanted to break away from this. Although the installation can stand anywhere it was primarily planned to be inside another building, to be in fact enclosed, or imprisoned, itself. *Here and There* also has a similar feeling to my immediately previous piece, *Natural Selection*, in that once you participate in the sculpture you have the feeling of not actually getting anywhere. At the same time as you are free to explore it there is also the sense of entrapment."

T. L. Rodney Wilson



Eric Feasey

Maquette for *Stand* 1984
exhibited at Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Gap 1980
tanalised pine and river stones
Installation on either side of the Waingawa River, Masterton
Hansells Sculpture Exhibition

Here and There 1986

Front page

Here and There 1986
tanalised pine
3000 x 3000 x 3000mm

The materials for this sculpture were donated by
Fletcher Challenge Ltd

Gillian Chaplin

Morgan Jones, January 1986

Biography

1934	Born Shirley, Surrey, England
1947-50	Mill Hill School, London
1950-53	Worked in a London bank
1953-55	With Forestry Commission in North Wales
1955	Arrived in New Zealand
1955-58	Worked as a bushman, herd tester and copywriter
1958,59	Secondary Teachers Training College, Christchurch
1975	Joint winner *Hansells Sculpture Award*
1983	QE II Arts Council travel grant to USA and Britain
	Attended International Sculpture Conference at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Theme: large outdoor sculpture
1985-86	St. Albans School, Christchurch

Exhibitions

1965	*Five South Canterbury Artists*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
1966	Solo exhibition, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
1972	*Hansells Sculpture Award*, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1978	*Package deal*, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1979	*Hansells Sculpture Award*, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1980	Arts Centre, Christchurch. Three installations
1981	Retrospective exhibition, Aigantighe Gallery, Timaru
	Stations installation, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
	First Australian Sculpture Triennial, ANZART, Christchurch
	Boxes, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
	F1 New Zealand Sculpture Project, Wellington
1982	*ARTEDER '82 International Drawing Exhibition*, Bilboa, Spain
	300 Steps installation, Mount Gray, South Canterbury
	Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
	New Zealand Drawing, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, national tour
1983	*ANZART in Hobart*, Tasmania
1984	Solo exhibition, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
	Art in Dunedin, outdoor installation
	Installation at Aigantighe Gallery, Timaru, with Stuart Griffiths
1985	Solo exhibition, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1986	*Totems*, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch

ISBN 0 86463 135 9

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Peter Nicholls

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Peter Nicholls

Peter Nicholls' sculptures both create and explore areas of tension – in the physical world of materials and in the responses of viewers. Tension, balance, pressure, precariousness and an edge of threat are all part of the physical vocabulary which Nicholls has been developing and mastering in over twenty years of working as a sculptor. In 1980 he made the following comments about his monumental *Untitled* work in the Hansells Sculpture Exhibition at the Wairarapa Arts Centre:

> My concern here is with the anxious object, the psychological tensions invoked by seemingly uncomfortable articulations of forms . . . precariousness imparts an emotional, gestural quality and conveys a distinct feeling of anxiety and expectation.[1]

This sculpture was a 20-foot by 8-foot sheet of steel, held into an arch by two enormous boulders. Under the arch burned dozens of diesel-fuelled flames, making an X. The light from the flames flickered on the arch above them, which swayed gently in the wind. In this sculpture there was actual movement which added to the drama of the work. The work in this exhibition, *Spine*, remains solidly immobile, yet its form and construction implies a strongly twisting movement. The drama is still there. The question, Is it safe to go near this? is often in our minds when we look at Nicholls' sculpture. Will it all fly apart, or come tumbling down?

Site and Scale

Peter Nicholls likes to work on a large scale, and preferably for outdoor sites. The final placement of a sculpture has a strong bearing on its development, and the large scale often ensures that the construction and installation of his sculpture is fraught with difficult technical problems. These technical challenges contribute to the energy andtension in the work which iseventually communicated to the viewer.

A large work, *Full Stop*, which Nicholls made at the F1 Sculpture project in Wellington in 1982 is a good example of his ability to create works which are superbly appropriate for their site, extraordinarily difficult to construct, and which combine detailed and careful preparation with a willingness to accept chance results. In this case, no further attempts were possible. Nicholls described *Full Stop* as follows:

> Working on the edge. A One Action gesture – accepting the form resulting from this one action. Empathy with materials and the researching of technical processes to increase the chance of success.
> Conceived as a plummet action to crumple sheet steel 3660x2745x5mm with a 3 tonne boulder into an instantly frozen, organically shaped plane.[2]

Nicholls took the sheet of heavy steel to red heat, and with the assistance of Army engineers, winched the enormous greywacke boulder above it. Then the ropes holding the rock were dynamited and it crashed into the metal below which curved up gracefully around it just as Nicholls had envisaged.

With all the paraphernalia of its construction gone, the sculpture now rests on logs; red rock, red metal against a blue/grey sea, looking, in these comet-mad days, like a meteor come safely to rest.

Machinery

Nicholls has for many years used massive pieces of wood, adzed, sawn and bolted into constructions which hold together under tension with cables and chains. Some of these works from the 1970s were reminiscent of abandoned pieces of old farm machinery which are part of the New Zealand landscape. In his most recent works Nicholls has been exploring the machinery which underlies human movement; in this sculpture it is the stretching, twisting, arching and balancing of the human spine. The vertebrae piled on top of one another, linked tenuously together, yet withstanding extraordinary wear and tear. A 1985 work, *Sinew*, exhibited at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, was also concerned with the structures beneath the skin. Two long lines of wood, bolted together, snaked along the floor, linked by an arch where they met at the centre of the gallery. The wood was creosoted black, and the end of each section was red. Though made in an inflexible material the work managed to convey the elastic strength of sinew that enables us to move.

Spine is made from massive pieces of wood – it is old Australian hardwood – dense and heavy. These timbers have supported bridges or wharves, withstanding enormous pressure and weight. From them Nicholls has made a work which reflects human scale and human structure. *Spine* is an archway and an entrance, and it will stand near the entrance to this gallery, inviting you to walk through and around it. Nicholls enjoys architectural forms and *Spine* is a development from a 1983 work, *Arch*, and a column called *100 ° twist*, also made from large blocks of wood fitted carefully together. However, in keeping with Nicholls' desire to push materials to the limit, *Spine* is taller, larger and more violently twisting than the other two works. There is still an inescapably perilous sensation of balance here as heavy wooden units work together to make a soaring archway.

Spine is stained black to give it extra visual solidity. It stands out against both the building and the park and provides a contrast with the sparkling surface and almost constant movement of George Rickey's *Double L Gyratory*, also in the Auckland City Art Gallery's sculpture court. Nicholls' sense of place and his ability to make works which enhance their site is again evident.

Totem

Spine is both totemic and anthropomorphic. It relates to human scale and structure and to the history of

Rod Evans

Full Stop 1982
redrock (greywacke), sheet steel
1830 x 2745 x 3660mm
Balaena Bay carpark, Wellington

human building, to the creation of entrances to cave and home, palace and temple, both the humble and the magnificent. Does the Art Gallery deserve a triumphal arch? Opinions will vary. But no procession can pass through here. Only one person at a time, and you must twist your spine as you walk through, echoing the arrested movement of the sculpture which surrounds you.

There is an intricacy of construction here, a delicacy of movement which belies the sculpture's weightiness (a crane is needed to put this spine together). Above all there is the sense of a sculptor who knows what he is about, who can use difficult materials to realize ambitious ideas, battling through to create consistently satisfying works.

Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Peter Nicholls, quoted by Neil Rowe in "Twenty-one Sculptors in Masterton", Art New Zealand No 16 p.53

[2] F1 New Zealand Sculpture Project, Wellington 8 November – 2 December 1982 Catalogue p.20

Nigel Yates

Bridge 1985 – 1986
Australian hardwood
University of Otago, Dunedin

Spine 1985-1986 (detail)

Front page

Spine 1985-1986
Australian hardwood
3500 x 2000 x 1900mm

Di Ffrench

Peter Nicholls, November 1985

Biography

1936	Born Wanganui, New Zealand
1955-57	Sheep station, Raglan
1959-61	University of Canterbury, School of Fine Arts
1961-63	University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts, DFA (Hons)
1962	Auckland Secondary Teachers Training College
1964-78	Taught art at various secondary schools
1974	Hansells Sculpture Award – Monumental/Environmental works
1975	QE II Arts Council grant
1978	Commission, *Counterpoise*, Commonwealth Games Sculpture Symposium, Edmonton, Canada
1978-79	Graduate Assistant, University of Wisconsin, M.A. in Sculpture
since 1979	Tutor in 3-D studies, Otago Polytechnic School of Art, Dunedin
1982	Commission, *Wisconsin No. 7*, University of Auckland, School of Architecture
1983	Commission, *Cross*, chapel, Dunedin Public Hospital
1985-86	Commission, *Bridge*, University of Otago, Dunedin

Selected Exhibitions

1963	*Painters and Sculptors of Promise*, Auckland Society of Arts
1972	Solo exhibition, Osborne Gallery, Auckland
	New Zealand Sculpture Invitational, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
1973	*Sculpturescape*, Mildura Triennial, Australia
1974	QE II Arts Council Award
1975	*Mildura*, Victoria Arts Festival
	12 New Zealand Artists, Australian tour
	Solo exhibition Barrington Gallery, Auckland
1976	*New Zealand Drawing*, Auckland City Art Gallery
	Hansells Selected Sculpture, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1977	Solo exhibition, Data Gallery, Auckland
1978	Installation, Albert Park, Auckland, with Di Ffrench
	Environmental works, Pakiri Beach, North Auckland, with Di Ffrench
	5 Sculptures, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
	Auckland Artists, Auckland City Art Gallery
	International Sculpture Symposium, Commonwealth Games, Edmonton, Canada
	10th International Sculpture Conference, Toronto, Canada
	Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Victoria, Australia
	New Zealand Sculptors at Mildura, QE II Arts Council national tour
1979	Solo exhibition, Superior, Wisconsin, USA
	New Zealand Sculpture Festival, Dunedin
	Finalist, Aotea Square water sculpture competition, Auckland
1980	*Dunedin Drawing Invitational*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
	Solo exhibitions, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin and C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
	Aramoana, Wellington City Art Gallery, and Hocken Library
1981	Solo exhibition, Wellington City Art Gallery
1982	*New Zealand Drawing Invitational*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
	F1 New Zealand Sculpture Project, Full Stop, Balaena Bay, Wellington
1983	Solo exhibition, Red Metro, Dunedin
1984	*Peter Nicholls Survey Exhibition 1971-1984*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
1985	Exhibition of work by tutors at Otago Polytechnic School of Art, Dunedin Public Art Gallery

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Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Terry Stringer

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Terry Stringer

The context in which we most often see contemporary art is the art gallery. It is of course a truism that this context or physical environment gives meaning and significance to the artwork; surrounding it with the aura of institutional approval, and setting it apart from everyday urban, surburban, domestic objects and noise in a usually silent, reverential, special place. While not affecting to deny the positive aspects of public display – he still shows in galleries – Terry Stringer expects much of his sculpture to become part of domestic, private spaces. His works are celebrations of domestic interiors, the litter and clutter of surburban living rooms. They are sculptures to be lived with; art which disguises itself as everyday objects; works of manageable size which people can have around them. Despite the pejorative tone which is often implicit in the word 'domestic' when applied to subject matter or scale in contemporary art, Terry Stringer maintains that he intends his works to please and intrigue – to be pleasant to live with.

Theatre

Stringer has made a number of installations in which he tranforms public spaces into quirky facsimiles of family sitting rooms. In these works he encourages theatrical and narrative associations. In one of the living-room installations, Stringer used a tape made by William Dart; a compilation of musical pieces around the theme of "Home Sweet Home", a further questioning and transforming of the silence and strangeness of public spaces set aside for viewing art. The domestic tableaux have many of the qualities of stage sets. His 1981 work, *Living Room*, included sofa, armchairs, tables with vases of flowers, a lamp (which works), a portrait on the wall and a carpet square with woven patches of light cast by a non-existent window. This room, and another installation, *Domestic Interior* 1980, had no sculptural inhabitants. There were instead the traces and signs of human activities – a magazine and a pair of spectacles lying on a table, a half finished cup of tea, an impression in a cushion on the armchair. They await the entry of the actors, and we feel ourselves on display walking around in them. We enter these spaces and are surrounded by objects which combine qualities of reality and illusion, at once familiar and strange, reassuring and disorienting; a simultaneous awareness of both absence and presence. What is really here?

Distortions

These paradoxes are created by two of the most distinctive features of Stringer's sculpture – his use of optical tricks and illusions through the manipulation of flat planes, and his use of paint on his sculpture, to enhance and extend the illusion. Stringer plays with our perceptions of objects in space, making three-dimensional sculptures which appear two-dimensional and which echo the distorting flatness of photography. Of course photography can be looked at only from the front – the viewer and the photographer share a single visual perspective. But sculpture in the round usually allows an infinite number of viewing positions. In his living-room installations, Stringer works from different viewpoints for each object. He lets us 'walk into' a photograph or stage set in which objects that appear perfectly plausible from one angle, suddenly reveal themselves as absurdly distorted from another, and at their most distorted they often appear most abstractly sculptural, throwing off their apparent domestic usefulness. The results are humorous and intriguing. The comfortable armchair cannot in fact be sat on, the plants and vases defy gravity, resting safely on tables which are tilted at 45-degree angles. Painted shadows reinforce real shadows: this is theatre, filled with gently dramatic incident.

Traditions

Stringer locates himself within the traditional sculptural practice of Western art. He makes three-dimensional objects and figures in space which relate in obvious ways to their models in the real world. In acceptance of these traditional precepts he sees connections with naive or folk artists who also accept traditional subjects and themes. Stringer is of course far from naive and is fully aware of the criticisms of conservatism which can be directed at his work. Yet within contemporary sculptural practice, to aim consciously for a domestic setting, and to challenge that context while celebrating it, is in itself a questioning of new conventions.

Sculpture and Painting

Challenges to traditional sculptural concerns and media occur throughout Terry Stringer's work. In 1978 he made a free-standing wooden figure for the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, *Marlene Dietrich wearing men's clothing*. In some respects the figure is aggressively two-dimensional, asserting its own flatness. It is made from thin plywood, cut and joined into a few planes, and the clothing is painted on to the wood, imitating the appearance of a photograph. Yet the figure maintains an illusion of movement through space, of a photograph come alive, emerging into the third dimension. (The choice of a famous, much photographed 'star' as a subject adds emphasis to the sculptor's comment on our perceptions of reality.) The figure even has one foot extending over the edge of its plinth, ready to step down into our space in apparent defiance of the rule adhered to by far more 'realistic' sculptures: stay on the plinth, don't set a foot on the floor. These painted wooden relief sculptures have some of the qualities of toys. Figures are even hinged at the shoulders, so that their arms can be raised or lowered. More tableaux, more theatre.

All this painting of the surfaces of sculpture involves a crossover of media boundaries, which has a particularly contemporary feel. Painted sculpture is still rare in New Zealand. Stringer's later painted aluminium wall pieces began with objects like medicine cupboards – acceptably three-dimensional. But eventually Stringer made a framed painting to

New Zealand Herald

Terry Stringer in *Living Room* 1981
Exhibition at RKS Art, Auckland

hang on the wall of one of his *Living Rooms*. It is a portrait of a woman, and yes, it is painted to look like a sculpture.

Real or not?

When we look at photographs of these installations, the conundrum becomes even more complicated. Stringer starts by recreating the perspective illusions of photography in sculpture. But when these are reduced again to two dimensions in a photograph, some of the objects lose all their pretensions to three-dimensionality and become puzzling ciphers, merely hinting at their household function. Reality and illusion are hopelessly entangled. In the photograph reproduced here, Terry Stringer is himself in the living room, reclining on the carpet, foreshortened by the camera, appearing scarcely more or less 'real' than his work.

Bench/Woman

Many of Terry Stringer's recent sculptural concerns come together in the installation of *Bench/Woman* at the Auckland City Art Gallery – the collision of private and public spaces, of classical and domestic subject matter, of painted and sculpted surfaces.

Although Stringer has often used the human figure in his work in painted reliefs, bronze portrait heads and free-standing sculptures, the combination of figure and furniture is fairly recent. In 1983 he made *Lobby Lady*, a life-size figure in painted polyster resin, who sits in a large painted armchair. The figure is highly stylized, made up of aggressively geometric planes, and her pose, clothing, and the title of the work combine with this simplification of form, seeming to indicate associations with the 1920s, America and cubism.

For Stringer, the flattened planes have been important as a way of achieving a two-dimensional effect and the art deco/twenties appearance is an unlooked-for result. He now concentrates less on attempting to hold the flat effect around all sides, and several of his new bronze torsos are relief sculptures – hollow from the back, meant to be viewed from the front, but still with an intriguing distortion of perspective. For Stringer, this distortion justifies his continuing exploration of traditional subjects. He hopes that small shifts of scale and distortions of form can help the viewer to sense the subject's bodily sensations, a twist of an arm or leg, a turn of the head. In contrast with the tension and tightness of *Lobby Lady*, the figure in *Bench/Woman* is relaxed, meditative and self-

contained. At the time of writing, Stringer intends to install an edition of three of the same sculpture for this exhibition, three painted bronze figures, resting on three enamelled aluminium benches differing only in the use of paint. Stringer now rubs paint into bronze, making a slightly tinted surface, almost a patina. Greater differences will be created by the contrasting spaces in which they are set. One of the figures will rest on a plinth in the 'public' area of the gallery. Stringer is well aware of the significance of the plinth in setting the sculptures apart from the viewer. In a 1983 installation entitled *Museum Corridor*, he placed a line of small heads on tall stands alongside a curtain on which he had drawn in charcoal shaded areas which signified the museum wall. His play with the pretensions of public and private spaces continues.

Behind the plinth will be a curtain of drapery, making a formal background for the self-conscious 'work of art'. Walking around the curtain, we find ourselves in a living room. There is wallpaper on the wall, curtains beside us, and two women relaxing on couches, almost identical but not quite, their feet resting on the wooden floor.

Terry Stringer continues his probing of the way in which the context of sculpture affects its appearance and its importance. Of course his domestic space is not really a home; the wallpaper will come off the walls at the the end of the exhibition, and the gallery will be a public space again, deceptively neutral in appearance, waiting for the next artist or artwork to attempt the difficult task of transforming it.

Alexa M. Johnston

Ponsonby on a stool 1984
bronze 270x390x190mm
private collection

Bench/Woman 1985–1986
bronze and aluminium
600 x 1200 x 600mm

Front page

Bench/Woman 1985–1986

Self-portrait chair 1980
oil on aluminium
1050 x 600 x 170mm
collection of the artist

Solo Exhibitions

1975	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1976	*Flat Women*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1977	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1978	*Bronzes & Painted Wood Sculpture*, Waikato Art Museum, Hamilton
	Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
	Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, Australia
1979	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
	Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, Australia
1980	Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, Australia
1981	*Living Room* – 5 venue tour – RKS Art, Auckland; Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North; Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui; Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt; Rotorua City Gallery, Rotorua
	Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
	Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
	Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, Australia
1982	*Wrap Around Sculpture*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
	Recent Works, Rotorua City Gallery, Rotorua
	Seen, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Ankrum Galleries, Los Angeles, USA
1983	Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
	Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1984	Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Sculpture in Bronze and in Painted Aluminium, Ankrum Galleries, Los Angeles, USA
1985	Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
	Domestic Details, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, Australia
	Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Janne Land Gallery, Wellington

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Photographs: John McIver

Biography

1946	Born Redruth, Cornwall, England
1953	Arrived in New Zealand
1967	Graduated DFA (Hons) University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts
1976	Hansells Sculpture Award
1977,81,82	QE II Arts Council Awards
1979	Air New Zealand Travel Award
	Aotea Square, Auckland, Sculpture Award
1980	Australia/New Zealand Foundation Award
1982	ICI Bursary Award

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Greer Twiss

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Greer Twiss

It would be tempting to conclude, on first making acquaintance with Greer Twiss's sculpture, that there have been four or five quite different modes, four or five themes more or less unrelated. That's not so.

From the bronze athlete figures of the mid sixties to the tripods and recent 'assemblage' works – collages of juxtaposed objects, mostly remade in different and alien materials and arranged in ambiguous and mysterious relationships – there lies a fascinating unity of attitude and methodology, a unity of sculptural concerns, and a unity of aesthetic.

These notes ponder that unity, connect the old work to the new.

Twiss is a collector, a compulsive gatherer, squirrelling about him works of art, tools, bric-á-brac, anything that takes his fancy. He responds to the look and feel of things, to the ideas and associations embodied in things. He possesses them, stores them away to be brought out, handled, enjoyed, returned to their box – or possibly, during the last few years, to be used in his work.

He is also a modeller, a maker of puppets, an engineer of the minute, fascinated by replication, by change of scale, by making, by changed contexts.

Twiss's first works were modelled, wrought in wax, cast in bronze. He was a sculptor who built in the additive way – adding wax to an armature, building up wax. The little fully modelled figures of the Acrobats, Athletes, the Marchers and protestors, became the legs, hands and truncated painted limbs arranged as 'incidents' upon sheer steel plates. The modelling of figures was expanded into the inclusion of other casts – spectacles, tools, pieces of models, handles, short lengths of knotted rope. Mundane objects became imbued with more powerful significances as they were transformed into cast metal.

The mundane, the commonplace became ennobled; the banal was elevated into art. A new purpose, a metamorphosis of material and strange juxtapositions imbued the meaningless with meaning, charged the commonplace with mystery.

And yet Twiss still modelled, he still added. He brought together. Scale changed. Large space, large form was referenced by small objects. Two isolated pieces of cast rope attached to wall plates stretched across a void, strongly activating the space between. A lifesize limb implied the wholeness of a figure, or introduced the spectator into a small tableau through reference to the spectator's own presence, scale and physical attributes. Found objects were included or rendered in new materials, but pieces were still modelled and cast.

During a brief sojourn in London in the mid seventies, Twiss was invited to see the installation of an exhibition of Giacometti's 'plates' at the Tate Gallery. In the later, and better known works, several slender figures stand rigidly vertical upon each base plate, an eerily quiet, motionless world. In the earlier pieces the objects are more abstract – plantoid and zoomorphic shapes from a less personal surrealist vocabulary. Clearly these works were strongly influential upon Twiss, but more potent for him, he recalls, was the experience of the exhibition in installation. There he was powerfully affected by the juxtapositions, by the unplanned and random relationships of the sculptures, or elements within the pieces.

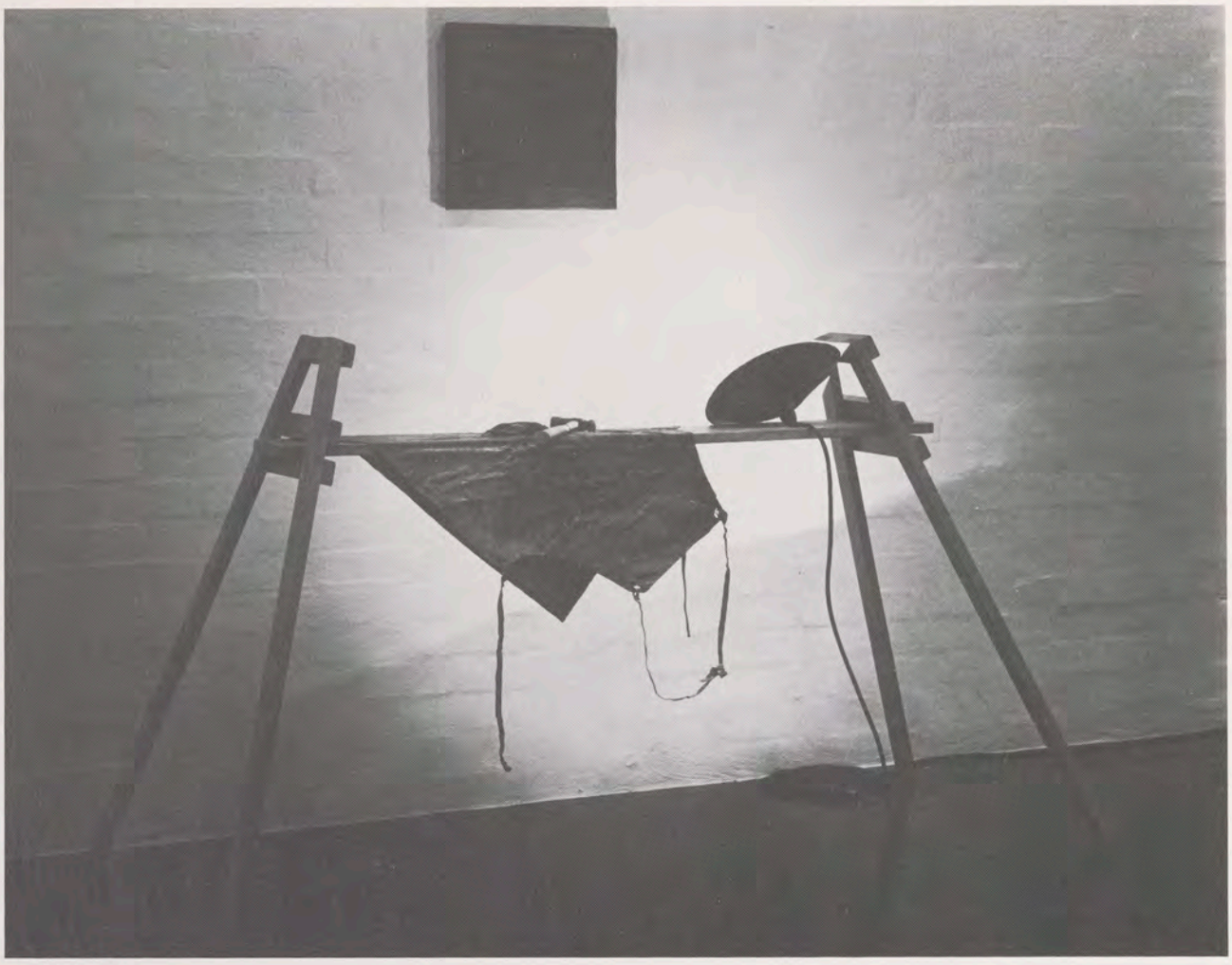
These plate works of Twiss's, these 'activity areas', for want of a better description, provided clear, undisturbed environments for the sculptor. As a painter can with a painting, Twiss was able to define a space, isolate his elements from the clutter of surrounding objects, create his own perspectives, establish his own scale relationships. A new potency was achieved, not only by tensions created through unexpected juxtapositions and associations, or by reference to scale through truncated parts, but by the isolation of the sculptures within their own tautly defined spaces.

Formal concerns of composition, always strong, now became formalist. Activity areas became specific defined spaces and by 1976 measured spaces became sites. The mid seventies were, of course, years in which site-specific sculpture, and site-defining sculptural projects, enjoyed much attention. The 'sighting' concerns encountered in poetic sculptures such as *VW Split*, 1974, became leaner, more formal, tougher. *Trig* and the *Site/Sight* works – which play with the two meanings of the sound 'site' – dispensed with the human references and most of the cast objects. Only small cast cushions or little G-clamps and wing-nuts were introduced into the formal relationships of steel plate and steel extrusion.

And yet, even in these formal – and for Twiss, severe and somewhat 'elitist' – works, the ironic and poetic were present. The 'sight/site' conceit and the little soft cushions cast into hard metal are examples. For that matter the reference to human scale and human endeavour was also there, not only in the inclusion of tools made to assist man in his work but also in the trigonometric and survey implications of site defining.

In 1980 the first tripod sculptures were made – steel tubular structures of three and, more often, many more legs, supporting small wedges, blocks and other minute cast metal objects. Clamps were introduced to the legs and small cast straps were sometimes applied. The reference is to utilitarian personal tools – a surveyor's tripod, a support for camera or telescope – but the aesthetic is anti-utilitarian. The modelled elements that form a continuous thread from the earliest sculptures – indeed, from the puppets that precede his activity as a sculptor – are there, but so too are the tensions, the perplexing and poetic ambiguities of the plates and earliest spatial works.

Twiss enjoyed the continuity of idea flow through the



Still-life 1985
wood and lead
sculpture, overall 1605 x 1351 x 735mm
wall canvas 370 x 374 x 50mm
collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

modelled works. With the later works, modelled separately and then assembled, the same continuous joy of making was not present. The tripods were, in part, an attempt to reach back and re-achieve that. They have a different spontaneity from the *Athletes*. They are conditioned by the demands of how things stand, how they are balanced. But although different from sustained modelling, they demand a continuing involvement and contact in the way the earliest works had done.

The newest sculpture is a change again and yet also something of a return. A return to earlier sculptural concerns, but a return quite different from the departure.

The tripods (which incidentally still continue – a recent private tripod commission gives the lie to tight compartmentalization of Twiss's *oeuvre*, just as the 1981 modelled and cast anti-Springbok marchers did) were somewhat esoteric for Twiss. He wanted to move away from triangles and spheres to 'roses' and everyday objects. And so he has returned to assemblies of collectable objects and the definition of 'activity areas', strictly defined spaces in which his new, complex compositions are enacted.

The source for the new change of direction was again an exhibition installation. Not the Tate Gallery and Giacometti this time, but RKS Gallery, Auckland, and the installation of a tripod show. Wine glasses – refreshments to counter the fatigue of work – and tools lying about among the sculpture. New juxtapositions which, in his own words, provided that necessary 'brain tickling'.

The poetical – even literary – nature of Twiss's post-tripod works, like its tableau form, refers back to the sculpture of the mid seventies. The juxtapositions of parts have become more complex, more enigmatic; there is a layering of meaning and significances. And while there are direct thematic links across the parts, there are ironic side excursions of meaning; often witty, always rich. Indeed the monumentality of these works, like that of so much of Twiss's work, is not in the scale, nor in the grandness of the parts (which are often quite diminutive, even slight) but in the tension between parts. Their stature and the conviction of the

pieces as sculpture arise out of the collective intellectual demands of the parts, the wit and the complexity of meaning of fragments so astutely woven together into a unity. They are finally also so visual; exciting experiences for the eye.

So *Vacation*, purchased recently by the Auckland City Art Gallery, includes a trout cast in lead; a lead upholstered director's chair, a steel plate and a steel welder's trolley. The trout (rainbow), the spoils of vacation, was the largest caught in its area. Rainbow cast in lead. A fish cast solid, dead, static. A trophy – largest, heaviest fish, reinforced in the heaviest of metals. A rugged trolley to carry the heavy trophy and its equally heavy plate around. A chair upholstered in a material clearly non-factual, but in its timber preserving the authority of materials – tawa is right for chairs, pine is not. Tension – absurd upholstery (but visually so right: Twiss does wonderful things with lead) – correct framing. And *Vaction*, like 'sight' and 'site', is both holidays and the process of leaving, of vacating.

Twiss's sculpture has never been richer, more complex in its meanings, more stimulating visually than it is now. The process of nearly thirty years of making sculpture, the consistency of a strong sculptural vision, the tradition of a maker, a gatherer, a hoarder of objects and ideas, the instincts of one who has always 'added to, built up' to acheive his ideas and his forms, are all at its service.

T.L. Rodney Wilson

Exhibitions

1954 *Puppet Theatre*, Western Springs Carnival, Auckland
1958 Group show, Auckland Society of Arts
1959 *Established Artists*, Takapuna Community Centre, Auckland
1960 First 2-man exhibition, with Max McLellan, Adult Education Centre, Auckland
Puppet series, for television station AKTV 2
1961 Group show, Auckland Society of Arts
1962 *Contemporary New Zealand Painting and Sculpture*, Auckland City Art Gallery
First NZ Society of Sculptors exhibition, University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts
1964 First solo exhibition, *Athletes*, Ikon Gallery, Auckland
Athletes, Eric Scholes Gallery, Rotorua
Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Victoria, Australia
The Group, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1965 *Protest Marchers*, John Cordy Gallery, Auckland
Paris Biennale, France
NZ Artists in Britain, New Zealand House, London
8 New Zealand Artists, Australian State Galleries
1966 *Group Sculpture*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1967 *Group Sculpture*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1968 *Recent Sculpture: Frozen Frames*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Recent NZ Sculpture, Auckland City Art Gallery
1969 *Painted Bronzes*, Victoria University, Wellington
NZ Society of Sculptors exhibition, Auckland Society of Arts
Three Environmentalists, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Sculpture 5, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1970 *Frozen Frames II*, Bonython Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Recent Sculpture, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
5 Sculptors, NZ Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington
Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Victoria, Australia
Small Centres Touring Show, QE II Arts Council of NZ
Wooden Sculpture, Fletcher Industries, Auckland
Art of the Sixties, Royal Visit exhibition, Auckland City Art Gallery
Group Sculpture, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1971 *NZ Society of Sculptors exhibition*, Osborne Galleries, Auckland
The Group, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
20:20 Print Show, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1972 *Intersections*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Drawings, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
NZ Society of Sculptors exhibition, Osborne Galleries, Auckland
Outdoor exhibition, Christchurch
1973 *Prize commission*, Hansells Sculpture Award
Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Victoria, Australia
Exhibition of Drawings, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
NZ Society of Sculptors exhibition, Osborne Galleries, Auckland
1974 *Of Lead Lines & Links*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Commonwealth Games exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1975 *Greer Twiss Sculpture*, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
Arts Victoria, Mildura, Australia
12 NZ Artists, Australian State Galleries
1976 *30 Little Drawings*, Maidment Little Theatre, Auckland
Barriers & Sight Screens, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
NZ Drawings, Auckland City Art Gallery
Art in the Mail, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
1977 *Site/Sight works*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Sydney Sculpture Biennale, National Gallery of New South Wales, Australia
NZ Society of Sculptors & Painters exhibition, Hastings Community Centre
Hands Exhibition, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
1978 *5 Works in steel and bronze*, University of South Australia, Adelaide
Platforms – Recent forms in NZ Sculpture, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
Auckland Artists, Auckland City Art Gallery
Puppets, Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt
Collection of NZ Paintings and Sculpture, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1979 *Recent Sculpture: works in bronze, steel & aluminium, Support Systems*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Recent Work, Victoria University, Wellington
Works in Progress, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland

No Sun, No Rain, No Radiation 1986 (detail)

Front page

No Sun, No Rain, No Radiation 1986
wood and lead
1505 x 2050 x 4000mm

Gillian Chaplin

Greer Twiss, March 1986

Exhibitions continued

1980	*Three-legged Race*, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
	NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters exhibition, Auckland Society of Arts
	New Year/New Works, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
	Kites, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
1981	*A Three-legged Device*, Rex Irwin Gallery, Sydney, Australia
	A Three-legged Device, RKS Art, Auckland
	New Year/New Works, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
	Figurative Sculpture, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters: Works on Paper, Auckland Society of Arts
	New Works, RKS Art, Auckland
	Greer Twiss: a survey 1959-1981, City Art Gallery, Wellington, national tour
1982	*A Three-legged Device*, New Zealand House, London
	A Three-legged Device, New Zealand Embassy, Washington DC
	12th International Sculpture Conference, Oakland, USA
	Carnegie International Exhibition, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, USA
1984	*Sculpture 83-84: Tripods* and *Vacations*, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington

Biography

1937	Born Auckland, New Zealand
1956-59	Attended University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts
1960	Postgraduate course, Auckland Teachers College
1963	New Zealand Society of Sculptors, Painters and Associates, foundation executive member
1964	QE II Arts Council travel grant
	Commission, *Sun in Tree*, Mercer
1965	Travelled Europe
	Commission, *Athletes*, Auckland City Art Gallery
1966	Appointed to staff, University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts
	Commission, *Fountain*, Auckland City Council, Karangahape Road
1968	President N.Z.S.S.P.
1969	Auckland Architecture Association Award
1971	Grand Prix Association, Jim Clark Trophy Commission
1973	Travelled England and USA
	Hansells Sculpture Prize
	Commission, *Scale-Shift*, Todd Motors
1974	Head of Sculpture, University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts
1975	Attended *Sculpture 10* conference, Toronto, Canada
	Commission, *Link*, Auckland Medical School
	Commission, *Resurrection Figure*, Redemption Church, St. Heliers Bay, Auckland
	Commission, *Tie*, University of Auckland, School of Engineering
1977	Commission, *Site* works – 9'x 9', Rotorua Art Gallery
1981	Travelled Australia, England, USA and Mexico
1982	Commission, *Twin Tripods*, University of Auckland, School of Architecture

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Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Marté Szirmay

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 1

Marté Szirmay

Much of the critical writing and discussion of Marté Szirmay's sculpture over the years 1968 to 1980 has concentrated on the formal beauty, symmetry and even the 'elegance' of her work. Szirmay has made sculptures which demonstrate her ability to work with technically difficult materials and to create objects with a strong visual and tactile appeal. Smoothly curving surfaces, rounded interlocking and enfolding forms, sweeping lines, dramatic use of reflected light to dissolve solid mass; all these aspects of her work have evoked approval and enjoyment.

Szirmay appeared to be working within an aesthetic which has influenced much twentieth-century Western sculpture; striving to reduce form to its essentials, allowing no superfluous decorative elements to interfere with the harmony and stillness of perfect forms, perfectly realized in durable and appropriate materials. Constantin Brancusi's work has been a major formative influence on several generations of sculptors. His marrying of material and form resulted in superbly harmonious and satisfying works. The British sculptor Barbara Hepworth had similar sculptural aims, and Szirmay met her in Britain in 1974. "Truth to materials" was the famous phrase used by Henry Moore to express this philosophy of sculpture.

In the late 1960s and 70s Szirmay worked in cast and sheet aluminium, chromed bronze and stainless steel and, more recently, in cast alabaster/resin. But her choice of materials and forms was influenced by broader concerns than the desire to make satisfying and beautiful forms. She was always hoping to communicate content as well, while avoiding dictating to the viewer the most appropriate reaction to the sculpture. Her work was a synthesis of her own philosophical and spiritual understandings, and she used archetypal forms and shapes – circles, pyramids, squares, spirals – all of which can be found in the traces we have of ancient civilizations all over the world.

And therein lay a dilemma for the sculptor. How much should the visual artist explain her work, or indicate the interpretation which she feels is most appropriate, the response she hopes to arouse in the viewer? In hoping for instinctive reactions from a twentieth-century urban audience to archetypal and anciently meaningful forms, is she expecting too much? This dilemma confronts many artists today who use symbols which are not universally recognized, as religious symbols once were. Yet few artists see it as appropriate or desirable to limit the types of response to their work. Today's analyses of the power structures at work in all the image-making in our society make us particularly wary of prescriptive formulae. But some indications of approach can be helpful. Szirmay sees 1980 as the time when the content of her work became more overt, and she began to be more specific about the messages she hoped her work would convey.

Essence

In 1985 when she gave a talk to the New Zealand Society of Sculptors and Painters in Auckland, Marté Szirmay began by saying that she wished to clarify some aspects of her work, and to discuss its implications for her. She explained her long-standing fascination with the responses of ancient civilizations to the mysteries of existence and to their idea of a creative earth deity, an earth spirit. In most civilizations the earth spirit was a female deity, whose reality and power could be sensed in a variety of natural forms, elements and places. Water was a purifying element which symbolized cleansing and regeneration; crevices, caves and grottos were shelter spots of the earth spirit, signifying entry to and exit from the underworld; rocks had importance as markers of especially sacred places and often had therapeutic, healing powers. Along with these symbols comes a parallel awareness of the importance of opposites, of complementary forces – female and male, the Chinese yin and yang, growth and decay, light and dark.

When Szirmay's earlier work is looked at from this perspective, new perceptions become apparent. Her use of highly reflective materials incorporates the sculpture's environment into itself, her constant recourse to enfolding and sheltering forms, her spirals of growth have the crumbling edges of decay. Szirmay began using cast resin in 1980 because in its liquid state it had many of the qualities of water, yet it set to a stone-like hardness. The smaller resin sculptures she called hand pieces, and she wanted them to have some of the properties of healing stones. They are forms which are meant to be picked up and handled; and as the viewer's hand echoes the motions of the sculptor who made the work, there is a transfer of warmth from flesh to stone.

So Szirmay's reduction to simple and economic forms has been an attempt at a summary of these ideas; a reduction to essence, to the simplest shapes and relations which can be traced throughout history and which have carried complex meanings for many human societies. Szirmay quotes Brancusi who said: "A well-made sculpture should have the power to heal the beholder."

Overlay

Of course there are many Western sculptors who have similarly attempted to connect their work with the traces of archaic societies. In 1983 art critic Lucy R. Lippard published a book, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*.[1] The book is the result of much careful research and enlightened observation of the conscious and unconscious ways in which contemporary artists have responded to the mysteries of the past. Lippard writes:

> *Overlay* is about what we have forgotten about art. It is an attempt to recall the function of art by looking back to times and places where art was inseparable from life . . . today's vanguard . . . has been primarily attracted by the archaic and prehistoric. These artists are rebelling against reductive purism and an art-for-art's-sake emphasis on form or image, along with a gradual upsurge of mythical and ritual content related to nature and to the origins of social life . . . this tendency has been interpreted by some

as formally and politically retrograde, anti-progress as well as anti-progressive. In fact, however, it is made up of a complex combination of reactionary and progressive elements . . . By bringing together the deeply moving vestiges of a past so distant it is virtually unknowable and images made by artists today which are culturally familiar and yet lacking some necessary depth in history, I hoped to understand better the original connections between art, religion and politics, the ways in which culture contributes to and functions in social life.[2]

In 1982 Marté Szirmay met Lucy Lippard in Britain and was excited to discover connections being made and ideas explored which paralleled the concerns of her own work.

Spiral

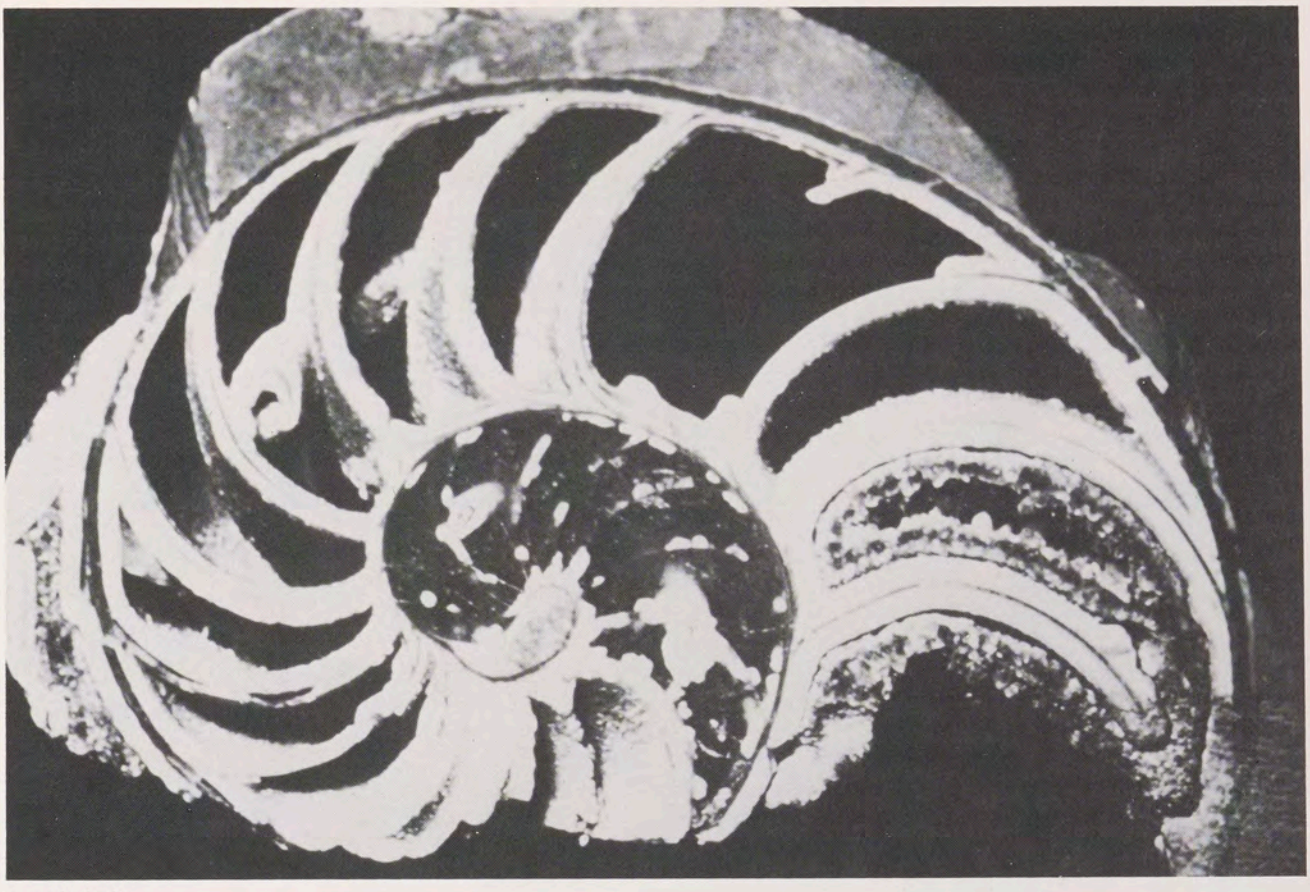
The two works in this exhibition are among the largest Szirmay has made using cast alabaster/resin, supported with stainless steel. In this combination of shapes, forms and materials, she attempts a complicated synthesis of symbols. Both works have large spiral shapes cast from alabaster/resin which has some of the colour and translucence of (white) skin. The spiral form is one which has always signified growth and regeneration; it is found throughout the world, from Maori moko and whakairo to ancient marking in stones in the north of Scotland. It has become something of a signature form in art made by feminist artists, denoting women's moves towards self-determination. It reflects also the growth pattern of seashells, which have been a continuing reference point for Szirmay. They are mathematically complex architectural forms which serve the needs of the animal inside, allowing for both protection and growth. The notion of opposites, of complementary forms combining to form a new whole underlies Szirmay's work *Splitting/Egg*. Lucy Lippard writes of "the world-egg of innumerable origin myths", and this sculpture has an upward movement which signifies growth and change. The two spirals here are from the same mould – one was cast from the other, they are literally two halves of the same whole, and they fit closely together. A shining line of metal marks their joining point and their point of division.

In the *Meandering Spiral* seven rippling lines of reflective steel which undulate across the spiral form make reference to the movement and shimmer of water and the ley lines which are thought to connect places of particular magnetic force across the surface of the earth. This work is more earth-bound in its shape and symbolism.

There are of course pitfalls in hoping that human beings can still respond instinctively to forms and shapes which once bore (we suppose) universally recognizable meanings. Certainly discussions like this one would theoretically be unnecessary if we all shared the same world view. These sculptures speak of natural rhythms and connections which are not part of urban living. Yet in them Szirmay makes another step towards that timelessly monumental quality, that compelling presence which, whether we understand it or not, informs our response to the mysterious traces from the archaic past which still mark the surface of the earth.

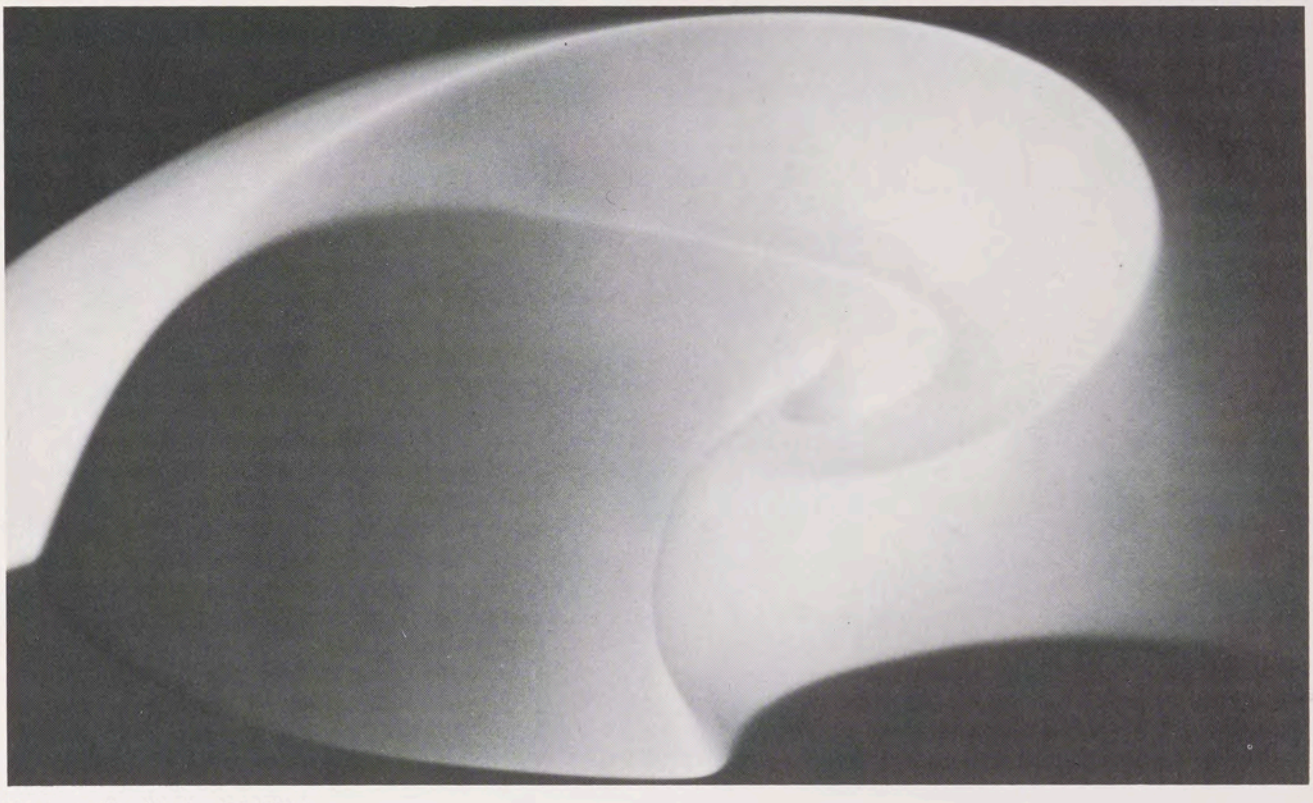
Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Lucy R. Lippard, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, Pantheon Books, N.Y. 1983
[2] Ibid. p.5



Marté Szirmay

Fossil shell



Cast marble (Series C) 1981
200 x 580 x 260mm
collection: Richard Kittelty, Auckland

Splitting/Egg 1986
cast alabaster/resin, stainless steel
2500 x 2500 x 2500mm

Front page

The Meandering Spiral 1986
cast alabaster/resin, stainless steel
2900 x 2500 x 500mm

Gillian Chaplin

Marté Szirmay, March 1986

Biography

1946	Born Budapest, Hungary
1957	Arrived in New Zealand
1968	Graduated DFA (Hons) University of Auckland, School of Fine Arts
	Air New Zealand Sculpture Award
1969	Commission, Newmarket Borough Council, Auckland (Smirnoff Award)
	Auckland Secondary Teachers College
1971-72	Frances Hodgkins Fellow, University of Otago, Dunedin
1972	Commission, St. Paul's Cathedral, Dunedin
1973, 78 & 82	QE II Arts Council Awards
1974	Commission, St. Cuthbert's College, Auckland
1975-76	Commission, Otago Medical School, Dunedin
	Commission, Auckland Medical School
1976	Commission, Auckland Architectural Association (Monier Awards)
1979	Commission, NZ Housing Corporation Building, Manukau City Centre, Wiri
1982	Visiting artist, Johnson Atelier, Princeton, New Jersey, USA
1982-83	Commission, NZ Foreign Affairs Department, Singapore
	Visiting artist, Governors State University, Illinois, USA
1984	Commission, NZ Peace Foundation, Media Peace Prize
	Commission, Bexley Development, Marac House, Manukau City
1985	Commission, A. and J. Gibbs, Parnell, Auckland
	Commission, Hawkins Development

Marté Szirmay has taught art in secondary schools and university extension programmes since 1970

Solo Exhibitions

1970	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1971	Dawson's Gallery, Christchurch
	C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1972	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
	Dawson's Gallery, Dunedin
	Waikato Art Gallery, Hamilton
1973	Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
1974	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1976	Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
	Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
	Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
	Bishop Suter Gallery, Nelson
1977	C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1978	Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
	Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
	Victoria University, Wellington
	New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1980	New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1981	Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
	The Hocken Library Gallery, Dunedin
	New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1983	C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
	New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1984	New Vision Gallery, Auckland

Group Exhibitions

since 1968	Various group shows in New Zealand
1970 & 1973	*Mildura Sculpture Triennial*, Victoria, Australia
1982	*ARTEDER '82 International Drawing Exhibition*, Bilboa, Spain
1983	*Drawing '83, 6th International Drawing Biennale*, Cleveland, United Kingdom
1984	*Kahurangi*, New Zealand Crafts Council, Los Angeles, USA
1985	

Group exhibition, Tokyo, Japan

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Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 25 March – 25 May 1986

Shared Concerns

Our sense of place, our awareness of where we are in the world, and in particular our responses to the local history of Aotearoa and its cultural traditions and pre-occupations — these are some of the threads that link the works of the eleven artists who accepted the invitation to exhibit in Sculpture 2. The artists are Chris Booth, Bronwynne Cornish, Bing Dawe, Jacqueline Fraser, Christine Hellyar, Robert Jesson, Vivian Lynn, Selwyn Muru, Maria Olsen, Denis O'Connor and Warren Viscoe.

The exhibition is not an attempt at binding art works into a thematic straitjacket; there is diversity and opposition. The catalogue essays individually explore the development of the work, the use of materials, and differing solutions to the problems of making sculpture and communicating ideas.

But an empathy of meaning among the works remains. One aspect of this similarity was noted by Nena Dimitrijevic in a 1984 essay on sculpture in Europe.

> There is a renewed passion for cultures distant in space and time, tribal art, archaic and crude forms, prehistoric artefacts and archeological remains. . .[1]

Many of these works exist within an emergent context of international sculpture. But there is also a strongly local set of references here. In New Zealand our distant history, our art history, and a growing strand of our present Pakeha reality is Maori. The *Te Maori* exhibition of indigenous sculpture of Aotearoa brought before the world and ourselves a rich sculptural practice which many contemporary sculptors here admire and honour.

Selwyn Muru and Jacqueline Fraser are both Maori artists whose works refer in different ways to a Maori understanding. Fraser transforms spaces with a light and humorous touch; Muru makes wry, totemic assemblages. Muru also honours a European sculptural tradition in one of his works which is a tribute to the life and work of the late British sculptor Henry Moore.

In this concern to re-discover and re-assess the past, the present is not forgotten. For many of these artists conservation of natural resources and the opposition to nuclear power and weaponry is a major concern. The works of Chris Booth and Bing Dawe insistently voice these issues.

There is also a strong call to celebrate the lives and stories of women; both Christine Hellyar and Vivian Lynn draw attention to the stages of women's lives and the cyclic processes of renewal in nature.

It is interesting to see how many of the sculptors, given a free rein to make the works they wished, have incorporated the idea of a gateway, an entrance or an archway into their works. Bronwynne Cornish, Vivian Lynn, Maria Olsen and Selwyn Muru all give us these places of transition to look at or go through.

Denis O'Connor, Warren Viscoe and Selwyn Muru make affectionate gestures in the direction of folk art and the New Zealand idioms of countryside and city. The use of materials is fascinating and surprising: wood, stone, fibreglass, shell, clay, paint, bronze, tapa, latex, plaster, steel, ribbon, wool, demolition debris — chosen, combined and brought together into a new life. Underlying these explorations are religious and spiritual ideas — poetry, mystery, hope.

As I have worked on this exhibition, many people have commented on the 'rightness' of this grouping of sculptors; they seem to fit together well. I hope that the reality of Sculpture 2 will bear out that confidence. I would like to thank all the sculptors for their assistance over the months of preparation for this exhibition and their generosity in making sculptures for us all to enjoy. Sincere thanks also to Priscilla Pitts who wrote four of the catalogue essays with wit and insight.

Once again the QE II Arts Council of New Zealand has assisted with the funding of the exhibition, and the Auckland City Council is grateful for their continued support.

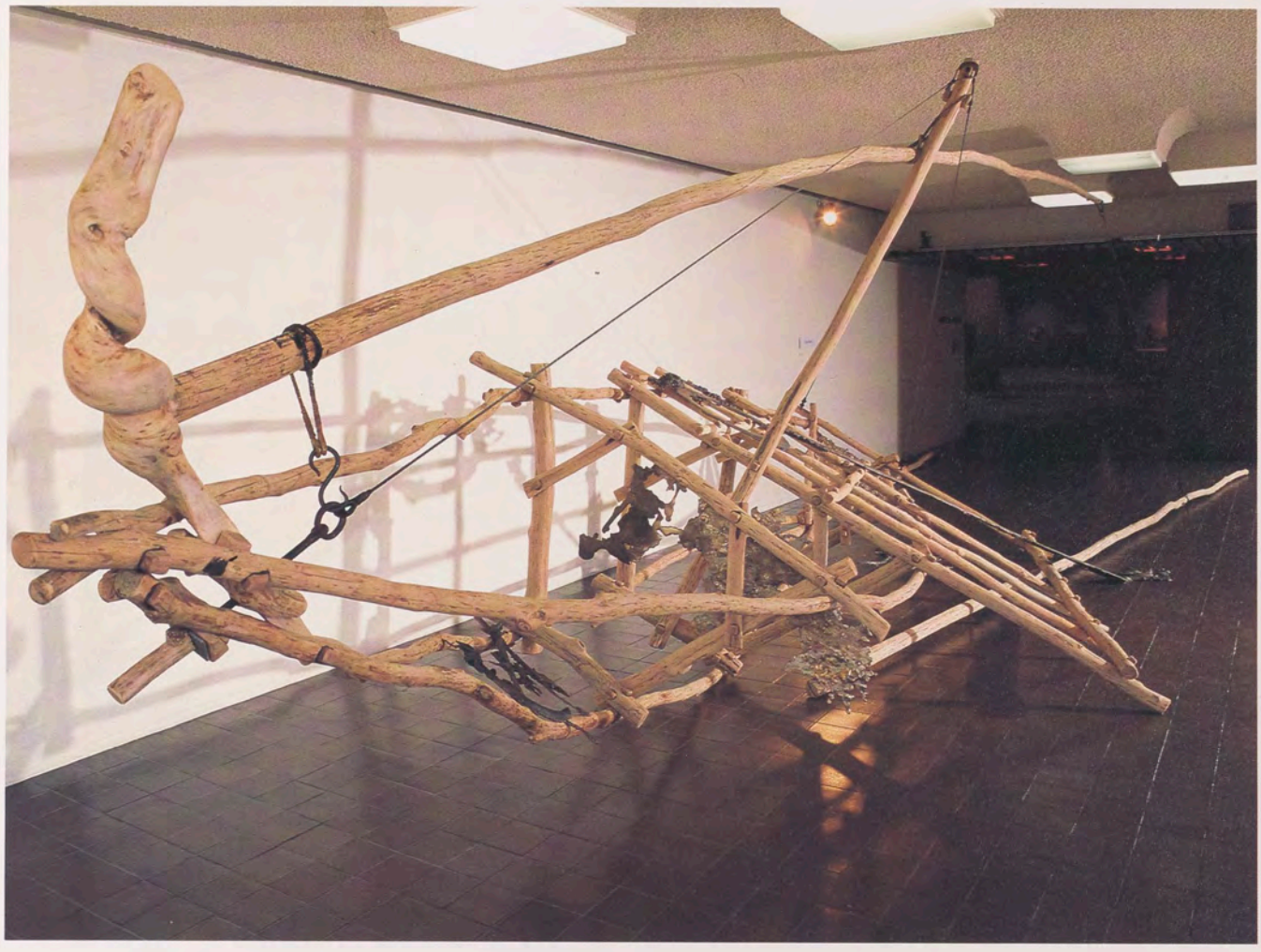
Alexa M. Johnston
Senior Curator
Contemporary New Zealand Art

[1] Nena Dimitrijevik, "Sculpture after evolution" *Flash Art* April/May 1984

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Chris Booth



Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

***Aramoana* 1982** power pole, steel, manuka, shells, bones, stones, wood collection of Ralph Hotere, Port Chalmers Photo: Julian Bowron

Chris Booth

Chris Booth makes sculptures to engage and enlarge our sympathies. They encourage us to acknowledge New Zealand as Aotearoa, a land which has both tangata whenua and manuhiri; a place of beauty where the guests must learn to honour the hosts and to show courtesy and respect to the land we both share.

The first sculpture I saw by Chris Booth was in his 1980 exhibition at the Denis Cohn Gallery in Auckland. It was one of a group of works which he made in response to Northland and his concern at the logging of its native forests and destruction of its bush. The work is called *Godsticks,* and I was surprised and exhilarated by its stark simplicity, its thought-provoking associations, and the sharp tangy smell of wood treated with tar and fish oil. Booth used methods similar to traditional Maori ones in preparing and assembling his materials. He lashed slim black poles of manuka into a grid which is reminiscent of the stick charts used by Micronesian navigators to indicate ocean currents and prevailing winds. This chart is held in tension by the two 'godsticks', small pieces of wood sharpened at one end. They are at the centre of the structure — without them it would fall apart. Chris Booth is aware of Western culture's lack of such a spiritual centre. Writing about Colin McCahon's *Necessary Protection* works, Wystan Curnow wrote:

> Cases for Necessary Protection abound: we need protection from the menace of nuclear holocaust, whales need it from the threat of extinction, land may go under to the city, Maori culture to European, the religious impulse to a crude secularism.[1]

When *Godsticks* was purchased by the Auckland City Art Gallery Chris Booth made some notes about the work. He described himself as a New Zealander, a far Northerner, a lover of nature, of human beings and of our ancient heritage.

> I was brought up in a family that put these things before capital and material gain, so we explored and walked and observed and collected and felt from the start. *Godsticks* is an attempt to bring some of these experiences into a profound statement...to arouse the same undefined profound feelings in fellow New Zealanders (something I think we are hungry for!).[2]

In the six years since then Chris Booth has continued to make works which do all these things, always experimenting with his chosen materials, surprising viewers with the energy, commitment, beauty and joy which his sculptures communicate.

In 1982 Chris Booth was Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago in Dunedin. He spent six months of his year making an enormously tall sculpture at Port Chalmers outside Ralph Hotere's painting studio. Hotere was a ardent campaigner against the building of an aluminium smelter at Aramoana and made many paintings in protest. Booth enjoyed six months working with an artist he admires (a practice he had begun in his twenties working for sculptors in Britain and Italy). He made a work called simply *Aramoana* which is like a tall swaying tree, a ladder which can be climbed. At the top is a metal cylinder, a 'sight' through which the climber sees Aramoana; a place with a superbly balanced estuarine ecology including low indented flats, salt marshes, sand and mud flats, inhabited by seals and a wide variety of sea birds and sea life. Opposite is Taiaroa Heads, the location of an albatross breeding colony which a smelter would have destroyed.

Booth's tree-like form is both a plea for life and a reminder of death. Long, spindly, whitened arms of kanuka wave outwards from the central pole; suspended from them are shells threaded onto long strings, stones, dried seaweed, a fishing float; reminders of the colours, the sounds, and the beauty of the harbour. These hanging symbols come from special places from North Cape to Stewart Island. This is a totem-like talisman, a good luck charm, placed on the hilltop to fend off evil. The smelter was not built.

The conservation of native trees and plants is a theme central to most of Booth's sculptures and he devotes a great deal of energy to the cause of conservation. In a recent article on unemployment in Northland, Emmett Devlin wrote:

> Northland's economic history can be summed up by the word 'extraction'. The seals and whales were dragged from the sea and later the gum and the kauri was taken from the forests.[3]

The extraction process continues and we are all poorer as a result.

Nga Tamariki a Tane was the name of the large sculpture Chris Booth made as a project for the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1983. The 'children' of Tane were a combination of ancient puriri stumps, the sad remains of stately trees felled last century and tree limbs made into huge swamp birds, kotuku and karuhiruhi, whose breeding habitat in estuaries is being destroyed, silted up by the erosion that happens when bush is cleared for forestry. This major outdoor installation, which delighted visitors to the gallery in the summer of 1983-84, was followed by another large work commissioned by the National Art Gallery, *Nga Rimu o Puketi.* Puketi is a forest near Kerikeri where Chris Booth lives. The sculpture is made from scraped manuka poles, lashed together with cord and festooned with shimmering swathes of creamy muka which resembles the flowing, weeping foliage of the rimu. The women at the Akotahi Craft Trust at Ngawha made the muka especially for this work. *Nga Rimu o Puketi* transforms its location, becoming in Ian Wedde's words "as much a wonderful place to be as a wonderful work of sculpture."[4]

The sculpture smells of the outdoors, and Booth creates an experience which summons up memories of walking through the bush while remaining an essence, a stripped-down symbol of a complicated reality.

Then, in 1985, Chris Booth began using bronze again. (He had first established a bronze foundry in Kerikeri in 1976.) He developed a method of casting in the open air, often using sand and horse dung moulds which he imprinted with nikau fronds and other debris from forest or beach. He poured and painted molten bronze onto the indentations, and the resulting irridescent, lace-like, splattery bronze castings became the wings of yet more birds, swamp birds again, this time with bent heads, warnings, memorials, crucifixes — one of them hangs in the new Auckland Stock Exchange. Very high on a gleaming white wall, it observes the stock market punters dashing by in the foyer below. How good are the shares in Forest Products?

Chris Booth's energy to tackle outsize projects seems undiminished despite many of the disappointments which plague sculptors who want to work on a large scale. In a superb performance/installation for the Govett-Brewster Gallery's 1986 Sculpture Project *River Proverb,* Booth worked with a foundryman and a sculpture student to assist him. They heated bronze in three outdoor furnaces, then poured the molten metal down channels carved in stripped kanuka. The metal ran in rivulets down to small bowl-like indentations in six large round Taranaki boulders in which stood tall, stripped kanuka trees. The furnaces roared, the bronze glowed, hissed and spattered, and the drama of the event was heightened by a violent storm through which all three worked like bronze-age artisans.

Process was all important in this work. A few weeks after the event, at Booth's request, the staff of the Govett-Brewster Gallery returned the huge pieces of wood to the bush to rot down. Now only the boulders remain, so there is little trace of the event. Booth has applied to his own working methods the criteria he has observed among the Maori and in his own upbringing: honour your materials and the place where you use them, think carefully about your methods and the ideas you are expressing, because if you ignore these things the work you make will not please you. Underlying all human creativity is its place in the order of all things. If sensitivity and care is not taken, there is disorder, harm. The creative process is special; don't abuse the gifts you have.

Chris Booth is a Pakeha artist who is constantly aware of and attracted by the depth and wisdom of Maori culture at a time when curators, critics and artists are confronted by the issue of appropriation. The use and abuse of non-Western materials and forms in Western art is hotly debated at present. Booth constantly subjects himself and his work to rigorous questioning on this issue and he remains humble, courteous and attentive in his responses to Maori ideas, history and people.

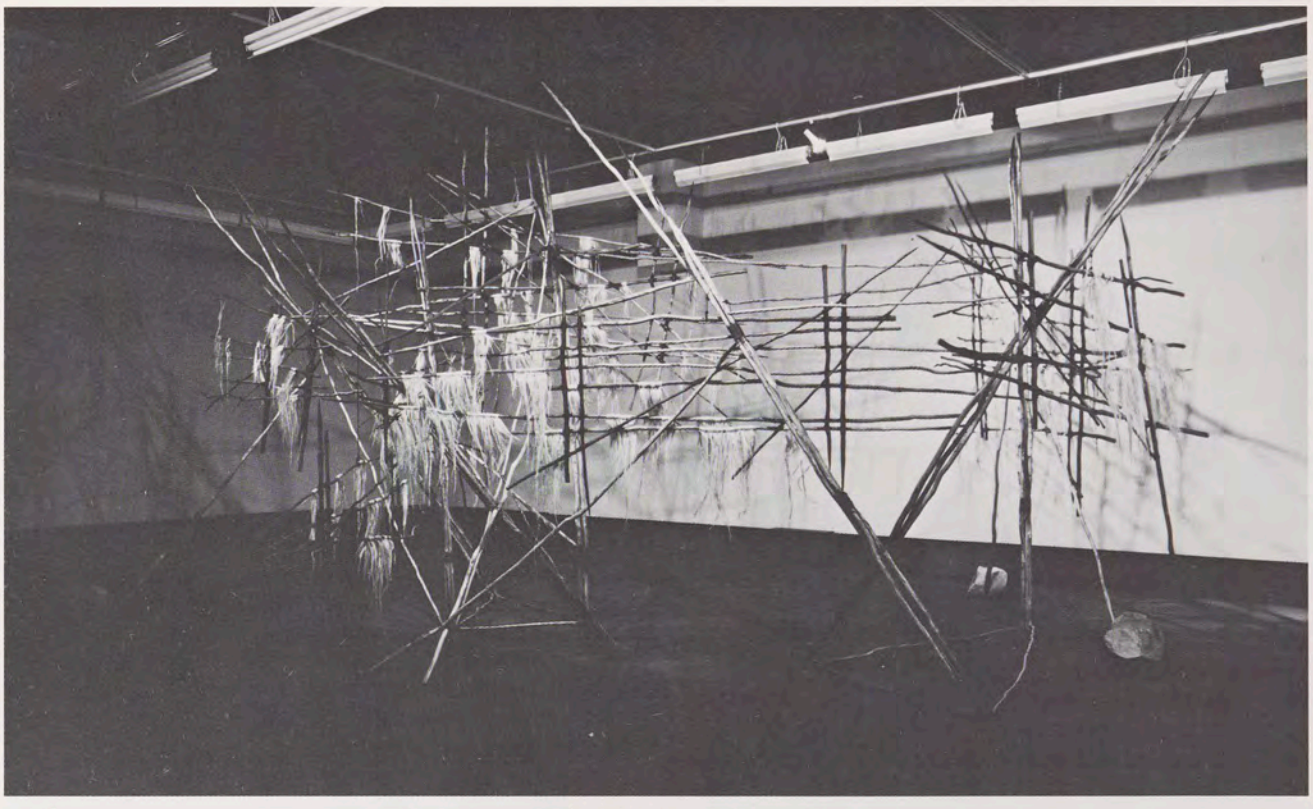
Booth called his 1985 exhibition at the Hamilton Centre Gallery *Proverbs.* There were *Stone Proverbs,* a *Forest Proverb,* and a *Moruroa Proverb.* He used sandstone, mud, shells, bronze castings made in the bush, and again those emblematic, smoothly stripped poles of kanuka. The kanuka *Forest Proverb* is a structure like *Nga Rimu o Puketi* but this time the forest is inhabited by nikau-frond, bronze castings like spirit birds hiding among the branches. In a recent interview discussing Pakeha response to and use of Maori materials in art, Ngahuia te Awekotuku spoke of taking some relatives to see Chris Booth's *Forest Proverbs.* She commented:

> I take great care in saying this as a Maori woman. . .Chris Booth's work has a integrity and understanding of the land — as *his* land; of space — as *his* space — which makes it indigenous.[5]

So what will we have for this exhibition? Chris Booth is working on a lifeboat, a kanuka boat skeleton, a beached shipwreck which like all wrecks will be home to many creatures. This boat will be inhabited by small bronze castings, castaway treasures collected from the beach — shells, driftwood, fish skeletons. Chris Booth's gentle yet insistent call for conservation, for caring, will still be heard.

Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Wystan Curnow, *McCahon's Necessary Protection,* 1977 exhibition catalogue, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
[2] Chris Booth, letter to Alexa Johnston, 1980
[3] Emmett J. Devlin, "Dole Paradise or Third World?" *Accent,* September 1986
[4] Ian Wedde, *The Evening Post,* 12 March 1985
[5] "Ngahuia Te Awekotuku in conversation with Elizabeth Eastmond and Priscilla Pitts" *Antic One,* June 1986



***Nga Rimu o Puketi* 1984** manuka, muka, stones
National Art Gallery, Wellington

***Nga Tamariki a Tane* 1983** puriri (birds), kauri, totara and puriri (stumps), steel bracings
collection of the artist Photo: Julian Bowron

***O*₃ 1986** (detail)

Front page ***O*₃ 1986** kanuka and bronze

Chris Booth with ***Godsticks,*** September 1986

Exhibitions

1973-80 yearly participation in Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1976 *Behind the Eye,* invited artists, Whangarei
1978 Solo exhibition, Victoria University Library, Wellington
1979 Solo exhibition, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Group exhibition, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters, Auckland Society of Arts
Pulp show, City Art Gallery, Wellington
1980 *Northland and Auckland Sculptures,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1982 *Sculpture 1969-82,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
Solo exhibition, Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin
NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters annual exhibition, RKS Art, Auckland
1983-84 Artist's project *Nga Tamariki a Tane,* Auckland City Art Gallery
1984 *Nature and Form,* National Art Gallery, Wellington
Spare Parts, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1985 *Chris Booth,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Sculptures, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
Proverb Series, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton
1986 Sculpture project *River Proverb,* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Sculpture on location, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
Group exhibition, Star Art Gallery, Auckland

Biography

1948 Born Kawakawa, New Zealand
1967-68 Ilam School of Fine Art, University of Canterbury, Christchurch
1968-70 Worked in England and Italy, studying sculpture. Produced and exhibited his own works.
Exhibited at the Penwith Society of Arts in Cornwall. On the recommendation of Barbara Hepworth, one of his works was purchased by the Cornwall County Council for their collection at Truro in Cornwall.
1970-76 Returned to New Zealand. Established workshop and bronze foundry at Kerkeri, Bay of Islands.
1976-78 Moved to Totara North, Whangaroa. Re-established workshop. Started husband and wife handmade flax paper workshop
1979 Moved to Auckland
QE II Arts Council of New Zealand grant
Finalist, Aotea Square water sculpture contest
Designer, Mercury Theatre, Auckland
1982 Frances Hodgkins Fellowship
1984 QE II Arts Council of New Zealand travel grants, to attend Sydney Biennale and sculpture project in Dunedin
1985 QE II Arts Council of New Zealand grant

Commissions

1976 Sculptural lectern, Old Colonial Church of St James, Kerikeri
1977 Sculpture to commemorate opening of first Marine Reserve, Goat Island Bay, Leigh
1983-84 *Nga Rimu O Puketi,* National Art Gallery, Wellington
1984 S. Fisher Family Trust for public park (incomplete)
1986 Private commissions: Michael Hill
James Wallace
Several other public and private commissions

ISBN 0 86463 158 8

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Bronwynne Cornish

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Bronwynne Cornish

In her recent sculptural installations Bronwynne Cornish has worked to create the sense of a special place, a quiet and contemplative atmosphere, a reverential mood. She achieves her aim in surprising and unexpected ways, always with a light touch, a generous and affectionate humour that welcomes and warms the viewer.

Bronwynne Cornish shows her work in art galleries which are of course already special places, repositories of precious objects, removed from ordinary everyday activities. Similar objects can be found in people's houses and there they manage to take their place in daily life. Essays have been written about the art gallery's present-day function as temple, about our reverence for art — especially art of the past — as the holder of ultimate value and worth. In capitalist countries, it is principally works of art that are described as priceless. But the comparison is an uneasy one. Places of worship are usually built for and visited by people who share some guiding philosophy, and the shared philosophy of value as synonymous with financial worth does not seem comfortably to unite visitors to art galleries. Instead it can alienate them, relegating them to the position of awed spectator. Many visitors to galleries feel uncomfortable, worrying about making inappropriate comments (since the ultimate significance of financial worth is seldom openly acknowledged), about talking too loudly or managing energetic children.

Bronwynne Cornish's works are inclusive and inviting, and her use of simple, inexpensive materials belies any assertion of intrinsic monetary worth. Although some may still find her work puzzling, Cornish believes that some universal human ideas, 'old brain' knowledge, underlie our varying cultures and the memory of these can be drawn out of our subconscious. In accordance with this Jungian approach, she asserts the human need to acknowledge the religious dimension of life through making special places for meditation and reverence, spaces for quiet thought.

In seeking to create an atmosphere around and in her work, Bronwynne Cornish has found it necessary to move from single sculptures into complete installations, using a variety of objects and materials, always carefully arranged. She has commented ruefully that she cannot achieve the atmosphere she wants with a single object. She sees many Maori art forms as imbued with energy by their makers, and that an energy or quality of immanence remains with them, no matter what their surroundings.

Cornish's 1983 installation at the Auckland City Art Gallery was called *Dedicated to the Kindness of Mothers.* The themes she explored in that work were principally our connections with the past, with our human ancestors, and especially that line of mothers which stretches back into the past from each of us. Women who bore and cared for children and whose daughters did the same.

Underlying all those human mothers is of course the earth mother on whom we all depend. The installation,

with its large scoria mother stretched out along the floor, her smooth clay face cracked yet benign, vases of flowers behind her, ceramic skulls encircling the walls, suffused with pink light, was a good example of Cornish's ability to make a rectangular white gallery space unusually mysterious and special. One visitor remarked, "I feel I should take my shoes off while I'm here." A universal note which most people recognised rang clearly in this quiet place.

The creation of environments, women's rooms, within both art and non-art spaces has interested many artists working in an area of feminism which is asserting the importance of women's experiences and women's traditional areas of work. The making and decorating of a home, cooking, sewing, the care of children and of gardens can bring joy and satisfaction; or — if the responsibility is unrelieved and the path not freely chosen — unhappiness, frustration and anger. Cornish celebrates home in her works, making small ceramic sculptures for houses and gardens. In these works her combination of common sense and playful wit is most pronounced. Cornish has been working in ceramics since 1968 and she continues to make many useful household objects. Yet they are always whimsical, unexpectedly individual, and sometimes absurdly impractical. The titles of works in her 1971 exhibition are particularly descriptive: *Hippo Family, Flabby dog, Coffee set, Snake tea set, Bread and Butterflies.* In 1975 we find *Handbags, Wedding Cakes,* and a *Russell and Bromley walking shoe.* Her works for gardens can be temples, cactuses, ziggurats or jaguar birdbaths which were inspired by her visit to South America. And that large scoria mother now lies in her own garden, tended and cared for, surrounded and sometimes enveloped by flowering and fruiting plants.

In the work for this exhibition, *Key 18,* Cornish is more enigmatic in her use of symbols. We puzzle over the meaning of the title which is inscribed on a triangular pediment above the doorway. The entrance is flanked by two large columns making a passing reference to classical architecture. There is also an acknowledgement of pre-historic customs in the making of a significant, important entrance, a special place of transition. Such references are increasingly familiar in contemporary Western art; Cornish is not alone in her explorations of the past.

Bronwynne Cornish is reluctant to have her installations photographed in detail. She is conscious of the deceptions of photography and our willingness to believe its messages. We are surrounded every day by photographs which encourage us to believe that the two-dimensional, mechanically made image can give us as much information about the world as our own senses. Our physical isolation in New Zealand leads us to rely heavily on photographs for information, especially photographs of artworks, and sculptors are particularly ill-served by this. Photographs cannot effectively communicate the experience of looking at and moving around a three-dimensional object. When the sculptor chooses to make an object which surrounds and encloses the viewer, the problems are compounded. Bronwynne Cornish prefers to restrict the photography of her installations. The only way we can begin to know them is by stepping inside.

Once inside *Key 18* we are in a transformed space. These are objects which Cornish has made and gathered and arranged symmetrically. We are reminded here of the experience of looking at the moon, ancient symbol of female wisdom and power. White shells crunch under our feet, making us aware of the process of walking, of where we put our feet.

This moon is, like us, anchored to the earth, standing firmly on the ground on one large foot, gazing down at her reflection in the circular pool. Cornish has long been fascinated by feet, both human and animal, sculptured and living. She has a rubbing taken from the foot of the Buddha, and she used it as a model for the beautiful clay feet she made for the *Mother* in her garden. Feet are our connection with the earth, and living in the South we are called (by Northerners!) antipodean. There are reminders here of the experience of walking along a beach, seeing the moon reflected in the water, hearing the swish of breaking waves, seeing the glimmer of phosphorescence. The window opposite the door into this *Key 18* room faces west, where the sun sets and the moon rises.

A further association with water and the sea is found in Bronwynne Cornish's interest in evolutionary processes and connections. She has made clay toads, frogs, and dragon-like lizards — amphibian animals which are reminders of our emergence from water on to dry land. As the water is the source and sustainer of life, so the subconscious mind pre-figures and sustains the conscious. This analogy is drawn in the Tarot and is the one which Cornish finds illuminating. The Tarot is called the 'Key to the Wisdom of the Ages', and Key 18 in the Tarot is the Moon, which governs sleep and the unconscious mind. There is a dream-like feeling in this draped, white space.

Standing in the corners of the room are four, white, clay temples, also a recurring theme in Cornish's work. She has made many Temples of Hera, intended to stand in gardens. Here the temples are like guardians, small yet somehow massive, with classical columns and tiny entrances. In his book *The Poetics of Space,* Gaston Bachelard speaks of our unconscious as 'housed', contained. These small houses seem to indicate secrets, mysteries beyond our unravelling, and they are enclosed within a larger house, the room itself, our unconscious mind, which we enter through a door called a key.

We are encouraged to walk around and explore a small yet expansive place, to accept both its present tangible reality and its ultimate transience (the exhibition will end) as parts of the same experience. We will not enter that room in the future without remembering how it was once transformed.

As I write this I am looking at a drawing Bronwynne Cornish has made of *Key 18;* the eventual work may differ from her drawing. Certainly these written words, like the photographs on this leaflet will be no substitute for the experience of standing inside *Key 18,* another of Bronwynne Cornish's special places. Everyone is welcome.

Alexa M. Johnston

***Key 18* 1986** (detail)

Front page ***Key 18* 1986** charcoal, shells, fired clay, wood, fabric

Bronwynne Cornish in her studio, September 1986

Exhibitions

1970 *Taranaki Review 1970,* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Auckland Studio Potters 8th Annual exhibition, Auckland Institute and Museum
1971 *China Cabinet Ceramics,* New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1972 *Invited Potters,* Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
The Group Show, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1975 *Formal Portrait,* Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1976 Group exhibition, Bonython Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Shadows and Reflections, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
22 Invited Potters, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Contemporary Ceramics, Manawatu Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Erotic Art East, West, ancient and modern, Barrington Gallery, Auckland
1977 *Auckland Studio Potters 14th Annual Exhibition,* Auckland Institute and Museum
Young Contemporaries, Auckland City Art Gallery
1978 *Ceramics in Progress: the work of 12 NZ Potters,* Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui
4 x 10 Ceramics: Four Approaches, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
Porcelain III, Alicat, Auckland
Ceramics 1971-1978, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
Rangitoto Special, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
Porcelain sculptures, Albany Village Pottery Garden
Auckland Artists, Auckland City Art Gallery
Little Works, Auckland City Art Gallery
1980 *Five by Five,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Craft New Zealand, QE II Arts Council of New Zealand National Tour
1981 *Impressions,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
New Directions in Ceramics, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
Handbuilt ceramic stoneware, Albany Village Pottery Garden
Aquamarine installation, Albany Gallery, Auckland
1982 *Fletcher Brownbuilt Pottery Award,* Auckland Institute and Museum
Home is where the heart is, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Raku, 12 potters, Auckland
1983 *Home is where the heart is,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
New Zealand Ceramics Now, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson
1984 Artist's Project *Dedicated to the kindness of mothers,* Auckland City Art Gallery
The Great Migration and *What have you in the house?* Auckland City Art Gallery
1985 *Animals Animals,* City Art Gallery, Wellington
Treasures from the land, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wellington
What have you in the house? National Art Gallery, Wellington
Images of Maungawhau, Spring Festival, Theatre Corporate, Auckland

Biography

1945 Born Wellington, New Zealand
1958-67 Hastings Street School
Hawera Technical School
Wellington School of Design
Training College, Wellington
Post Office, Wellington
1968-70 Worked with Helen Mason in the Waitakere ranges
1971-77 Worked on Waiheke Island
1978 Attended sculpture symposium, Toronto Canada, and travelled for six months in Central America
1984 QE II Arts Council of New Zealand travel grant. Visited Italy and London
1985 Visiting tutor, Otago School of Ceramics

Commissions

1984 *The Great Migration,* Department of Foreign Affairs, Wellington
What have you in the house? Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton

ISBN 0 86463 150 2

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Bing Dawe

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Bing Dawe

The plight of animals enmeshed in traps created by human greed and shortsightedness; the plight of humans trapped into senseless conflict by their own selfishness. These grim images provide underlying themes for much of Bing Dawe's sculpture and his recent woodblock prints.

In 1982 Bing Dawe made three large sculptures which were a response to the proposed building of an aluminium smelter near Dunedin. The smelter was to be at Aramoana where it would destroy the albatross breeding colony at Taiaroa Heads. Many Dunedin artists joined in the protest. Bing Dawe's wood and metal sculptures were like the enormous skeletal remains of those graceful birds of soaring flight. The remains had the poignant quality of a sea bird caught on the ground, out of place and floundering. They evoked in viewers feelings of remorse and pity, linked with wonder at the skill and subtlety of Dawe's choice and use of materials. Dawe appeared to be drawing in the air with fine threads of dark, smooth kauri which perfectly evoked the fineness, strength and fragility of a bird's bones.

In *Large Soaring Bird (Dead),* in the Auckland City Art Gallery's collection, two of these 'bones' are broken, snapped perhaps in the bird's dying struggles. Dawe linked the bones together with tendons and ligaments of marlin twine and, unexpectedly, the light but strong aluminium parts of an old racing bicycle. An ironic gesture back towards the smelter. But aluminium parts cannot hold together the bones of living things, only the dead.

Many reviewers of these three sculptures wrote admiringly of Dawe's integration of a clear message of protest into works which are intellectually intriguing and physically impressive. The other two works were *Large Soaring Bird (Ensnared),* recently installed in a Ministry of Works building in Wellington and *Study: Bird removing foreign object from its wing.* Of the latter sculpture Roger Blackley wrote:

> Carefully worked, slender pieces of kauri, patinated with bitumen and wax, are lashed together with cord into a skeletal bird shape, the wing extremities of which reach out as long talons. The 'bird' is itself lashed on to a wire web, or grid, that stretches right across the gallery. Up close the 'foreign object' is revealed to be an electronic component, the infamous 'silicon chip' suspended between a lens and a mirror. Peering into the eyepiece, you discover a microscopic grid — a link with the wire grid on which the entire sculpture rests. . . By combining skeletal remains of a bird or insect, by stringing it up on a wire death-trap, by introducing a late twentieth century conceptual conceit, Dawe has produced a menacing work of great resonance.[1]

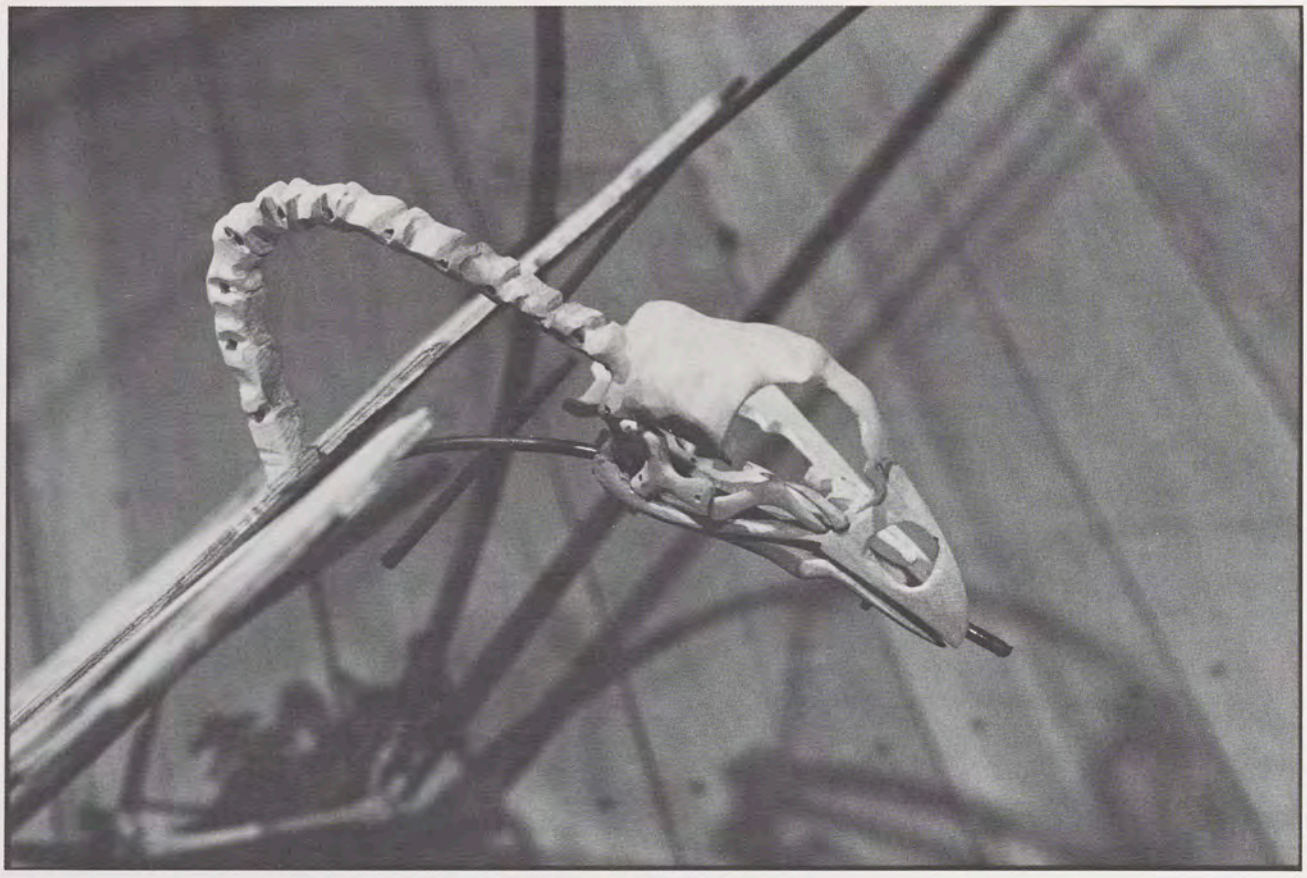
Are we then as trapped as the birds? Unable to keep pace with our own technological progress, unable to control our aggressiveness towards each other and the other species with whom we share our planet?

The linear quality of much of Bing Dawe's sculpture reflects his extensive use of drawing in the development of each new work. His drawings of bones and skeletal forms are particularly accurate and intriguing. He uses them to work out the structure of the skeleton in the round and its appearance if flattened. This flattening gives a fossil-like appearance to the bones. It reminds us of the bones of our ancestors, both animal and human, which lie flattened beneath the surface of the earth, and also our physical and emotional links with them which are buried in unconscious memory. Like many other sculptors, Dawe enjoys the beauty of bones, their efficient construction, their lightness and their strength.

Skeletal forms appear again in Dawe's 1984 installation *The Cock-fight,* pointing at grisly connections between animal and human behaviour. Cock-fights involve the baiting of the birds and stimulating their instincts for self-preservation, surely one of the more macabre illustrations of humanity's uneasy relationship with animals. There are many analogies to be drawn from this work, a large yet fragile structure which fills its exhibition space with apparently flimsy yet powerful sculptural forms. The two birds, wooden skeletons, are trapped within a two-metre-wide steel enclosure. This circular line of steel refers back to Bing Dawe's drawings and as the birds enter it they are changed from rounded to flattened forms. The circle is also a barrier which separates us, the viewers, from the arena of conflict, the impact of the blast, putting us in the position of spectators. In this capacity we are joined by another skeletal figure, human this time, enmeshed in an imprisoning metal grid. It seems to have peeled away from a base of concrete blocks, leaving behind its impression.

This impression is reminiscent of the silhouettes left on buildings after nuclear explosions, the only reminders of people who were burnt away. Perhaps this spectator was foolishly encouraging the battle until seared by the blast. One of its severed hands remains attached to the outer edge of the ring. Dawe seems to be suggesting that we too are trapped by the insistent problems of life in the West's fast-moving technological cities. We are left unable or unwilling to intervene in a conflict which will affect us all. Bing Dawe said of this work, "You can extend it to the superpowers or whatever you like."

***Umbrella canopy with figures* 1985** woodblock print, tar on canvas 1000 x 960mm Auckland City Art Gallery



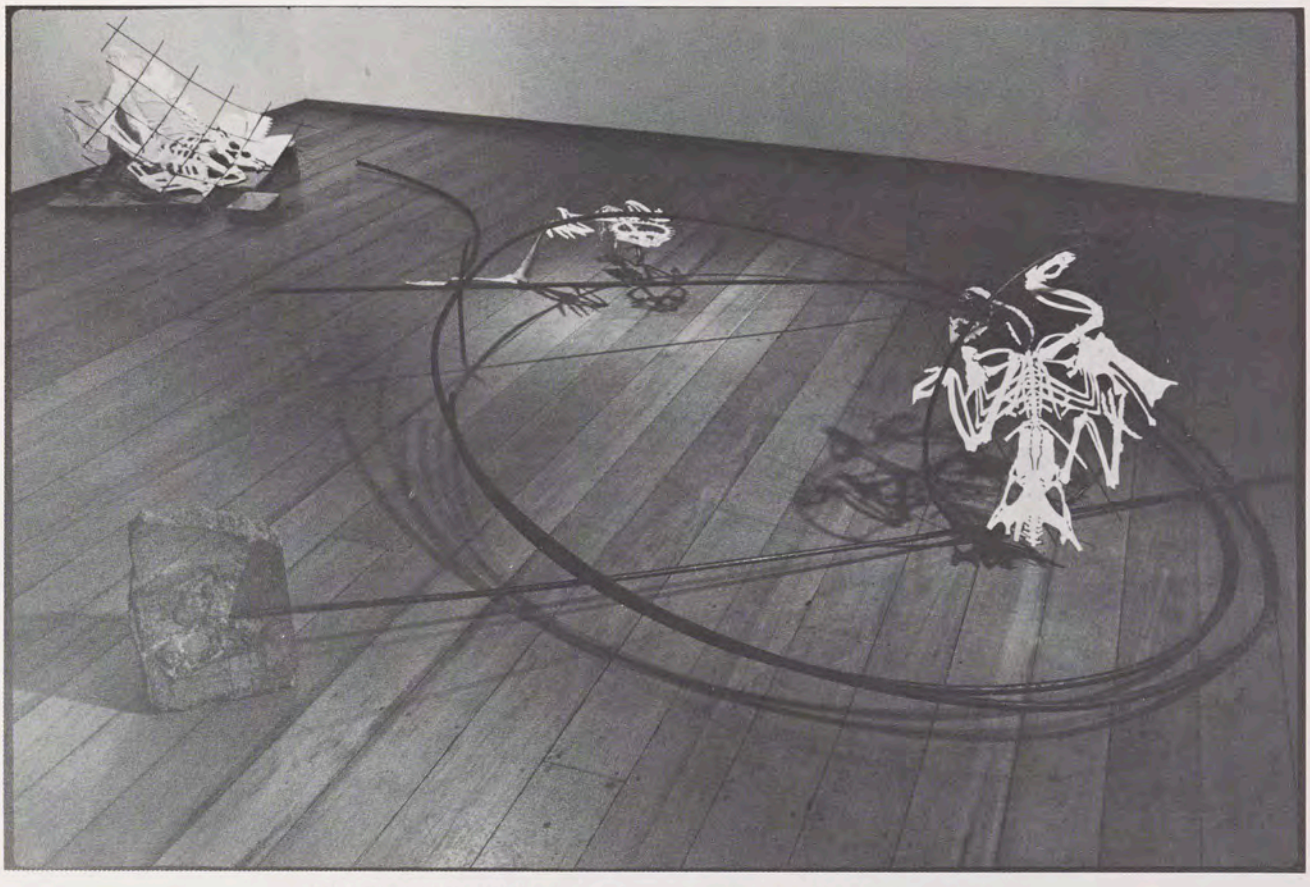
***The Cock-fight* 1984** (detail) Photo: Julie Riley

With this installation Dawe showed a number of wood prints which also alluded to warfare, ancient and modern, and the mistrust which makes us suspicious of each other. (Animals of course have good reason to be suspicious of us, yet are surprisingly trusting.) In the medieval warfare which some of the prints refer to, safety was to be found in impenetrably solid walls and long-range weapons. One of the prints is called *Missile Throwing Device with Arrows.* If we shoot at each other from the top of our towers of prejudice and self-congratulation, how can we move towards one another; how discuss and allow for our differences? Long-range, first-strike, remote controlled weapons are still seen as the source of security by many countries, with New Zealand at present a happy exception.

Bing Dawe's concern at the lunacy of 'safety' based on nuclear arms and his continuing investigation of our relationship with animals are both evident in the series of large woodblock and linocut prints on canvas which he exhibited in 1985. Like most New Zealand artists, Bing Dawe cannot afford to work full-time on his sculpture. For many years he has worked seasons at the Christchurch abattoir and has been disturbed by our ability to operate shifting standards in our treatment of animals. We can treat them with compassion and concern as individuals (preferably pets who rely on us for survival) yet also see them as commodities, links in our food chain, units of production. What is our relationship with them? What allowance do we make for their capacity for suffering, for enjoyment? We switch on and off at will our operation of that golden rule — treat others as you would wish them to treat you.

In her fascinating book *Animals and why they matter,* British philosopher Mary Midgley explores the historical background to our current treatment of other species and our conflicting views on animal rights. She discusses the limitations implicit in seeing animals as either mere chunks of walking meat or as honorary, if humble, people. She writes in her conclusion:

> Among the parts of the universe which are within our reach, the other animal species which share our planet with us are a most significant part. . .They are not just put there as a convenience for us, neither are they just an oppressed minority in human life. They are the group to which we belong. We are a small minority of them. It seems reasonable to suggest that we ought to take them seriously.[2]



***The Cock-fight* 1984** plywood, steel, concrete (5 metres square)
collection of the artist Photo: Julie Riley

In the print *Repetitive print with blindspot* Bing Dawe gives complicated instructions for the printing of 'blindspots'. A detail of one blindspot is carefully magnified to show us a line of sheep on the slaughter chain. This is a disturbing sight which only freezing workers see; most of us keep it safely out of our mind's eye. Dawe included a quote with the exhibition from Siegfried Giedion's work *Mechanisation takes command:*

> What is truly startling in this mass transition from life to death is the complete neutrality of the act. This neutrality toward death may be lodged deep in the roots of our time.

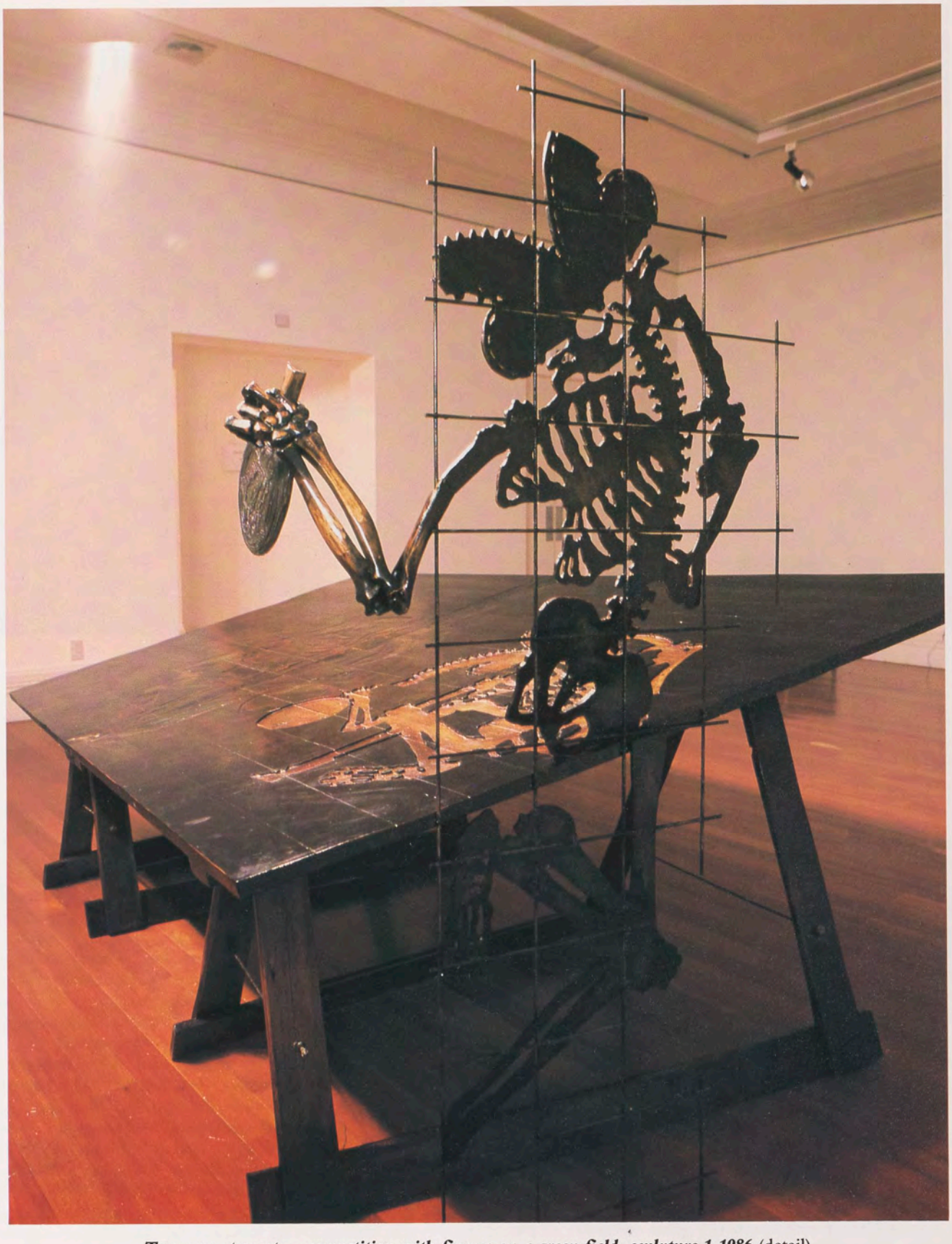
Images of course can numb us as well as awaken our compassion, a dilemma of which Bing Dawe is very aware.

Other prints refer specifically to the nuclear threat. *Umbrella Canopy with figures* is a grim reminder of the flimsy, useless protection offered by the nuclear umbrella, a theme Dawe also explored with some suitably threadbare metal umbrellas which were part of a 1984 exhibition. The *Floor plan for a shelter* print, which is extraordinarily large, shows a plan of a boat-shaped ark, presumably designed as an escape vessel. But its shape is reminiscent most of those floor plans of slaving ships, published by shipowners in the 19th century to encourage investment in the lucrative trade...Here is yet another reminder of human inhumanity, especially evident it seems where there are profits to be made. Armaments manufacturers today fuel the world's conflicts yet they too cannot escape the consequences forever.

At the time of writing this essay, I have not seen Bing Dawe's work for this exhibition. He describes it as a table tennis table with two figures locked in conflict yet again. Do sporting contests help or hinder human community? Our opinions will vary. Bing Dawe will continue to express his concern for this planet and its inhabitants through sculptures and prints which prod us with questions and encourage us to consider the world as an ecological whole, a fragile organism which we must treat with care.

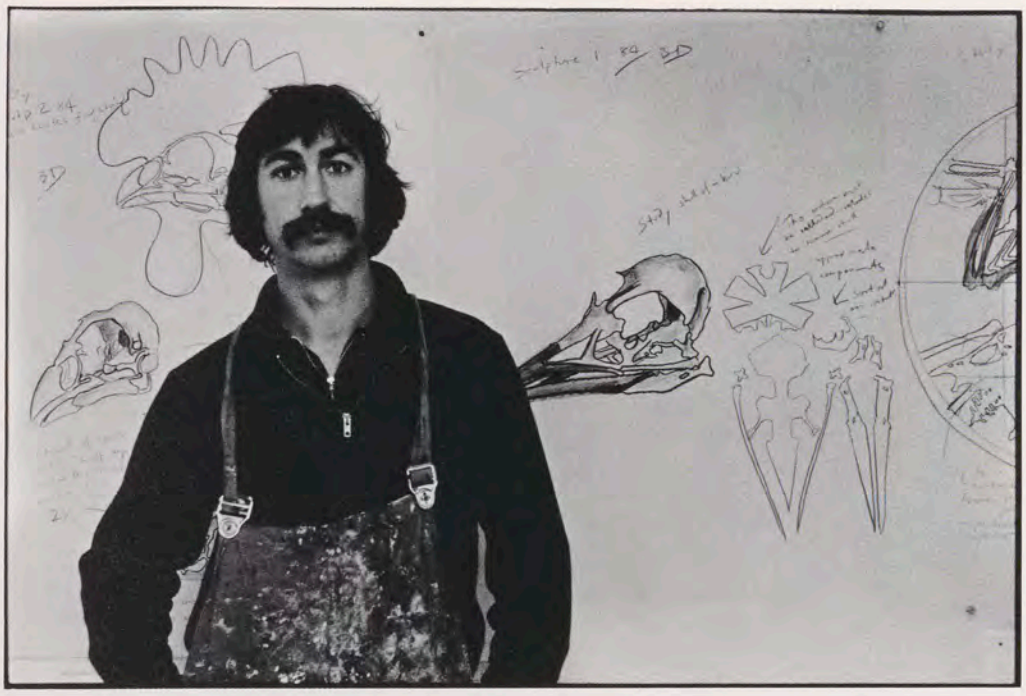
Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Roger Blackley, *New Zealand Herald,* 13 September 1982
[2] Mary Midgley, *Animals and why they matter, A journey around the species barrier,* Harmondsworth, 1983



Two men at sport — competition with figures on a green field, sculpture 1 1986 (detail)

Front page ***Two men at sport — competition with figures on a green field, sculpture 1 1986***
wood and steel 3 metres x 2 metres x 2 metres



Bing Dawe, 1984 Photo: Julie Riley

Exhibitions

1971 Sculpture Students exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1974 Solo exhibition, Labyrinth Gallery, Christchurch
1975 Solo exhibition, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1976 *New Artists,* C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1977 *Young Contemporaries,* Auckland City Art Gallery
1978 *Platforms — Recent forms in NZ Sculpture,* C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
Solo exhibition, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Victoria, Australia
1978-79 *NZ Sculptors at Mildura,* QE II Arts Council of New Zealand National Tour
1979 *New Contemporaries,* Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Drawing '79, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
Students Arts Festival, Christchurch
1980 *Canterbury Contemporaries,* Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Grants recipients, City Art Gallery, Wellington
The Street installation, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1981 *Large Soaring Bird Ensnared* installation, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Three Christchurch Sculptors, Auckland City Art Gallery
Protest/Flight installation, Gingko Gallery, Christchurch
1982 *Study: Bird removing an object from its wing* installation, RKS Art, Auckland
Group exhibition, Robinson/Brooker Gallery, Christchurch
Sculpture 4, RKS Art, Auckland
Solo exhibition, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1983 *Banners,* Forrester Gallery, Oamaru
Solo exhibition, City Art Gallery, Wellington
Solo exhibition, Red Metro Gallery, Dunedin
Solo exhibition, RKS Art, Auckland
1984 *Cock-Fight* installation, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
Solo exhibition, Rotorua Art Gallery
On the Spur of the Moment: Recent Sculpture and Prints, RKS Art, Auckland
Nature and Form, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Paper Chase, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Artists for Peace, Christchurch
1985 *Five Christchurch Artists,* Centre for Contemporary Art Hamilton
Prints, Gingko Gallery, Christchurch
Prints, Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington

Biography

1952 Born Glenavy, Oamaru, New Zealand
1964-69 Secondary education, Waitaki Boys High
1972-76 Studied at Ilam School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury. Graduated 1976 Dip. FA
1980 QE II Arts Council of New Zealand grant. Travelled in Eastern and Western Europe

Commissions

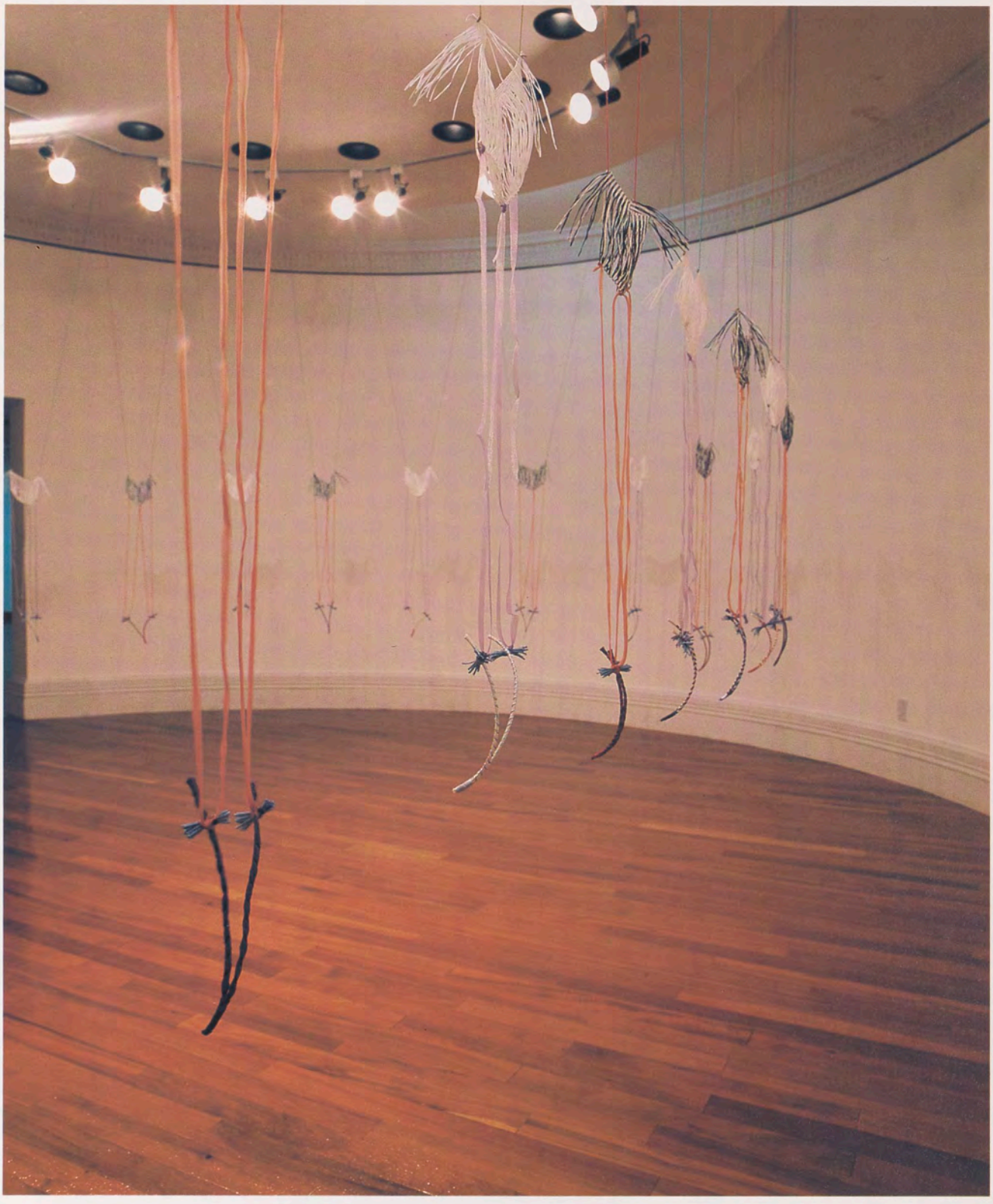
1984 Rotorua Art Gallery
William Clayton Building, Wellington
1985 Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1986 Shortland Centre, Auckland

ISBN 0 86463 153 7

Photographs: John McIver

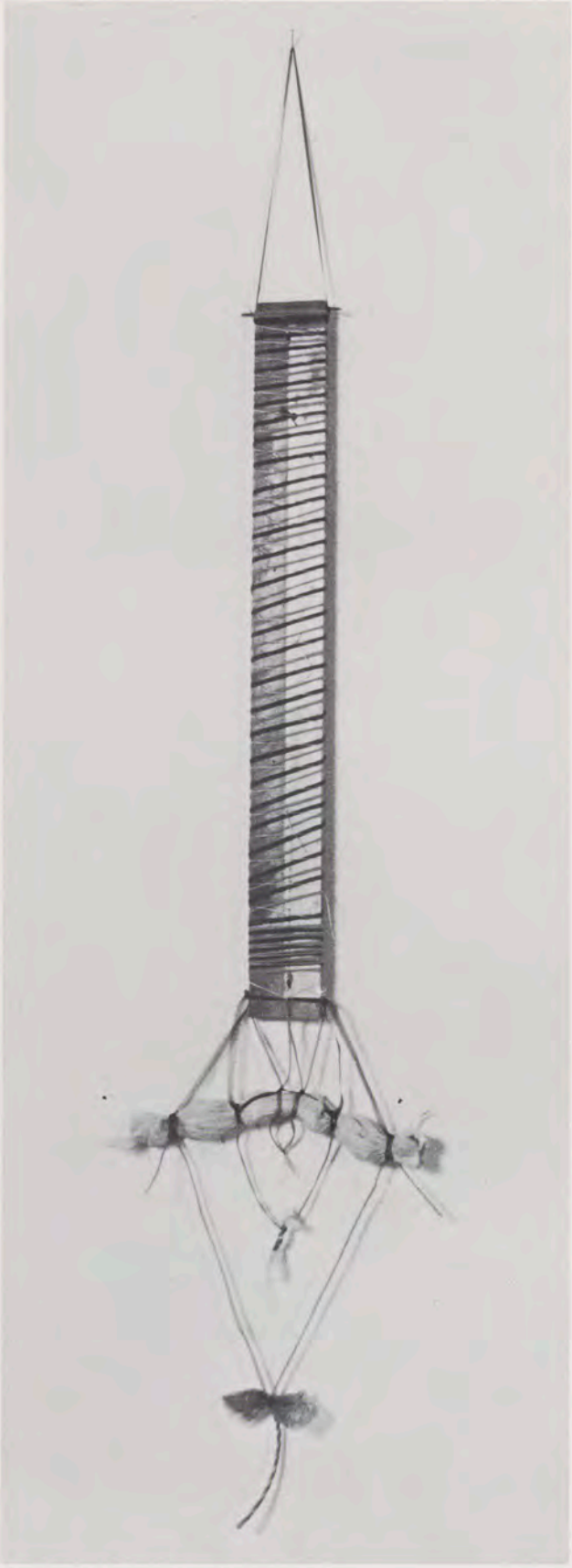
Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Jacqueline Fraser



Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2



***Kauri* 1986** mixed media installation,
Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland Photo: Peter Hannken

Jacqueline Fraser

Writing this some weeks in advance of *Sculpture 2,* I have very little idea of what Jacqueline Fraser's sculpture for the show is going to look like. Neither has she.

For the way Fraser works is spontaneous, improvisatory, almost opportunistic. She'll move into her allotted area in the gallery with a selection of materials and a few simple tools (scissors, wirecutters) but without any drawings or plans or preconceived ideas of what she'll create.

Usually she starts with the distinguishing features of a given space — the placing of windows and doors, elements like pillars or stairs, a low ceiling which can be emphasised. Between these key points she'll often 'draw' a grid, perhaps in coloured string or fine ribbon, a framework on which to base her decoration of the environment. She may hang delicate constructions from this grid or pattern the floor with 'mosaics' of ribbon or raffia snippets, maybe glass 'jewels' or shells.

She prefers to use materials that come readily to hand: yarrow stalks from her garden, perhaps, or willow from a nearby park. Odds and ends that catch her eye in junk shops find their way into the work: current favourites include glossy raffia hat braid and satin-covered milliner's wire. Patterned paper table napkins, plastic-coated electrical wire and plastic napkin rings, coloured stockings, shiny parcel ribbon and bright scraps of cloth — all these unlikely materials are grist to Fraser's magpie mill.

Fraser's preference for this intuitive, spontaneous process has been reinforced by her rediscovery of her Maori heritage. After graduating from art school, she lived for three years on the Aramoana marae near Dunedin and that close contact with her own people has subtly affected the way she works. Her approach to making her installations is a Maori one: she meditates before beginning, asking her ancestors for assistance and, at the work's close, thanks them.

> If I don't have that stance when I'm working, the work isn't nearly as successful . . . it takes the burden off you as an individual . . . that's the Maori way. When you carve, the ancestors are carving and that's why a traditional carver never draws the design, they just carve it — same as I do.[1]

Dreams may also influence her — for instance, the decision to use pieces of demolition kauri boarding in her recent installation at Sue Crockford Gallery followed directly from instructions in a dream.

At the same time, this way of working demands great concentration; Fraser's arrangement of colours and materials is "not random by any means, it's very calculated."[2] Similarly, she is meticulous about the crafting of her works — if something looks raggedy or a little offhand, it's deliberately so; if she wants precision or symmetry, she sets out to achieve just that:

> If I want things all in a row, I'll make a lot of effort — like a person making a cane basket — to get them in a row.

Greer Twiss taught me that. He used to say, "Now, did you mean that little bit of string to stick out there or have you just not cut it?"[3]

It pays to look at the details of a Fraser installation — not just at the artistry of her wrapping and knotting but at the minute stripes painted on lengths of electrical wire, the sprinkles of fairy-glitter, the way the curve of one twig mirrors that of another.

Jacqueline Fraser's first installation was created when she was a sculpture student at Elam School of Fine Arts. After sitting for weeks, frustrated and inspirationless, in her studio, a fortuitous incident triggered off an idea:

I'd been to a movie. . .at the Film Society, it had all these little sort of strange puppets — and the next day, I was out in the grounds at Elam and the gardener was cutting down all these canna lilies which were dead and brown — it was March or April — and I thought, "Well, they look a bit like those wee puppetty things. I'll stick them in my studio and see what I can do with them." So I went outside and I started dragging them in. . . I filled up the whole end of the studio and it made it like a little cave. And I started getting other stuff like muslin and draping it all around to make a little room. . .and that was my first one.[4]

Other environments quickly followed — not just in her Elam studio, but in other University buildings and at the *Young Contemporaries* exhibition at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1977.

Of course, the concept of the sculptural environment wasn't new. This was, after all, the second half of the seventies and for over a decade American artists (following in the footsteps of the Futurists and Surrealists earlier in the century) had been creating 'happenings' and room installations. However, Fraser's canna lilies, her soft swathes of gauzes and muslins and fragile, dyed tissue paper constructions were rather different from the stark, often monumental look and conceptual basis of many installation works both here and overseas.

When she moved to Dunedin, Fraser began working outdoors as well — a logical extension of her use of natural, organic materials indoors. Once again, site-specific outdoor installations had been made in America and, to a lesser extent, in Britain for some time. Fraser's approach, however, like that of most New Zealand artists who have worked in this way, is a far cry from that of American sculptors like Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, or Robert Morris. Where they built huge, geometric, proclamatory structures clearly distinct from the surrounding environment, Fraser created unobtrusive, temporary additions to the landscape — a tree wound round and round with coloured strings, or hung with flimsy decorations; delicate ephemeral constructions of bound twigs and sticks gracing a public garden. In Dunedin's Queen's Park she drew attention to the given material and her own presence in that particular environment by gathering all the fallen leaves into one area, placing all the broken twigs in another, much as the British artist Richard Long arranges sticks or stones into magic circles or long lines that mark his travels across the landscape.

Fraser no longer makes works outdoors.

There are so many things that can go wrong — like the weather, or people stealing the work, or councils getting involved. The other thing I find is that very few people *see* that work.[5]

Other things have changed too. Fraser pays more attention now to the durability of her materials and her construction. Leaving such questions unresolved could bring problems as she discovered with *Fern,* an installation created at the National Art Gallery in 1981. The ferns and other foliage with which she decorated a gallery "to look like a country dance hall" were beautifully lush and green at first — but by the end of the two-month-long exhibition period, they were brown and dusty and brittle — a not entirely welcome metamorphosis. Now, with parts of, or in some cases entire installations being purchased (primarily by public galleries), conservation of the work is becoming increasingly important to the artist.

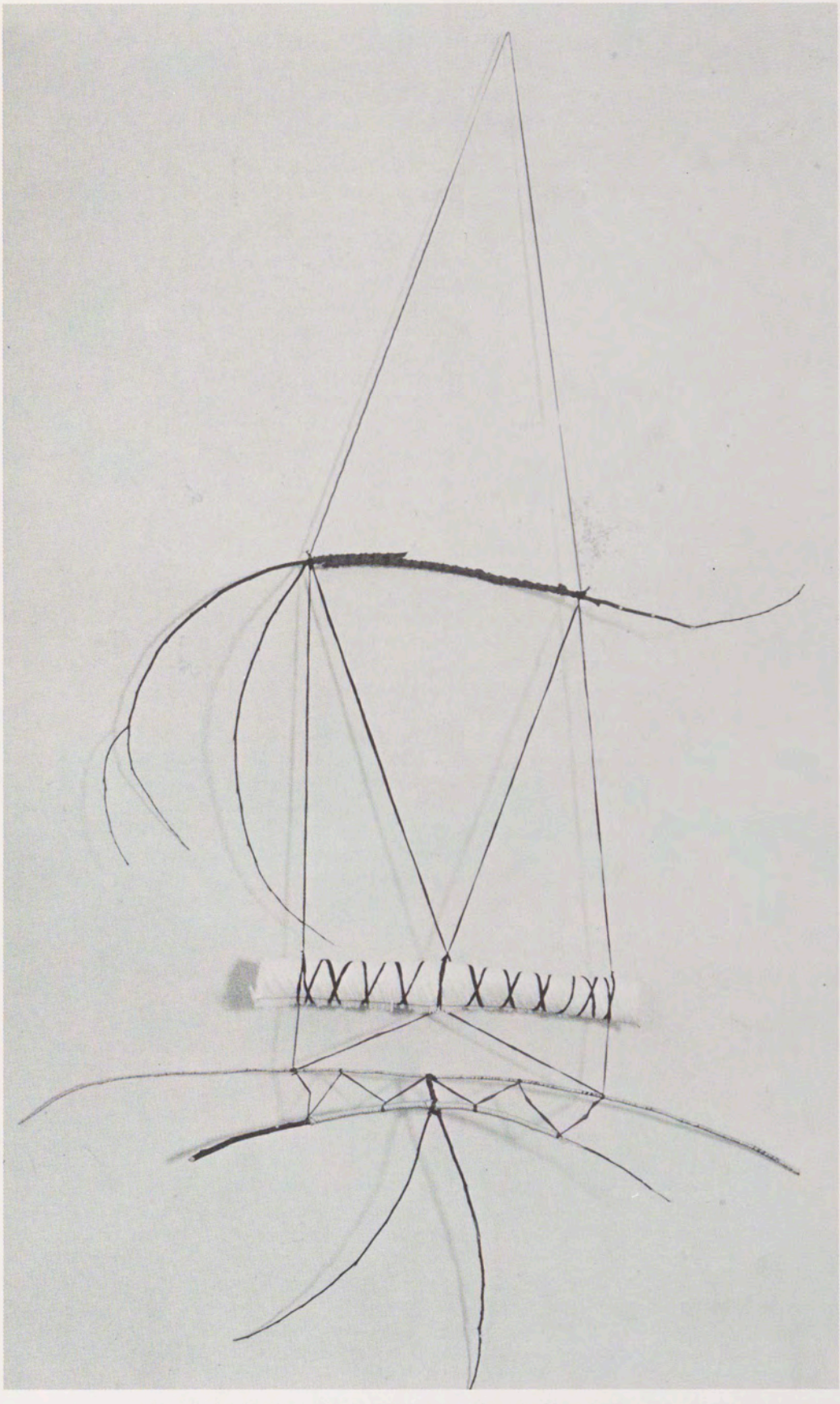
Also, her environments have become increasingly spare and minimal, revealing the muted formality that underlies her work. The proliferation of different elements in *Fern* has been pared down to the lucid symmetry of her *Willow* installation[6]; the slightly cluttered feel of, say, *Lunar Eclipse*[7] which Francis Pound has described in all its elaborated detail[8] had given way to the simple geometry of *Kauri*[9].

Nonetheless, Fraser's aims as an artist have remained essentially the same: to transform and beautify the space in which she's working.

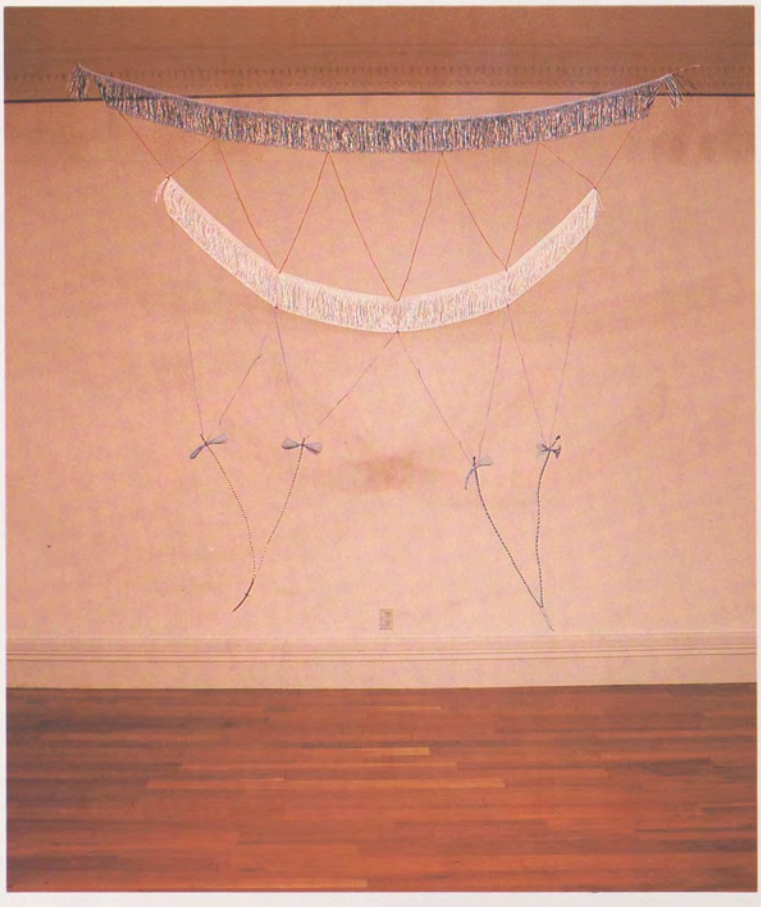
As I wondered how best to sum up Jacqueline Fraser's works, I remembered that when I first knew her we worked together on costumes for a children's show. Then, as now, she had an eye for tinselly, glittery bits and pieces. Delving into her seemingly inexhaustible hoard of treasures, she concocted gaudy masks embellished with feathers, glass beads and scraps of shiny satin, and top hats made of cardboard, glitter and sequins — tacky, but effective. One might say that her sculpture does for cheap, everyday, even rather tawdry things what physical distance and theatre lighting did for those cardboard top hats, bestowing on them a glamorous, magical quality, a beauty previously unrealised.

Priscilla Pitts

[1] Conversation with the artist, August 1986
[2] Conversation with the artist, July 1985
[3] Conversation with the artist, August 1986
[4] ibid
[5] ibid
[6] Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, 1985
[7] Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin, 1978
[8] Francis Pound, "Lunar Eclipse: an installation by Jacqueline Fraser at the Bosshard Galleries", *Art New Zealand* 12, 1978, pp. 17 and 59
[9] Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, 1986



***Witty* 1986 mixed media installation, Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga** Photo: Peter Hannken



***The New Zealand Room* 1986** (detail)

Front page ***The New Zealand Room* 1986** mixed media installation

Jacqueline Fraser, September 1986

Exhibitions

1977 NZ Arts Students, Lambton Quay, Wellington
Young Contemporaries, Auckland City Art Gallery

1978 *Mildura Sculpture Triennial,* Mildura, Australia
Solo exhibition *Lunar Eclipse,* Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin

1978-9 *NZ Sculptors at Mildura,* QE II Arts Council of New Zealand, National Tour

1979 Group exhibition *Flight Fancies,* Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
Outdoor installation *Market Reserve is Sprung,* Dunedin
Hovering Balcony, Otago Art Society Balcony, Dunedin
Solo exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Installation, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
Group exhibition *Sculptural Propositions,* National Art Gallery, Wellington
Installation, Sydney Biennale, Sydney, Australia

1980 Installation, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Rank Xerox Experiment, National Mutual Arcade, Dunedin
Hansells Sculpture Award, park installation, Masterton
Aramoana — NZ Artists Against the Smelter, City Art Gallery, Wellington
Installation *Untitled 1980,* National Art Gallery, Wellington

1981 *Untitled 1980,* Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
ANZART in Christchurch
Installation, Phoenix Palm Park exhibition, Auckland
Aramoana, Hocken Library, Dunedin

1981-2 *3 Women Sculptors* (with Christine Hellyar and Pauline Rhodes), National Art Gallery, Wellington

1982 *"22/4"* installation, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Hansells Sculpture Exhibition, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
New Zealand Drawing 1982, Dunedin Public Art Gallery

1983 *F1 Sculpture Project,* Warehouse, Tory Street, Wellington

1984 *Poi Poi* installation, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1984 Arts in Dunedin
Installation, Brasserie Restaurant, Ponsonby, Auckland

1985 *Perspecta '85,* Steve Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Solo exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
ANZART, Alexandra Tavern Courtyard, Auckland
Installation, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Willow, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
Sculpture Project 1985-1986, Untitled 1981, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

1986 Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
Auckland Sculptors, Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga Arts Centre, Manukau
Waikato, installation of willow and cloth, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton

Biography

1956 Born Dunedin, New Zealand

1974-77 Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. Graduated 1977 BFA (Sculpture)

1977-86 Group and solo exhibitions, New Zealand and Australia

1980 Daughter born, Lillian

1982 Son born, Ratanui

ISBN 0 86463 152 9

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Christine Hellyar

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Christine Hellyar

Christine Hellyar's work in this exhibition, *Being Born, Bearing Fruit and Dying,* brings together a number of elements that have been present in her work for the last seventeen or eighteen years: life casting from natural objects in a variety of materials — rubber latex, bronze, lead and iron; moulding from fine, white clay; the use of found natural objects. Making multi-piece works has also been an aspect of Hellyar's practice. In recent years most of these sculptures have been contained, framed within cupboards or shallow boxes. However, placing works in an open, scattered installation format like this one isn't entirely new to Hellyar. One example is the early *Rock Candy Beach* (1971) with its sprinkling of cast resin shells and pebbles; another, on a much larger scale, was her *Shelter* installation in this gallery in 1982. And, like all the other large, multiple-piece works she's made, *Being Born, Bearing Fruit and Dying* is far from monumental. Its low-lying, fragmented, non-hierarchical structure, its use of life-size natural forms are the antithesis of the dominating, monolithic, larger-than-life characteristics of monumentality.

As well, few of the motifs in this installation are new to Hellyar's vocabulary — the squid and flounder might have wriggled off the aprons she's been making recently, or the latex kumaras tumbled out of one of her food sculptures from the mid-seventies. The lumps of pumice recall elements of her various *Cupboards* or her *Insulated Rocks* series and the decaying latex logs hark back to early works like *Rotten Log.*

In fact, many of the pieces *are* from previous sculptures, for Hellyar has a habit — confusing to the art historian, but with a long and honourable tradition in the domestic sphere — of dismantling and recycling parts of earlier works. The cast iron pohutukawa root at the mouth of the work is from the large-scale bush environments of 1976. So are the bronze flax pods — originally they hung from the corners of plant-emblazoned latex 'flags'; a bronze capsicum half was once part of *Tough Pepper* (1976).

Some aspects of Hellyar's work, of course, aren't represented here. For instance, much of her sculpture has focused on the idea of enclosure — the very opposite of the open composition we see here. She likes to play with the paradoxes of containment: the shelter that is also a snare, the cranny that conceals something precious — or something nasty. The fragility of the web and the cocoon, the open vulnerability of nest and rock pool. The mouth that both devours and sustains, the preservation that entombs.

More ambiguities arise in the way many of Hellyar's forms hover on the boundary between natural object and cultural artifact. Are these encircling clay forms funerary vessels or are they tunnels and caves? Those hanging muslin tents with the spidery-looking creatures inside — are they webs or nets? A basket may be a nest, or a stone a weapon.

For something else that *Being Born, Bearing Fruit and Dying* doesn't show us is Hellyar's preoccupation with the artifact, her fascination with those small remnants of human activity that, in her work, act as signifiers of the evolution of thought and culture. She's also intrigued by how we preserve those remnants and the ways in which we encode and interpret them to create histories. She likes to photograph museum displays — glass cases of arrowheads and ancient tools — and presents her own artifacts — primitive-looking skin scrapers and adzes, daggers and hammers and clubs, musical instruments and headpieces — in museum-exhibit formats (those cupboards and trays I mentioned earlier).

Hellyar's most recent emblems of human behaviour are 'aprons' and 'cloaks'. The aprons, in particular, return to the domestic imagery that was central to her latex works in the mid-seventies — her *Country Clothesline* (centre of a public controversy when the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery bought it in 1977) with its work clothes and summer dresses dipped in latex and hung out to dry; *Surgical Leftovers* and *Kidney Stones,* unappetising collections of latex ox hearts and kidneys displayed in glass cases; the (not entirely) jokey *Meals on Wheels* — a dead fish prone on a little wheeled trolley. Works like *Surgical Leftovers* and *Meals on Wheels* were intended as comments on relationships between humanity and the rest of nature, placed in the context of preparing and eating food.

Hellyar had discovered rubber latex as a sculpture medium in the late sixties — around the same time that the American sculptors Louise Bourgeois and Eva Hesse began using it. She manipulated her latex castings in all sorts of ways — combining them with cast metal and wood or enclosing them in Perspex containers, joining pieces with zippers, stitching forms together with copper wire and stuffing them with cloth. The flabby, slightly unpleasant look and feel of rubber appeals to Hellyar; so does the fineness and accuracy with which it reproduces textures.

In 1977 when liquid latex and metal casting became too expensive — at least, for the time being — Hellyar looked around her for something else. Calico and muslin, plaster and white clay, plant fibres and found natural objects, anything from twigs and feathers to birds' nests and bones — all became her new materials. Different techniques too were needed — stitching, plaiting, pleating, weaving, wrapping, tying, knotting. This was Hellyar trying to create a new sculptural language for herself.

Most of the early works in this mode referred directly to natural forms. For the most part, they weren't illusionistic, as the latex works had been, but allusionistic, triggering off, often quite obliquely, hidden memories and fears in the viewer. The human analogy, however, was seldom entirely absent — especially with Hellyar using titles like *Stone Homes, Treasured Mummies, Protected Plots.*

That aspect gradually became more dominant, resulting in the 'artifact' sculptures. Here, Hellyar continued to use craft techniques, lashing stones to crude clay handles to make her primitive tools, hand felting wool for scullcaps, weaving basket forms and combining an increasingly wide range of unlikely objects and materials in an idiosyncratic and thought-provoking way. In some of these works, most notably her *Cloak, Meat* and *Dagger Cupboards,* she returned to the problematic question of where the boundary lies between human self-preservation and needless violence.

The newer cloaks and aprons can be read as celebrations of fertility and sexuality. Some of them

Meat Cupboard 1981 A wooden cupboard containing objects made from fired clay, stone and found natural materials 1167 x 914 x 279mm
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

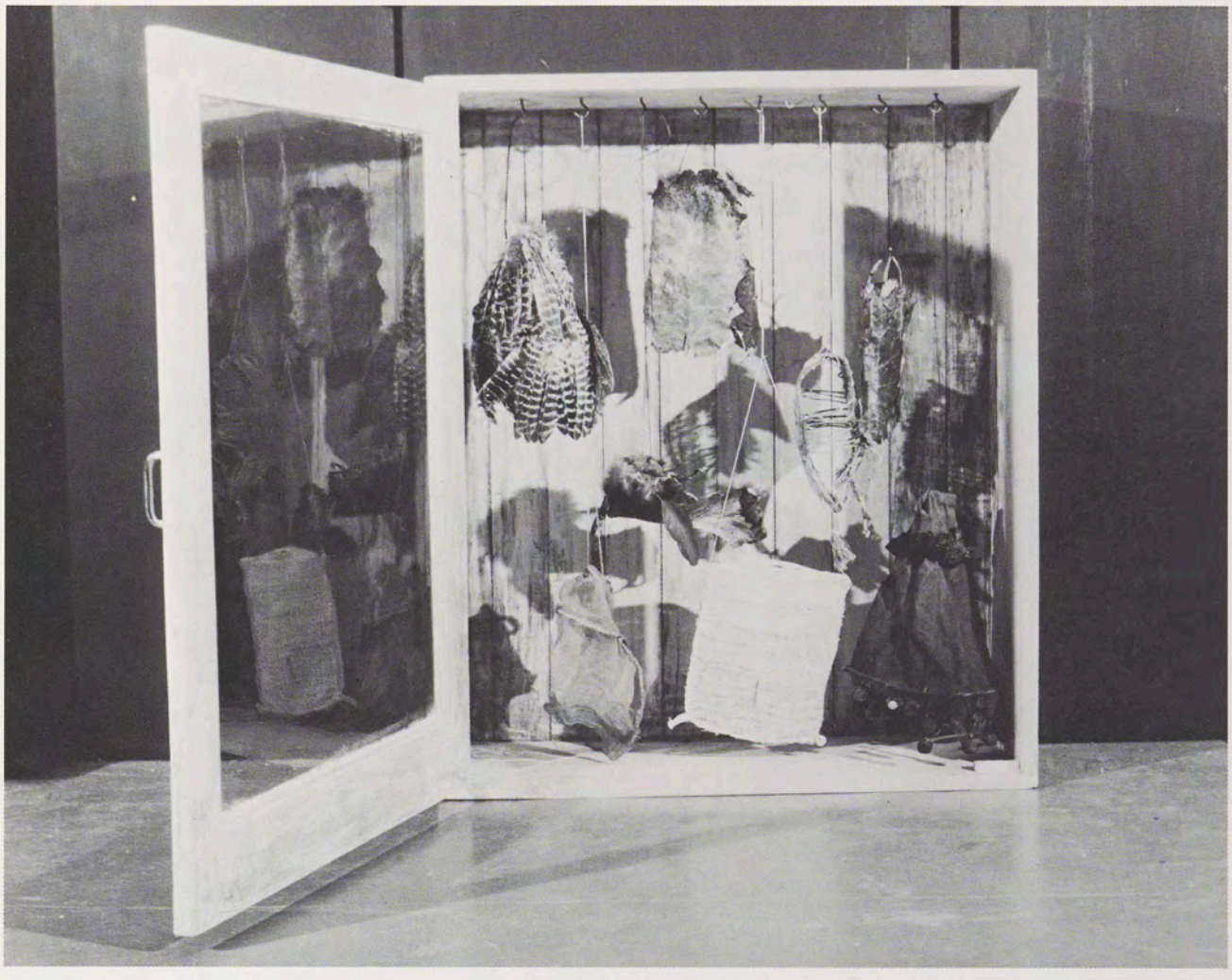
Hellyar describes as specifically male or female, but others blur and question notions of sexual difference.

Being Born, Bearing Fruit and Dying shares the theme of fecundity, though not in a specifically human context. The work is divided into three zones. The first represents the sea; in the evolutionary process which the installation chronicles, water is the source of all life, its birthplace. Rubbery squid, clay flounder, driftwood, extruded volcanic rock fan out from a cast iron, tree-root orifice into a spreading triangular shape that suggests growth and flow; it's also reminiscent of certain natural formations created by water (such as the delta and the alluvial fan) and of the one truly universal shell shape, the scallop or fan shell. Hellyar has used lots of latex here for its boneless jellyfish quality, embryonic and unfixed like the slither of the sea.

The central area of the work is roughly circular — like a seed or an egg, a fruit or a womb. Moon or planet-shaped, archetypal symbol of wholeness and completion, it represents both the land (second stage of evolution) and the fruit. The seeds of the mangrove, that neither-fish-nor-fowl of the vegetable world, mark the transition from life in the sea to life on land. So do the snails, creatures of both earth and water.

A series of roughly arrow-shaped forms — branches, seed pods and pine cones — runs through the centre of the work, visually linking all three zones. The third section is also long and tapering, tailing off into the void from which the work began. Rotten-looking latex logs and piled-up layers of slate suggest the processes of time — death, decay, compression, Yet death for Hellyar is not sterile nor even final. She includes a scattering of flaxpods and clusters of lichens which often take their life from decaying matter. And, as well as dying, this section represents the air; the pterodactyl leaving the ground or the spirit the body.

Priscilla Pitts



***Cloak cupboard* 1981** a wooden cupboard containing eight hanging 'cloaks' of commercially made and natural substances 952 x 800 x 317mm
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

***Dagger Cupboard* 1981** A wooden cupboard containing objects made from fired clay, wood, felt, skin, stone, bone, seed, feather, shell, etc 990 x 2438 x 380mm
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

***Being Born, Bearing Fruit and Dying* 1986** (detail)

Front page ***Being Born, Bearing Fruit and Dying* 1986** mixed media

Christine Hellyar, September 1986

Exhibitions

1969 *Sculpture 5,* Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1971 *Young Contemporaries,* Auckland City Art Gallery
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1972 *Hansells Sculpture Award,* Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1973 Solo exhibition, Osborne Galleries, Auckland
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1975 Solo exhibition, Bett-Duncan Gallery, Wellington
Hansells Sculpture Award, Auckland City Art Gallery
1976 Solo exhibition, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Solo exhibition, Northland Society of Arts, Whangarei
Solo exhibition, Settlement Gallery, Wellington
Solo exhibition, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Young Artists, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
New Zealand Drawing, Auckland City Art Gallery
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1977 Solo exhibition, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Young Contemporaries, Auckland City Art Gallery
1979 Solo exhibition, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Solo exhibition, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
1980 Solo exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Solo exhibition, Northland Society of Arts, Whangarei
Solo exhibition, Hogarth Galleries, Sydney, Australia
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1981 Solo exhibition, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Three Women Sculptors, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1st Australian Sculpture Triennial, Preston Institute of Technology & La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
International Small Sculpture Triennial, Budapest, Hungary
ANZART in Christchurch
1982 *Shelter* installation, Auckland City Art Gallery
Solo exhibition, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
New Zealand Drawing, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
Installation, Sydney Biennale, Sydney, Australia
Hellyar, Webb and Twiss, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
1983 Solo exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
Solo exhibition, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Solo exhibition, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1984 Solo exhibition, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1985 Solo exhibition, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland; Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
ANZART '85 Book Show, Auckland City Art Gallery
International Experiment Art, Budapest, Hungary
1986 Solo exhibition, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
Solo exhibition, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
Solo exhibition, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
Arts of Today, FMK Galleria, Budapest, Hungary
Seventh International Impact Art Festival, Kyoto, Japan

Biography

1947 Born New Plymouth, New Zealand
1969 Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. Graduated DFA (Hons) in sculpture
1970 Teachers' Training College, Christchurch
1974 Travelled in Great Britain and Europe
1977-78 Travelled to Europe, Great Britain and North America
1982- Relieving Lecturer Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland
1985 Co-curator for *ANZART in Auckland* — exhibition of artists' books, Auckland City Art Gallery

ISBN 0 86463 157 X

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Robert Jesson

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Robert Jesson

When I visited Robert Jesson's studio recently I found him working, not on sculpture, but on paintings for an exhibition — his first such exhibition. Surprising? Well, yes, but on further deliberation it fits as part of a pattern that's becoming apparent in Jesson's work.

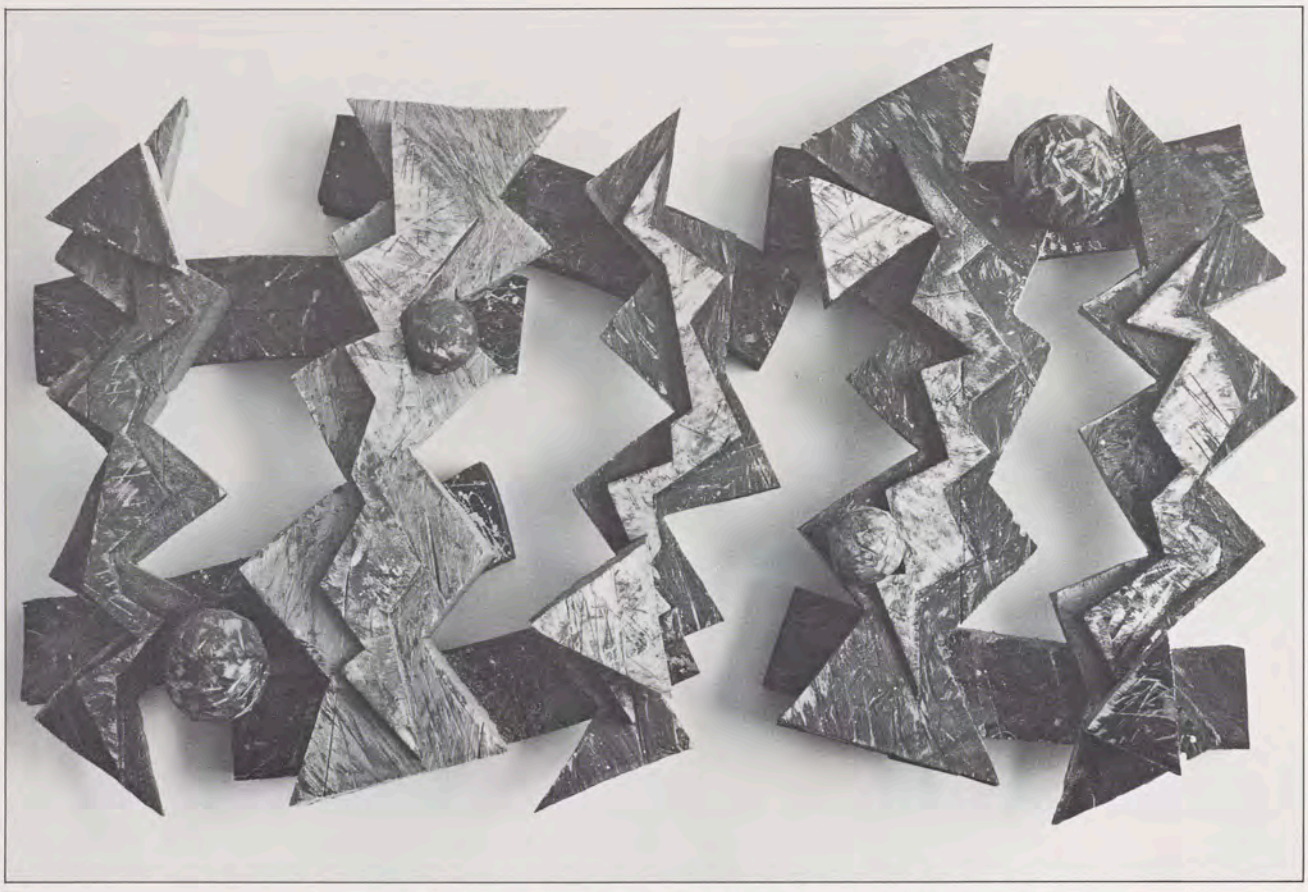
To begin with, the forms that were being laid down in Jesson's new paintings closely echoed those seen in his recent sculptures: fat, starfish forms reminiscent of *Sambusa* or *Venetian Nights,* intertwining like amorous misshapen porpoises; the same desolate ranks of tree trunks that latticed the surfaces of *Acrid Lagoon.*

For several years now, Jesson has been painting on the surfaces of his sculptures. The earliest works he showed in New Zealand were ornamented with zigzags and hatchings, triangles and rectangular flecks of colour. A year or so later the paint was used less for pattern than for texture, built up in thick, crusty blisters and dribbles. And in the most recent works there have been not only increasingly complex overlays of paint, and brushed-on highlights which emphasise and articulate the three-dimensional forms, but actual paintings as well. Works like *Acrid Lagoon* and *Bailing Moon* might be termed diptychs — two-part works, each consisting of a large 'drawing' made with paint on paper, and a wall-mounted sculpture; each repeats the form of the other, though not always exactly.

As well as all this, in the earliest works (*Melt Down* for instance or *Refuge (for Nicola)*), there's perhaps another reference to painting (or the absence of painting) in the format Jesson chose — frame-like shapes, built up and elaborated, distorted, it's true, but presented and hung on the wall like picture frames.

In later works those frames close in, the apertures become smaller, the sculptural masses around them more substantial — but almost never do they close down completely. The gap, suggestive perhaps of a certain mystery, a sense of loss, remains. We see it at its most poignant in the recent diptychs. For, whereas Jesson rejects the possibility of sexual overtones in the earlier work, these newer pieces are, he says, "about love". Though the two "life forms" duplicated in each work are slightly differentiated, "they seem to belong to each other, they are a pair — sort of male/female."[1] Forever separate, apart, yet briefly touching, the space between them becomes the aching void that is desire.

Jesson underscores this reading with romantic, evocative titles — *Sambusa, Valhalla, Venetian Nights.* At the same time, he undercuts the romance by making his 'creatures' slightly repulsive — their forms unpleasantly ambiguous, a little too fleshy, uninviting to the touch.



Untitled 1984 enamel on kauri 1750 x 2840 x 410mm Auckland City Art Gallery

This last quality is certainly deliberate. The 'hands off' warning is signalled more subtly, more equivocally, even, than before, but it's the same message. Many of the earlier works are spiky, ominously toothed or zigzagged, with jagged angular holes through them. Some of the slightly later sculptures are softened a little — a few curved forms, the angles somewhat less savage — but their surfaces are rough, sometimes aggressively so, especially in those works which have been hacked from raw logs with a chain saw.

Jesson was, at least to begin with, consciously trying to project a hostile, aggressive look:

> I was reacting against that whole sixties Henry Moore type of flowing soft shape — sculpture which you were supposed to touch or handle.
>
> I've always had that sense that, even with sculpture, it's a purely visual thing. Perhaps that's part of our generation — we grew up with film and that sort of stuff, a lot of our assimilation is purely visual. . .I've always regarded art as being like that — that there's a slight barrier between you and the work. . .

Perhaps that's why so many of Jesson's works are wall-mounted — declaring themselves 'art works', eschewing too-familiar contact.

Jesson did his art training in Britain, at the Norwich School of Art and later at St Martin's in London, where the dominating presence of Anthony Caro became, eventually, something else to react against. Working with Caro meant, almost inevitably, working in sheet steel — hard-edged, smooth-surfaced, abstract. But Jesson abandoned that material when he returned to New Zealand in 1978.

> As soon as you get off the plane you realise it's not a 'steel' environment — you only have to look at Maori and Polynesian art to see that wood is a very natural art material in this country.

So he began using plywood, cutting out and building up shapes similar to the ones he'd been making in art school, elaborating the surfaces with plywood cut-outs and projections and, of course, that enlivening skin of paint. Before long, the works became smaller, more solid, some of them garnished with glossy 'billiard balls' and blocks and wedges of wood, others pierced with zigzagging slashes. Around 1983 Jesson began wrapping some of his pieces, muting their spikiness a little, hinting already at the later 'starfish' diptychs. (In fact, he has returned to this bandaged look in a large commissioned work recently completed for the Cromwell Corporation in Wellington. The 'bindings' round the two huge forms are, however, fake — their surfaces are actually fibreglass, modelled to look like folds and swathes of cloth.)

Towards the end of 1984, after eight months of living in a rural South Island area, Jesson showed a collection of sculptures at Denis Cohn Gallery that seemed to mark a distinct change in his work. They had a more rugged, organic look to them than the previous pieces, an irregularity, a kind of mis-matching of forms that made those earlier sculptures look relatively structured and formal. Parts of them were hacked out of hunks of freshly cut pine logs — still warm says Jesson — with a chainsaw. The more sinuous curving forms were of woven cane — Jesson taught himself basketry from a library book. (He admits he sometimes cheats by shaping the basketwork over a plaster form.) Some of the works were smeared with clay mixed with resin and deliberately allowed to crack and flake before the resin hardened; others were coated with pitch.

Even here there were constants — the 'don't touch' message, the spaces between meeting forms, the emphasis on the paint surface, albeit more expressionistic, more evidently brushed than before, the jutting angles — all were carryovers from the earlier work. But why the changes? In an article written last year[2] Francis Pound sternly rejected the possibility that the artist's change of surroundings could have affected his art; the only influence he would admit was the new German Expressionist art that Jesson had just seen in the U.S.A.

Jesson himself, however, makes some of those despised connections. He shows me a photograph of *Snark* (the most organic of all Jesson's works so far — cane-wrapped and thickly daubed with clay, obscenely visceral, undoubtedly the precursor of later, more refined 'snarks') and talks about seeing seals for the first time.

> About a month later when I was walking along the beach I found one that was dead — a great decayed sort of thing on the beach. This work was partly based on that — it's got that decaying quality. . .

When I ask him about the lifeless treescapes on *Acrid Lagoon* and *Valhalla* (which exists, as yet, only as a drawing) his answer is about art *and* nature:

> Painting like this on sculpture is a 'no-no' — that's why I'm doing it, to make a statement about painting and sculpture. It's also a way to introduce ideas into sculpture which are normally impossible to express. I lived with my family in the South Island for a while and I fell in love with the pine tree. . .it's a really eerie feeling walking in the pine forests, nothing else growing there. There were farms all around and everything had been killed off with sprays. There was this extraordinary red lake, surrounded with dead things — dead water, dead reeds, dead trees. . .

In yet another variation, some of the more recent diptychs are painted with architecture — grey and gold colonnades striping the skin of Jesson's curvaceous 'life forms' with emblems of history and culture.

Given the changing look of Jesson's sculpture, what will he come up with for this exhibition? He won't know exactly till it's finished.

> I've very seldom sat down, drawn up what I want to make, planned it all out. . .I don't work that way, I find it's boring.

However, he says it'll be different from the recent works. He has no intention of getting stuck with any one style and three months working on a single sculpture in that particular vein have made him impatient to move on to something new. . .

Priscilla Pitts

[1] All quotes are from a conversation with the artist, August 1986.

[2] Francis Pound, "Robert Jesson" *Art New Zealand* 36, 1985, pp. 28-31.

***Untitled* 1986** acrylic and oil on fibreglass 1525 x 1600 x 405mm

***Babbi Yar* (diptych) 1986** acrylic and oil on fibreglass 1700 x 2160 x 760mm & oil on canvas 1700 x 2160mm

Front page ***Cuttings* (diptych) 1986** acrylic and oil on fibreglass 1700 x 2160 x 760mm & oil on canvas 1700 x 2160mm

Robert Jesson, 1986 Photo: Peter Hannken

Exhibitions

1981	*Wall Sculpture,* Closet Gallery, Auckland
1982	*New Artists, New Art,* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
	Robert Jesson, Closet Gallery, Auckland
	Installation, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1983	*Artist in Focus,* Auckland City Art Gallery
	New Sculpture, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
	Jesson, City Art Gallery, Wellington
	Jesson, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1984	*Robert Jesson — New sculpture and drawings,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1985	*Jesson,* Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
	Robert Jesson: Sculpture 1981-1985, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton

Biography

1947	Born Auckland, New Zealand
1961-65	Secondary education, Mt Roskill Grammar School
1968-70	Left New Zealand to study in Europe
1971	Pre-diploma. Wrexham School of Art, England
1972-75	Norwich School of Art, London. Graduated 1975, BA Hons. (Sculpture)
1975-77	St Martins School of Art, London. Graduated 1977 MA Equ. (Sculpture)
1977	Returned to Auckland, New Zealand
1985	Winner, Team McMillan Ford Art Award

Commissions

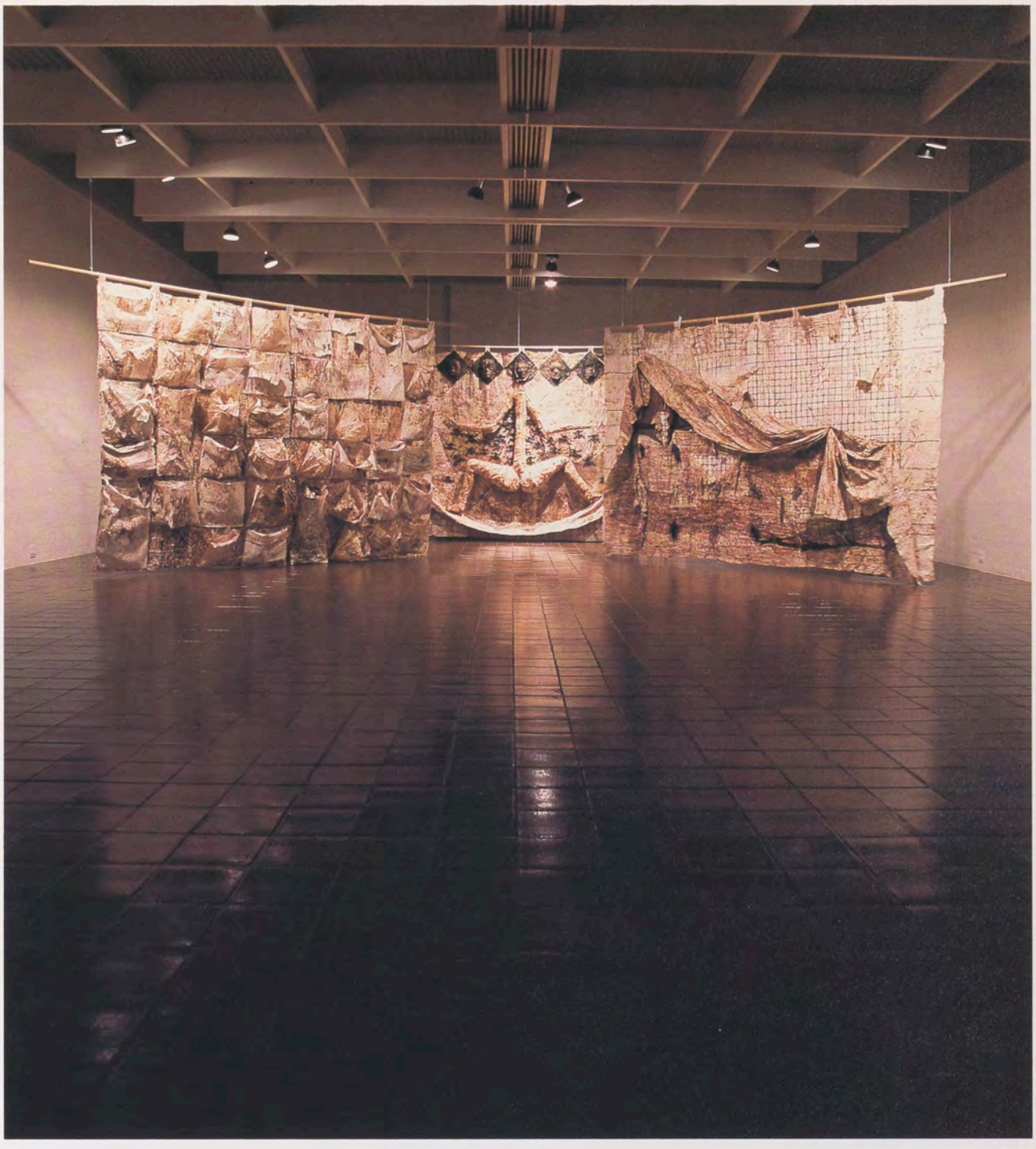
1982	Remuera Public Library — in 1985 this work was moved to Forum North, Whangarei.
1983	Auditorium Foyer, Auckland City Art Gallery
1985	Cromwell Corporation, Wellington

ISBN 0 86463 156 1

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Vivian Lynn



Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Vivian Lynn

Vivian Lynn made the *Gates of the Goddess; a southern crossing attended by the Goddess* for the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery's 1986 Sculpture project. She said at that time, paraphrasing Mary Daly in *Gyn-ecology:*

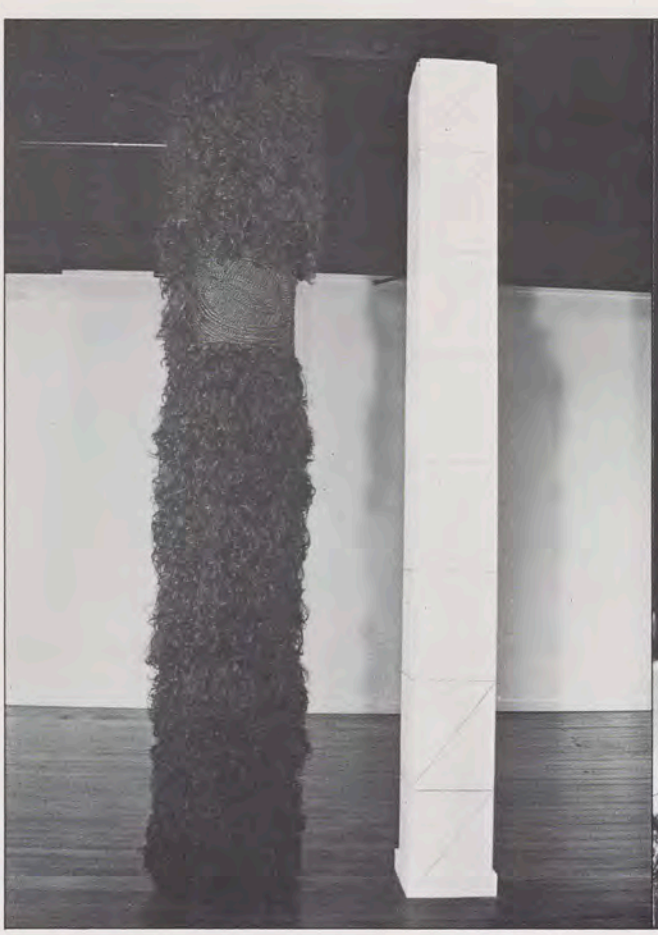
The work is about moving into the sacred realm of my background, the wild realm of the pre-historic sacred. The *Gates of the Goddess* traces the cyclical process of my journey from menarche to menocease, and menocease becomes a metaphor for rebirth. The passage through the Gates of the Goddess signifies metamorphosis or re-birth, into the wild realm of the sacred and ecstatic way. Walking through the gateway, I/we go forward into my/our background.

This idea of moving 'forward into our background' in the hope of understanding ourselves better is a constant concern in Vivian Lynn's work. Hers is an active investigation which involves exploring and analysing 'background' in all senses, and ultimately affirming hope for growth in the future. Lynn explores her knowledge of the past, the pre-historic, dimly understood reminders of earlier human societies, questioning received opinions and looking for new insights. This is an interest she shares with many other contemporary Western artists. She also explores the background of cultural attitudes, beliefs and assumptions which form the base, the ground for our living and acting, for our understanding of ourselves.

Vivian Lynn's feminist awareness leads her to question many assumptions about men and women, their contrasting abilities, their 'complementary' roles, and to oppose the subtle and violent ways in which women are encouraged to undervalue themselves. Lynn's works all indicate the need for change and growth to make our human relations happier and less oppressive. She has made many works which explore the patriarchal systems which govern our society, attempting to analyse the damage they do. After nearly two decades of contemporary feminist awareness and analysis, there is still a long journey ahead to the new country and many obstacles along the path. We are all invited to join in this personal journey of uncovering and transformation.

Vivian Lynn began making installation sculpture in 1982 after working principally as a painter and printmaker. Her intent is to communicate ideas and emotions and to do this through a melding of form and content. Her use of materials is always deliberate and often disturbing, directed by her careful analysis of them, the way they have been seen and used in the past and the associations they have for both artist and viewer. Of her 1983 work for Anzart in Hobart, *Lamella - Lamina,* Lynn writes:

This work was specifically in response to the conservation struggle taking place on the Franklin river in Tasmania where horrendous ecological damage was taking place. . .The work suggests life/death, fragility and resilience, and I think *mostly* a persistent toughness in all living matter to survive



***Caryatid* 1983-1986** hair, concrete, graphite 3320 x 500mm
Photo: Wellington City Gallery

***Caryatid* 1983-1986** (detail)
Photo: Wellington City Gallery

brutalization. . . so the material paper was selected for a work about a forest.

Lynn has used human hair in many works and this is a substance loaded with literary, sexual, social and artistic associations, even taboos. We all seem to have instinctive, physical reactions as well as learned, cultural reactions to hair. Hair is a powerful symbol which carries a range of meanings. Consider European fairy stories like *Rapunzel,* the biblical strength of Samson, Medusa's snake-like hair (symbol of female power or female ugliness depending on your perspective) or Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock.* Hair as a fetishistic substance in tribal ritual, hair in Victorian mourning brooches, haircutting as punishment for women (the shaving of collaborators) or as initiation into manhood. And then hair length and style as a visible protest — long and loose or sculpted into spikes. Hair can be a token of love or a talisman for luck — women sewing strands of their hair into the hems of wedding dresses.

Hair is often a symbol of sensuality. In Roman Catholic tradition, a nun steps over her cut hair when she takes her final vows, apparently leaving behind her female sexuality. In a 1984 work for *Art in Dunedin, Stain,* Vivian Lynn wove a long carpet of hair which flowed down the steps of the Cathedral to the Octagon; a reference to the Churches' partriarchal structures which have relied on women's work too much while acknowledging their worth too little. The doormat analogy was almost too close for comfort.

In a recent work for the Wellington City Gallery's project series, Vivian Lynn made superb use of hair as a sculptural medium in a work called *Caryatid.* A caryatid is a female figure used as a pillar to support the entablature of a classical building. This *Caryatid* is covered in hair, her eyes indicated with shining plaits of hair coiled and woven together. She is enormously tall, dwarfing the viewer with a tree-like grandeur. Lynn refers here to the association of trees with places of worship in ancient Goddess religions. This marker tree, which was represented by a column, later came to indicate the tree of life. Our female ancestors have played their part in supporting both the men and the structures which oppressed them. The *Caryatid,* this supporting pillar, asserts a dominant, almost hypnotic presence in the room, overshadowing and staring out the slim, square white pillar which she confronts. She is indeed a tower of strength. Many levels of association are possible here, and Lynn hopes we will explore them.

Then from hair to skin, our largest sensory organ and another substance loaded with meaning. In her search for a material with skin-like qualities, Vivian Lynn rejected many possibilities before deciding to use tapa, the bark cloth made by women in the Pacific Islands. The three panels of *Gates of the Goddess* make reference in varying ways to the changes in women's lives as they grow older, and to Lynn's personal journey. The skin-like qualities of the panels are intended to reinforce Lynn's connection of the physical process of ageing with psychological and spiritual changes, the opening-up rather than the closing-down of possibilities.

In the first two panels through which we approach the central Goddess figure there are references to the sloughing off of old skin and re-emergence in a new form. The left-hand panel has a grid of forty pockets which unfold from its surface. Forty years of menstruation is the average for women in New Zealand. Lynn has left two spaces in the calendar grid to represent the years when she bore her own two children. Inside the pockets are lunar charts which point to the link between women's menstruation and the moon's cycle.

On the right-hand panel the bark cloth pulls down in a swathe; the physically reproductive years are over, a veil is dropped, the horizon expands, a new era begins. Small figures made of clay, fibre, sticks or hair move across the surface.

In the central panel of the gateway the bark cloth loops down to reveal the three-dimensional figure of the Goddess. This central figure is intended to evoke the many great goddesses of pre-historic cultures. Her shape is reminiscent particularly of the female gable figures of the Palau Islands in the Pacific. Along the top of the panel are seven diamond-shaped masks — possible faces of the Goddess. Smaller figures crowd into the protection of her embrace. Lynn has painted the back of the outer panels with columns which make further reference to her combined Pacific and European heritage, and to women's history. Throughout the three panels the persistant grid pattern of the tapa provides a unifying motif.

Many questions arise today over the use of material from other cultures in the making of art works — in particular, Western artists' use of forms from tribal art. Here Lynn has re-used materials made and painted by other women artists. In 1973 the American sculptor Harmony Hammond wrote of her own work:

> The rags and hair come from women and add their personal power to my pieces. It is the connection to my female ancestors which provides an ethnographic content to my work.[1]

The tapa of the Pacific is a material made exclusively by women and used as clothing, wall covering, bed covering, ceremonial gift, and since European colonisation, occasionally as a saleable item. In response to the appropriation question, Vivian Lynn wrote:

> I used tapa cloth as part of the specific construction of meaning within the work. The material is not specifically used for its aesthetic possibilities but in a context of revendication. This was tapa cloth made by women but colonised by non-Pacific symbols, heraldic symbols, or insignia. It is allied in my mind with the takeover of women's energies and inventions by men. So the concept of rehabilitating the tapa made by women, the fact that the tapa was used for intimate functions like clothes and bedcovers and the fact that its source was a tree became the politics of the work.[2]

We do not know the names of the women who made this tapa; like so many women artists they are anonymous. Their work has now become part of another woman's affirmation of the importance and significance of women's lives. Vivian Lynn intends her affirmation to include them; we must hope they would agree.

The Pacific cultures all have traditions which

***Lamella - Lamina* 1983** paper installation, ANZART-in-Hobart Photo: Jurgen Waibel

honour age and its wisdom and experience in a way that European culture does not. In the *Gates of the Goddess* Vivian Lynn celebrates women's ageing and growing, changing and developing in a cyclical process of renewal. Feminist artist Harmony Hammond wrote in 1984 of her vision of art. It is an inspired vision, and the *Gates of the Goddess* is a move towards its realisation, but the question of the relationship of Western women artists to the women artists of other cultures must be confronted before this end can be achieved.

Art that is inspirational, a positive force in the face of sexist backlash and the threat of nuclear and environmental disaster. Art that goes beyond critique. Creating a positive female presence. I envision a feminist work of outrageous quality. Complex. Deep. Rich in associations. Full of content and meaning. Committed. Responsible. Passionate.[3]

Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Statement by Harmony Hammond, reprinted in *Wrappings-Essays on Feminism, Art and the Martial Arts,* New York 1984
[2] Vivian Lynn, letter to Alexa Johnston, 1 September 1986
[3] Harmony Hammond, ibid

***Gates of the Goddess* 1986** (detail)

Front page ***Gates of the Goddess: a southern crossing attended by the Goddess* 1986**
tapa (bark cloth), hair, rubber, wood, shells, Auckland City Art Gallery

Vivian Lynn, September 1986 Photo: Jurgen Waibel

Exhibitions

1963 *Contemporary New Zealand Paintings,* Auckland City Art Gallery
1965 *Mid '65,* Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Pan Pacific Arts Festival, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1966 Solo exhibition, Little Woodware Gallery, Christchurch
New Zealand Painting, Auckland City Art Gallery
Five South Canterbury Artists, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
The Group, Durham Street Gallery, Christchurch
1970 *Expo '70,* Tokyo, Japan
Two Printmakers, Graphic Gallery, Christchurch
Two Printmakers, Dawson Gallery, Dunedin
1971 *Christchurch '71,* New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Prints, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Nine Printmakers, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Two Printmakers, Bett-Duncan Studio Gallery, Wellington
30 Plus, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1972 *Honolulu Printmakers Exhibition,* Honolulu
1973 *New Zealand Women as Potters and Printmakers,* New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1974 *New Zealand Art 1974,* C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1975 *Sculpture and Prints for International Women's Year,* New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1976 *New Zealand Drawing,* Auckland City Art Gallery
Land '76, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1977 *New Zealand Prints,* Auckland City Art Gallery
1978 *Invited Printmakers,* New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1979 *Show the Flag,* National Art Gallery, Wellington
Diverse Dimensions, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Women in Communication, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Directions in New Zealand Printmaking, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
1980 Solo exhibition *Book of Forty Images: Drawings, Collages, Prints,* New Vision Gallery, Auckland
1981 *3 Wellington Women,* Gingko Gallery, Christchurch
Me by Myself: the self-portrait, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1982 *F1 Sculpture Project,* Warehouse, Tory Street, Wellington
A Survey 1973-80 and New Work, City Art Gallery, Wellington
G[u]arden Gate, Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
Solo exhibition, Victoria University, Wellington
1983 Commissioned installation *Twist,* National Art Gallery, Wellington
ANZART in Hobart installation, Hobart, Australia
4 + 1 installation, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
1984 *Working drawings for Asherim and Garden series,* Janne Land Gallery, Wellington
Stain, outdoor installation, *Art in Dunedin*
Asherim installation, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art: Anxious Images, Auckland City Art Gallery
Four Installation Sculptors, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton
1985 *New Zealand Printmaking 1985,* Portfolio Gallery, Auckland
1986 Sculpture project *Gates of the Goddess: a southern crossing attended by the Goddess,* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth.
Solo installation *Caryatid,* City Art Gallery, Wellington
Content/Context, A Survey of Recent New Zealand Art, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington

Biography

1931 Born Wellington, New Zealand
1949-51 Canterbury University College School of Fine Arts, Christchurch. Graduated 1952 Dip. FA
1952 Auckland Teachers College. Graduated Dip. Teaching
1953-55 Tutor in Fine Arts, Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College
1964 Travelled to Australia
1972 Travelled to America
1973 Tutor in silkscreen and drawing, Victoria University Extension Department, Wellington
1974-78 Tutor in etching and lithography, Wellington Polytechnic
1978-82 *Taupatauma* garden and tree planting project, Wellington
1980-83 QE II Arts Council of New Zealand grants (1980, 1981, 1982, 1983)
1981 Travelled to America and Europe
1983-84 Co-ordinator, Women's Art Archive, National Art Gallery, Wellington

ISBN 0 86463 155 3

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Selwyn Muru

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

***Palisade* 1983-1984** wood, metal, paint, found objects, collection of the artist

Selwyn Muru

Selwyn Muru's front fence in Auckland is certainly one of his best-known sculptures — a fact which he enjoys since his stated wish is that the visual arts should communicate with as wide an audience as possible. Much of his work is fired by a determination to achieve this end. The fence is called *Palisade,* a reminder of traditional Maori fortifications, but this one is constructed from pieces of demolition timber, old toys, rusting metal parts from cars or garden tools, and much of it is brightly painted. At one end a dancing harlequin (a joker?) announces, "This is a nuclear free front." Other carved figures offer mocking salute to passers-by and heads which recall Maori carvings look solemn and subdued.

The whole structure draws on the traditions of junk sculpture which have attracted artists like Don Driver and Frank Womble, and also lay practitioners like the sculptor of the Muffler Man in Auckland's Khyber Pass, or the Firestone Tyre Man in Christchurch. Those two figures are probably among the better-known public sculptures around.

Muru's suburban fence has not however gone unnoticed by the art world. Ian Wedde has suggested that it represents a widely observable New Zealand artistic idiom:

> What seems to have emerged is something we can dub the 'Selwyn Muru's own front fence' school, after his sculpture *Palisade* which does in fact protect the front of his house. It is a work of power and humour, thoroughly contemporary, with roots that go back through popular and vernacular images to its bedrock culture.[1]

The origins of *Palisade* can be traced in the reactions of Maori artists to the overwhelming impact of European culture last century. They developed new forms of folk art which joined Western image-making methods and motifs with Maori traditions. A fine example of this type of work is the wharepuni Rongopai at Waituhi, near Gisborne, which was built for Te Kooti Rikirangi in 1888. Muru's wooden sculptures continue in this tradition: humorous and with an often cutting political edge. Other Maori artists like Hariata Mei Ropata Taingahoe have followed a similar path.

Selwyn Muru is a painter, musician, maker of films and television programmes, playwright, poet, set designer, as well as sculptor. Working in all these areas over the past twenty-five years, he has always wanted to discuss issues with the audience, in particular the political and social injustices which beset Maori people in Aotearoa.

In 1975 he began an ambitious series of paintings which retell the story of Parihaka from the Maori perspective. Muru's paintings are explicit and confrontational, boldly asserting the facts of Pakeha ruthlessness and treachery in Taranaki. Their message is communicated directly to the viewer. The paintings are based on Dick Scott's book *Ask That Mountain,* the story of Parihaka.[2] They take their place within a growing number of works which revise history from the perspective of indigenous, colonised peoples. The facts are those of the passive resistance of the people of Parihaka, led by Te Whiti o Rongomai, to the attempts of the Government forces to confiscate their lands. Te Whiti's leadership, his non-violent philosophy which preceded Ghandi by many years, has become a source of inspiration in present-day legal and verbal battles over Maori land rights.

While I was at Parihaka I sat down for three days and listened to the old people there. People like Te Whiti's granddaughter and Mohi Wharepouri. They gave me the other dimension, the Maori point of view, the spirit of the people, their pain and anguish. Their stories moved me so much that at times I wept when they were telling them. There was no hatred. Just an enormous sense of injustice at what had happened. Te Whiti and the Maori people of Taranaki wanted to be recognised as people with the same rights as Europeans. This didn't happen. Now I want to tell the story in pictures. The true story.[3]

Muru adopted a painting style for this project which was based on Sydney Nolan's series of works on the life of the Australian outlaw Ned Kelly. The style is a mixture of naive realism and symbolism and Muru uses strong, harsh colour to depict dramatic and brutal events.

The *Parihaka* paintings' narrative echoes the tradition of whaikorero, oratory and storytelling central to Maori society. Stories which reaffirm the community's history and significance are told in the wharepuni, the meeting house which is the heart of the marae. It is a place where the people meet and talk, listen, sing, pray, sleep, remember the past and discuss the future, and there they are surrounded and warmed by the visual as well as the verbal arts of their people. Kowhaiwhai, tukutuku, whakairo and whariki, all made to enrich the life of the tribe and connect them with their past.

New Zealand art galleries and museums which have developed almost exclusively on the model of British and European institutions lack this sense of being a home for the community, a place of welcome and warmth. In 1979 a selection of Muru's *Parihaka* paintings were shown for the first time in the Dowse Art Museum at Lower Hutt. At the exhibition opening there was prayer, poetry, song, food from a hangi, and a play by Rowley Habib, *Death of the Land,* which is based on a Maori land case from the 1960's. Mattresses were laid on the floor and many people slept there, following the tradition of "keeping the paintings warm". Seven years later art galleries and museums, prompted by the *Te Maori* exhibition, are beginning to acknowledge and attempting to modify their monocultural nature. Events like that hui at the Dowse Art Museum may become less rare.

In 1981 when New Zealand reeled under the turmoil and bitterness created by the Springbok Rugby Tour, Selwyn Muru again applied his maxim of putting his work in public places to be seen by as many people as possible. On the day before the first Auckland match he displayed twenty-five large paintings on screens in Auckland's Aotea Square. Leonard Bell described them:

Muru's painted messages are clear and direct, namely: apartheid is evil. Racism kills. The New Zealand government and the Rugby Union have colluded with this evil by allowing the tour to go ahead. This collusion can be connected to the injustices and loss of land experienced by Maori people, past and present, and to government-sponsored exploitation and 'rape' of the land in the interests of profit, at the expense of the people.[4]

Bell also expressed his regret that artworks seem to have limited effectiveness in altering people's attitudes over controversial issues. Whether minds are changed or not, artists can have the satisfaction of expressing their political opinions if they wish to.

Muru's latest project, an independent documentary on recent and distant events concerning the Mataatua canoe, is one of affirmation rather than criticism. Muru is still telling and re-telling stories. He speaks with great enthusiasm about this project in which he has drawn on his artistic and technical skills to tell a story, in Maori, an amalgam of ancient legend and contemporary reality among his own people.

In the painting *Nga Tuupuna o Te Whenua,* we look through misty films of paint into a dark, rich, ancient, almost steamy landscape. Ancestral forms emerge from the depths of the earth, set against the hills, melding themselves into the landscape. A fiery glow in the sky reflects across the land; this is the dimly remembered beginning of time. These paintings are more complex and less determinedly narrative than much of Muru's other work. They are explorations, suggestions rather than statements. We must contribute our own understanding to them.

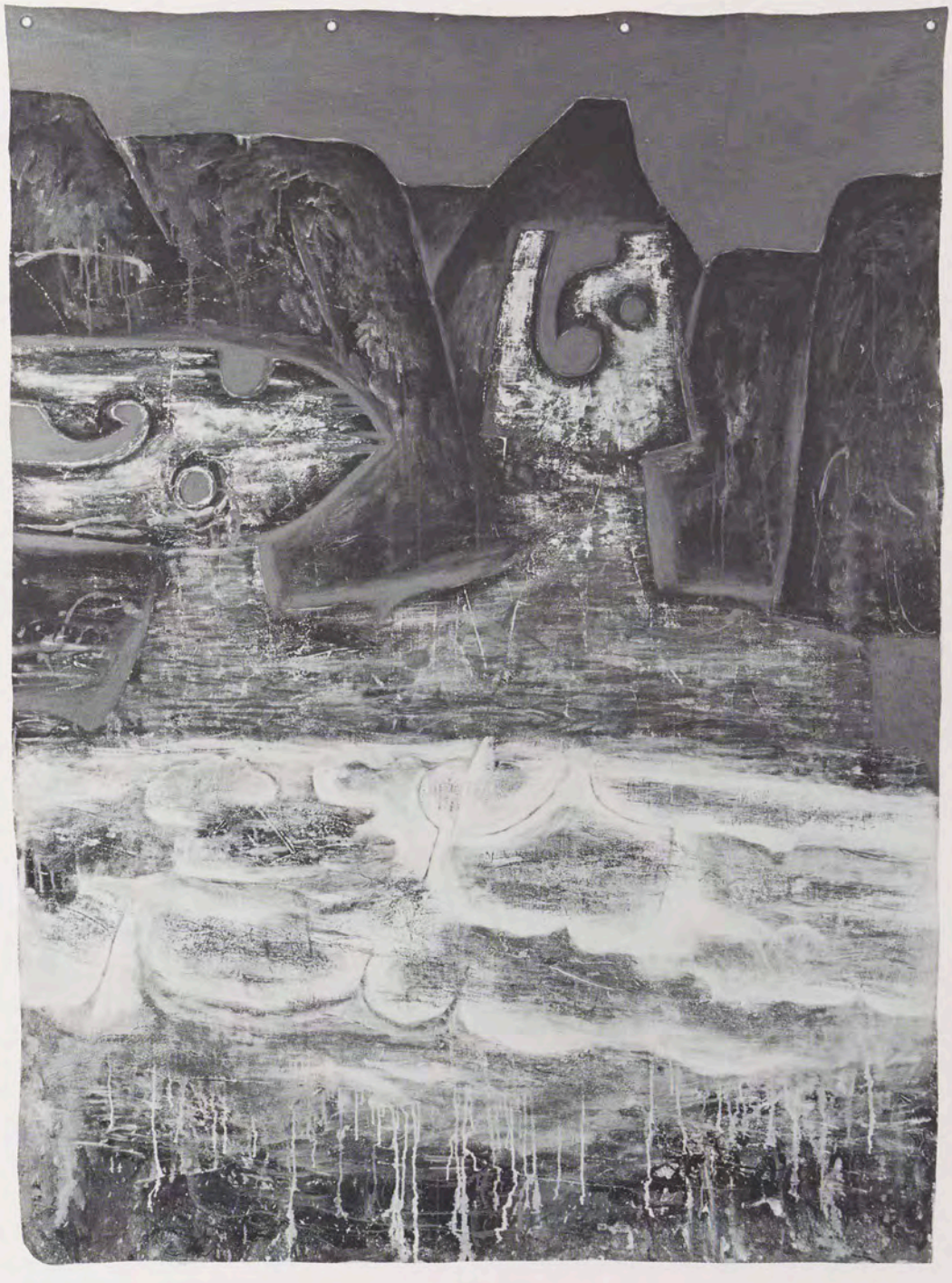
For this exhibition Selwyn Muru returns to the raw materials of the *Palisade* — timber and associated junk, salvaged from a demolished Auckland building. When I visited his studio a month before the exhibition, he had completed one of his three works. Again there are messages to be communicated. In the *Crucufixus pro PAPA,* Muru has made an enormous cross for Pope John Paul II just as about 150 years ago the Pope sent a crucifix to the Maori people. Muru's ambivalence towards the Church is expressed in this work, which is both cross and crucified. There are layers of meaning and association here; the symbolism shifts under your gaze.

Muru regrets the widespread demolition of old buildings in Auckland at present.

The tragedy is that the old buildings are knocked down unceremoniously and these glass refrigerators are put up in their place. So this crucifix is a statement about the developers with a bulldozer mentality, who place profits before humanity and spirituality. There is a Maori tradition of holding a service to farewell a building when it comes to the end of its useful life. We give thanks to the house for having given shelter and warmth to people over the years. Then it is burned or buried.[5]

The cross is jagged wood and metal bound together. There are references to land grievances and conservation: a bloody hatchet buried in the side of the cross, a crumpled copper penis from which poisonous green effluent flows, polluting the hills. Over it all the element of an old electric jug is a jaunty reminder of Maui's topknot, Maori pride. There is affection here too for the unknown people whose hands touched these door handles and light switches when the building was still alive, healthy.

Another work is *Te Maaoorii,* a sharp dig at the ceremony which has surrounded the exhibition of that name and a reminder of the lack of ceremony, lack of identity, which is the reality for so many young Maori people today. Muru also parodies the genital mutilation of so much Maori carving by early missionaries. And finally, Muru has made a waharoa, an entrance, a place for transformation and new



***Nga Tuupuna o Te Whenua* 1986** oil on canvas
1810 x 1325mm collection of the artist

beginnings, through which we can all pass. It is dedicated to the memory of the sculptor Henry Moore. Muru commented, "You feel sad when a tohunga passes on."

So what conclusions can be drawn at this stage? The harlequin on his *Palisade* gleefully pronounces a nuclear free front. New Zealand is doing the same — is baiting the American giant. Smallness can be its own defence. Muru's work fires arrows which are stinging reminders of New Zealand's political, social, racial problems.

To the sleeping giant of Pakeha society he says, "Wake up, it's time to change."

Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Ian Wedde, *Wellington City Magazine,* July 1985
[2] Dick Scott, *Ask That Mountain: the story of Parihaka,* Auckland, 1975
[3] Selwyn Muru, quoted by Wendy Simons in "The Parihaka Paintings" *New Zealand Listener,* 20 December 1975
[4] Leonard Bell, *New Zealand Listener,* 31 October 1981
[5] Selwyn Muru, *Zealandia,* 31 August 1986

***Te Maaoorii* 1986** demolition kauri, copper,
brass, cast iron 3000 x 825 x 445mm

Front page ***Archway for Henry Moore* 1986** demolition kauri and rimu,
exotic timber 2435 x 2335 x 380mm

Selwyn Muru, September 1986 Photo: New Zealand Herald

Exhibitions

1963 Group exhibition *Annual Autumn Show,* Auckland Society of Arts

1963-64 Prizewinner, Hays competition, Christchurch
Solo exhibition, Ikon Gallery, Auckland
Painters and Sculptors of Promise, Auckland Society of Arts
Contemporary New Zealand Art, Japan and Southeast Asia

1964 Willeston Gallery, Wellington
Uptown Gallery, Auckland

1965 Centre Gallery, Wellington
Hamilton Festival of Maori Art, Hamilton
Solo exhibition, Willeston Gallery, Wellington; Canterbury Museum, Christchurch

1967 *Contemporary Maori Art exhibition,* Australia and England

1969 *New Zealand Maori Council exhibition,* National Art Gallery, Wellington

1976 *Contemporary Maori Art,* Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
Benson and Hedges Art exhibition

1978 Solo exhibition, paintings and sculpture

1979 *Parihaka,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

1981 *Anti-Apartheid,* Aotea Square and Outreach, Auckland

1982 *Get the Hell home Boy* (play), New Independent Theatre, Auckland

1984 *Contemporary Stone Sculpture,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt

1985 John Leech Gallery, Auckland

1986 *Haongia te Taonga* group exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton. Organised by the Waikato Museum of Art and History and Nga Puna Waihanga

Biography

Ngati Kuri, Te Aupouri, Te Paatu, Ngati Rehia

1940 Born Te Hapua, New Zealand
Secondary education at Northland College
Ardmore Teachers College
Teacher, 2½ years: Matakana Island, Ruatahuna and Urewera primary schools

1962 Left teaching to become full-time artist
Worked with broadcasting since 1966

1964 Actor and set designer for film *Runaway*

c1982 Wrote three plays: *Te Ohaki a Nihe*
Get the Hell home Boy
The Gospel according to Tane

1986 Designer for Waitangi Stage Production, Wellington

Commissions

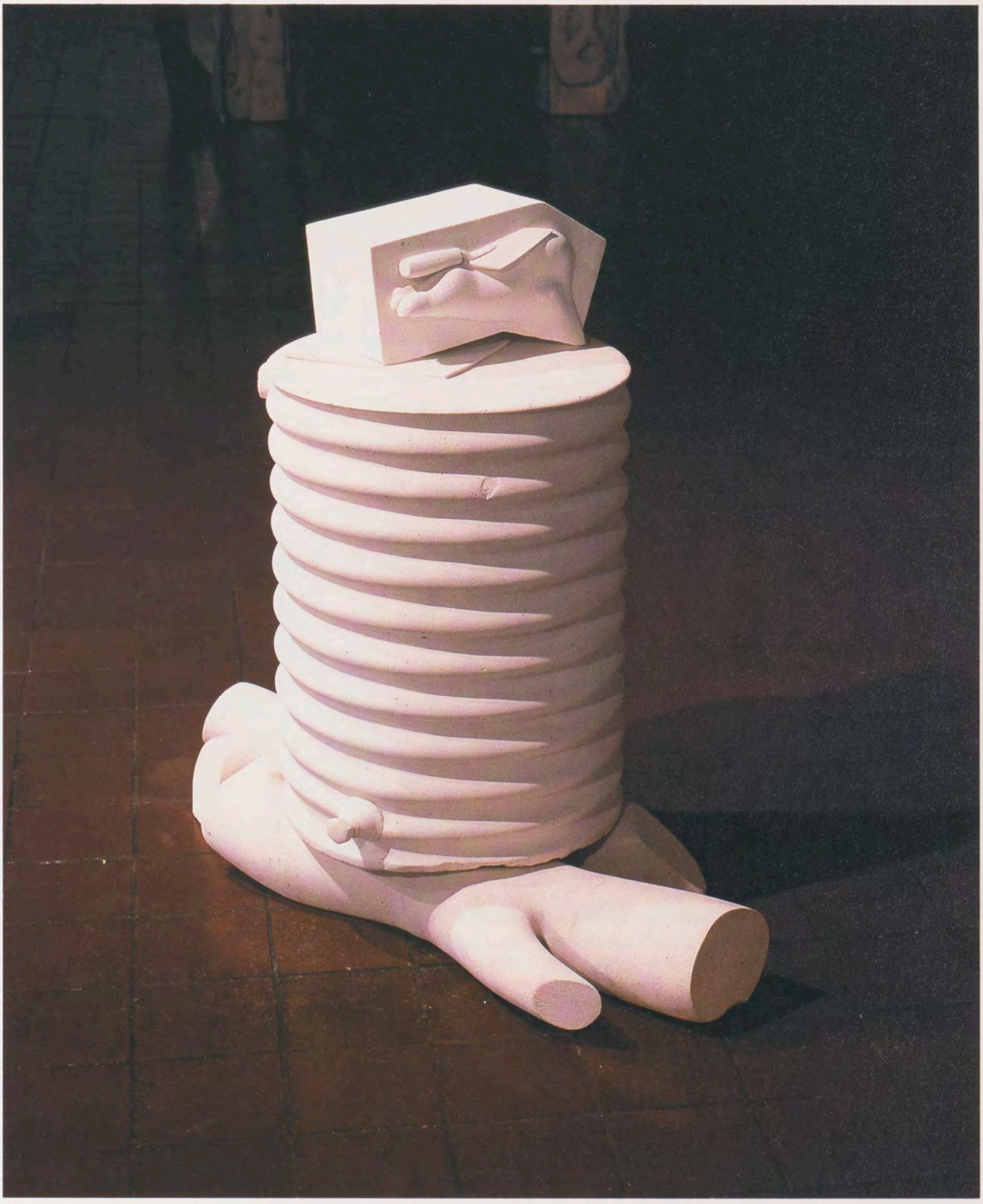
1965 Murals for overseas terminal of the Wellington Harbour Board

ISBN 0 86463 143 X

Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Denis O'Connor



Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Denis O'Connor

Denis O'Connor's five limestone carvings are from a group of eleven works he made in 1985 while he was the University of Otago's Frances Hodgkins Fellow. The sculptures are collectively known as *Branches from the Wishing Tree;* stone branches form the base of each work. The title's reference is to the ancient practice of tying scraps of cloth or other mementoes to the branches of special trees or hedges to make tangible a wish or prayer. Most of the sculptures are carved from single blocks of South Island limestone. They reflect layerings of meaning beginning with the history of the stone itself, its use in public architecture, O'Connor's Irish heritage and his life in Aotearoa. The verbal and visual lore of stones, poetry, the sea and coastal ritual, the manual skills of tradespersons, community activities and lifestyles, memories of childhood — all these work together in floating and shifting coalescences of meaning which elevate the commonplace to the domain of myth and legend. The soft, white limestone suggests weight and density, yet seems to defy gravity; the sculptures are small tableaux. They are humbling works — O'Connor's technical skill is astonishing — yet they also inspire and warm in their confident affirmation of humankind.

Denis O'Connor's reading of contemporary verse has played an important part in his making of these sculptures and his writing about them reinforces this. The following essay is one he wrote for the catalogue to his June 1986 Dunedin exhibition *Branches from the Wishing Tree.*

LIMESTONETREE

In an essay entitled *Feeling into Words,* Ulster poet Seamus Heaney defined poetry as:

. . . divination, poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself, poems as elements of continuity, with the aura and authenticity of archaeological finds, where the buried shard has an importance that is not diminished by the importance of the buried city.[1]

This group of eleven limestone carvings would happily aspire to that definition. The raw material itself, deposited as the calcareous remains of microscopic marine animals, forms a sedimentary rock shelf along the North Otago coastline and is still quarried in Weston, south of Oamaru. It was used extensively as a building material in the nineteenth century, not only in the South Island, but northern cities such as Auckland boasted Town Halls, Post Offices, universities and cathedrals built of the stuff. It was admirably suited to architectural ornamentation and some of the earliest public sculpture by the Pakeha in this land has survived on these buildings. In Dunedin particularly, Mr Louis John Godfrey and his three sons left a magnificent record of their carving skills. The blocks of stone for this series are recycled units from the now demolished gasworks in Caversham, Dunedin, built in the 1860s and finally giving way to a motorway in late 1984. They were originally quarried at the A1 Stone Company in Maheno, North Otago. I found them in a demolition yard and after a preliminary doodle with the chisel, set about in earnest on these branches.

My first introduction to a wishing tree came in a short story by the young Irish writer Neil Jordan.[2] This story, with its central image of the sacramental tree on which the surrounding community literally fastened its aspirations, yearnings and fears, aroused my interest and became the unifying symbol for this group of pieces.

Within the series, a subgroup of six works featuring architectural masonry — *Sill, Quoin, Pediment, Two Keystones, Font* and *Mantel,* are an attempt not just to celebrate the stonemason's detailing or even the influence buildings may have on us, but to give these stone mouldings a voice, to somehow let them comment on the inner lives and pulse of their builders and dwellers. In some works, specific places were strongly in mind, such as the monumental coastal railway tunnel on the main trunk line at Purakanui *(XXIV).* Or in others, landscape features such as the conical 'Hillmother' in *Pediment (XXI)* and the dramatic plunge of the cliff face in *Quoin (XX),* both dominant features on the Otago Peninsula. Some go back to Celtic myth, like the appearance of the Bird King Sweeney in *Sill (XIX).* Others venture into my forest of childhood idols and come up with a bootmaker's last *(XV)* — to keep my feet on the ground — or even the echoes of the patriotic refrain *Eireann Go Brach (XVI)* from the nights of booze and rebel songs. Another, *North/South (XVII)* commemorates an ecological mystery when the Quinnat salmon teemed up the Otago Harbour. The Hodgkins Fellowship for 1985 provided the security for this group of works to emerge, and the expressive potential of South Island limestone, seen in the intricate and complex stone mouldings of a Gothic basilica, or the scoured walls of warehouse loading-bays showed me the way.

The five works shown in this exhibition are *North/South (XVII), Oarnest (XVIII), Pediment (XXI), Mudsled (XXII),* and *Font (XXIII).* In these following notes on the works, I quote again Denis O'Connor's comments about them.

North/South (XVII)

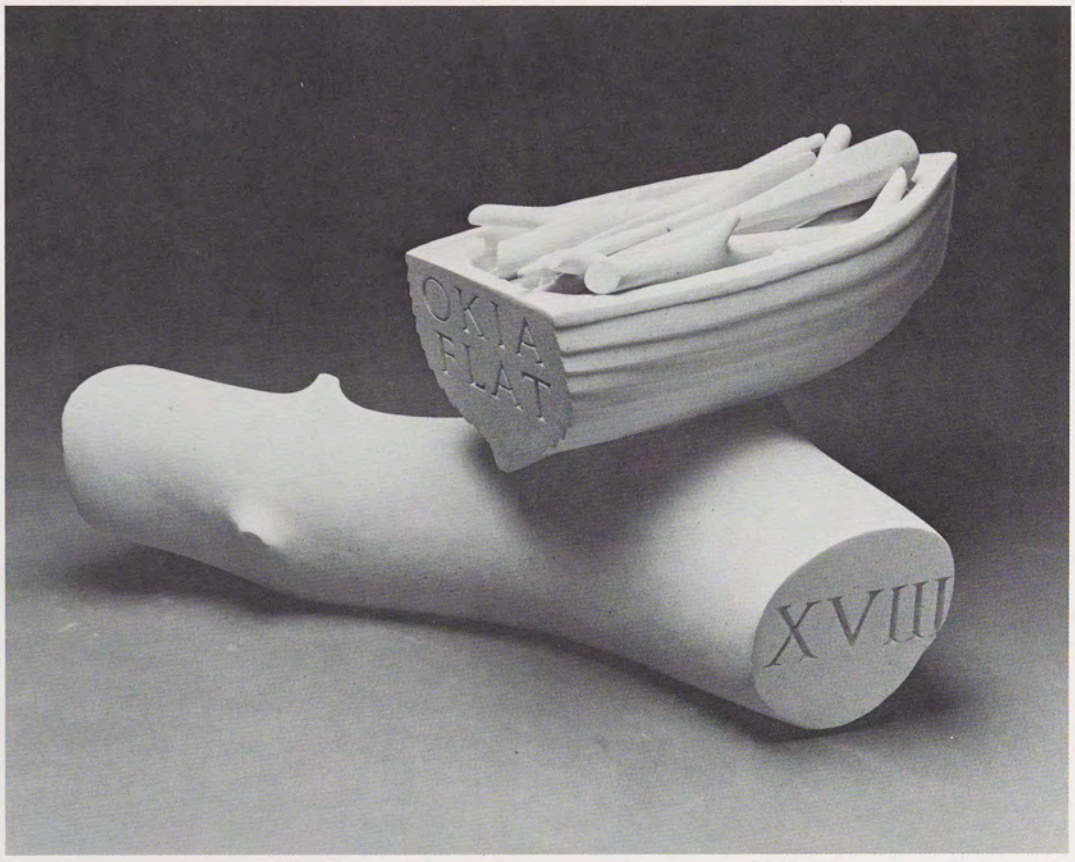
It started off with the migration of salmon up the Otago Harbour — why did they make an uncharacteristic left turn and race into the channel? — and ended up in a long meditation about polarities.

These far swimming fish make the journey annually between northern and southern hemispheres, their geographical allegiance and history evenly divided. Another great migration. Similarly do the Pakeha of Aotearoa feel the pull of a northern heritage and a southern reality. This gleaming, shimmering fish has stopped moving, turned to stone, caught between the northern and southern shores of the harbour, in fact the north and south sides of a mitre box. It is cut neatly in two, with all the skill of the joiner or cabinetmaker who also made the immaculate dowel-jointing at the ends of this branch.

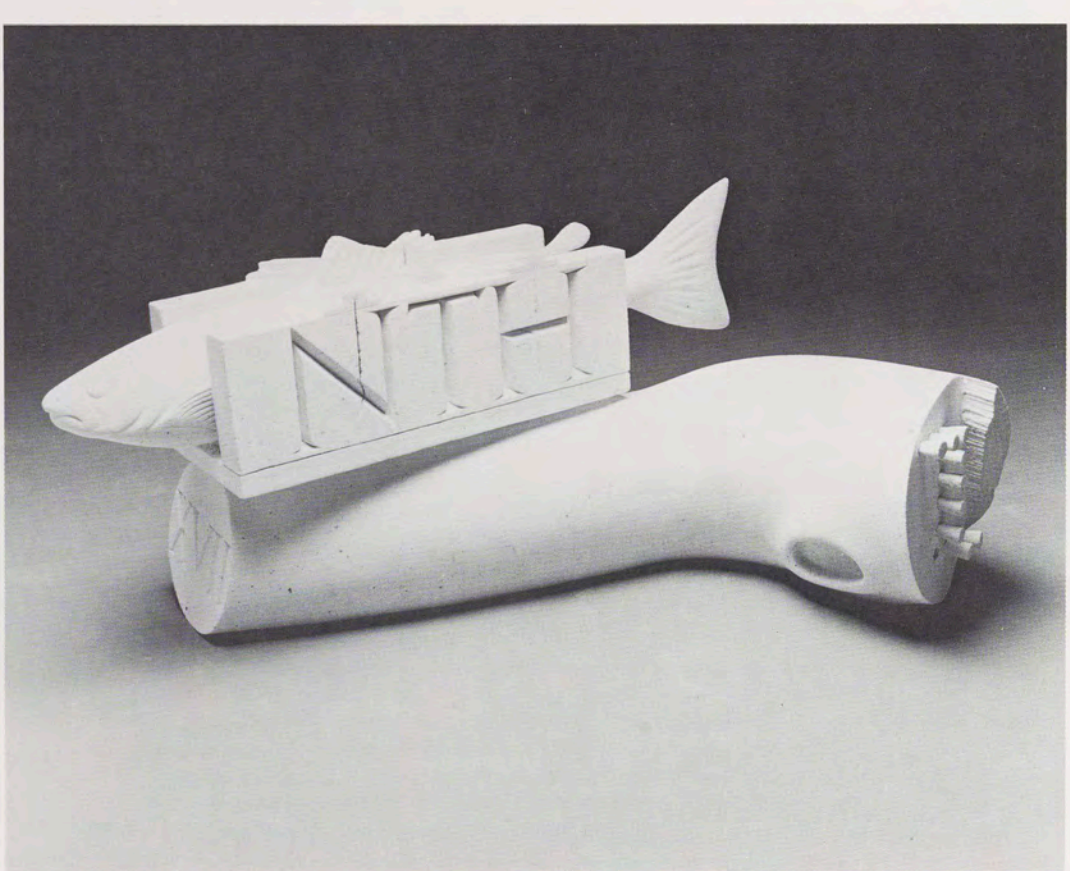
Oarnest (XVIII)

Oarnest is one of those special works that starts with the usual touchstones of place, incident, tool, etc., and becomes on completion something that expresses a little more than you intended (I'm thinking now about those intangible qualities like joy, innocence) that can only come through unconsciously. The completed physical poise, stance and formal balance of course must contribute to this special quality (a guess) and this work hits that point for me.

This is a deceptively simple work about journeys and growth and belonging. Okia Flat is a large area of sand dune on the eastern shoreline of the Otago Peninsula. Its undulations make it literally a sea of sand. Paradox has been a continuing theme in O'Connor's work. Vessels laden with impossible stone loads. The Halcyon bird constructing its fishbone nest on calm seas. A story of rebirth through water. This sculpture



Oarnest (XVIII) **1985** South Island limestone 875 x 563 x 425mm
Private collection Photo: David Harris



North/South (XVII) **1985** South Island limestone 914 x 555 x 380mm
Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt Photo: David Harris

beautifully extends the web of associations.

Pediment (XXI)

I made this work during mid-winter in Otago, the ritual movement of the hands towards the warmth of the fire seemed a very simple way of celebrating the season. This work, as do a number of others in the series, makes use of the branches to function as a pallet (like those on building sites). The numbering system on the log ends is a convention borrowed from the sawmilling yard.

This beautiful sculpture is in part a response to the shape of Harbour Cone, that astonishing landmark on the Otago Peninsula which dominates the hills around it and which other artists have all responded to in their work. The searching hands move towards the warmth of this 'Hillmother' — the word is incised on the back of the pediment — Mother Earth upon whom our life depends.

The following poem by Irishman John Montague epitomises for O'Connor a melding of ideas about natural forms and forces, and human warmth and affection. The pediment makes a portal through which we glimpse an affirmation of enchantment and discovery.

For the Hillmother

Hinge of silence
creak for us
Rose of darkness
unfold for us
Wood anemone
sway for us
Blue harebell
bend to us
Moist fern
unfurl for us
Springy moss
uphold us
Branch of pleasure
lean on us
Leaves of delight
murmur for us
Odorous wood
breathe on us
Evening dews
pearl for us
Freshet of ease
flow for us
Secret waterfall
pour for us
Hidden cleft
speak to us
Portal of delight
inflame us
Hill of motherhood
wait for us
Gate of birth
open for us[3]

Mudsled (XXII)
For the waders of Aotearoa (in memory of DM)

Pushed for miles out onto the mudflats in Wales and Ireland out amidst the wading birds to the shellfish beds; a celebration of the foodgathering ritual again — I've collected seafood all my life.

Here branches form the runners of the traditional Celtic sled, laden with its cargo of cockles and mussels, pipi and kuku. On its journey out to the shellfish the sled passes the native waders of Aotearoa and their names are incised on its deck: Kotuku, Tuturiwhatu, Kaki, Makutu. A reminder that the mudflats, estuaries, shellfish beds and wading birds are all in retreat from human pollution. This work is a plea on their behalf, attached to the wishing tree.

Font (XXIII)

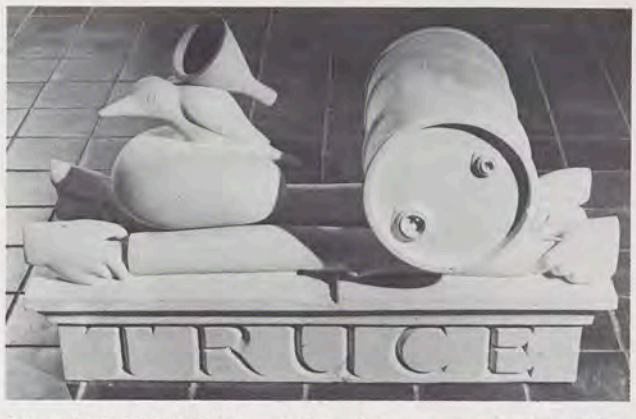
The work *Font*. . . is about baptisms and origins — Maheno North Otago, the *place* where this material was quarried. The excavated quarry site literally becomes a water container after the stone has been removed, and we all recognise the vernacular links when the undulating lines of corrugated iron are in sight!

A small rectangular hole in the side of the tank is a direct reminder of the origins and former use of the stone. The stonecutters at the quarry and the masons on the building site moved the huge blocks by placing metal levers in these holes. On top of the corrugated iron tanks rests a skew-back arch and ceremonial trowel blessing a foot. Our connections with our origins in the earth are through our feet, a cautionary reminder for the Pakeha in these antipodean islands. Denis O'Connor sums up his approach to his work in this way:

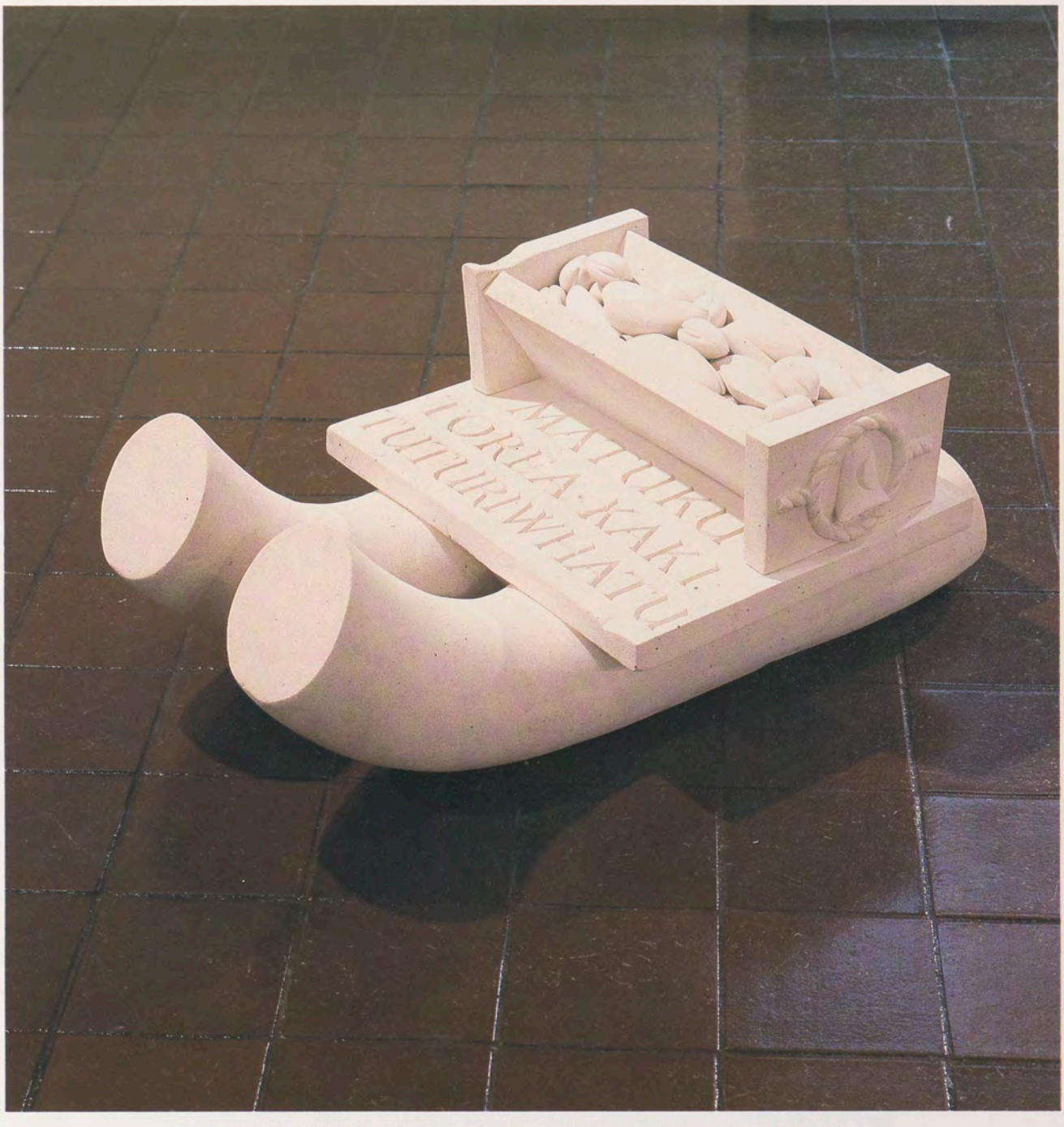
Yes I like my work to *appear* easy and familiar, the backyard vernacular imagery, a grammar of things *almost* taken for granted. . . but the metaphors and the stories hidden within the work, to be intuited. If the stuff has any heraldic magic or any vision at all, is what's crucial for me. The regional histories, popular music, poetry, landmarks, myths, etc. all contribute a share, as do the trades, folklore, even for Heaven's sake, art movements. . . earthworks, arte povera, or anything else too that might help to refine the work. Christians have their Cross, I've got all these other icons to talk to me!

Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-78,* London, 1984
[2] Neil Jordan, *Night in Tunisia and other Stories,* London, 1982
[3] John Montague, *Selected Poems,* London, 1982
All other quotes taken from a letter, Denis O'Connor to Alexa Johnston, 7th August, 1986.

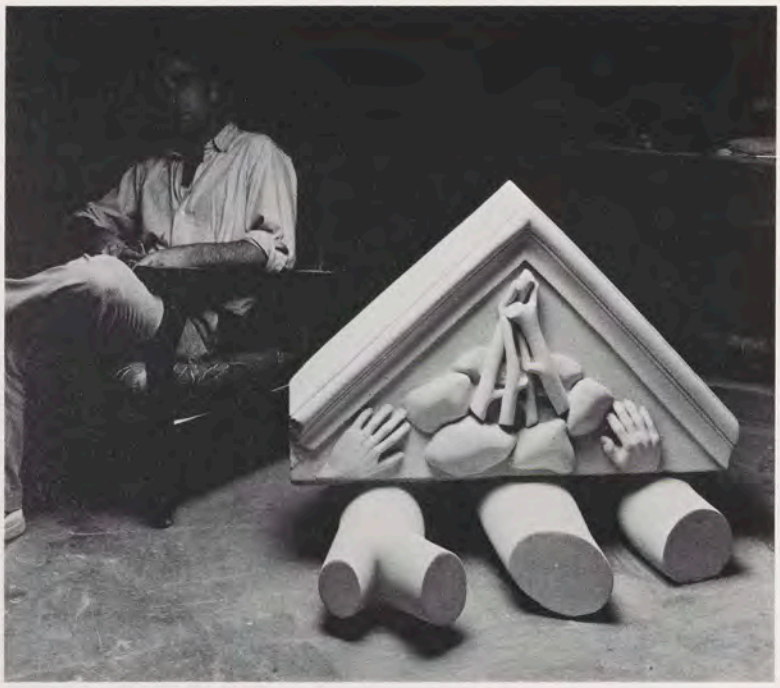


***Mantel (XXV)* 1985** South Island limestone 1088 x 508 x 695mm Dunedin Public Art Gallery Photo: Dennis Feaver



***Mudsled (XXII), for the waders of Aotearoa (in memory of DM)* 1985**
South Island limestone 920 x 589 x 338mm Auckland City Art Gallery

Front page ***Font (XXIII)* 1985** South Island limestone 1030 x 579 x 1047mm collection of the artist



Denis O'Connor with ***Pediment (XXI)* 1985** Photo: David Harris

Exhibitions

1969 Solo exhibition, Vulcan Gallery, Auckland
1975 *Work in progress,* Alicat, Auckland
1976 *Four Salt-Glaze Potters,* Alicat, Auckland
1977 *Auckland Studio Potters,* Auckland Institute and Museum
1979 Solo exhibition *Porcelain Ceramics,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Fletcher-Brownbuilt Award exhibition, Auckland Institute and Museum
1980 *Five by Five,* ceramic sculpture, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Guest exhibitor, Auckland Institute and Museum
Fletcher-Brownbuilt Award exhibition, Auckland Institute and Museum
1981 *New Directions in New Zealand Ceramics,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, & Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
Solo exhibition *New Ceramics,* Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1982 Travelling exhibition *Contemporary New Zealand Treasures to Japan,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
1983 *New Zealand Ceramics Now,* Bishop Suter Gallery, Nelson
Invited Auckland Ceramicists, Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga Arts Centre, Manukau
1984 Solo exhibition *Songs of the Gulf,* Auckland City Art Gallery
Shop window installation *The Measure of Opinion,* Auckland
1985 Solo exhibition *Songs of the Gulf,* Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
Treasures from the Land, tour of America, curated and organised by the Smithsonian Institute, Washington
Four Artists, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
1986 Solo exhibition *Branches from the Wishing Tree,* Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt & Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
New Acquisitions, drawings, Hocken Library, University of Otago

Biography

1947 Born Auckland, New Zealand
1966 School of Design, Wellington
1970 Moved to Putiki Point, Waiheke Island. Established a communal pioneer ceramics workshop
1978 Lived in California, USA
1982 QEII Arts Council of New Zealand travel grant. Attended Biennale of Sydney, Australia
1983 Artist-in-Residence, Department of Education, Auckland
1984 Attended Biennale of Sydney, Australia
QEII Arts Council of New Zealand project grant
1985 Frances Hodgkins Fellowship, University of Otago
1986 Commissions in progress:
Waikato Museum of Art and History
University of Auckland Music School
University of Otago Arts Complex
Schist House, Arrowtown
Limestone House, Queenstown
Garden installation, Governor's Bay, Christchurch
New Zealand Post Office, Waiheke Island

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Photographs: John McIver

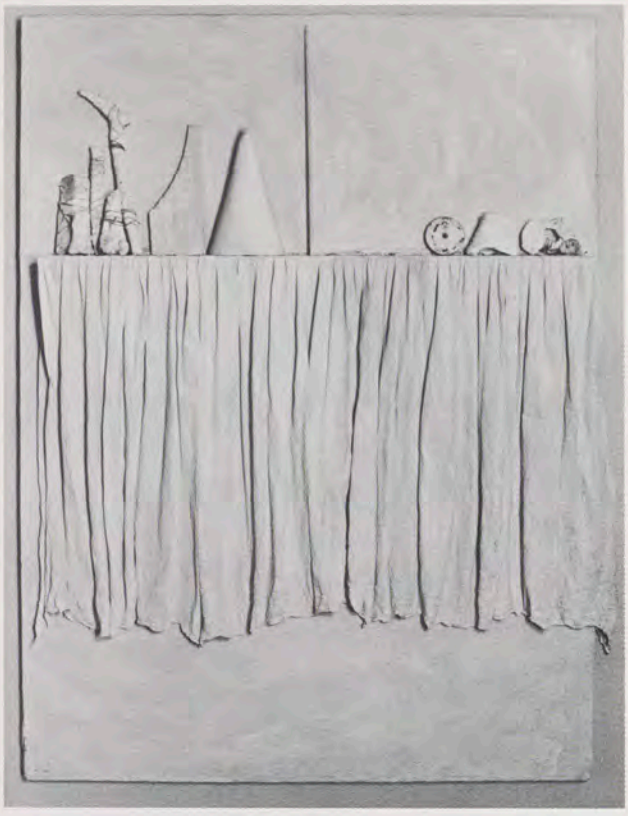
Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Maria Olsen

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

***Pink construction in a niche* 1980** (detail) wood, fabric, gesso, cotton, muslin, pigment 1210 x 900 x 95mm collection of the artist



***Still-life construction* 1981** wood, fabric, gesso, bone, cotton, muslin, pigment 1023 x 903mm, private collection, Auckland

Maria Olsen

Maria Olsen's sculptures are physically large and at times looming — lumpy, rounded shapes which she builds up with layers of plaster-soaked fabric and paints with pigments suspended in a translucent, glue-like medium. At a distance her works intrigue us by their unfamiliar forms; close viewing reveals her unexpected use of colour and the tactile traces of her methods of construction which further complicate the process of comprehension. What associations can we find in these sculptures? How to begin to analyse their presence, their meaning, and our response to them?

In a perceptive essay on Olsen's recent work, Christina Barton concludes:

> Her success lies in her ability to work, not from text to image...but in that Barthesian spirit of unconscious quotation. As a result, her work has a deep-rootedness that undermines any too literal linking to her sources...[1]

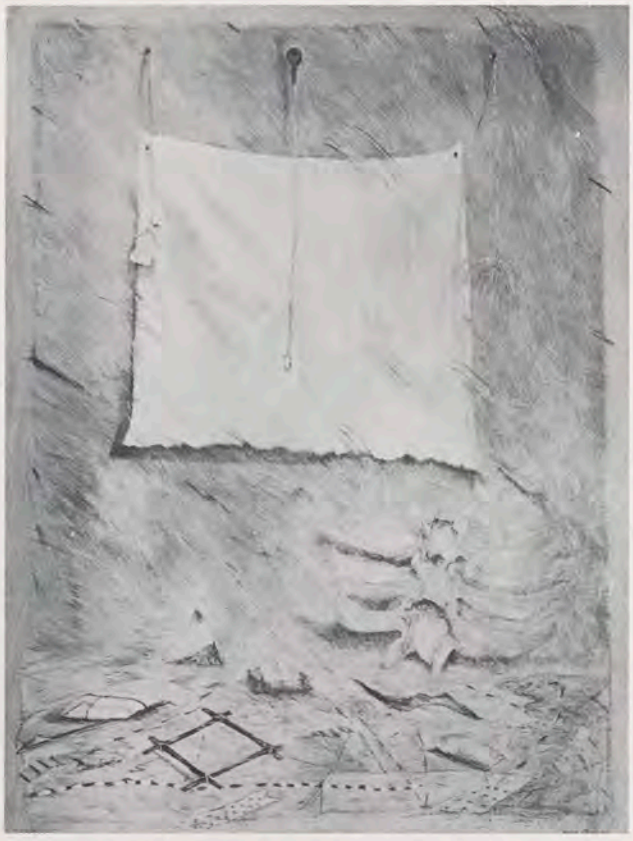
While hoping to avoid that too literal, and inevitably constricting linking to sources, I believe that in endeavouring to understand Maria Olsen's work it can be useful, may even be essential, to begin with an attempt at understanding the systems of thought which Olsen finds sustaining and relevant. The aim must always be to open out wider vistas of meaning, rather than to oversimplify. Yet as we look long and carefully at her sculptures, sitting quietly with them, we know that they can withstand our unravelling. They remain puzzling, separate from us, resisting analysis and comprehension.

Yet the urge to analyse persists. Olsen has developed a language of signs, symbols, objects, shapes and forms which recur in her sculpture, drawings and paintings, and these provide some help. There are many recognisable symbols here, recurring through the ages in all cultures — the threshold or gateway as signifier of transformation and the creative power of the female; the Great Mother archetype, container and crucible of life; the stream and pool of water, reflecting the mysteries of the heavens and the unquenchable flow of divine and human caring. We are in the realms of poetry, of spiritual certainty and searching, and at the heart of Olsen's work. Her interest in Indian philosophy, religious concepts, poetry and ritual art is central to her life and work as an artist.

Since her first exhibition in 1976, Maria Olsen's work has always been in some sense devotional — a rare quality in contemporary Western art. Olsen understands the Indian tradition of the household shrine, a place for the symbolic life of daily worship, for the integration of the self into a wider world order.

> In the countryside nothing is seen as too low or too high to be reached by worship. People look to symbols and signs, images and myths to solve the daily problems of living as well as for spiritual nourishment. Ritual art touches every aspect of life and every village is ready to maintain elaborate rites and ceremonies.[2]

Olsen's earliest exhibited works were pastel drawings. Many of them included ledges on which were arranged a variety of small, often familiar yet puzzling objects. A cone, a paintbrush, a bone, a cotton reel, an oddly patched and stitched 'map'. Olsen seemed



***Untitled* 1980** egg tempera on gesso on board
1200 x 900mm collection of the artist

to be indicating the calm and mysterious beauty in ordinary things, and the fact that we can answer so few questions about the universe. Even the simplest things are finally unexplainable: the symmetry of a seashell, the texture of wood, the beauty of plants. The colours of these drawings are soft, almost chalky and Olsen explores the texture of her small chosen objects with a tender touch. In a group of paintings she made for Auckland Hospital, Maria Olsen again ranged small objects in the foreground before landscapes which opened out into cloudy distances. A cloth hanging over a ledge, a white chalice with green fruit; the daily rituals of cleansing and eating are indicated here. They are calm and expansive paintings.

In 1980 Maria Olsen showed paintings, drawings and wall sculptures at RKS Art in Auckland. She had decided to move her drawing ideas into three dimensions. The sculptures have shrine-like, draped ledges and niches on which small objects are again carefully arranged. One of these works remains in the hallway of her house, encouraging family and friends to pause for a moment on their way past.

These were her first publicly exhibited sculptures and there followed a period of uncertainty for her over the direction of her work. This she resolved while on a trip to India in 1981, and subsequently she showed a group of new works with the materials and forms which she continues to use. Some of them were amusing; Olsen seemed to play with the loose, lumpy quality of her shapes and let them flow from the wall down onto the floor. Other large, wrapped, bone-like shapes were tied together in pleasing symmetry or made into webs of broken 'bones', joined and patched. One triangular sculpture was called *Rabia,* an Indian woman saint, another *Leila and Majnu,* mythological lovers, closely entwined.

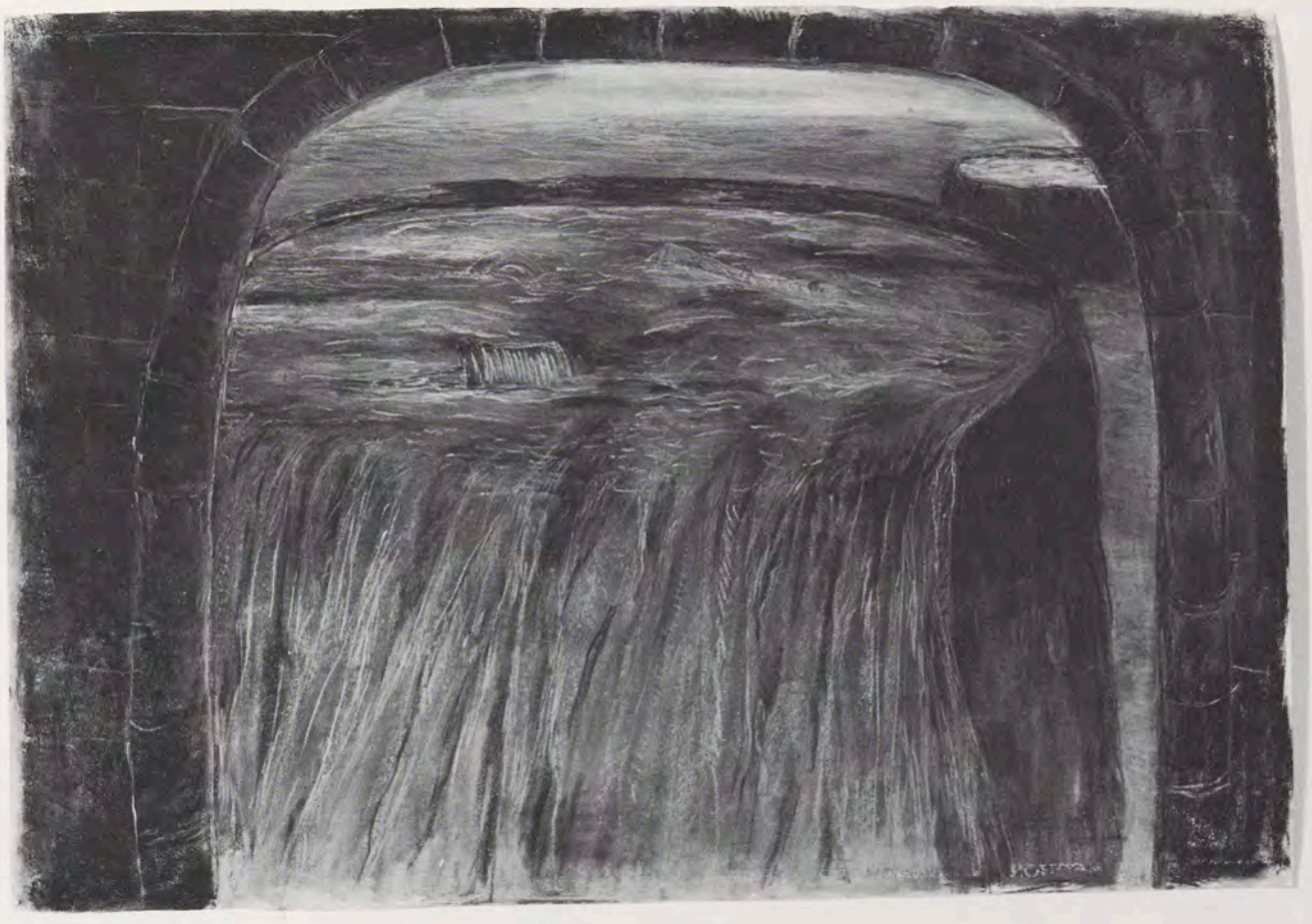
A central idea in Indian religious thought is the notion of balance, of equilibrium. In Sivaism the union of antithetical principles, male and female, is often represented by the linga-yoni image. It is a synthesis that restores balance, changing a state of chaos caused by separation into perfect unity and equilibrium. This image is part of a language of inward searching, a vocabulary of signs to express the human relationship with the universe.

As she continues to make drawings, paintings and sculpture, Olsen indicates through oblique and often elusive visual references, the possibility of restoring a lost equilibrium, and that restoration is both means and end, the path and the objective. Milestones along the path include ideas that are central to the health of all human societies — the acknowledgement of and respect for natural forces, the struggle to overcome fear and evil, to welcome and foster good. This search for balance, for wholeness and equilibrium, involves also a reconciliation of the spiritual and temporal aspects of our lives, of masculine and feminine forces, and of ancient wisdom and contemporary understanding. Some of Olsen's more sombre recent works seem to predict the bleak results of ignoring such simple needs.

Yet Olsen's are not 'harmonious' images in any simple sense. The achievement of balance and equilibrium is not an easy task. There are obstacles and difficulties on the way. We stumble along the path. Olsen's sculptures sometimes seem to imply a futile striving; ladders which could help us are buried in the 'bonestacks' of the past or glimpsed through a gap in a stone wall, beyond our grasp. Her expansive, impossible landscapes, are scattered with odd and apparently unconnected objects of indeterminate size. They seem to imply that these are the landscapes of the unconscious, difficult to map or traverse. A connection can perhaps be made with Erich Naumann's ideas in his book *The Great Mother, an Analysis of the Archetype.*[3] He speaks of the Great Goddess of the ancient past as the ruler of the unconscious, the Goddess of stupor and sleep, of healing, transformation and awakening. There is also a dream-like quality in Olsen's paintings of large, overflowing cauldrons.

> Always the cauldron was understood to signify the cosmic womb, source of re-generation and re-birth. All life, mind, matter and energy arose in various forms from the ever-boiling vessel, only to return thereto when each form came to its destined end.[4]

Maria Olsen is interested in these connections and associations but doesn't feel tied to them. Her work



***Cauldron with reel* 1986** acrylic emulsion with pigment on paper
1000 x 1400mm collection of the artist

bears its load of allusions lightly, without ever seeming programmatic or didactic.

The sculpture in this exhibition, *Headlands,* is in some ways a summary of Olsen's forms, shapes and symbols. Elements of her visual language are brought together to make a phrase, a sentence, a poem, achieving the visual harmony and balance to which she aspires. She has combined a range of sculptural shapes, leaning them together in a kind of stack. All the parts are separate and moveable. She spent time in her studio arranging and re-arranging the parts of *Headlands,* making sure that they made sense to her in differing positions. At the time of writing, the two heads or masks in profile are at the outside ends of the work — a traditional balancing of forms. On the left is the linga-yoni shape which Olsen uses, indicating both a threshold and the joining of male and female. This piece is stepped up away from the floor, setting it apart as a place to be approached with care. Around the central form are splashes of dark red paint which echo the pigment used in India to mark special places for ritual, prayer or meditation.

This shape is balanced by another large form on which the faint shapes of two hay stacks are just discernable through an arch. Balances and contrasts are subtly articulated across the sculpture.

Leaning against the two principal forms are a number of other shapes — arches, bones, branches of wood — all bandaged, stitched and vulnerable. They are like broken fragments (of a past wisdom?) carefully and gently mended. Soft-looking and softly coloured surfaces are like both flesh and stone, with insistent ancient associations.

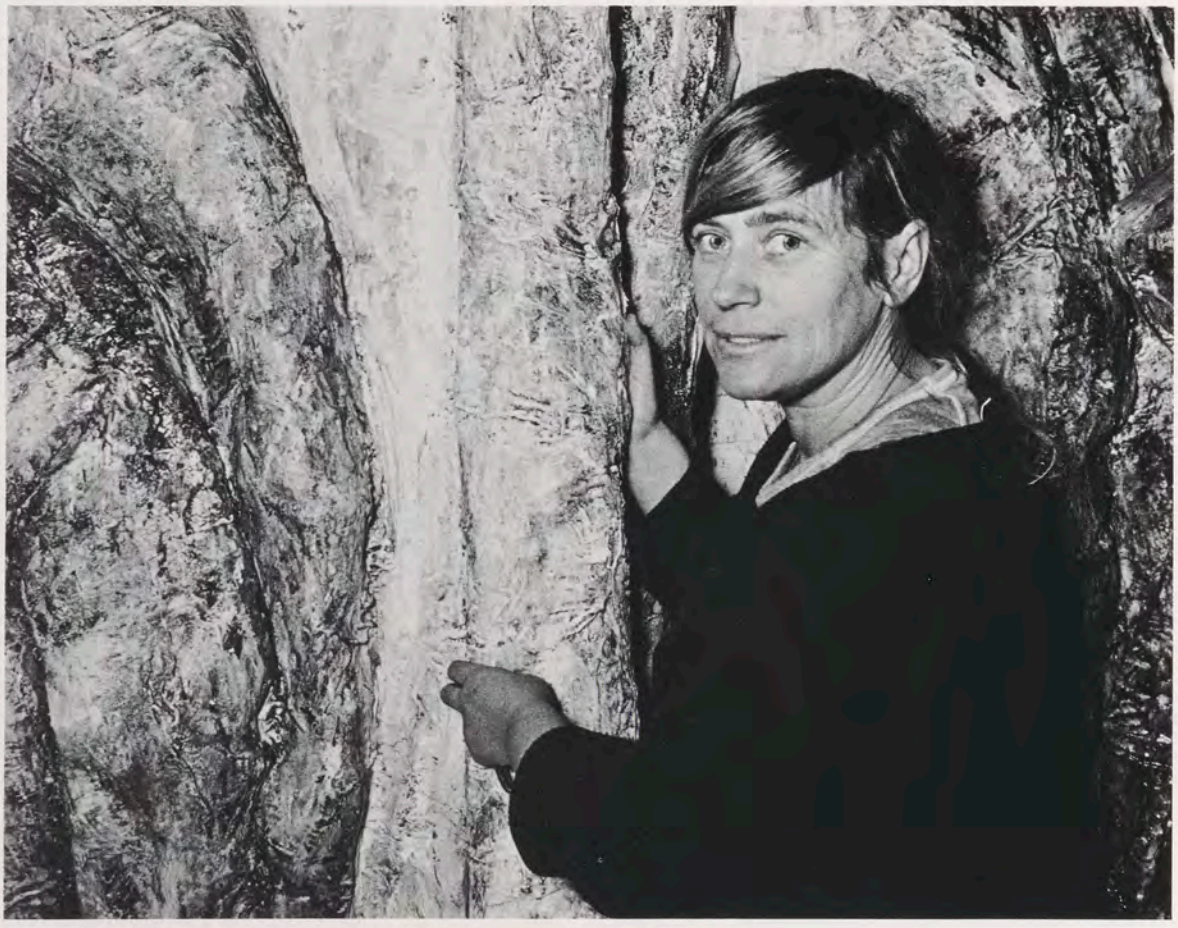
There are many possible interpretations and responses to Maria Olsen's works. *Headlands* is contemplative and compelling, bulky, formidable, sometimes disturbing, yet also welcoming and calm. Within its mystery is an affirmation of joy and wholeness.

Alexa M. Johnston

[1] Christina Barton, "Maria Olsen" *Art New Zealand* no. 40 Spring 1986
[2] Ajit Mookerjee, *Ritual Art of India,* London, 1985
[3] Erich Naumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype,* London, 1985 pp 292 and 300
[4] Barbara G. Walker, *The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom and Power,* San Francisco, 1985

***Headlands* 1986** (detail)

Front page ***Headlands* 1986** gesso, plaster, pigment, cotton, muslin, synthetic padding, wooden armatures, fibreglass 2000 x 4800 x 360mm



Maria Olsen, September 1986

Exhibitions

1976 Group exhibition, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
1978 *Works on Paper* (with Barbara Tuck), Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Solo exhibition, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1979 *New Year/New Work,* Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Figurative Artists, Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
1980 *Pastels, Paintings and Constructions,* Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
15th Anniversary, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
Group exhibition, Outreach, Auckland
Group exhibition *Domestic Scale,* RKS Art, Auckland
1982 *Women on Women,* Outreach, Auckland
Hanging Constructions, RKS Art, Auckland
Group exhibition, RKS Art, Auckland
1983 *Painted Sculptures,* RKS Art, Auckland
Summer Show, RKS Art, Auckland
1984 *Sculpture,* Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Pastels 1982, Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
ANZART at Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art
New Vision sees Red, New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Group exhibition, Pakuranga Arts Centre, Auckland
1985 Solo exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Group exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Perspecta '85, Steve Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Group exhibition, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
10th Anniversary exhibition, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1986 *New Work,* Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

Biography

1945 Born Christchurch, New Zealand
1958-61 Secondary education, St Mary's College, Christchurch
1962-64 Studied at Ilam School of Fine Art, University of Canterbury, Christchurch. Graduated 1964, Dip FA
1967-69 Lived in Australia
1977&81 Travelled to India
1983 QE II Arts Council of New Zealand grant
1984 Travelled in America, France and England
Has worked as a nurse aid, art teacher, full-time artist and in family framing business
Lives in Auckland

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Photographs: John McIver

Auckland City Art Gallery 21 October - 4 December 1986

Warren Viscoe

Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art

SCULPTURE 2

Warren Viscoe

Warren Viscoe has been one of the most interesting sculptors working in Auckland over the last decade and, until very recently, one of the least visible. Though his work has been included in several international sculpture exhibitions in Australia and he has shown consistently in Wellington over the last few years, his work is still comparatively unknown elsewhere. True, he had a late start. He graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts aged thirty (having acquired a builder's ticket and some overseas study on the way) and produced very little sculpture during the next ten years, which were primarily occupied with teaching and raising a family. From about 1975 he began concentrating more intently on artmaking.

Viscoe's early works were very minimal and used quite basic materials (sawn timber, scoria, concrete, wire) and processes. Looking at these sculptures one is constantly reminded of Viscoe's training as a builder. *Slump Test,* for instance, is a direct steal from building practice — truncated concrete cones dumped out of their buckets like sand castles (a process used in construction work to test the stiffness of the concrete mix). In Viscoe's sculpture only the purpose for which the concrete castings are intended and the context in which they're placed differentiate them from the real thing. *Lintel,* too, a precarious-looking structure of three planks arranged like a door frame with a pile of rocks balanced on top, refers to building construction and terminology. And Viscoe has likened making works like his *Site Structures* to "framing a house or throwing up a roof".[1]

But Viscoe could take risks with these sculptures that he couldn't take with a building — cantilevering planks from rough blocks of scoria, tying one board to another to another to create light, vertical structures "extending or probing in space", anchored only by the rocks lashed to their bases. Builder's materials and know-how are here combined with techniques derived from Oceanic artifacts, like binding and knotting; and the sense of risk is reinforced by Viscoe's comment that in these pieces he worked "like a mountain climber. I could have something right up in the air and I wouldn't know where I'd go next, but by tying something I could make that extension. . ." He adds that he enjoys "making things balance, making things poised. . .they have the propensity to fall but they *just* overcome it."

Viscoe was also interested in the intrinsic properties and behaviours of certain substances — like the wet concrete of *Slump Test* or, more particularly, crushed scoria:

> I was looking for something very fundamental, very basic — the stuff of the universe. Scoria had the regional characteristic to it. . .I got aggregate and applied a whole lot of criteria to it — gravity, its ability to slump. . .

He poured fine aggregate into mounds to exhibit its natural "angles of repose", brushed it across a series of graduated timber ledges to show the way it accumulated in the various spaces and angles. Larger pieces of rock were piled against sloping boards, testing the point at which they'd tumble down. In fact, working with scoria — either in blocks or in the form of builder's aggregate — has become something of a Viscoe trademark.

Visually, all these works were very austere, pared down to the bare minimum, with little sensuous appeal. In this and other respects they were related to the process and conceptual art being made in America and elsewhere in the late sixties and the seventies. Aesthetic qualities were of little importance — the intellectual content and/or the process of making the work were of overriding concern.

Between the work I've just described and the sculpture Viscoe has made for this and other recent exhibitions there might appear to be a complete disjunction. These massive figures, with their folk-art look, hewn and crafted with evident feeling for the gutsy texture and grain of the raw pinewood, seem to suggest a total about-face — Viscoe now versus the Viscoe of four or five years ago.

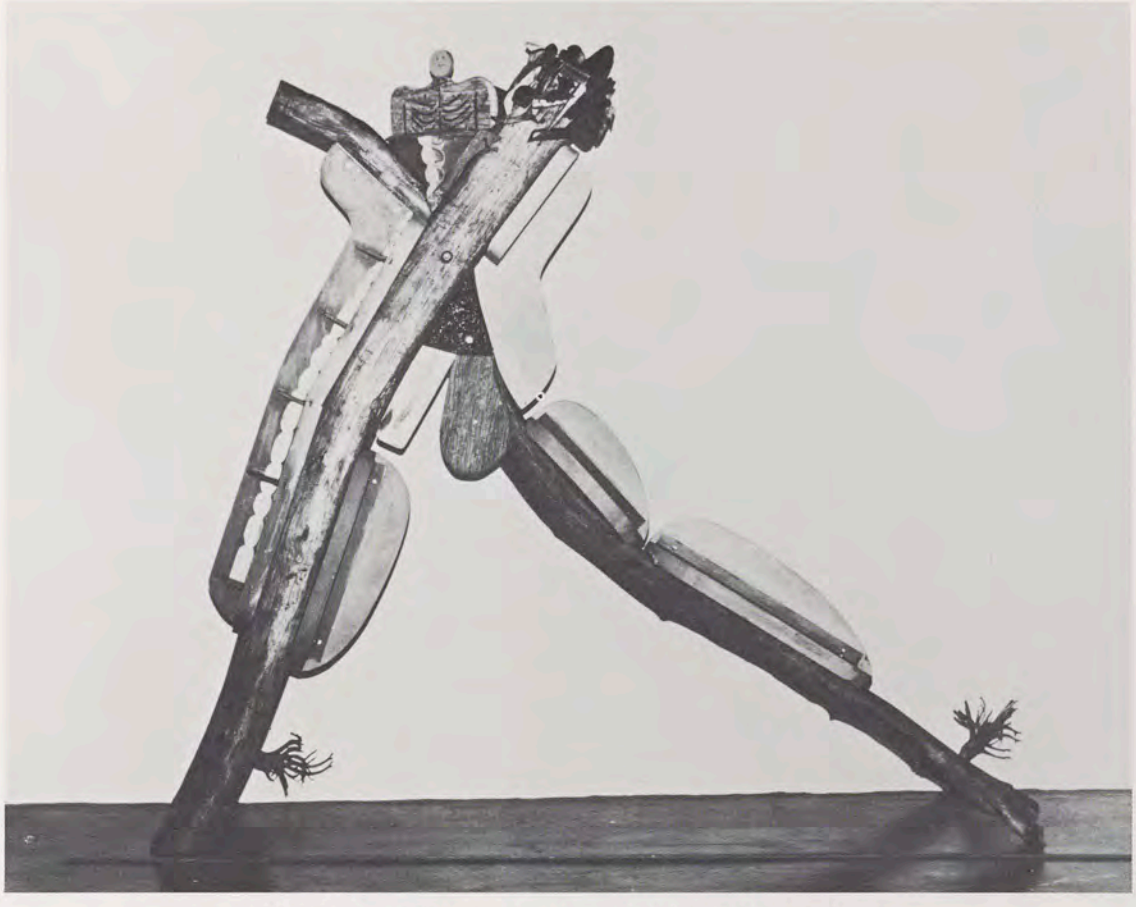
In fact, the shift from minimal 'abstract' sculpture to the new figurative works hasn't been a completely abrupt one. As I've mentioned elsewhere[2], Viscoe has carried certain motifs and structural devices from the work of the seventies and very early eighties into his more recent sculpture. The cardboard shoeboxes with holes punched in their lids (reminiscent of classroom 'nature tables') that comprised *Breathing* (1978) reappear as plywood 'breeding boxes' in *The Breeder, His Wife and His Stock* (1985). The balancing acts that the Breeder's Wife and the *Firewalker* perform, poised on giant 'feet' of volcanic rock, are direct carry-overs from the more abstract *Site Structures* and *Fifteen Birdcalls.* So, too, are the use of mirrors, the wire ties holding things together. And the height, the somewhat totemic look of Viscoe's recent large figures have been characteristics of his work for many years.

It was around 1982 that Viscoe began juxtaposing natural, found timber with all its visual and tactile irregularities with the milled boards he'd been using until then. Segments of scarred and knotted wood, split and worn, crusted with lichen, gave works like *Puketi* and *Vegetable Kingdom* a new visual richness. More recently, figurative works such as the *Firewalker* and *DSIR Man* were based on great forked tree trunks, and though Viscoe is currently carving his figures from processed timber again, that feeling for textural variety remains. Surfaces are pocked and rippled, gouged into deep ribs and ridges and sometimes texture is emphasised with crayonned and painted marks.

Though the works from the early eighties didn't represent figures, they frequently referred to human systems and artifacts: sawn-off branches and planks arranged like books on a rough shelf; the form of a forked tree trunk imitated, compartmentalised and hedged in by a superstructure of planks; hourglasses filled with birdseed and shuttlecocks 'imprisoned' in jam jars with holes punched in their paper covers to let in the air.

These latter elements were part of a major series entitled *Fifteen Birdcalls,* which included several tall structures divided into tidy little pigeonholes housing recognisable, familiar objects, put together in provocative, evocative combinations. Viscoe describes these sculptures as his most natural works, born of his nostalgia for native birdsong during the years he spent

Three locations: Rockfall, In a bucket, Out of Sight **July 1978**
rock, timber, galvanised bucket, earth



***D.S.I.R. Man* 1985** wood and metal 2100 x 2747 x 392mm
Auckland City Art Gallery

away from New Zealand and, later, the intense pleasure of waking to the sound of bellbirds in the Urewera. Yet, ironically perhaps, in their structuring, their telling juxtapositions, they could be said to epitomise Viscoe's reading of the nature/culture dialogue.

For much of Viscoe's recent work has dealt with the problematic (in Western society, at least) relationship between nature and culture. His attitude to that relationship is a complex one. On the one hand, he is an active conservationist, with grave reservations about the ways in which we manipulate and destroy our environment. His two versions of the *DSIR Man* (great ugly giants who authoritatively and unheedingly straddle the land) are unequivocal condemnations of attempts to regulate and control nature, of the reduction of the magic of fertility and reproduction to mere clinical pragmatism. Viscoe's DSIR Men are themselves ironically monstrous products of the genetic engineering they practise.

At the same time, he acknowledges the existence and inevitability of technological development: "Once you open up Pandora's box you can't put the lid on." Often his swipes at human meddling with the rest of nature are moderated by their comic edge. *Teaching Dogs to Whistle* (1985) with its seated man and attentive dog facing one another, its little hand mirror suggesting mimicry, makes us wonder if the dog might in return teach the man to bark or go out and bring in the sheep. (This, like so much of Viscoe's sculpture, is a work very much in the New Zealand vernacular.)

However, Viscoe does more than merely accept human 'progress' or poke gentle fun at our belief in it. He is genuinely moved and excited by the heroic aspect which he perceives in human endeavour, in the will to explore and create and conquer. As he states quite simply in relation to his 1985 installation, *The Quarryman's Dream:* "The quarryman's dream is to move mountains." Consequently, the beings which mark his recent move to the figurative are of monumental proportions. The *dramatis personae* in *Entries-Exits,* an installation at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery earlier this year, stand about ten feet tall, hewn from hefty structural building poles; the acrobat-cum-miracle man in *The Firewalker's Feat* strides high above the viewer, his massive tree-trunk legs extended by long stilts.

Ultimately, Viscoe sees his "clumsy heroes and heroines" as part of nature, albeit rather uneasy and sometimes more than a little arrogant about their place there. Building up and laying waste, destroying what they create and shoring up what they pull down, they live on the brink of the abyss, delicately poised between what Viscoe calls "the optimism of love"[3] and the "sin of despair".

Priscilla Pitts

[1] All quotations, unless otherwise attributed are from the artist in conversation with the author, July 1986.
[2] Priscilla Pitts, "Exhibitions: Auckland: Warren Viscoe, Pauline Rhodes, Erica Sowman, Allen Maddox, Milan Mrkusich", *Art New Zealand* 35, Winter 1985, p. 20
[3] Warren Viscoe, letter to Cheryll Sotheran, 15 June 1986

***Guided Tours* 1986** (detail)

Front page ***Guided Tours* 1986** tanalised pine installation

Warren Viscoe, September 1986

Exhibitions

1964/5 Group exhibition, Uptown Gallery, Auckland
1966 *Recent NZ Sculpture,* NZ Society of Sculptors exhibition, Auckland City Art Gallery
Group exhibition, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1967 Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Australia
Group Sculpture, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1968 *4th Annual Sculpture Exhibition,* Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1970 *Mildura Sculpture Triennial,* Mildura, Australia
Wood Sculpture, Fletcher Centre, Auckland
Five Sculptors, NZ Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington
1971 Group exhibition, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
1972 *10th Anniversary exhibition, NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters,* Osbourne Galleries, Auckland
1973 *Hansells Sculpture exhibition,* Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters exhibition, Osbourne Galleries, Auckland
1974 *Hansells Sculpture Award,* Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
Art New Zealand 1974: Commonwealth Games Exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1975 *Hansells Sculpture Award,* Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters exhibition, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
1976 *New Zealand Drawings,* Auckland City Art Gallery
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1977 *New Zealand Prints,* Auckland City Art Gallery
1978 *Mildura Sculpture Triennial,* Mildura, Australia
Five Sculptors, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
Auckland Artists, Auckland City Art Gallery
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters exhibition, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch
1978/9 *NZ Sculptors at Mildura* — QE II Arts Council National Tour
1979 *Dunedin Sculptors,* Grounds of First Church, Dunedin
1980 Solo exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1981 *1st Australian Sculpture Triennial,* Preston Institute of Technology & La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
ANZART in Christchurch
1982 Installation, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Hansells Sculpture Award, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
Two Decades 1962-1982, NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters, RKS Art, Auckland
Solo exhibition, *Midden Site,* National Art Gallery, Wellington
1984 *Art & Nature Sculpture Debate,* Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Corrugated Iron in NZ (with John Maynard), Real Pictures, Auckland
1984 Art in Dunedin
Nature and Form, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1985 *Country Life: Recent Sculptures,* RKS Art, Auckland
Solo exhibition *Recent Sculpture,* Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1986 Solo exhibition, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Auckland Sculptors, Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga Arts Centre, Manukau
Sculpture Project 1985-1986: Entries-Exits, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

Biography

1935 Born Auckland, New Zealand
1958 Studied at Chelsea Polytechnic, London
1961-62 Part-time study at Ontario College of Art, Canada
1963-65 Studied at Elam School of Fine Art, University of Auckland. Graduated 1965, Dip. FA
1967 Mildura Prize for Contemporary Art
1973 Hansells Prize for Contemporary Sculpture
1976 Co-winner, Hansells Sculpture Award

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