

Reading Room:
A Journal of Art
and Culture

ELECTIVE PROXIMITIES
ISSUE/06 2013



Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture

ELECTIVE PROXIMITIES

ISSUE/06 **2013**

*Edited by Christina Barton,
Natasha Conland and Wystan Curnow*

Managing editor: Catherine Hammond

Supported by

THE MARYLYN MAYO FOUNDATION

Published by the E. H. McCormick Research Library

Reading Room is a refereed journal of art and culture published annually by the E H McCormick Research Library at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

ISSN 1177-2549

Editors:

Christina Barton, Natasha Conland, Wystan Curnow

Managing editor:

Catherine Hammond

Editorial assistant:

Tom Irwin

Editorial board:

Len Bell, Peter Brunt, Jan Bryant, Allan Smith, Morgan Thomas

Editorial advisors:

Bruce Barber, Gregory Burke, Rex Butler, Lee Weng Choy, Tony Green, Chris Kraus, Terry Smith, Nicholas Thomas, John C. Welchman

Photographers:

Jennifer French, John McIver

Design:

www.inhousedesign.co.nz

Printer:

Everbest Printing Co., China

Order

Subscription rate (1 issue per year, includes tax and postage):
Within NZ \$25.00
Overseas \$40.00

An order form and information for contributors is available online at:
www.aucklandartgallery.com/library/reading-room-journal/order

Or contact the managing editor at:

Email:
library@ Aucklandartgallery.govt.nz

Phone:
+64 9 365 5487

Fax:
+64 9 302 1096

Web:
aucklandartgallery.com

© Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

This journal is copyright. Except for reasonable purposes of fair review, no part may be stored or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including recording or storage in any information retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publishers.

No reproductions may be made, whether by photocopying or other means, unless a license has been obtained from the publishers or their agent.

Cover image:

Aloi Pilioko and Nicolai Michoutouchkine in Red Square, Moscow, 1980
Pages from USSR photo album c1979–1981
Image courtesy Aloi Pilioko
Photo: Peter Brunt

Errata

Jan van der Ploeg's text in "Julian Dashper, 1960–2009. A Tribute," *Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture*, issue 4 (2010): 26–27 should have appeared with the following reference:
Allan Smith, "Julian Dashper: Outgoing Call. Julian Dashper 1960–2009," obituary in *Art New Zealand*, no. 132 (2010): 24–25.

Contents

.04	Foreword
.05	Introduction
ELECTIVE PROXIMITIES	
.08	Deconstructing Europe / <i>J. G. A. Pocock</i>
.28	Goes Almost Anywhere: The Vehicle as Motif in the Art of Michael Stevenson / <i>Anna Parlane</i>
.46	Sound Stories / <i>Phil Dadson</i>
.62	THE WEIGHT OF THE LIGHT FROM ABOVE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE FROTH OF THE WAVES ON THE SEA / <i>André Vida</i>
.70	Together/Apart: Regional Networks in a Global Age: Imagining the Pacific in New Zealand, 1976 / <i>Christina Barton</i>
.86	Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Alio Pilioko: The Perpetual Travellers / <i>Peter Brunt</i>
.104	Where I'm Calling From: A Roundtable on Location and Region / <i>Coordinated and edited by Lee Weng Choy</i>
.124	Mildura Sculpture Triennials, Australia / <i>Jim Allen</i>
.130	Sculpture in Sunraysia: New Zealand Artists at the Mildura Sculpture Triennial / <i>Eric Riddler</i>
.141	5th Fiji Biennale Pavilions / <i>Mladen Bizumic</i>
ARCHIVE	
.158	A Little Knowledge Let Loose on an Untrained Mind: Jim Allen as Educator / <i>Charlotte Huddleston</i>
.168	Make a Case for Movement / <i>Ruth Buchanan</i>
.178	"He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother": <i>Reading Room</i> Presents a Record of New Zealand Artists Exhibiting in Australasian Networks / <i>Tom Irwin</i>
.184	Staff Presentations and Publications: 2012–13
.186	Contributors



Foreword

Catherine Hammond

Marylyn Mayo as
a child with her
mother Mavis Mason

Dr John Mayo established the Marylyn Mayo Foundation to benefit a number of causes, including the advancement and wider appreciation of the visual arts. The Foundation's support has enabled the Auckland Art Gallery to establish a number of major initiatives: in 2007 the Marylyn Mayo Internships and the scholarly journal *Reading Room*, and in 2011 the John Mayo Members Lounge and Marylyn Mayo and Mavis Mason Painting Conservation were opened. The journal is also in memory of both Marylyn Mayo and her mother, Mavis Mason, in recognition of their shared interest in the visual arts.

Born and raised in New Zealand, Marylyn Eve Mayo had a lifelong interest in education, law and the visual arts. Her academic career established her as a legal pioneer in Australasia. Marylyn was one of fewer than two dozen women law graduates when she completed her degree at the University of Auckland in 1960. Her legacy is honoured at its Law School with the Marylyn Eve Mayo Endowment Scholarship and the Marylyn Mayo Rare Book Room. Marylyn's parents, Mavis and Sydney Mason, moved with her to Auckland when she began her university studies. Mavis Mason was an artist and the move to Auckland enabled her to develop this talent: in the 1960s she studied painting with one of New Zealand's most celebrated artists, Colin McCahon. Mavis's love of art was imparted to Marylyn who was a regular visitor to the Auckland Art Gallery and, from the time she was a recent graduate, collected works by contemporary New Zealand artists including Colin McCahon, Don Binney and Richard Killeen.

In 1969, Marylyn moved to Australia to teach law at the University of Queensland's campus in Townsville, soon to be known as James Cook University. It was here that she met and married John Mayo. In 1974, Mavis left New Zealand and joined her daughter and John in Townsville, and remained in Australia for the rest of her life. Marylyn's vision to establish a separate Faculty of Law at James Cook University was realised in 1989 when she became the Foundation Head of its newly established Law School. She retired in 1996 but her links with the University remained with the establishment of the Marylyn Mayo Medal and the Law Students' Society's annual Mayo Lecture.

Introduction

Wystan Curnow, for the editors

Some weeks back at a dinner in Amsterdam, I met a Franco-American artist now resident in Berlin, who was delighted to learn I lived in New Zealand because that was not far from his daughter who he'd been missing ever since she moved to Vanuatu. I said I'd never been there though it seemed to make no difference and later regretted not mentioning the French-born Russian émigré, artist and Vanuatu resident, Nicolai Michoutouchkine, whose scrapbooks provide the cover image for our current issue.

Our title puts a geographic or spatial spin on Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, his 1809 Enlightenment novel whose guiding metaphor subjects human relations to the laws of chemistry. However, "elective" means "optional" as much as "preferred" or "chosen", and it is the elastic rather than the deterministic connotations of the phrase that explain its suggestiveness to us, as well as to the likes of Max Weber, for whom it intimates the workings of ideology; René Magritte, who used it as a title for a 1933 painting, and Tom Stoppard, whose 1993 play *Arcadia* is something of an update of Goethe's novel. For us the phrase indicates a desire for a geopolitics of situatedness and connection whose terms are more fluid and less predictable than those laid down by oppositions like centre and margin, local and global, isolation and assimilation.

What then are the options, and how might they be exercised? It could be a matter of "resonance" – the name Phil Dadson gives to one of his "Sound Stories" – in which proximity chooses us as much as we choose it, and is full of the possibilities of affiliation:

In 1985, after many years of long distance contact between Akio and myself swapping images and sounds through the mails, he and his wife Junko come to New Zealand. Our knowledge of each other's language is zero, but our sign language is great. On the day of Akio's departure I pull a gift from my pocket, two songstones found in the Hokitika River, and in perfect synchronicity Akio pulls a gift from his, two stones from the Na Chi River in Japan. Neither of us knew of the others intention, but the stones clearly did.

By walking into the surf at Piha Beach to play his saxophone, Berlin-based New Yorker André Vida sought to substantiate his “receivership” of a Lawrence Weiner work: *THE WEIGHT OF THE LIGHT FROM ABOVE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE FROTH OF THE WAVES OF THE SEA*, itself inspired by a beach in Denmark. Vida’s drawings, which document this convergence, or resonance, are, like Weiner’s texts, “scores”, which are themselves to be performed; they have a past and a future.

New Zealand’s present situation in the world, and that of its art practice, has a past, a history, which began to take shape in the 1970s; cheap international air travel reduced all distances while Britain’s entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) reduced its historic proximity to New Zealand. Christina Barton develops the argument by focusing on two ambitious art events of 1976, one in Rotorua and one in Auckland, that sought to “imagine the Pacific.” In “Deconstructing Europe” (1991),¹ written in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, J. G. A. Pocock points to the Pacific hemisphere and indicates:

There is a history which has to be created in this space, and when it is not a history looking back up the lines along which culture has travelled – toward what Māori called *Hawaiki-paa-mamao* – the spirit land high up and distant – it has to be the history of small communities in an ocean of planetary size. Writing Pacific history is a challenge to the imagination: it both is and is not a history of “the West” and it certainly is not a history of “Europe”, even when a history of “Europeans”. These are spaces by which the antipodean historian defines his relation to the world, and the need to see the planet as if the Southern Hemisphere contained its centre makes him aware of others.

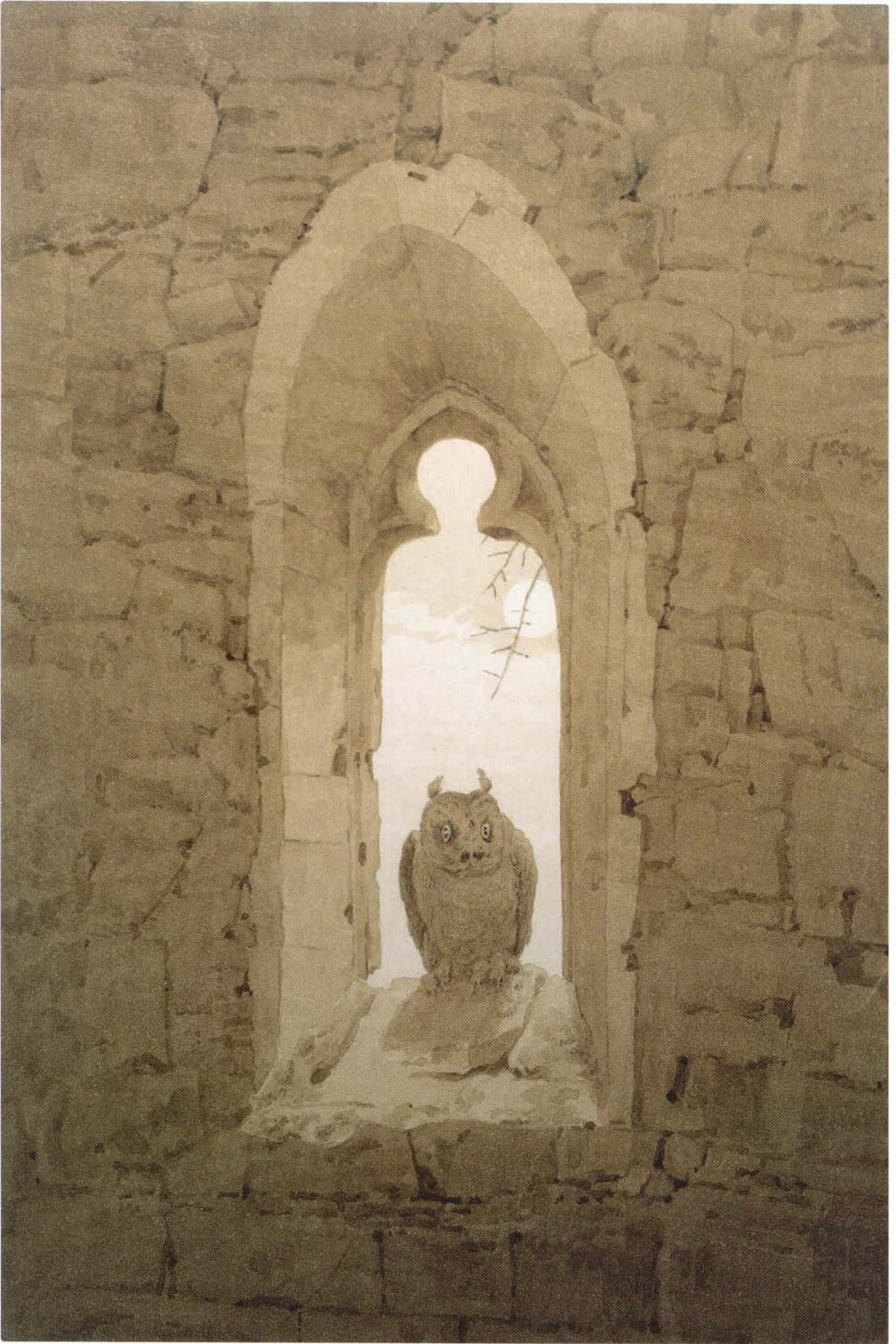
As Pocock himself knows, and not just because his own interpretation of British history as that of an Atlantic archipelago itself bears the stamp of the antipodean imagination, this task of re-arranging proximities was already underway and has continued in the works of Anne Salmond, James Belich, Jonathan Lamb, and most recently Peter Brunt and Nicholas Thomas, co-editors of the magisterial *Art in Oceania: A New History*. As a resonant footnote to that publication, Brunt’s story of Michoutouchkine and Pilioko, “The Perpetual Travellers”, also sits usefully beside Christina Barton’s essay. As Brunt notes:

Today we take a pan-Pacific consciousness for granted as a cultural and political construction of decolonisation through the establishment of state alliances, regional games, cultural festivals, widespread migration, tourism, and recent rise of televisual and digital media. In the 1960s, Pilioko was on the leading edge of this consciousness, discovering the Pacific as an interconnected region in a very personal way.

The story of the far-fetched peripatetic partnership of artist/collectors, White Russian Michoutouchkine and Wallis Islander Pilioko, world touring their collection of Pacific art, has the kind of compelling eccentricity that links the narratives around which Michael Stevenson organises his diverse projects and which are discussed in Anna Parlane's essay on his work. Surely it is to make too much of the elective proximities of our current issue to claim Stevenson for the antipodean imagination? Even for a somewhat antic manifestation of it? Although there's no doubting the intensity of his geopolitical inquiry or the tragi-comic cast of his sensibility.

Historiography is one thing, history another. In *The Discovery of Islands* Pocock writes of the New Zealand in which he grew up, the 1930s and 40s: "Though it has disappeared, it is entitled to the respect and understanding due to the phenomena of history, and I describe it here because it shaped a view of history which I still find valid." This sentence, which one is likely to pass over, as an aside, gave me pause, because it articulated so matter of factly an historian's, not Pocock's personal closeness to the past. So, to close this Introduction, it is appropriate to point to our issue's focus on the life and work of Jim Allen, not only as Pocock's close contemporary, but a figure whose work as a practitioner is emerging as a seminal contribution to a situated consciousness that builds on artistic affiliations, interactions and transactions. Allen's memoir of the Mildura Sculpture Triennials of the 1960s and 70s, is supported by Tom Irwin and Eric Riddler's contributions documenting New Zealand artists' exhibitions in Australia, and in particular Charlotte Huddleston's account of Allen as educator, which draws on archives recently deposited by him.

1. "Deconstructing Europe" was republished as a chapter in a collection of Pocock's writings, *The Discovery of Islands, Essays in British History* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); its introductory and partly autobiographical chapter concludes with the following confession: "This history owes something to the antipodean perspective. It sees peoples in motion, histories traversing distance, and 'identities' (the word is overworked) as never quite at home. Formed partly in an archipelago of the Southern Ocean, it present the islands, including Britain as another archipelago (hence the title of this book), not the promontory of a continent; it presupposes histories 'not in narrow seas.' It questions identities, but waits to hear answers. In this, I believe, it is indebted to the culture and the moment in history, in which it was formed; but its test, needless to say, must be its success in explaining, and enlarging, the histories to which it has been applied." (23).



Deconstructing Europe

J. G. A. Pocock

Caspar David Friedrich
Owl in a Gothic Window
c1836
Sepia and pencil
378 x 256 mm
The State Hermitage
Museum, St Petersburg,
Russia

History is about process and movement: yet up to now, it has been taken as given the perspectives furnished by relatively stable geographical communities, of whose pasts, and the processes leading to their presents, history is supposed to consist. All that may be changing, with the advent of the global village, in which no one's home is one's own; with the advent, too, of a universally-imposed alienation, in which one's identity is presupposed either as some other's aggression against one, or as one's own aggression against someone else, and in either case scheduled for deconstruction. Yet the owl of Minerva may continue to fly, as long as there is an ark left to fly from; and the historian, who must today move between points in time, must recollect voyages and may still recollect voyages between known points with known pasts, recalling how the pasts changed as the presents shifted.

Two voyages, then, furnished the prelude to this essay in historical reflection: one beyond what is known as "Europe", the other within it. The former was the later, and is therefore the nearer in time; it is therefore remembered first. It was a voyage in May 1991 to New Zealand, which is this historian's home culture; he is aware that few of his readers know that there is a culture there, or can readily believe it stands at the centre of anyone's historical consciousness. It was in that month a culture very deeply in crisis and threatened with possible discontinuation: more than for most reasons because the Europeanisation of Great Britain had deprived it of its economic (and like it or not, its previous spiritual) *raison d'être*, and it had not yet found another. Not having found – wherever the fault might lie – new markets of outlet, it had resorted to policies of privatisation which amounted to the forced sale of national assets in the hope of attracting new investment capital, a subjection of national sovereignty to international market forces such as the European Community – only in this case there was no community – is supposed to stand for. This had reached the point where it was being seriously proposed to sell New Zealand public schools to their own

boards of trustees, and the trustees were making it known that they had no money to buy them with. In the midst of this scene of understandable demoralisation, relations between the largest minority and majority ethnic groups – Māori and Pakeha, Polynesian and Anglo-European – were giving rise to a complex, serious and conceptually sophisticated debate over the legal, moral and historical foundations of the national identity.¹ The owl had taken flight, but the dusk could be felt approaching. In history nothing is as certain as night and day: but it was a measurable possibility, if not an inevitability, that the history being intelligently debated might simply be terminated because the international economy had no further need of the community whose memory and identity it was.

An effect this had upon a historian who had lived for 25 years in the Northern Hemisphere, while remaining a product of the Southern, was sharply to jolt his awareness of “Europe”. The historic process he saw before his eyes in New Zealand had begun with the British entry into the European Community, and had not been alleviated by that Community’s economic policies. This is to say nothing of the moral policies of some of its member nations: the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* has not been forgotten in New Zealand, and there is a deep conviction that the French do not care, and cannot understand that anybody else does. In New Zealand – as when resident in the United States of America – he found himself in a culture governed by “Western” values and given shape by then historic (and imperial) expansion: yet it seemed that there was a mystique of “Europe” which laid claim to these values while excluding others from the community which claimed to base itself upon them. And the same mystique seemed to proclaim the subjection of national sovereignty to international market forces without making more than sporadic progress toward the creation of any new kind of political community governed by its citizens, to replace that whose obsolescence it so readily proclaimed. New Zealand, only yesterday a viable social democracy with policies and a government of its own, looked like an extreme because extra-marginal case of where the post-sovereignty process might lead.

The response might be a retreat into militant and even violent local populism – the Third World, to which New Zealand was threatened with relegation, was full of examples of the kind. But New Zealanders had been and still were a non-impooverished, civilised and international people, used to travel, to join the world and its history – distant though they found them – and to look at history through looking at others, way of seeing it.

An owl departing from the South Island of New Zealand must define the region in which its flight has navigational meaning. Until half a century ago, New Zealand’s national existence was situated less in the Pacific Ocean than in a global area defined by British naval and imperial power, running from Britain and Flanders through the Mediterranean and India to Australia, Singapore and beyond. New Zealand’s wars were fought along the length of this system, as late

as the Malaysian emergencies of the 1950s; even in 1942, New Zealand troops were not withdrawn from the Mediterranean for war against Japan, as those of Australia were, but ended the Second World War keeping Trieste from becoming part of Yugoslavia. This imperial area possessed a consciously-preserved history which was less that of empire or imperialism than that of British culture, political, religious, social and historical. Of this, New Zealanders – and, subject to their own more Irish mythology, Australians – saw themselves as part; it was believed to be the history of a culture with a global capacity for creating and associating new nations. Even now, when it has survived the power that once held it together, this history is part of their perception that they inhabit “Western civilisation” though they do not inhabit “Europe”. The accession of the United Kingdom to the European Community entailed a rejection by that kingdom’s peoples of the former global capacity of their culture; it was a confession of defeat, and at the same time a rejection of the other nations of that culture, which seemed to entail a decision that there was no longer a British history in which New Zealand’s past or future possessed a meaning. The South Pacific owl of Minerva, finding its environment endangered, faced the task of rewriting New Zealand’s British history, while taking part in the revision of all British history in which the historians of the United Kingdom have engaged in the post-imperial and quasi-European era now going on.

An assertion by means of which the owl defined its flight path and air space was therefore the assertion that “Western civilisation” extended beyond “Europe” into those oceanic and continental spaces irreversibly Westernised by navigation and settlement in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Europeans are often anti-American enough, and the United Kingdom British hostile enough to their imperial past, to deny and wish to sever this relation to the world: but the inhabitants of the world thus created are under a necessity of keeping its history alive, and an obsessive “Europeanness” can appear to them a device aimed at excluding them from visibility. As part of the assertion that “the West” extends beyond “Europe”, therefore, there are owls of Minerva who define themselves as navigating in the continental spaces of North America and Australia, or – and this is the case of the subspecies under examination – the enormous oceanic spaces of the austral Pacific ocean, which Polynesian and European navigators have lodged in their memory and tradition. Take a globe in your hands, one not mounted on a spindle which preserves the intellectual dictatorship of Gerardus Mercator, rotate it until the islands of New Zealand are at the centre of the hemisphere you face. You will be looking at one facet of the New Zealand historical imagination, and you will be able to see Australia and Antarctica, but nothing worth mentioning of Indo-Malaysia, Asia or the Americas. There is a history which has to be created in this space, and when it is not a history looking back up the lines along which culture has travelled – toward what Māori call *Hawaiki paa-mamao*, the spirit land high up and distant – it has to be the history of small communities in an ocean of planetary size. Writing Pacific history is a challenge to the imagination: it both is and is not a

history of “the West”, and it certainly is not a history of “Europe”, even when a history of “Europeans”.

These are spaces by which the Antipodean historian defines his relation to the world, and the need to see the planet as if the Southern Hemisphere contained its centre makes him aware of others. There is the Indonesian or Indo-Malaysian space from which he is separated by the mountains of New Guinea and the deserts of Australia; there is the northern ocean defined by the “Pacific rim” and the movements of Japanese, American and neo-Confucian capital; there are the spaces defined by the major civilisations of Asia, and west of them the extensive and at present disastrously incoherent domains of Islam. There is the enormous space of northern Eurasia, formerly coextensive with the Soviet Union, which may be glimpsed from cruising altitude on a flight from London to Tokyo. These last two offer the imagination a post-colonial route toward Europe, and toward the memory of the second voyage by which this essay is dominated.

This is the memory of a seven-months sojourn in Europe during 1989, moving through Calabria, Sicily, Tuscany, the Alpine region, south-west Germany and the Netherlands. The revolutions of Eastern Europe were beginning, and it would have been possible to set out by *ferrovia* or *autostrada* and watch the borders crumble: but there was work to be done, and in any case a lingering feeling that history is for its immediate participants and not a spectacle for tourists. One was close enough, at all events, to experience a sensation that we were witnessing the end of a European era 40 years long, and of a definition of “Europe” predicated on the partition collapsing before one’s eyes. The term “Europe” had come to be often used co-terminously with “the European Community”, an association of former imperial states having in common the experience of defeat – Germany of defeat and partition, France, Italy and the Low Countries of defeat and occupation, Britain of exhaustion following victory – and the loss of colonial empires – in all cases except the first after 1940 – which had recovered enough to form a powerful combination based on the pooling of some sovereign powers and the removal of obstacles to the movement across their frontiers of international economic forces and some of the ways of living immediately dependent on them: this is the process intended to reach a culminating point in 1992.

The formation of this Community had been accompanied by an ideology of “Europeanness”, which sometimes affirmed that the culture possessed in common by these national communities, and the history of this common culture, was of greater moral and ideological significance than their several distinct national sovereignties or than the history shaped and written – as in the classical age of European historiography it had been – by their several existences as sovereign nation-states claiming to exercise control over their several histories. Politically as well as historiographically, there had been problems attending this fecund and exciting enterprise: it was not asserted, for example, that there existed or should exist a “European people” or a “European state”, using these

terms in the singular; and consequently – following the logic of political historiography – the “European history” which was developing was (rightly enough) a plural history of divergences and convergences, in which a cultural commonality interacted with a diversity (often a warlike and destructive diversity) of political sovereignties and national histories.

In this, European historiography continued in its classical patterns, the history of the state retaining its primacy even after giving up its claim to be a moral absolute. In partitioned Germany, and in an Italy still plagued by consequences of the forced unification of the Pied-montese and Neapolitan kingdoms in 1861, there continued to be debate whether the national state had been a historical necessity or could have taken some other path. There was less sign that the French were inclined to regard “France” as a contingency or accident of history;² but even in Britain – which came to “Europe” late, reluctantly, and with many signs of self-contempt – there was an enterprise of considering “British history” as existing distinctly from the history of “England” and of asking whether the extension of English sovereignty had created a “British” nation with a history of its own.³ The historian writing this essay and remembering these voyages could claim some role in furthering this enterprise; and since the questions which it posed could be answered in the affirmative or the negative, it might either reinforce or subvert the existence of “British history” as a distinct and intelligible field of study.

In ways such as these, the process of “Europeanisation” stimulated the classical historiography based on the conception of the state: it became more exciting, and yielded richer information, when the state and the nation were perceived as precarious, contingent and ambivalent rather than as moral absolutes and historical necessities. At the same time, however, the experience after 1945 of Western Europe, and the planet’s advanced cultures in general, was conducive to post-modernism and alienation – meaning by these overworked terms that there were many competing memberships, allegiances, values and involvements, of which none was altogether satisfactory and each might be seen as competing with the others for mastery of the individual subjectivity which they had formed among them without rendering it satisfactory to itself. This was a problem at least as old as the European Enlightenment, and long antedated the temporary settlement of 1945. Under these conditions, however, it greatly encouraged an ideology, historiography and sub-culture of alienation in which every historic formation bearing on the individual consciousness became a candidate for deconstruction and rejection by that consciousness, which was in turn forced by the logic of historicism to deconstruct and reject any self or identity it might seem to possess. Since “Europe” was the classical locus of this kind of consciousness, the deconstructive attitude became part of the ideology of “Europeanness” and “Europe” was thus well placed to deconstruct its competitors, while retaining for itself an essential lack of identity, of much tactical advantage in the assertion of hegemony: the Great Boyg won by refusing to name himself.

It was of course open to anyone to give him a name. When one saw praise of *la cultura europea* in graffiti on South Italian university walls in 1989, one was given to understand that some conservative Catholic programme was using these words in a code of its own; “Europe” meant different things to different people, and they were busy deconstructing one another’s meanings. All this, however, was ideologically and historiographically normal: a “Europe” which incessantly challenged and debated its own identity was part of the civilisation to which as a “Westerner” one belonged, and “America” in its own way did the same thing. What left the closed or open character of “Europe” in greater doubt was its geopolitical situation. Demarcated down to 1989 by a military, political and ideological barrier running through central Germany and Europe, the European Community could look like a neo-Carolingian construct: a regrouping of Neustria, Franconia, Burgundy and Lombardy in the areas defined by the Treaty of Verdun in the ninth century, modified by one major exclusion and one inclusion of lands not so defined. The exclusion was that of eastern Germany, the inclusion that of the British islands; both areas had been historically dominated by differing forms of Protestantism.

In the latter case, standing nearer to the concerns of the owl of Minerva, the entity’s insular situation had separated it in some degree from two of the major historical experiences undergone in western Eurasia. Through military weakness, it had avoided involvement in the Wars of Religion fought down to 1648 (though some argued that it was by that date caught up in a war of religion of its own insular kind); through oceanic, mercantile and industrial power, it had escaped conquest and liberation in the Wars of Revolution after 1789, and had succeeded in playing a dominant role from an external situation. From the time of their consolidation at the end of the seventeenth century, the British kingdoms had been able to exercise power in Europe while maintaining their distance from it. Only the loss of that capacity was obliging the United Kingdom to seek membership in the European Community, and however strongly the step could be justified it could not altogether lose the character of a historic defeat and an enforced separation from a past by which the British had previously known themselves. It was this step which had left the British nations of the Pacific ocean denied a role in “European” history and in “British” history considered as part of it: oceanically situated in the face of the economic power exerted by Japan and the Lesser Dragons, and liable to be told that as neither “European” nor “American” (nor “British”?) they belonged to no “Western” community acting together to maintain itself.

These were the circumstances in which the ideology of “Europeanness” could appear closed, exclusive and deconstructive. It is, in fact, not the case that the European Community has developed an accredited historiography of its own; there have been tentative ventures in that direction, which down to 1989 would have led toward a neo-Carolingian synthesis addressing itself to Germans on the loss of the east, Italians on the miseries of the south and British on the loss

of detachment from the adjacent continent. What took a much more visible shape was an ideology of “Europeanness” which enjoined the rejection of previously distinct national histories without proposing a synthetic or universal history to take their place. When the British are enjoined to consider themselves “European”, it is usually with the implication that they should not consider their history as in any way distinctive; and though this injunction has not been notably effective, it has strengthened the tendency toward the kind of post-modernism in which any *Lebensform* is presupposed an act of hegemony, an imposition to be deconstructed. “Europe” could therefore become the ideology of a post-historical culture, in which varyingly affluent and varyingly alienated masses – there is an alienation of the consumer as well as an alienation of the deprived – float from one environment to another with no awareness of moving from one past, and one commitment to it, to another. It would be a problem in historicity to determine whether this freedom from commitment were an illusory or a real condition; either seems possible.

The mystique of “Europe”, which has often made it possible to use the word as an incantation with which there can be no argument, may have been the product of a turn toward a post-historic consumer culture, but it has also been a product of the Community’s singular success in creating a common economy, elements of a common culture, and some institutions of a shared administrative – it seems too soon to call it “civic” – political structure. All these were the connotations of the word “Europe” as it was being used down to 1989, and as it is still used as it looks toward 1992.

In the former of these two years, however, the collapse of the Wall, the Curtain, and much more besides, deprived “Europe” of its partition along the militarised and policed frontier which had defined its identity as opposed to the presumed alternative culture of late Leninism. It turned out that this alternative was not merely a failure, but had for a long time been no more than a pretence; mass action and mass sentiment rejected it, because for many years nobody had believed in it enough to make it work; and the liberal-democratic capitalism of the Community was faced with the task, not of transforming a counter-culture, but of filling a vacuum and tidying up a gigantic mess. The collapse extended beyond the Central and Eastern Europe occupied in 1944-45, deep into the Soviet Union itself and the heartlands of northern Eurasia, where what collapsed in 1991 was not only an economic and political order but a system of states possessing sovereignty distributed among themselves: so that the ideological transformation of the continent instantly took on a geopolitical dimension. “Europe”, used both as a term of mystique and a synonym for the European Community, came face to face with a Central Europe, an Eastern Europe, and a Eurasia extending through Siberia, which had not been integrated into its post-modern culture and did not belong with any simplicity to its history. The Community proved to be a regrouping of the lands of west Latin culture, as modified by Enlightenment, Revolution, and the wars of Germany

with France and Britain, uncertain in its relations with the historic consequences of Protestantism, and now obliged by the reunification of Germany to recall how far the twentieth-century wars had been a consequence of German-Russian encounters in the environment formed by Eastern Europe. Beyond a Slavonic Europe of largely Catholic culture could be discerned a wide cultural zone whose history was Orthodox and Ottoman beyond the point of belonging to the history of Latin Christianity and its secularisation.

This region was ethnically diverse and politically indeterminate. Among the disturbing consequences of the liberations of 1989-91 – the tunnels at the end of the light, as someone put it – was the discovery that 75 to 45 years of revolutionary totalitarianism, long credited with a capacity to wash brains and rebuild minds, had eliminated none of the ethnic and sub-national antagonisms of western Eurasia. (It did not help to add that two centuries of West European colonialism had enjoyed no better success in Africa and southern Asia.) The collapse of socialism proved to be a collapse of empire, the only if inadequate force which had attempted the subjugation of these hostile identities; and the Russian-dominated federation of the Soviet Union, the Serbian-dominated federation of Yugoslavia, began a disintegration which has continued through the revolution of August 1991 and the war in Croatia. Both European and United States policy-makers face a choice between encouraging the devolution of sovereignty as a means of creating larger market economies, and maintaining existing centralisations of sovereignty as a means of preventing endemic inter-ethnic warfare – war having become less a means of asserting the interests of states than of posing ethnic challenges to their authority. The European Community faced this problem in respect of Yugoslavia, the United States of Iraq, both of the Soviet Union; and there were uncomfortable parallels in Canadian North America. This problem has many aspects. It raises the conceptual question – now extended from west to east – whether sovereignty can be rearranged without rearranging the pasts of which sovereignty makes human communities aware, and whether sovereignty can be treated as a contingent convenience or inconvenience without history itself becoming similarly contingent and manipulable.

This is a familiar problem in Central and Eastern Europe, where the distinction between “historic” and “non-historic” peoples was invented as a debating device in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and turned against it – but by no means eliminated – by the policy-makers of Versailles and Trianon. A New Zealander has some reason to know what it may be like to belong to a people which thought it had a history and is now instructed by others that it has none. These are devices in the discourse of empires and the unmaking of empires. The next discovery is that “Europe” may be at the point of becoming an empire uncertain of the frontiers of its own discourse, as it faces the question of how far to intervene in the ethnic strife of Croats and Serbs, and as differences between the policies of its major nations emerge over the admission of central and

eastern states to the Community. The greatest single truth to declare itself in the wake of 1989 is that the frontiers of “Europe” towards the east are everywhere open and indeterminate. “Europe”, it can now be seen, is not a continent – as in the ancient geographers’ dream – but a sub-continent: a peninsula of the Eurasian land-mass, like India in being inhabited by a highly distinctive chain of interacting cultures, but unlike it in lacking a clearly-marked geophysical frontier. Instead of Afghanistan and the Himalayas, there are vast level areas through which conventional “Europe” shades into conventional “Asia”, and few would recognise the Ural mountains if they ever reached them. In these regions the states and cultures of Latin, Catholic-Protestant and Enlightened “Europe” both merge and do not merge with others, of Orthodox, Islamic, Russian and Turkish provenance, as what we call “Europe” is ambiguously continuous with what we had better learn to call “Eurasia”.

In this perspective, to imagine “Europe” as a cohesive entity raises questions of demarcation and definition. Are Serbians, Moldavians, Georgians and Armenians “Europeans” because their culture is historically Christian and post-Christian; are Albanians, Bosnians, Turks and Azeris not “Europeans” because theirs is Islamic or post-Islamic? On what grounds could such questions be answered, and who would have the authority to decide them? In such geographical and historic circumstances, a culture which regards itself as cohesive and autonomous may find itself playing the role of empire, claiming the authority not merely to extend its frontiers but to extend or retract them at will, telling others that they are or are not “European” as the British claim the authority to tell New Zealanders or Hong Kongers when they are or are not “British”. In the special circumstances of western Eurasia, “Europe” may find that it has the power to do this unshared by others, but not the authority to command the consent of the cultures affected, which alone can legitimate the inclusions or exclusions of empire. Kurds, Albanians and boat people know what it is like to be ill-informed as to whether the protection of empire is being given or refused; indeed, all *Gastarbeiter* know.

These are practical problems, which lie beyond the province of this essay, though it does seem permissible to point out that the mentality of 1992 cannot safely be any longer, but dangerously may be nevertheless, a projection of the mentality of “Europe” as it was before 1989 and the German reunification. This is an essay in and on historiography, a meditation for owls of Minerva watching history change behind them under changing global light-conditions in which it is monocentric any longer to speak of “gathering dusk”, since dusk to one culture may be dawn to another; though again, it has to be remembered that we claim to be diversifying the world’s cultures precisely when, and because, we are in fact homogenising them. The debate over multicultural education has to be read in that complex of lights and shadows. At the outset of this essay it was premised that historiography was the study of change and memory, which is why it lies both behind and before the owls flying against the time-stream: the

study of the processes of change in which we are all involved, counterpointed by the maintenance in the present of identity as members of coherent communities possessing coherent and recollectable pasts. Since it has been regularly assumed that these communities in the present are relatively autonomous political entities – it is less than a century since “history” could be defined as “present politics” and “the memory of the state” – these definitions of historiography have a political dimension. They presuppose that one of the aims of the state is to exercise some control over its own history, defining its past and seeking to determine its future; that the liberal state associates individuals with it in this enterprise, that of seeking the freedom – thus history used to be defined as “the history of freedom” – to act as citizens in the determination of their own historicised identities; that political sovereignty was so far the state’s means of prescribing its historic past and future that it was doubtful whether the individual could be accounted free, in history as in politics, unless a citizen of an autonomous and sovereign political community.

There is consequently an association between sovereignty and historiography; a community writes its own history when it has the autonomous political structure needed if it is to command its own present, and typically the history it writes will be the history of that structure. Such a history need not, though it very often will, be written uncritically; it may be written in ways that reveal its existence within a historical context larger than itself, its contingency upon many historical processes which it does not command. There are other kinds of history which can and should be written, and a historian or person of historical sensibility is at liberty to decide that these kinds possess priority over political history and history of the state. A class, gender or ethnic group which has been excluded or repressed by the political community must write its own history and that of the state in terms of this experience, though whether history can be written in exclusively negative and eristic terms is another question. A national community which has existed by assimilating diverse ethnic groups to an ethnically specific culture – the United States is a major example – must decide how to measure the history of the assimilating culture against that of the cultures undergoing an assimilation which may be incomplete or false. There is nothing sacrosanct, or privileged, about the history engendered by sovereignty: and yet the history of historiography as we know it obliges us to ask whether it would exist without history of this kind, whether historiography would exist without the state. One reason for this is that sovereignty and historiography, a voice in controlling one’s present and a voice in controlling one’s past, have been and may still be necessary means by which a community asserts its identity and offers an identity to the individuals composing it. Certainly, it can and must be asked whether it can pursue this enterprise, and maintain the means of doing so, without making war against other communities or denying an identity, a politics and a history to subjugated communities within its hegemony. But if the abandonment or the redistribution of sovereignty are to become general practices recommended to or imposed upon states, or communities of states, which

were formerly sovereign and wrote their national histories as histories of their autonomous politics, one must also ask: if the sovereignty is to disappear, what is to happen to the historiography? If the historiography is to disappear, what is to happen to the identity? If the autonomous political community is to disappear, what is to happen to the political identity and autonomy of the individual?

These questions appear to be intimately linked, and one can imagine an “Austro-Hungarian” set of answers, in which the surrender of sovereignty to a common set of institutions is found to have privileged some communities, but not others, to claim certain kinds of hegemony as “historic peoples”, while failing to provide the governing structure itself with a history which was that of a community or provided anyone with an identity. There was in that case an “imperial” mystique, as there is now a “European” mystique, which claimed to have a history but on the whole failed to make good that claim; and to this it may be added that empires commonly claim to be communities and to possess histories, but often fail in a diversity of ways to satisfy the communities they incorporate that their claim is good.

At this point new sets of questions may be asked. Is the supra-national community we look at in the double perspective of this essay – the European Community, since no Pacific community is in process of formation – a species of empire, in which ultimate political control belongs to some institutions rather than others, to some national communities rather than others? The problems placed before the Community by the changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe seem to make this a reasonable question; there are said to be differing German, French and British policy preferences regarding the future of the states of Eastern Europe. If we answer the question in the affirmative, we return “Europe” to the domain of reason of state. “Empire” and “confederation” are not mutually exclusive terms, but are ranged along a spectrum of meanings: it may be said, however, that if there is to be a “Europe” commanding its political present, there must be a political structure capable of defining its own past and writing its own history. On the other hand, the “mystique of Europe” that has taken shape does not seem to offer a political history, which as far as can be seen would have to be that of a plurality of states acting in their own history and never yet confederated or incorporated in a lasting imperial structure. This opens the way to the reply that the question has been wrongly posed, and that the community being shaped is not a political community in the sense of a redistribution of the sovereignty possessed by states, but a set of arrangements for ensuring the surrender by states of their power to control the movement of economic forces which exercise the ultimate authority in human affairs. The institutions jointly operated, and/or obeyed, by member states would then not be political institutions bringing about a redistribution of sovereignty, but administrative or entrepreneurial institutions designed to ensure that no sovereign authority can interfere with the omnipotence of a market exercising “sovereignty” in a metaphorical because non-political sense. There

would be an “empire” of the market which would not be an empire as the term is used in the vocabulary of politics, because that vocabulary would itself have lost its hegemony.

One might emerge with an uneasy hybrid, an “empire” of the market in which residual political authority was unequally distributed between the political entities subject to its supra-political authority; or with a more benign, at least a more familiar, scenario in which confederated nations successfully operated shared institutions designed to allow market forces that freedom of operation which it had been agreed should belong to them. The problem of empire would not have disappeared, since it would be possible to find former national communities which had been denied their sovereignty and their history, or simply abolished as viable human communities, either by inclusion within or by exclusion from supra-national common markets of the sort being imagined. It will be remembered that this essay is being written in part from a New Zealand point of view. In the East European and Eurasian settings – perhaps also in the North American as regarded from Quebec – member states of hegemonic confederations are to be seen claiming an independent sovereignty, very possibly with a view to joining common markets to which sovereignty must be given up as soon as asserted; the pooling of sovereignty in some regions and the fragmentation of sovereignty in others may be two sides of the same medal; but there may be yet other regions in which market forces simply reign without bothering to exact common institutions from the communities they rule, make and unmake. There have been informal empires as well as formal.

This essay is designed to ask questions about the voice of politics and history in the conversation of mankind. What happens to the sometime citizens of a formerly autonomous community when it is enjoined to give up its political sovereignty and the capacity to write its own history; to the United Kingdom British when they are enjoined to cease claiming a history of their own and accept that they have no history except that of a Europe which has not been written yet, to the New Zealand British when they are ejected from Anglo-European history and enjoined to consider themselves part of a Pacific world which has no common history and may never acquire one? The craft of historiography suggests some responses to these predicaments. The United Kingdom British have the option of writing the history of Europe on the assumption that the history of the British peoples does indeed form part of it and radically modifies the ways in which it must be understood once this is admitted. The far more isolated and threatened New Zealanders, to whom others rather deny than extend options, may easily recognise that they are made up of voyaging peoples, Polynesian, European and latterly Asian; they may write their own history as shaped by voyaging, and voyage themselves in search of other histories to which oceanic distances connect them by the very radicalness of separation. Owls of Minerva may send back messages from other points in what is only planetary space.

But this is to presuppose that the voice of self-defining political and national historiography will survive. There have been political and social preconditions of its existence, and these may be in process of supersession. Let us imagine a state of affairs in which political communities had been effectively reduced to insignificance, and humans could identify themselves only as existing in market communities, engaged in no other self-defining activities than the manufacture, distribution and consumption of goods, images and the information (if that is the right word) relating thereto. It would in principle be possible to write the histories of such communities, and these histories might be full of unexpected and intriguing information about their conduct and the character of human life as shaped by them. The proposition that life in the non-political community is as historically informative as life in the political is as old as the New History, which has cropped up at intervals since Voltaire published the *Essai sur les mœurs*: but New Historians have usually been political actors, with political motives for de-emphasising the political. If we imagine a dystopia or eutopia in which market communities exercised complete hegemony, we may ask whether the ruling élites of such communities would have much interest in seeing their official histories written, or whether the individual as consumer would have the same grounds as the individual as citizen, or as social actor interacting with the political, in seeing herself or himself as a critical actor modifying rule by his or her responses to it, and wishing to see the history of such modifications written.

The preconditions of historiography would not be met if the market communities had acquired an unlimited capacity of changing the produced and distributed images of what they were and what human needs they were designed to satisfy, if there were no alternative to responding to the images presented by the system that distributed them, and if the communities were incessantly and therefore uncritically engaged in this transformation of their self-images. There could then be no critical histories of images, but only images of history. To imagine this is, of course, to imagine the dystopia of *Brave New World* or 1984, in which rulers as well as ruled are totally assimilated to the systems they operate. It may be replied that market communities do not deprive the individual of agency to the dystopian extent, while leaving open the question whether they will, under post-political conditions, contain individuals with enough sense of agency to require histories, as we know them, to be written. The problem will become more acute if we imagine market communities as lacking temporal stability, as constantly dissolved, transplanted and transformed by the market's insatiable demand for new human needs to satisfy; or if we imagine communities marginalised by the market, mere pools of unwanted labour with little or no purchasing power. Such fluctuating or frozen human masses would have little history and less need or will to write it; perhaps there are prerequisites for having a history at all. For the purposes of the present essay it is not necessary to predict the prevalence of such non-communities: but it is not mere fantasy to imagine them.

It is nearer description than imagination to say that we already have the makings of the historical or post-historical ideology which might take the place of historiography in such communities and non-communities as we have been supposing. This is the ideology of post-modernism, which – to simplify matters – may also be called the ideology of alienation, and a great deal of post-political historiography is already being written according to its specifications. It presupposes that all history is invention, and that all invention is alien and an imposition; any context in which the self might find meaning is imposed on the self by some other, or by the self acting out of a false consciousness imposed on it by some other, and any specification of the self is similarly imposed, with the consequence that the self is always false, an imposition or imposture against its own unrealisable existence. History is the study of constructs, and its aim is invariably their deconstruction. It used to be argued that this knowledge was the escape into freedom, until it was discovered that there remained no subject to be free, and it can still be argued, within limits, that it teaches a critical skill very useful to selves constantly threatened with identities imposed by others, and constantly obliged by the nature of history to be on the move between contexts in which identity must be varyingly realised and asserted. As a strategy, it is a good one for living and fighting back in the world of uncriticised market forces which incessantly impose new and non-referential images of who one is and what one wants: but as an ideology, it is the instrument of that world and operates to reinforce it. The marketers of images instruct us that we have no selves other than those they choose to impose upon us; the deconstructionist intellectuals, if they are not willing to stop somewhere and make a stand, tell us exactly the same thing. In all too many cases, they have become anti-humanist enough to get no nearer making a stand than casting us either as oppressed – which is not so bad – or more commonly as oppressors of some Other, to whose alienated consciousness they then enjoin us to submit our own. Their motives in doing so should be scrutinised and may be conjectured.

It is easy enough to see how this could become the ideology of a post-political, post-industrialist and post-modernist Europe. The affluent populations wander as tourists – which is to say consumers of images – from one former historical culture to another, delightfully free from the need to commit themselves to any, and free to criticise while determining for themselves the extent of their responsibility. How far this is a freedom to make their own history, how far a freedom from any need to make it, may be debated. Meanwhile the non-affluent form underclasses, pools of labour ebbing from one area of under-employment to another. The ideology of alienation, a luxury to the affluent, is a necessity to them, and as long as the state, feeling little need of a highly educated work force, chooses to underpay its teachers, public education will be a means of perpetuating the underclass's pseudo-revolutionary discourse, which will double as the means of promotion into the educated bureaucracy. It will produce quite an intelligent, articulate and disenchanting populace, offered by history no means of associating themselves in politically active communities, but only in

self-congratulatory yet self-accusatory sects and counter-cultures of the apparently or really alienated, capable at best of the special-issue activism which constitute populism but not democracy. Thus the post-historical and post-political culture one can imagine taking shape in Western Europe or North America; more isolated communities might be more deeply threatened. When the historian writing this essay spoke in New Zealand and argued that neither Europeans nor Polynesians there were *tangata whenua* – people of the land – but both were *tangata waka*, peoples of the ship who could remember the voyages that had brought them,⁴ it was a Māori discussant who remarked that both were threatened with becoming boat people. We were recognising the power of market forces to uproot communities and turn them into migrant labour.

There are regions of continental and oceanic proportions beyond the common markets in which post-modernism can flourish. Early in 1991, Tatyana Tolstaya drew attention to such a region in western Eurasia not far beyond Europe: “in the West the sense of history has weakened or completely vanished; the West does not live in history, it lives in civilisation (by which I mean the self-awareness of transnational technological culture as opposed to the subconscious, unquestioned stream of history). But in Russia there is practically no civilisation, and history lies in deep, untouched layers over the villages, over the small towns that have reverted to near wilderness, over the large, uncivilised cities, in those places where they try not to let foreigners in, or where foreigners themselves don’t go.”⁵ In using “civilisation” and “history” as antithetical terms, Tolstaya is engaging in a dramatic departure from conventional Western language. By “history” she means the experience and memory of the past unprocessed, in the nature of raw sewage: unmediated, uninterpreted, uncriticised and (incidentally if not centrally) unsanitised, present but not controlled, unimpeded in its capacity to drive humans to do unspeakable things. There are many areas of the settled earth (some of them in great Western cities, as the United States knows to its cost) where “history” is like this. But when Tolstaya says that “history” dies where there is “civilisation”, she departs deliberately and for good reason from Western discourse, since there we still believe that “civilised” societies can write and debate their history, interpret it, argue over it, succeed or fail in coming to terms with it, even regard it as “the nightmare from which one struggles to awake”, and be the more “civilised” for this ability to criticise it and reduce it to process. Even the loss of sovereign autonomy can stimulate the owl to take flight and map the territory of the past in greater detail and new perspectives: this happened in Edinburgh and Glasgow during the Scottish Enlightenment, and has been happening in both British and New Zealand historiography in response to Europeanisation.

To us it does not follow that history disappears when it is interpreted:⁶ but Tolstaya may be reminding us that this state of affairs cannot be relied on to last. The privatising state may be ending its alliance with the clerical and intellectual élites who were its accredited interpreters and critics; it would rather its

universities were vocational schools – if that – than centres of enquiry; and as we look through Europe into Eurasia, where the intelligentsias have been devastated by the life and death of the Party, we may be looking into a world where the post-modern which is indifferent to history lies side by side with the pre-modern which cannot rule history and is ruled by it. Along this fault-line between tectonic plates, we wish to say, unspeakable things will continue to happen, and the historian – that spokesperson for excluded modernity – may find something useful to do: but if there is no political domain in which historical understanding seeks an opportunity to act, is there anything that can be done?

Tolstaya's very striking language reminds us of a sense in which the "death of history", prematurely announced a little while ago, might theoretically happen. Francis Fukuyama was (perhaps) imagining that the growth of the state and the processes of revolution might cease to be effective makers of history, given the universal triumph of a global market which took no account of frontiers; that the politics culminating in state and revolution were the means by which human beings attempted to control their history; that "history" was the name for that process when under human control; and that henceforth humans would not make their history by their own thought and action, but the forces of the market would make it for them. Tolstaya is envisaging a not wholly different state of affairs, in which "civilisation" resolves and abolishes history and only barbarism retains it. Given these premises, the post-modern historian – when not living, as many still do, in a fantasy world in which linguistic criticism secures and continues the Leninist supremacy of the inquisitorial intelligentsia – will attempt to discover "history" in the micro- or macro-experiences of humans in the global market and its culture. Those who maintain the modernist, or at any rate the pre-post-modernist, perspective will maintain that politics does not disappear with the Bismarckian or the Stalinist state, that humans continue to set up political structures to control their own history and contest for the power which comes from the attempt to control it, and that politics and history remain among the active forces which shape human lives and give them meanings. But the new world disorder coming after 1989 calls in question the premises of this debate, by calling in question the bipolarity of Tolstaya's (to say nothing of Fukuyama's) projection. The boundaries between "civilisation" and its opposite, barbarism, between history assimilated and history uncontrolled, have been broken open, and there is a zone to which politics and history are once more relevant. Europe is again an empire concerned for the security of its *limites*, and we may cautiously recall Gibbon's projection, in which the inhabitants of the civilised provinces have "sunk into the languid indifference of private life" and history is being made for them by the encounters of soldiers and barbarians along the frontiers – the new barbarians being those populations who do not achieve the sophistication without which the global market has little for them and less need of them.

It is time to stop projecting and fantasising: but in late 1991 it seems apparent that "Europe" – both with and without the North America whose addition turns

it from “Europe” into “Western civilisation” – is once again an empire in the sense of a civilised and stabilised zone which must decide whether to extend or refuse its political power over violent and unstable cultures along its borders but not yet within its system: Serbs and Croats if one chances to be Austrian, Kurds and Iraqis if Turkey is admitted to be part of “Europe”. These are not decisions to be taken by the market, but decisions of the state; and they are revealing clearly enough that “Europe” is still a composite of states, whose historically formed interests give them non-identical attitudes towards the problems of “Europe” and its borderlands. Classically state-centred historiography returns to relevance, and even salience, once the crises of historic Russia and Yugoslavia present themselves before a Europe in which Germany has once again become united. There is still something for history to do – this is not put forward as a cheering prospect – whether written about the past or enacted in the present; the end is not yet. One may of course perform an act of faith, professing that these phenomena are all transitory and that sooner or later the global market will have exterminated politics and history all around the globe. When that happens, the end of history will have arrived: but to celebrate 1992 as if “Europe” were a secure and self-regarding “homeland”, intent only on its post-modern and post-historical self, might be to look rather like the emperor Philip the Arab, celebrating the Secular Games at one of Gibbon’s great ironic moments.

This essay has been written with a certain disrespect for the post-modernist intelligentsias, whose arrogance and provincialism at the moment expose them to their share of derision. But the post-modern phenomenon itself is entitled to respect: there really are senses in which the political community is losing its place at the centre of our allegiance (and allegiance itself any centre in consequence), and the non-political structures – or alternatively, those structures which enlarge the meaning of “political” until it has no boundaries – surrounding our existence are acquiring histories, or non-histories, of their own. Therefore the current “new history” or anti-history is entitled to its place. The thrust of this essay is towards suggesting that it is not entitled to more than a place, and will not be enabled to claim a monopoly or an allegiance. Politics, the state, and various kinds of war, will continue to command our attention; Tolstaya’s confrontation between “civilisation” and “history” will continue to generate a history in which both are involved; and even within, as well as outside, the global consumer culture generated by the all-conquering market, communities will continue to assert their politics in order to have a voice in determining their history. It is reasonable therefore to predict, and even to recommend, a continuing dialogue, or family quarrel, between the political and the post-political, the modern and the post-modern, the historical and the post-historical, history in older and in newer senses. It is perhaps in eastern, not western Eurasia that it will finally be seen whether “history” has come to an “end” or not.

“Europeans”, in this prediction, would write their history in ways which both privileged and deprived the centrality of states, admitting that they cast

long and sometimes dark shadows in a present which may transcend the past but cannot abolish it; the pretence that there can be invented some uncomplicatedly “European” history which both includes and excludes the histories of all the nations would be given up. “British” would write their history into that of “Europe”, rewrite the latter’s history as modified by their presence in it, and continue on occasion to write the former as seen in perspectives which are less continental than insular, archipelagic, oceanic and imperial. They would probably not be the only “European” national society to do so. As for that culture with which this essay began – “New Zealand”, cut adrift from its “British” history by the advent of “Europe”, and for some purposes to be renamed “Aotearoa” – it may already have lost both political and economic control of its present and future: but if it survives at all, its historians will have learned (as they are learning) many new perspectives. They are learning rather rapidly to write their history as that of two cultures in stubborn interaction, and this reinforces rather than diminishes their sense of its autonomy; engrossed by the processes of settlement, they are already writing micro-histories of local experience and discourse, at their own distances from the history of politics and the state. If (again) they survive, their owls of Minerva will send out messages before as well as behind them on their flight, and they will address both Pacific history – which is that of small intense communities formed, separated and connected by voyagings over oceanic distances – and the history of “Europe”, “Britain” and other northern land-mass cultures from which they are derived and which they need to see in their own way. They will inform “Britain” that it has a planetary history it will not be able to forget, and “Europe” that, as there is a Eurasian world into which it shades without fixed borders, so there is an oceanic (and likewise an American) world which it created and which enlarges it into “the West”. Barriers between empires went down in 1989, and the intercontingency of the world increased. What do they know of Europe who only Europe know?

1. Andrew Sharp, *Justice and the Maori: Maori Claims in New Zealand Political Argument in the 1980s* (Auckland, [N.Z.]: Oxford University Press, 1990).
2. See Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France*. Vol. 1: *History and Environment*, trans. Siân Reynolds (London: Collins, c1988-1990).
3. J. G. A. Pocock, "The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of the Unknown Subject," *American Historical Review* LXXXVII, no.2 (1982).
4. J. G. A. Pocock, "Tangata Whenua and Enlightenment Anthropology," *New Zealand Journal of History* 26, no. 1 (1992): 28-53.
5. Tatyana Tolstaya, "In Cannibalistic Times," *New York Review of Books*, trans. Jamey Gambrell, April 11, 1991.
6. See, however, J. H. Plumb's *The Death of the Past* (1970) and David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985).

MŮŽE JET SKORO VŠUDE

MIMOČESTINY



TREKKA
TERRIFIC!

Goes Most Anywhere: The Vehicle as Motif in the Art of Michael Stevenson

Anna Parlane

Fig. 1
Michael Stevenson
*Mimocestni – Múže Jet
Skoro Všude*
[Offroad – Goes Most
Anywhere] 2003–08
Screenprint and
letterpress, edition of 8
970 x 665mm
Courtesy of the artist

Despite the fact that he once titled a work *Too Artistic to Drive*, the work of the Berlin-based artist Michael Stevenson is densely populated by vehicles.¹ From an assortment of cars, caravans and planes, to rafts, chopper motorbikes and UFOs: vehicles of all types form a leitmotif in Stevenson's practice which has continued uninterrupted by transitions between media or the mobility of their maker. The vehicles which figure so often in Stevenson's work provide a convenient metaphor for his interest in mobility more generally: in the exchanges and transactions that occur as people and things act and operate, and in the continuous circulation of economies of meaning and value. Taking the vehicular motif as its central focus, this essay is an attempt to cross-section Stevenson's formidably variegated body of work. This sectional cut links four artworks spanning his output to date, and four vehicles: an aging first generation Ford Falcon XP station wagon; a reconditioned 1968 Trekka; a ramshackle raft kept afloat by re-purposed aviation fuel tanks; and a single-engine Cessna 185 light aeroplane. It indicates a thread of startling consistency running through a body of work which seems at first glance to be extremely varied.

While vehicular transport is often associated with ideas of progress, efficiency and speed, calling to mind the high polish and svelte curves of precision engineering, Stevenson's vehicles proceed according to a non-linear logic. They are neither sleek nor streamlined, never the most efficient mode of transport, always cobbled together, recycled, outmoded or even handmade. The connections they make are aleatory, their routes rambling. Stevenson's examinations of the liquid relations of political, economic and artistic trajectories have, perhaps similarly, taken him from Inglewood, New Zealand to Berlin, Germany in a career that has progressed via a multitude of stopovers, with exhibitions in Venice, Aachen, Mönchengladbach, London, Panama City, Otterlo, Sydney, Mexico City, Frankfurt am Main.

The vehicles in *Jesus Changed My Life* (1988), *This is the Trekka* (2003), *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* (2004-06) and *A Life of Crudity, Vulgarly, and Blindness* (2012), fragile crafts in all their precise historical and material specificity, navigate the monster currents of prevailing ideologies and the perilous tidal flows of history. Each of these works is rooted in a specific history, a particular time and place, but each also acknowledges a broader frame of reference. Implicit in Stevenson's work is an itinerant's knowledge of the aggregate nature of locality, and the complex circulations and transactions that constantly crystallise, dissolve and re-combine to form our understanding of a place.

The four works I will discuss in the following text connect, and complicate, notions of locality and the global in a way that can perhaps be best understood as "worldly" in the sense recently articulated by art historian Terry Smith. Alert to the elisions and slippages in our contemporary understandings of locality, and locality's relation to globalisation, a "worldly" art "defines itself against parochialism, jingoistic nationalism and universalizing, 'globalized' art discourse."² Instead, it recognises the world as disjunctive, and also, necessarily, as "connected, in a multiplicity of ways, and with varying intensities."³ It is drawn to the ambitious task of giving form to such complexity.

Stevenson's recurrent metaphor of the vehicle seems apt for an art that is fit for a global environment; an art that is produced reflexively, using the technologies and resources to hand; an art that is vulnerable to buffeting by the environmental conditions through which it moves; an art that delights in tracking particular ideas, objects or individuals and seeking out the ways in which they corrupt, entangle or enrich generalising regionalist, nationalist and globalising ideologies. Travelling between Palmerston North, New Zealand, 1988 and Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 2012, Stevenson has charted a circumlocutionary path which I will follow in four stages, using the modes of transport provided by the artist.

Mongrel Regionalism

In *Jesus Changed My Life* (Fig. 2) a first-generation Ford Falcon XP station wagon slouches on worn springs, the driver's door agape, in a vaguely sinister scene of abandonment.⁴ The titular phrase is scrawled across the car's rear windscreen. What has happened here? A break down? Side-of-road religious conversion? The only thing that can be stated with certainty is that Jesus changed somebody's life. Particularities unknown. This, like many of Stevenson's early paintings, is an exercise in studied ambiguity; an enigmatic fragment that short-circuits interpretation. The narrative that would make sense of the depicted scene is withheld. In Stevenson's words:

That [religious] imagery came from growing up in a small-town Pentecostal setting. I just started painting what I was familiar with, although no one could figure out what the pictures were on about.

Some people thought I was proselytising, while others thought I was taking the piss out of religion.⁵

After graduating from Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts in 1986, Stevenson moved – as a 22 year-old, against the flow of city-bound traffic – to Palmerston North, with the stated intention of “inventing a mythology for the small town.”⁶ The subject matter wasn't unfamiliar, Stevenson grew up in Inglewood, Taranaki, but his deliberate re-immersion in small town life is a gesture containing something of the anthropological. The paintings Stevenson made about community life in small town New Zealand during the late 1980s and early 1990s have a feeling of double exposure. The tenderness of familiarity is overlaid with cool, almost analytic, detachment. They describe the strange and out-of-kilter, the wryly comic and the mournfully grotesque.

Stevenson's work from this period was consistently read as a revival of the New Zealand regionalist tradition: in one memorable phrase, Francis Pound described it as “an interesting, neo-regionalist footnote to McCahon.”⁷ However, Stevenson has always been drawn to cultural forms which reveal something of the flow of international traffic, objects which are dislocated as much as they are located. The Ford Falcon in *Jesus Changed My Life* is such an object. This is a car styled for a North American market in the 1960s, re-engineered in Australia, on-sold for assembly in New Zealand – and still being driven in the provinces when Stevenson's painting was made in 1988. While the U.S. ceased production of the Falcon in 1971, the car continues to proliferate in its South Pacific habitat.⁸ The practice of emblazoning cars with slogans, too, is an export as American as Ford. A unique conflation of personal expression and public advertising, the earliest bumper stickers emerged from the workshop of a Kansas City screenprinter.⁹ As Stevenson has pointed out, the dispersal and diffusion of such cultural forms and practices transcends all kinds of distance:

Fig. 2
Michael Stevenson
Jesus Changed My Life 1988
Acrylic on paper
330 x 508 mm
Chartwell Collection,
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki, 1994



The things that were popular in Inglewood [in the 1970s] were from American white trash culture: Kentucky Fried Chicken, the *Dukes of Hazzard*, hotted up cars, confederate rock and truckin'... People think of small towns as isolated but they are plugged into an international culture, only it's not a high cultural one. In Auckland they listened to Philip Glass while everyone else was into ZZ Top.¹⁰

At Elam, Stevenson was taught by painter Dick Frizzell. In the early 1980s, Frizzell's tongue-in-cheek mythologising of New Zealand kitsch was bundled together with the work of Paul Hartigan, Denys Watkins, Richard Killeen and others to form a local vanguard of postmodern figurative painting.¹¹ His works from this period simultaneously monumentalise banality (tinned fish labels, commercial signage, comic book characters) and slyly undercut such monumentalisation. Performing a similar sleight-of-hand to Stevenson's *Jesus Changed My Life*, they are ostensibly local in focus, while being international in outlook. Stevenson remembers: "Dick was very big on *source material* – you had to have a big stack of photographs in your studio, lots of books out of the library, bric-à-brac, postcards..."¹²

Frizzell has subsequently described the scene at Elam in the 1980s as one of mutual influence between himself and his students, as they each struggled to advance a viable painting practice. In an art school environment which had been dominated by installation, sculpture and intermedia practices since the 1970s, painting was an embattled medium:

With meetings... that for a giddy moment had the air of an Eastern European Underground Movement – we bumped and lurched our way from the clutch of Theory's dead-cold hand to a much sunnier and open place. From pessimistic doubts to optimistic doubts.¹³

The influence of Frizzell's clandestine band of determined painters can be read in works like *Jesus Changed My Life*. The deliberate naivety of Stevenson's paintwork, the ambiguity of his address, and his deadpan focus on an everyday object that is somehow more than the sum of its parts clearly owe something to Frizzell's example. As with Frizzell's *Good Value* (1981) or *Workin' on the Railroad* (1982), the worn-out wagon in *Jesus Changed My Life* is a precise articulation of local culture's international unconscious.¹⁴ This faithful family workhorse is not a pretentious automobile (futuristic tail lights notwithstanding). While the Falcon's 1960s modernist styling contains the vestigial traces of its heritage as an American export, by 1988 the car had been absorbed into a different local vernacular. Its down-home values, evidenced by the practicality of roof racks and tow bar, would be as recognisable in a small town in America's heartland as in Palmerston North, 1988. If this is regionalism, it's mongrel regionalism, spliced with a strong international strain.

In Stevenson's painting, however, the asymmetry of the Falcon's open driver's door subtly undermines any sense of comfortable internationalism. Providing an escape route without indicating the reason for this change of direction, the open door destabilises the painting. Rather than articulating the universality of folksy, small town values, this compositional instability, together with the painting's ambiguity, forge an uneasy combination of foreignness and familiarity. Stylistically, Stevenson's faux-innocent brushwork reinforces this sense of foreignness nested within the familiar. A knowing mimicry of an apparently naïve style, it emphasises the historical particularity of what seems natural or self-evident.

The Balance of Payments¹⁵

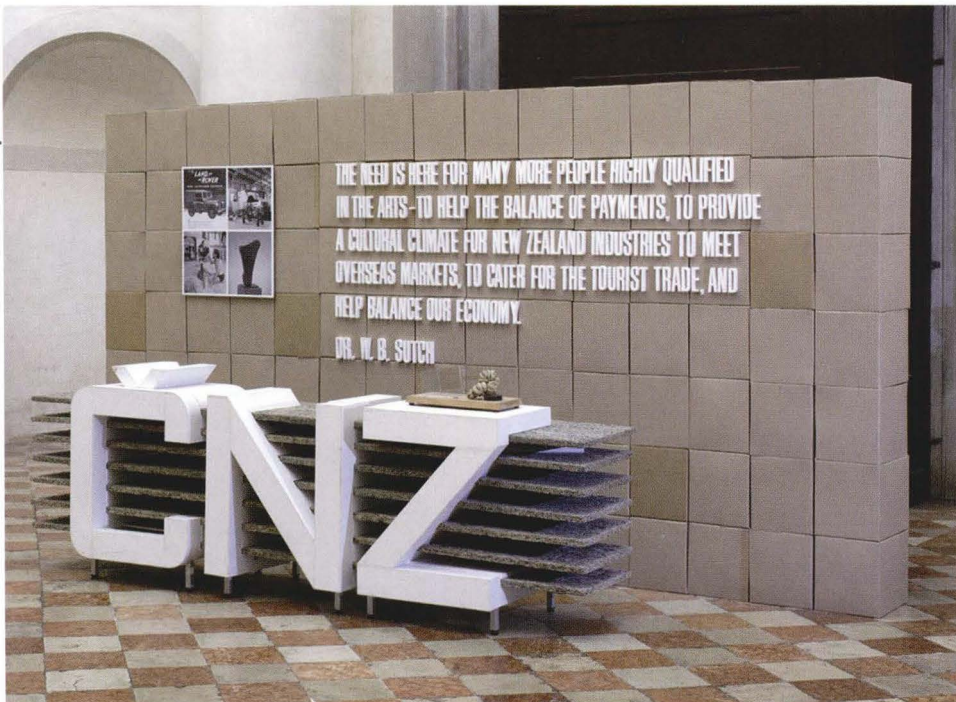
Stevenson left New Zealand in 1994 and lived in Melbourne for six years before settling in Berlin. During this period he started making the large, research-based installations for which he is now best known. Stevenson's movement offshore resulted in the expansion of his professional network and increased international recognition. In 2003 he was selected as New Zealand's representative at the Venice Biennale. Creative New Zealand's press releases for Stevenson's *This is the Trekka* (Fig. 1) pushed the international angle, promoting him as "one of New Zealand's most visible artists on the international stage."¹⁶ Like the *Trekka* itself, which as the advertising material insists, "goes most anywhere", Stevenson's role as national representative exploited his ability to mediate between international networks and "the New Zealand condition".¹⁷

Entering Stevenson's *This is the Trekka* at the Venice Biennale, the visitor was initially faced with a reproduction of a Marti Friedlander photograph.¹⁸ Friedlander's *Demo* (1968) documents a protest against the Soviet repression of Czechoslovakia's "Prague Spring".¹⁹ Standing in Auckland's Aotea Square, the protesters face the camera and also into the sun. Blinded and bemused, squinting at the world, they impotently proffer their handmade placards. For Stevenson, this image condenses 1968 New Zealand's "strange, confused" understanding of offshore events.²⁰ Positioned to greet visitors entering New Zealand's enclave in Venice, it also comically reenacts the fixed horizon-ward stare of Bill Hammond's birds, forever looking outwards from their island prison, or poet Charles Brasch's melancholy nationalism with "face turned always to the sea."²¹ The tropes of islands and distance, as Francis Pound thoroughly articulated in his 2009 *The Invention of New Zealand*, perpetually haunt New Zealand's art and cultural analysis.²² Restless horizon-gazing, lonely isolation, rootlessness in a hostile landscape: the very *lack* of cultural belonging has itself become a mournful kind of cultural belonging for the descendants of New Zealand's European colonisers, powerful in its tragic air of displacement, loss and stoicism.

Stevenson's trajectory, however, cuts across this well-worn path. His interest in distance is of a different sort. Friedlander's photograph does not depict the

melancholy sublime of a windswept coastal landscape, it shows the discordant vocalisations of local politics embedded in an international context. As Stevenson makes explicit in *This is the Trekka*, the unlikely collaboration between Czechoslovakia and New Zealand that produced the Trekka (a collaboration that continued throughout the Prague Spring of 1968) arose out of a fortuitous mix of public initiative, private enterprise, a mutual appreciation for bartering, and Slivovitz plum brandy.

This is the Trekka presents the story of New Zealand's only locally made assembly-line vehicle, produced during the late 1960s and into the 1970s. New Zealand's then highly protected economy made importing consumer goods difficult and expensive. The Trekka was an entrepreneurial solution to consumer demand for affordable cars. A (very) low-budget version of a Land Rover, the car was 70% locally made, with an engine and chassis produced by the Czech company Škoda and imported from behind the Iron Curtain at the height of the Cold War. This politically irregular arrangement was a creative response to what Trekka historian Todd Niall has called "perhaps the most distorted [car market] in the Western world."²³ An economy straight jacketed into supporting local industry thus produced a product that trumpeted its nationalism while literally being powered by mechanical parts imported from overseas. As Niall relates in Stevenson's exhibition catalogue, New Zealand entrepreneur Noel Turner brokered the relationship with Škoda in an informal fashion:



There is a story that in one bunch of negotiations, he clinched the deal by producing a suitcase full of sausage casings, which New Zealand produced very well [as a by-product of agricultural industry] and which, in Czechoslovakia, because of the [political] situation, were not easily obtainable and were highly sought after . . . Turner wouldn't miss an opportunity to make a buck.²⁴

However, the unique market conditions provided by “Fortress New Zealand” didn't last for long. Britain's decision to join the European Union in 1973 effectively severed the “umbilical cord of butter” that joined New Zealand to its colonial parent.²⁵ No longer able to operate as Britain's offshore farm, New Zealand's policymakers were suddenly forced to trade in a world disinclined to indulge a protected economy. The import tariffs began to be lifted. Unable to compete with the ensuing flood of high quality imported vehicles, the remaining stock of *Trekka* components was eventually – quite literally – deposited at the local rubbish tip.

Stevenson's *This is the Trekka* adopts a proposal made by the architect of New Zealand's post-War economic nationalism, W. B. Sutch, as a guide (Fig. 3). It was Sutch who had applied the logic of import substitution (the effort to manufacture industrial products locally rather than importing them) to New Zealand's economy. He argued that greater self-sufficiency would insulate New Zealand from the fluctuations of the global economy – and maybe even allow it to become an exporter. The balance of payments, the register of inward and outward transactions flowing across national borders that accounts for a country's financial dealings with the wider world, would show a healthier figure if New Zealand could manufacture locally rather than purchasing offshore. In a 1960 speech, Sutch applied the principle of import substitution to the arts. By building cultural infrastructure to support the arts locally, he argued, artists could be recruited to the task of helping the balance of payments by reducing expenditure of foreign reserves:

The need is here for many more people highly qualified in the arts – to help the balance of payments, to provide a cultural climate for New Zealand industries to meet overseas markets, to provide for urban living, to cater for the tourist trade, and to help balance our economy.²⁶

Writ large in *This is the Trekka*, Sutch's notion of artistic import substitution serves to describe a double movement. Both inward- and outward-looking, import substitution aims for self-sufficiency, while holding the ultimate goal of building an economy able to compete in the world market. In an application of this economic principle to artistic creation, *This is the Trekka* measures the “locally produced” against the “imported”. In a sequence of archival photographs displayed in the installation, an image of the *Trekka* is paired with its *doppelgänger*, the British Range Rover, and reclusive New Zealand painter

Fig. 3
Michael Stevenson
This is the Trekka 2003
Detail of installation at
the 50th Biennale di
Venezia
Collection of Museum
of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa, 2005
Photo: Jennifer French

Michael Illingworth faces off against English artist Barbara Hepworth's sculpture *Torso II (Torcello)* (1958). *Torso II* caused a fuss when it was acquired by Auckland City Art Gallery in 1963.²⁷ At the princely sum of £950, it was at the time the most expensive piece of foreign artwork to enter a New Zealand museum collection, and the sculpture's acquisition sparked a heated discussion of the Gallery's use of ratepayer's funds. Stevenson represents the monetary value of a Range Rover and Hepworth's *Torso II* with wall-sized stacks of the true New Zealand currency of the 1960s: export quality butter.

Tasked with acting as New Zealand's national representative in Venice, Stevenson's response was to complicate the whole notion of national representation. Presenting the *Trekka*, mechanical avatar and awkward anti-hero of New Zealand national pride, he troubled the fundamental premise of his own participation at the Biennale. Instead of seeking to smooth the entry of triumphant New Zealand nationalism into the Biennale's international arena, he presented an object with a decidedly ambiguous genealogy: an object which was, however, produced using the very real ties that Stevenson has to the place of his birth. The *Trekka* was the product of a unique mix of public policy and private connections, and similarly *This is the Trekka* arose from a combination of state funding, private patronage, international industry networks and local community support, including that of Stevenson's home town. Stevenson's father, Alan Stevenson, worked with fellow Inglewood local Eric Allerby to restore the *Trekka* that was exhibited in Venice. In a documentary about the project made for Radio New Zealand, Alan Stevenson described how the restoration of the *Trekka* became a community effort in Inglewood:

... we got into the business of using other tradespeople around the town. Now, we're just a small town of about 3000, but a lovely little community and everybody works together – and so you could go up to the engineering company just up the road and say, 'what about sandblasting and painting the chassis?' And they'd say, 'ok, send it up.' And that happened all along the way. So its really been an Inglewood project.²⁸

This is the Trekka maps a transition from a state of economic near-autarchy to open international trade; but it also complicates the story of our inexorable movement from heterogeneity in art and industry towards globalised homogeneity. "Biennale culture", commonly cited as the art world's version of globalisation, is a culture that New Zealand entered belatedly and hesitantly, though it proved – eventually – to be an irresistible force. *This is the Trekka* invites reflection on the extent to which, as New Zealand's second ever official representative in Venice, Stevenson was charged with "helping the balance of payments" through the international export of New Zealand art.

In hindsight, the *Trekka* – as the final, heroic, exertion of New Zealand's attempt to achieve economic autonomy – was always doomed to founder in

the face of the awesome circulatory force of global capital. However, as an unlikely entrepreneurial collaboration between New Zealand and Czech private enterprise it also enacted – on a very small scale – capital’s effacement of national and political boundaries. The *Trekka* was simultaneously the product of isolationist policies and a strange precursor of globalised industry, and as such unites the contradictory aspirations of self-sufficiency and economic cooperation. *This is the Trekka* draws a parallel between artistic autonomy and economic self-sufficiency, revealing the import and export that are – and have always been – integral to both. As Stevenson has dryly observed, even at the height of New Zealand art’s nationalistic fervour in the mid-20th century, “key components were sourced overseas.”²⁹

Stevenson’s strategy of re-mobilising found histories in works like *This is the Trekka* taps into a trend in art practice which began to take shape in the late 1990s. Works like Tacita Dean’s *Disappearance at Sea* (1996), which evokes the saga of Donald Crowhurst’s fatal entry in the 1968 Golden Globe yacht race; Simon Starling’s *Le Jardin Suspendu* (1998), Gerard Byrne’s *Why it’s time for Imperial, again* (1998–2002), or Jeremy Deller’s reenacted *Battle of Orgreave* (2001), range freely across history. This group of artists, all born in the mid to late 1960s, are each concerned with ideas of transmission and trade, and the circulation and mediation of forms as they travel across time and geography. Interestingly, an overt vehicular motif can be traced through Starling’s practice in particular,³⁰ and can also be seen in Dean’s fascination with maritime adventure and misfortune. Stevenson’s own trajectory developed via a number of collaborative works that he produced during his time in Melbourne, as a member of the art/music collective Slave Pianos.³¹ The Slave Pianos production *The Strange Voyage of Bas Jan Ader* also adopts Donald Crowhurst as a protagonist. It was performed in 2001 as a chamber opera derived from writings by Crowhurst and artist Bas Jan Ader.³² Drawing together Ader’s fatal attempt in 1975 to cross the Atlantic in a 12-foot boat and Crowhurst’s similarly tragic journey, *The Strange Voyage of Bas Jan Ader* conflates artistic practice, maritime voyaging and metaphysical dislocation: a group of ideas that Stevenson revisited with *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* in 2004.

The Price of Autonomy

Stevenson’s *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* (Fig. 4) was made the year following *This is the Trekka*, and while both works were produced while Stevenson was resident in Berlin, both revisit his former antipodean homes. Where *This is the Trekka* refracts New Zealand national representation through a global lens, *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* situates the current Australian politics of border control in a regional framework. Stevenson’s installation maps a complex field of exchanges. Its centrepiece is a full-scale reconstruction of a raft on which the Australian artist Ian Fairweather made an eccentric and near-suicidal journey from Darwin to Indonesia in 1952. Built from discarded military supplies – aviation fuel “drop” tanks for flotation and a parachute for a sail – as well as other scavenged odds and ends, Fairweather’s vessel was complete bricolage.

Fig. 4
Michael Stevenson
Argonauts of the Timor Sea
2004–06
Detail of installation at *The
5th Asia Pacific Triennial of
Contemporary Art Queensland
Art Gallery*, 2006–07
Collection of Queensland Art
Gallery, Brisbane, 2004



His voyage, rendered Homeric in Stevenson's telling, is positioned in a terrain rich with histories of material and intellectual trade, salvage and redeployment; a cartography criss-crossed by traces of influence and indebtedness.

Stevenson's painting *Rute Migrasi Lama* [Long Migration Routes] (2004), is one of two paintings included in the installation which illustrate, in the diagrammatic style of a 1970s educational encyclopedia, this cartography of movement.³³ Through reference to a miscellany of key sites in the migration and settlement of Southeast Asia and Australia, *Rute Migrasi Lama* describes the mobility of prehistoric, ancient and modern populations. Stevenson's map marks, for example, the location of Wajak, Indonesia, where early hominid remains known as "Wadjak Man" were discovered in the late nineteenth century;³⁴ Makassar, an international port which was the hub, from the eighteenth century, of the vigorous trepang industry that formed a historical connection between China and Aboriginal groups in northern Australia;³⁵ Keilor, the site of an ancient Aboriginal settlement in Melbourne's north-west;³⁶ and Cooktown, Queensland, where James Cook's *Endeavour* landed for repairs before

proceeding to map Australia's eastern coast. The painting telescopes vast spans of time into a single image. Its long view of boundaries made permeable by trade, by developments in technology, and by the appearance and disappearance of land bridges and islands due to fluctuations in sea level, sits in stark contrast to the hardening of political borders in contemporary Australia. The initial exhibition of *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* took place in Sydney during the aftermath of the 2001 *Tampa* crisis, and *Rute Migrasi Lama's* pedagogical tone reprimands Australian party-political scaremongering over asylum seekers.³⁷

Cutting back in the opposite direction to the migratory routes of ancient and contemporary boat people, Fairweather's journey was nevertheless also that of an outsider, an individual displaced from a polity. In his recent *Cosmopolitanism and Culture*, Nikos Papastergiadis described the climate of "ambient fear" radiating out from the United States after September 2001.³⁸ The Howard government's response to the *Tampa* crisis and the attack on New York's World Trade Centre was to link anti-terrorism law with migration policy and initiate border lockdown. For Papastergiadis, public debate over the brutality of the Australian government's refugee policies indicated a "genuine dilemma" which "could not be resolved by promoting either the 'goodness' of hospitality or the 'righteousness' of sovereign authority."³⁹ *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* holds this "genuine dilemma" in tension: in an intrinsically fluid landscape, the mobility of agents across borders and through states will always occur via transactions. Fairweather crossed sovereign borders on his own terms and using his own resources: in a raft manufactured from found materials, he set out into the deep unknown without the permission or knowledge of the state. The price of his autonomy was his terrible vulnerability.

First exhibited at Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney in 2004, Stevenson's project also travelled to Herbert Read Gallery in Canterbury, U.K., and then on to Germany's Neuer Aachener Kunstverein (NAK) before coming to rest in the collection of Queensland Art Gallery. *The Gift* (2004-06),⁴⁰ Stevenson's reconstruction of Fairweather's raft, which rests stationary in the gallery as the centrepiece of the installation, was mobilised during these global peregrinations.⁴¹ In the U.K., Stevenson worked with the 2nd Whitstable Sea Scout Troop to build a new version of the raft on Whitstable Beach, which he then attempted to sail to the island of Sheppey near the mouth of the Thames. The video documentation of this effort, *Making for Sheppey* (2004), shows the artist engaged in industrious collaboration before, ultimately, setting out solo: a gesture which recounts the fragility of Fairweather's position when he launched himself seaward half a century earlier.

The Gift underwent a radical reinvention for its third showing. In May 2005, with the participation of a group of German art collectors known as Twodo, Stevenson staged the ceremonial dismemberment of his work at Aachen's NAK. Playing on anthropologist Marcel Mauss's theory of gift exchange, Stevenson's

Die Aufteilung [The Distribution] presented *The Gift* as the material embodiment of ongoing social and economic relationships. Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern presided over the event, in which Stevenson and the members of Twodo literally cut the raft into pieces. The dismembered raft was then reworked by the artist into a number of discrete items ranging from the functionally domestic (cooking pots, ashtrays) to the comical (a full-size gong). These were exhibited at the NAK in August 2005 under the title *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* before being dispersed among the collections of the Twodo group.⁴²

Nigel Clark's astute 2010 essay "Acquiescence: Fluid Realities and Planned Retreat," read *Argonauts of the Timor Sea's* multiple manifestations as a meditation on the place of hospitality in a world perpetually engaged in fluid exchange, and teetering on the brink of climatic disaster.⁴³ As Clark points out, "the circuits of gifting and exchanging that Stevenson traces and enacts around the globe... play through each other... just as centre and so-called periphery meet, transact, change places."⁴⁴ *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* certainly maps economies of exchange, and the movement of objects and people across time and geography, but it does not describe movements that are smooth or discrete. These things are *sticky*: they pick up debris and leave trails of residue. Their transactions, borrowings and encounters create persistent traces. The model for Stevenson's raft, the Ian Fairweather original, was never documented before it was dismantled by the Roti Islanders who took Fairweather in, dehydrated and hallucinating after drifting for 16 wave-tossed days in the Timor Sea.⁴⁵ It was the Australian historian Peter Spiller, who travelled to Roti and brought back a drawing by Roti fisherman Bapak Raja Syion, that provided Stevenson's template. Several times salvaged, remade and remobilised, *The Gift* is saturated with previous lives and encounters. Its timbers, ingeniously re-adapted, bear the trace of their former uses – nail holes, paint residue – and in their mode of construction they also articulate a whole history of technologies of survival and exploration. Lashed together with rope, sealed with tar, chiselled and hammered into mortise and tenon joints, *The Gift's* component parts are assembled using the knowledge of ancient seafarers.⁴⁶

Argonauts of the Timor Sea doesn't just describe the arbitrariness of political borders, it enacts and re-enacts the itinerant agency of material technologies. With Fairweather's raft as an example, it shows how objects (including art objects) mediate the transactions which form human relationships and enable human mobility. In a recent essay, art historian Lars Bang Larsen proposed that the gravely inadequate remuneration of creative workers under late capitalism is systematically offset by payment in symbolic capital.⁴⁷ In this system, mobility and international "exposure" become currency, provided as payment to artists in lieu of hard cash. The artist's survival in this economy becomes a matter of gambling on the promise that today's travel will boost future earning potential. Today's investment can be cashed in tomorrow, when – or, if – your stocks are up. It is a system remarkably similar to speculative "futures trading" in neoliberal

financial markets; but rather than transactions effected digitally, it relies on the relentless physical movement of objects and people around the globe. Like Fairweather on his raft, at the mercy of winds and currents, autonomy that comes at such a price is not really autonomy at all. Stevenson's video performance *Making for Sheppey* and the dismemberment of his raft in *Die Aufteilung* make the parallels that he draws in *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* explicit: between the kind of material transactions embodied in the construction and design of *The Gift*, Fairweather's historical navigation across state borders and Stevenson's own position in a global network based on relentless movement and transaction.

Theory of Flight

In 2012, Stevenson travelled to Mexico City and Frankfurt am Main to produce two exhibitions; two more chapters in a story that he first began in Panamá in 2008.⁴⁸ *Nueva Matemática* at Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, and *A Life of Crudity, Vulgarity and Blindness* at Portikus gallery, further developed Stevenson's fascination with José de Jesús Martínez, and particularly with a short, meditative text Martínez authored in 1979 titled *Teoría del Vuelo* [Theory of Flight] (Fig. 5).⁴⁹

Martínez, who was Nicaraguan by birth but Panamanian by choice, was universally known in his adopted country as "Chuchú". A man of many and various talents, Chuchú was a mathematician, philosopher, soldier, poet, playwright and a keen aviator who owned and flew several light aircraft. He held doctorates from universities in Paris and Madrid, taught abstract algebra and mathematical logic at the Universidad de Panamá, and worked as bodyguard and aide to General Omar Torrijos, Panamá's military leader from 1968-81. During the Sandinista uprising in Nicaragua in the 1970s, Chuchú regularly risked his life flying weapons and food to the revolutionaries' guerrilla camps in the mountains, and transporting Nicaraguan refugees back into Panamá. In the words of the Argentine journalist Stella Calloni: "He was dark and luminous at the same time."⁵⁰

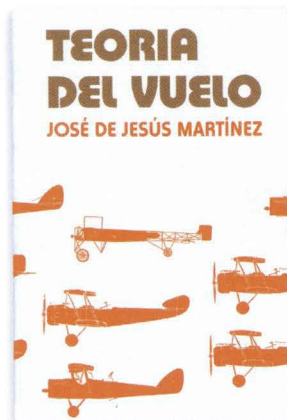


Fig. 5
José de Jesús Martínez
Teoría del Vuelo [Theory
of Flight] [1979]
Cover
Köln: Verlag der
Buchlandlung Walther
König, 2012

Published in association
with Michael Stevenson's
exhibitions *Nueva
Matemática*, Museo
Tamayo Arte Contemporá-
neo, Mexico City, 26 August
– 18 November 2012 and
*A Life of Crudity, Vulgarity
and Blindness*, Portikus,
Frankfurt am Main, 29
September – 2 December
2012.



For the exhibition at Portikus, Stevenson transformed the entire structure of the gallery into a *camera obscura* (Fig. 6). He made a near life-size replica of Chuchú's plane, a single-engine Cessna 185, and installed it, like a ship in a bottle, in Portikus's glass-roofed attic. The plane was only directly visible from outside the gallery, looking back from the far bank of the river through the sloping attic windows. Inside, light flooding in through these windows transported an image of the plane out: via another small window in the attic wall, through a series of lenses and mirrors, and down a huge purpose-built light shaft which Stevenson had grafted onto the exterior of the building. It travelled a total of 18 metres to arrive as a ghostly apparition, rear-projected through a set of double doors into the darkened exhibition space two floors below. As Stevenson has pointed out, while the projection seemed static, it was actually in continuous motion. In his words: "I think it is actually closer to a film than a photograph – it is not still – it shimmers – vibrates – and it is updated at infinite intervals."⁵¹

The title *A Life of Crudity, Vulgarity, and Blindness* is lifted from Chuchú's 1979 essay, which Stevenson republished for his exhibition as a slim booklet printed on airmail paper. The feather-light *Teoría del Vuelo* reflects on the pilot's miraculous ability to coax his own body and the mechanical bulk of his plane into a state of weightless suspension. Temporarily liberated from the gravity-bound struggle of everyday existence – a life of crudity – for the pilot in flight "Objects have physically disappeared. Only their images and their memory remain."⁵² This is not a text that addresses aeronautical physics or mechanics; it is a poetic

Fig. 6
Michael Stevenson
*A Life of Crudity, Vulgarity
and Blindness* 2012
Detail of installation at
Portikus, Frankfurt am
Main
Photo: Helena Schlichting

meditation on the sensation of flight. Flight is here a metaphor, both escape fantasy and survival strategy.

The raft in Stevenson's *Argonauts of the Timor Sea* cuts a romantic figure as it rests in the gallery under full sail, with flag aloft. Like something from a children's story, there is a wistful, fantastical quality to this sea-going vessel made from re-purposed aviation supplies – materials that “literally fell out of the sky” – as if this strange bricolage of the technologies of air and sea might simply take flight.⁵³ However, it is Chuchú's plane which enacts the magical transformation that Fairweather's raft dreams of: it dematerialises into light, and in so doing, becomes infinitely mobile.

But this exquisite mobility is ephemeral. A camera is usually a device for capturing light and fixing it in permanent materiality, but the *camera obscura* that Stevenson wrought from Portikus's architecture created an image which was overwritten, irrevocably lost and remade, every instant. It left no material trace. As Fairweather knew, and as Stevenson constantly reiterates, mobility – autonomy, the freedom to operate – comes at a price. The absolute specificity of, for example, Ian Fairweather's raft, or Chuchú's single-engine Cessna, or a first generation Ford Falcon XP, or a 1968 Trekka lovingly restored in Inglewood, Taranaki, plays against the fluid network of relations within which these objects operate. Each of these vehicles is a technology developed under very specific conditions and in response to a particular terrain; each is the product of a particular time and place. However, each also offers the means of mobility; a way of transcending such particularity, crossing borders, making unexpected connections. In Stevenson's hands, these vehicles are shown to be agents of history, negotiating between the particular and general, and also models of a way of moving through the world. They track some of the convolutions of the perpetually uneasy exchanges between locality and globalism, and the fraught question of individual mobility and survival in the broad, continuously circulating currents of political, artistic and economic exchange. Transactions occur, autonomy is compromised, and movement continues.

1. Michael Stevenson, *Too Artistic to Drive*, 1996. Photocopy and collage on paper in found VHS cover, 225 x 147 x 40mm. Collection of Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.
2. Terry Smith, “Background Currents: Modern and Contemporary Art, World Currents, China,” *The Research House for Asian Art*, January 24, 2013, <http://www.xzine.org/rhaa/?p=752> (accessed September 15, 2013).
3. Terry Smith, “Currents of World-Making in Contemporary Art,” *World Art* 1, no. 2 (September 2011): 171–88.
4. Michael Stevenson, *Jesus Changed My Life*, 1988. Acrylic on paper, 330 x 508mm. Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.
5. Gregory O'Brien, “Michael Stevenson: Putting the Fun into Fundamentalism,” in *Lands & Deeds: Profiles of*

Contemporary New Zealand Painters (Auckland: Godwit, 1996), 136–7.

6. Michael Stevenson, “Biographical Notes,” c1988. Michael Stevenson Artist File, E H McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.
7. Francis Pound, “In the Wake of McCahon: A Commentary on *After McCahon*,” *Art New Zealand* 52 (1989): 80. In the catalogue for her 1989 exhibition *After McCahon*, Christina Barton presented Stevenson's religious paintings as an inclusive and populist postmodern alternative to Colin McCahon's thundering prophetic modernism (“Not I Paul to you at *Ngatimote* but *Jesus loves us all: in Clinton*”), skating over the hint of sarcasm in Stevenson's title. Christina Barton, “After-words: Conversation Around McCahon,” in *After McCahon: Some Configurations in Recent Art* (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1989), 12. See also

- Douglas Standing, "Between Remembering and Forgetting: Painting at the Periphery," in *Distance Looks Our Way, 10 Artists from New Zealand*, ed. Mary Barr (Wellington: Distance Looks Our Way Trust, 1992), 95-102; and also Miro Bilbrough, "Changing Fashion in Artistic Tastes," *The Evening Post*, April 13, 1989.
8. The Falcon series has been manufactured by Ford Australia since 1972 and now sells almost exclusively in Australia and New Zealand – but not for much longer. Collapsing sales have led to Ford Australia's decision to discontinue manufacture in 2016. Geoff Easdown, *The Falcon Story: An Illustrated History*, (Melbourne: Lothian Publishing Co, 1989), 68; and Alan Stokes, "Why You Should Be Mad as Hell About the Falcon's Demise," *The Age*, May 23, 2013, <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/why-you-should-be-mad-as-hell-about-the-falcons-demise-20130523-2k2n4.html#ixzz2XUMsobos> (accessed June 28, 2013).
 9. Brendan M. Lynch, "Researcher Works to Preserve Bumper Stickers, a Kansas Invention," *The University of Kansas*, February 14, 2011, <http://archive.news.ku.edu/2011/february/14/bumperstickers.shtml> (accessed June 28, 2013).
 10. Robert Leonard, "Smokers Please: Robert Leonard Talks to Artist Michael Stevenson," *Midwest 4* (1994): 33.
 11. Francis Pound's Auckland City Art Gallery exhibition *New Image* included works by Wong Sing Tai, Denys Watkins, Richard Killeen, Paul Hartigan, Dick Frizzell, Gavin Chilcott and George Balogh. Francis Pound, "New Image," in *New Image: Aspects of Recent New Zealand Art*, ed. Ron Brownson (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1983), 8-9.
 12. Michael Stevenson quoted in O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 135. Emphasis in original.
 13. Frizzell notes that during this difficult period: "I was incredibly fortunate to be in the company of an unusually talented intake of students at Elam. Mike Stevenson, Karl Maughan, Michael Harrison, Jo Pegler – all very determined young people who had no intention of NOT painting just because – globally – the practice was struggling to find a way forward." Dick Frizzell, *Dick Frizzell: The Painter*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Random House, 2012), 134-5.
 14. Frizzell's *Everybody's Business* series was first exhibited at RKS Art, Auckland, 1982. The series, ostensibly focusing on small local businesses, is peppered with references to the slippage between the local and international. For example, *Workin' on the Railroad* features an image of a Pacific Island man carrying a Rose's Lime Juice branded carton and an Air New Zealand branded satchel. Rose's Lime Juice originated in Leith, Scotland, where it was primarily sold to the Merchant Navy to be taken by sailors as a precaution against scurvy. The slang term 'limey,' originally meaning a British sailor, derives from the enforced consumption of medicinal lime juice on Merchant Navy ships. The term was subsequently used in Australia and New Zealand to refer to British immigrants generally. "Rose's Lime Juice," *Leith Local History Society*, 2012, http://leithlocalhistorysociety.org.uk/businesses/roses_lime_juice.htm (accessed June 7, 2013); and "Limey," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*, ed. John Ayto and John Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199543700.001.0001/acref-9780199543700-e-2588> (accessed June 7, 2013).
 15. The balance of payments is a term used in economics. Summarising a country's financial transactions with the outside world, the balance of payments accounts for exports and imports, foreign direct investment, and fluctuations in official foreign exchange reserves, among other transactions. See "Balance of Payments," in *A Dictionary of Economics*, ed. John Black, Nigar Hashmizade, and Gareth Myles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199237043.001.0001/acref-9780199237043-e-155> (accessed 9 September 2013).
 16. "Media Release: New Zealand at 50th La Biennale di Venezia," Creative New Zealand, June 12, 2003.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. Friedlander is celebrated for the unusually sharp "outsider's eye" that, as an immigrant from the U.K. in 1958, she brought to her representations of life in New Zealand.
 19. Marti Friedlander, *Demo*, 1968. Gelatin silver print, toned with gold, 323 x 479mm. Collection of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Marti Friedlander, with assistance from the Elise Mourant Bequest.
 20. Michael Stevenson, in Todd Niall, "Trekka Goes to Venice," aired October 27, 2003 (Wellington: Radio New Zealand, 2003), radio broadcast.
 21. See for example Bill Hammond, *Watching For Buller*, 1993. Oil on canvas, 1000 x 1200mm. Collection of The James Wallace Arts Trust, Tauranga Art Gallery, <http://collection.wallaceartstrust.org.nz/collection/search.do;jsessionid=4A937DBD65F49A83DAAB51E169D3FF30?id=19100&db=object&view=detail> (accessed September 9, 2013); Charles Brasch, "The Land and the People (i)," in *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45*, ed. Allen Curnow (Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1945), 142.
 22. Francis Pound, "Islands, Landfalls, Distance," in *The Invention of New Zealand: Art & National Identity, 1930-1970* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009), 38-50.
 23. Todd Niall, *The Trekka Dynasty* (Auckland: Iconic Publishing, 2004), 109.
 24. Todd Niall in Boris Kremer, "Suitcase Full of Sausage Casings: An Interview with Trekka Historian Todd Niall," in Michael Stevenson, *This is the Trekka* (Wellington, Frankfurt: Creative New Zealand, Revolver - Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2003), 25. Stevenson's sculpture (which doubles as a mechanical Slivovitz dispenser) *The Hidden Hand*, 2003, infers that these negotiations were also lubricated by the popular Czech plum brandy.
 25. In 1934, A.R.D. Fairburn presented New Zealand's privileged economic relationship with Britain as a hindrance to its burgeoning cultural nationalism: "The umbilical cord of butter-fat has held us in strict dependence on the motherland, culturally no less than economically. We are, even to-day, far from dreaming of a latch-key. That cord, hardened into debt, will continue to hold us in subservience, and will exert a drag on any movements toward a culture of our own." A.R.D. Fairburn, "Some Aspects of New Zealand Art and Letters," *Art in New Zealand* 6, no. 4 (June 1934): 214.
 26. W.B. Sutcliff, "The Importance of the Arts Today," reproduced in Stevenson, *This is the Trekka*, 70. Originally presented as the opening address at the Annual Meeting of the New Zealand Federation of Chamber Music Societies, Wellington, April 23, 1960.
 27. The Gallery's intended purchase of *Torso II (Torcello)*, 1958 was controversially blocked by Auckland's City Council. The sculpture was eventually purchased by a local businessman and anonymously donated to the Gallery. See "The Barbara Hepworth Affair," *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 49 (March 1971): 18, <http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/media/307913/q49.pdf> (accessed 28 June 2013).
 28. Alan Stevenson, in Niall, "Trekka Goes to Venice."
 29. Michael Stevenson, quoted in Robert Leonard, "New Zealand at Venice," (Wellington: Creative New Zealand, 2003), n.p.
 30. For example, Starling's *Flaga 1972-2000*, 2002 formed an automotive companion piece to Stevenson's *This is the Trekka* when both were shown at the 50th Venice

- Biennale. The commonalities between the two artist's interests and approach were underscored when Starling nominated Stevenson's *On How Things Behave*, 2010 as his pick for *Artforum's* "The Artists' Artists: Best of 2010," *Artforum* 49, no. 4 (December 2010): 97.
31. Slave Planos was founded in 1998 by Stevenson, Danius Kesminas, Neil Kelly and Rohan Drape.
 32. Slave Planos, *The Strange Voyage of Bas Jan Ader*, 2001. A radio play in one act for six players, six instruments and two-channel tape, 28 min. Text by Slave Planos after writings by Bas Jan Ader and Donald Crowhurst. Commissioned by the Neuer Aachener Kunstverein. First performed as the first part of a two-part chamber opera on October 14 and 16, 2001 at the Klangbruecke in Aachen and Malkasten in Dusseldorf.
 33. Michael Stevenson, *Rute Migrasi Lama*, 2004, from *Argonauts of the Timor Sea*. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas with maple rods and string, 1910 x 1680 x 23mm (installed). Collection of Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.
 34. Paul Storm and Andrew J. Nelson note that while there is currently no consensus as to the dating of the Wajak material, "Many scholars have suggested that early populations were very mobile, and that Wadjak may represent one of these groups coming into or leaving southeast Asia." (Paul Storm and Andrew J. Nelson, "The Many Faces of Wadjak Man," *Archaeology in Oceania* 27, no. 1 (April 1992): 39.).
 35. The name "trepang", derived from the Makassar *teripang*, refers to several species of edible sea cucumber which were harvested off the coast of what is now Australia's Northern Territory and sold to Chinese merchants. Makassar is a port on the southern coast of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. See Charles Campbell MacKnight, *The Voyage to Marege: Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976); and Marcia Langton, *Trepang: China and the Story of Macassan-Aboriginal Trade* [Hai Shen: Hua Ren, Wangjiaxi Ren, Aozhou Tu Zhu Ren De Gu Shi] ed. Alejandra Duschatzky and Stephanie Holt (Melbourne: Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation, University of Melbourne, 2011).
 36. The discovery of a 14,500-year old human cranium at Keilor profoundly altered contemporary awareness of the antiquity of Aboriginal inhabitation of Australia. Archaeologist Gary Presland has estimated that people have inhabited the territories of the Kulin nation for up to 40,000 years. Gary Presland, *First People: The Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Central Victoria* (Melbourne: Museum Victoria, 2010), 8.
 37. The debate over how to administrate the arrival of desperate, unauthorised asylum seekers on Australia's shores still continues to claim front-page headlines, and dominated electoral campaigning during Australia's recent federal election.
 38. Nikos Papastergiadis, *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), 19-35.
 39. *Ibid.*, 7.
 40. Michael Stevenson, *The Gift*, 2004-06, from *Argonauts of the Timor Sea*. Aluminium, wood, hemp, rope, bamboo, acrylic paint, World War II silk parachute, 4000 x 6000 x 3000mm (approx). Collection of Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.
 41. The raft's immobility is comically underlined by the signal flag displaying a white "X" on a blue ground which hangs off its rigging. This is the national flag of Scotland, the country of Ian Fairweather's birth, but according to international maritime code it also indicates the letter M, "Mike", or the signal "My vessel is stopped and making no way through the water." "Signalling Instructions," *International Code of Signals for Visual, Sound and Radio Communications, United States Edition* (Washington, D.C.: National Imagery and Mapping Agency, 2003), 18, 22, <http://www.seasources.net/PDF/PUB1012.pdf> (accessed 17 May 2013).
 42. The surviving version of *The Gift* held in the collection of Queensland Art Gallery is one of three that Stevenson has made.
 43. Nigel Clark, "Acquiescence: Fluid Realities and Planned Retreat," *Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture*, no. 4 (2010): 42-59.
 44. Clark, *op. cit.*, 57.
 45. Stevenson's *Die Aufteilung* reproduces this act of reciprocation. Fairweather's raft was dismantled and its raw materials taken, apparently in exchange for the Roti Islanders' benevolent hospitality towards its skipper. In *Die Aufteilung* Stevenson's raft was also dismantled and gifted in exchange for the Twodo group's hospitality towards its maker.
 46. Maritime archaeologist Cheryl Ward has dated the use of fixed, or pegged, mortise and tenon joints to 3300-3000 BC. The carpentry technique was used in ancient Egyptian graves and furniture construction, and was a key feature of early boat construction in Egypt and the Mediterranean. The "Khufu Ship" unearthed near the Great Pyramid at Giza, dating to 2500 BC, uses mortise and tenon joints. See: Cheryl Ward, "World's Oldest Planked Boats," *Archaeology* 54, no. 3 (May/June 2001): 45; and Cheryl Ward, "Boat-building and its Social Context in Early Egypt: Interpretations from the First Dynasty Boat-grave Cemetery at Abydos," *Antiquity* 80 (2006): 118-129.
 47. Lars Bang Larsen, "The Paradox of Art and Work: An Irritating Note," in Jonatan Habib Engqvist, Annika Enqvist, Michele Masucci, Lisa Rosendahl, and Cecilia Widenheim, eds. *Work Work Work: A Reader on Art and Labour* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 18-27.
 48. Stevenson's film *Introducción a la Teoría de la Probabilidad*, 2008, which takes Martínez as its protagonist, was made for the 2008 Bienal de Panamá *The Sweet Burnt Smell of History*.
 49. Originally published as José de Jesús Martínez, *Teoría del Vuelo*, Colección "9 de enero" (Panamá: Centro de Impresión Educativa, 1979).
 50. Stella Calloni, quoted in William Grigsby Vado, "Nicaragua: Passionate Memories from Times of Solidarity," *Envío* 276 (2004), <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2213> (accessed June 28, 2013).
 51. Michael Stevenson, email correspondence, October 21, 2012.
 52. José de Jesús Martínez, *Teoría del Vuelo*, trans. Michelle Suderman (Köln: Verlag der Buchlandlung Walther König, 2012), 34.
 53. Michael Stevenson, in "Michael Stevenson 'The Gift' (from 'Argonauts of the Timor Sea' 2004-06)," (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2006), video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jou-e_o_ZTY (accessed April 17, 2013).



Sound Stories

Phil Dadson

ACROBATICS

Phil Dadson
Wudangshan 2012
Drawing from
Natura'notations series
Image courtesy the artist

It's late dusk in the Pao (yurt) village, the sky illuminated by a myriad of stars. I hear music coming from a neighboring tent. A shaft of light and sound projects out into the darkness from an inviting open doorway. A young blind musician is sitting on the floor with an electronic keyboard balanced across his lap, singing Kazakh pop songs to friends who sing along, and at the end of each, clap, laugh and cheer wildly. Several smiling faces spot me at the door and I'm waved in. A few songs later and the hosts gesture for me to respond. I take a risk and sing an overtone chant of high ringing harmonics and low frequency throat growls hoping they might recognise the style. The group erupts into laughter and clapping and urges me to continue. Shortly after, one of the party leaves and returns with an older blind musician, leading him to an empty space on the floor. I'm asked to sing another, at the end of which I indulge in a few quirky effects which, to this audience, probably sound like the whinny of a horse on heat. More laughter all round after which the singer, who has just arrived, launches spontaneously into an astonishing response of vocal acrobatics, combining squelchy voice and whistling sounds into impressive combinations of all manner of birds and animal imitations, one after the other.

For some time now I have been video-recording an archive collection of the unique sounds humans can make with their bodies (Bodytok). This performance tops the lot and I'm in two minds to rush off and grab my camera. But this is a magical moment worth far more than any desire to record.

VALDIVIA

Through a high open window
A quacking duck monologues endlessly
A lone hammer knocks dully
Men's voices indecipherably rise on the breeze
A rhythm of multiple hammerings, breath-length pauses between
An electric saw sings an alluring microtonal melody
Solo knocking projects through a rumbly cacophony of background traffic
Hammering now on metal (a nearby factory?)
Car horns parp, one high, loud and long
A travelling fragment of whistled tune
Birds chirp and chatter a regular ostinato
An electric plane sings short downward-swooping glissandos
An irregular handsaw joins with slow to quick, low to high cuts
A clear whistle rises and fades as fast
A man shouts
Percussive knockings
Dogs bark up a long pause that the frequency of the city fills in waves
A high squeal of distant brakes
A bird, or maybe dripping tap ricochets
A dog woofs high-pitched in reply, abrupt and childlike
The voice of the city flows into the gap
In distant perspective, a siren and a horn duet
And close by, a varying pitched bleat or could-be bark
A mystery of blunt pitches cascading.

(in bed recovering from food poisoning, 24.5.13)

DIWALI BOOM

High volume sound and spectacular pyrotechnics are a national addiction in India, and the Diwali Festival of Lights, just 20 days after Dussehra, is another excuse for fireworks mayhem and is one of the annual highlights. Delhi started exploding around three in the afternoon, beginning with spasmodic sputters, cracks and ear-splitting bangs. Gradually through the afternoon into early evening, the intensity increased, until by seven there were literally no audible gaps between booms, bangs, cracks and every kind of explosive sound imaginable. And central to all this are regular dynamite-like explosions at perspectives near and far. The sonic spectrum is a constant deep background rumble, in full 360 surround, made up of snaps, bangs, fizzes, cracks, pops, booms and whistles, all slicing into foreground, middle and distant perspectives; a continuous cathartic cloud of immensity that eventually subsides back to spasmodic sputters and booms at around 5am the next morning.

What strikes me most about Diwali is the realisation that the whole billion plus population of India is immersed in it, and that the same broad-band of explosive frequencies, accompanied by a cloud of black smoke and CO₂, is occurring simultaneously from north to south, over the entire Indian sub-continent. Observed from outer space, the triangular shiva-linga shape of the nation is enshrouded in a murky black fog, its edges softened, the entire landmass emitting a low, slow continuous throbbing pulse of frequencies, sufficient to disturb the bowels of any listening aliens. Diwali makes me wonder what India might do for a festival of darkness.

TIAN SHAN

The morning is cool and crisp, the light as clear as crystal, the grass glistening with dew, cold and wet underfoot. I strike a path straight up a steep hill behind the Pao (yurt) village where I know the view will give a panorama of the entire alpine valley. It's early and aside from the sounds of birds conversing high in the pines and horses ripping and munching grass on the flats below, the valleys are peaceful and still. I find a roughly level patch of grass at the top of the wooded peak and am preparing a camera position when I hear sudden shouts and whoops echo across the valley. Hooves thrum and drum the ground as several horses canter up the flat to avoid a couple of Kazakhs, harnesses in hands, running behind to saddle them. Out of the blue, from within a distant yurt, a boom box is switched on and a deep bass beat, like the heartbeat of Tian Shan, thumps out loudly into the stillness.

Like a cock's crow the signal is sounded for the rest of the village to greet the day. Suddenly the valley is alive with children's voices and distant laughter, with deep and shrill sounds bouncing off the hills. Transfixed by the drama unfurling below I'm suddenly surprised from behind by two swarthy Kazakhs mounted on horses. With querulous smiles they look at me intently, then wordlessly gallop off in a tumble of hoof beats to the flats below.

GUJJAR SEDUCTION

Lively amplified devotional singing and drumming, spiced with echo effects is being broadcast from the Gujjar temple next door to the lakeside hostel I'm staying at in Pushkar, so I whip around into the temple courtyard to check it out. A drummer, two finger-cymbal players and a trio of singers sit cross-legged in the forecourt. A charismatic older man wearing a suit jacket and an orange turban stands in the centre, leading the singing in a call and response style, his gravelly voice reverberating into the night and across the lake. I was welcomed into the circle and shown somewhere to sit. The music is trance-inducing, with its 3:4 rhythms repetitively underpinning half-spoken, half-sung vocals. Some heavy smoking is going down, ganja I assume. A recording is also in progress, the drummer occasionally flipping a cassette at the side.

Suddenly a veiled, sari-clad woman gets up out of the group to dance. Her style is alluring and provocative. She takes the mike from time to time and sings huskily and seductively. After a few minutes I realise the woman behind the veil is a man, laughing and camping it up. Two young guys arrive and join her, partnering her one at a time and then together. One song stops and another starts almost immediately with the same relentless 3:4 rhythm. I make a donation to the musicians, but it comes back to me through about 10 hands, my appreciation acknowledged with its return. Later back in my room the live music stops and the recording, just made, loops and lulls me to sleep.

SQUAWK

Tiritiri Matangi is a rare island sanctuary where all things native are nurtured and preserved and anything introduced removed or eradicated. It has one of the best native bird populations in New Zealand with Tieke, Kiwi, Keruru, Korimako, Tui, and Wihi in abundance; birds whose names alone evoke song.

A mobile phone feels especially foreign on the island but I have a necessity to call home shortly after arrival and so leave my phone on, half expecting a reply as I walk a coastal ridge track. Blissfully absorbed in the absence of urban sounds and the superbly clear light, a sudden discordant signal, like a malfunctioning intercom on echo-delay shocks me out of my trance. I automatically dive into pockets for my mobile, only to find it mute, and the strangely electronic noise bleeping on. Swivelling in several directions at once my ears direct me to a barely concealed hole close to the track. Expecting to find an electronic monitoring device, I go down on all fours for a closer inspection. The continuous bleeping blares out even louder and no amount of peering or tentative probing reveals the source. My only clue is a poop-encrusted entrance. Later I'm told it's the squawking of hungry kingfisher chicks deep inside their burrow.

WUDANG SHAN

The internal partitions of the mud wall shack I'm staying in on Wudang mountain are membrane thin.

My bed is in a cave-like inner room with earthen floors and walls, no window and no ceiling other than a canvas stretched above the bed to catch falling insects and dust. A single bare bulb hangs by its cable with a switch I grope for in the dark. It's also a potato store and smells of musty soil.

I'm staying with a farming couple in their late 60s who live on the side of the mountain growing vegetables and selling what they can at the markets. It's August and intensely hot. A choir of cicada call insistently through the heat of the day and crickets chirp intermittently through the night.

A heavy black coffin, hand-hewn by the farmer for himself, dominates the room we eat in. Another two, for his wife and brother, are stacked in the kitchen.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are a hearty bowl of hand-drawn noodles and fresh vegetables from the garden, boiled in a soup spiced with a dash of fermented beans.

After the evening meal a folk opera is played loudly on an ancient TV, the farmer and his wife singing along, imitating the actions of the singer playing his Er Hu (one string fiddle). On my second night, the same routine is repeated. About 30 minutes into the song-cycle I slip away to view the stars and enjoy the clear mountain air. Returning a short while later the door and window shutters are closed, the only light emanating from the TV screen in the kitchen-come-bedroom where the old couple sleep, its light flickering through a gap in the panel wood door. It is about 9pm and knowing I have to be up early the next day for a dawn departure, I fumble through the darkness to my potato store bed.

The DVD ends soon after I settle but is quickly replaced with another. I hear a deep male voice talking, recitation-like, pausing, talking, pausing. A prayer or meditation instruction perhaps? This mountain, after all, is famous for Taosim, Tai Chi and Kung Fu. Drifting into sleep I then hear a higher pitched woman's voice, responding, possibly crying. Aah, it's more likely a local drama that they're watching. I also hear the farmer and his wife's voices commenting and occasionally laughing. The female voice gets louder and more intense, moaning now into a crescendo of haa-ahaa-ahaa-ahaa-ahaa, her breath rapid, her voice higher, underpinned by the low intoning drone of the male voice. I'm wide awake now, intrigued. It's pitch dark. I slide out of bed and across to the door, open it into the black-hole of the room where the coffin stands and creep across to the door where the TV light flickers through. Peering through a crack I'm amazed to discover the old couple are watching hard-core porn. Glued there in disbelief, I suddenly catch sight of myself, eye to the crack, mesmerised. I beat a tiptoe retreat, pursued by moaning and panting. And on it went interminably, indifferent to the guest in the potato store with paper-thin dividing walls and no ceilings between. Early next morning it was Ni Hao as usual, the DVD no doubt passed from shack to shack to spice up an all too familiar repertoire of after dinner diversions.

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

At the South Pacific Festival of Arts in Papua New Guinea, From Scratch – four conspicuous white dots in a canvas of black – are scheduled to perform at noon in an open-air patch of earth on the outskirts of Port Moresby. The mid-day sun is intense as we wait our call, glued to the rhythms of ritually costumed New Britain dancers, circling and chanting, the ground thumping under their feet. Under cover of noisy applause, we quickly carry in our racks of long PVC tubes like giant panpipes with tuned chimes and drums slung underneath. An unruly file of excited children arrive on site from a school nearby and sit attentively up close around us. Fair and freckly, under wide-brimmed hats, we strike out on the pipes, paddling furiously to make an impact against the unexpected affect of sun-warped tunings and anechoic chamber acoustics, the sounds rising and disappearing like hot air.

Geoff whirls a growler-drone over nearby heads and the crowd erupts into contagious laughter. We paddle on, infected, through a wild microtonal mix of sun-stroked instruments, managing, only just, to hold things together through the mesh of tangled rhythms with waves of hilarity greeting our every move. As a comedy act we couldn't have planned things better.

Needless to say, following this experience, tuning sleeves became an indispensable addition to the From Scratch arsenal, while some of the local PNG string bands, with their melodies underpinned by boogie-style bass lines, replace their bamboo tubes with PVC.

SIRENS

Curious how one sound signalled in different ways can have many meanings. The human voice for example has an infinite range of tone and emotion; whisper, croon, shout, laugh, cry, scream, whereas signal sounds from church bells, slit gongs and sirens carry a far simpler message. I grew up in a small town where on a daily basis, there was one sound that everyone's ears were attuned to, the noon-day siren. One short burst up and down and the whole population automatically took a lunch break. In contrast, a continuous siren glissando is a scary sound that sparks alarm.

It happened to me early one Saturday morning in St Johns, Newfoundland when I was abruptly woken from late morning slumber by a chorus of sirens and car horns panning 180 degrees in slow stereo outside the window. Fearing the worst I dashed out onto the street to find a long winding line of cars and fire engines, whining, parping and barping as they led a procession across town. A wedding. With hills fanning out behind the town to provide a natural soundshell, it's a tradition there as familiar to locals as the one burst glissando in Napier.

KAIKOURA

About 10 years ago I made a journey to the Opihi River valley in South Canterbury to see Māori rock art first hand, and on the way there and back was drawn like a magnet to the Kaikoura coast. The sea ran hard and the shingle sang as it surged up and down the beach, reminding me of my childhood in Napier where sounds of sea on shingle were ever within earshot. Within yards of each other I found two smooth, perfectly ovoid stones, one black, one white but as opposites they resisted pairing. The black stone I later found a mate for on the shore of Lake Tazawako in Japan, and on Tiritiri Matangi, a partner for the white one. Songstones have personalities and are fussy who they pair with.

PURR

We have a cat called Bella who has the loudest purr, a vibration low and deep, but with high burbling overtones when she's excited. Intrigued about what mechanism of the voice box produces such therapeutic rumblings, I decide to find out. After researching a bit I begin practising and find I can breath in and out making a comparable rumbly purr. One morning, early, when Bella jumps on me in bed to sprawl on my chest, purring as she invariably does, I join in with a resonant deep-throated purr. She abruptly stops and vanishes in fright.

RESONANCE

In 1985, after many years of long distance contact between Akio and myself swapping images and sounds through the mails, he and his wife Junko come to New Zealand.

Our knowledge of each other's language is zero, but our sign language is great.

On the day of Akio's departure I pull a gift from my pocket, two songstones found in the Hokitika River, and in perfect synchronicity Akio pulls a gift from his, two stones from the Na Chi River in Japan. Neither of us knew of the others intention, but the stones clearly did.

BASEL

As a kid I was an insatiable collector: moths and butterflies, foreign notes and coins (a set of notes the Japanese printed in anticipation of colonising India even), autographs, penfriends and curios of all kinds. And stones. Not just any old stones but stones that had been shaped and held by human hands, stones with physical and sonic histories. I was a fossicker in the middens around my home town and the impulse to collect led me to exchanges through the mail – Australia, Papua New Guinea, Africa, Switzerland. My best swaps were with a museum in Basel. The Director, Dr Paul Hinderling, wrote to me: “Dear Mr Dadson...” addressing me as if I was the director of my own private museum. And so we exchanged stones for stones, the first for an exquisitely fashioned axe head from a Swiss Neolithic lake village, and later for seven flint implements from the Paleolithic strata of Peyzac-le-Moustier in Perigueux France, flints that sing with voices of 80 millennia.

In 2010 I was in Switzerland for an art related event on the shore of Lake Biel/Bienne. Before arriving I wrote to the museum in Basel to ask if Dr Hinderling was available. A curt response from the museum informs me he has long retired.

Considering the chapter closed I arrived in Biel/Bienne delighted to discover the lake is a celebrated archaeological site and that one of my hosts is the custodian of an inherited and perfectly preserved private museum of artifacts collected from the lake. The octave completes itself when she invites me to select stones with suitable sonics from a box of seconds. Flat discs of stone once used as fishing net weights now sing their source.

COLAC BAY

I was in Southland recently mounting an installation, each day yearning for the stony beaches of the southern coastline, the bays of Tihaka, Colac, and Orepuke. Just hours before I was due to fly home, I hired a car and sped to the beach, arriving firstly at Tihaka where veins of milky green argylite, its surfaces polished by waves, spill and spew from the beach into the sea. Then to Colac where perfectly shaped hand size pebbles are banked up in millions, a choir of a billion voices when the sea runs rough.

The unique thing about these southern bays is the conglomeration of stones that make up the pebbles on the beach. It's as if the complete variety of glacial, igneous and sedimentary rocks shuffle their way down and around the coastline to end up in a sonorous multitude at the bottom of the island, water and stone on stone, grinding and wearing rocks of every kind into a crystalline kaleidoscope of sun-refracting pebbles. Schist, quartz, argylite, serpentine, basalt, the best foley floor on the planet.

TRAIN WHISTLES

Our rule is that the room must have a window to the outside, a clean bathroom facility, clean sheets and pillowslips on a comfortable bed. Camilla does the toilet inspection. It's a bit grubby and the price is too high – western tourist price – and so we leave and head back across the train station square to find another. A competing tout promises us an improvement closer to the city proper, so off we tramp again, the rain falling more steadily now and the light rapidly disappearing. Camilla's grimace tells all, but we're tired, wet and it's only for one night.

The hotel room is small and boxy, a perfect amplifier for outside sounds. A couple of resonant train-horn blasts in the background tells me we're conveniently close to Datong station, a small sampler of the cacophony to come. From the moment our heads hit the pillows, a continuous symphony of horns and whistles blast from dusk to dawn in full 180 degree stereo imaging. Trains arrive, depart and shunt to and fro all night long, their two-and-three-toned whistles combining in richly dissonant and consonant harmonies; some with extended sustained chords producing complex sonic backdrops and others that punch in and out like a fantasy fanfare.

I'm a light sleeper and lie alert most of the night analysing individual frequencies and timbral harmonies evident in single horn blasts; tonic and fifth, tonic and sixth or seventh, mixes of 1,6,9; 1,7,9; and combinations in random at intermittent intervals throughout the entire night, penetrating the night air with clarity and tonal detail that was obscured in the noise of day. Camilla is a deep sleeper. She hears nothing and thought I was hallucinating in my sleep when I described it the next morning. In proof I open the window wide and a two-tone whistle blasts in at a perfect fifth.

THE WEIGHT OF THE LIGHT FROM ABOVE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE FROTH OF THE WAVES ON THE SEA

André Vida

Meditating on a Lawrence Weiner piece, *THE WEIGHT OF THE LIGHT FROM ABOVE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE FROTH OF THE WAVES ON THE SEA*, I roamed Piha and Karekare beaches, considering the temporal and gravitational systems at play in front of me. The moon pulling the water vertically from the ocean, the earth's rotation pulling it to shore, and the light bearing down on the froth. The beach in Denmark that the piece was conceived for and beaches onward framed by this text. How in this act of framing the text reveals the beach as a score-like vista, structured by the interplay of motion and time in the waves. And the weight of light, though unseen, felt as a kind of charge; it seems to place the beach onto a chalkboard littered with a history of conflicting equations. I want to say that this gives it a mood, but the mood resides for me in the experience of viewing the beach with the text in mind. And at that intersection is where I choose to respond, by extracting some kind of sound world from what that text did to that scene, some kind of physical interpretation.

I thought about putting a bunch of speakers on the beach to amplify the sound of the waves and feed them back on themselves, but was dissuaded by the destructive wind and magnetic graphite sand. I wondered about adding instruments to that sound, human interpretation of the variegated movement of waves under the weight of light and gravity. I wrote sketches for saxophone while staying in a beach house at Piha. Holding the saxophone closely, breathing steadily into one unnaturally held fingering until the sound became unstable and started shifting between a fundamental and its upper partials. Something about breathing, holding, and waiting for the sound to resonate at odds with itself seemed to turn the inside of the saxophone into a foreign, hermetic space, a force field operating according to laws I intuited but didn't know and which therefore remained mysterious – a bottled reflection of the wide, wild beach. I thought of how this is the closest a saxophone might come to the speed of light. Could John Coltrane or Charlie Parker come closer through the movement of their fingers? I wasn't going to try. I met Josh Rutter who responded to gravity as a framework for improvising with his body. An interactive score via another material.

The thought of a musical system expressed in the presence of the ocean imploded as I played into the waves. Completely drowned out by gale force winds and the roaring diagonal sprawl of waves. I couldn't hear myself, let alone my friend Jeff Henderson, who was playing his sax 10 metres to my left. Playing into a void I disappeared. The sound was a phantom that I trusted to exist – mostly. It peeled its way through the wind from time to time.

And so I moved the piece from one strange space into another. Out of the water, wind and sand and into the basement of the Audio Foundation in Auckland, which juts half-exposed from a hill and, inside, contains a series of dead-end hallways and diagonally juxtaposed rooms. Hermione Johnson translated onto prepared piano and its horizontally activated keyboard. Josh, Jeff and myself, body and saxophones, instruments drawn in the vertical. Wystan Curnow with words drawn in all humours and seeming to elude any orientation beyond the immediacy of the face-to-face. Wystan's text for a different Lawrence Weiner show, *The Other Side of A Cul-De-Sac*, completed the transition from wild beach to inverted city. And he graciously allowed me to transpose another layer onto the text. To block it from being read or rather to make the act of reading so difficult that its rhythm would stutter and stop.

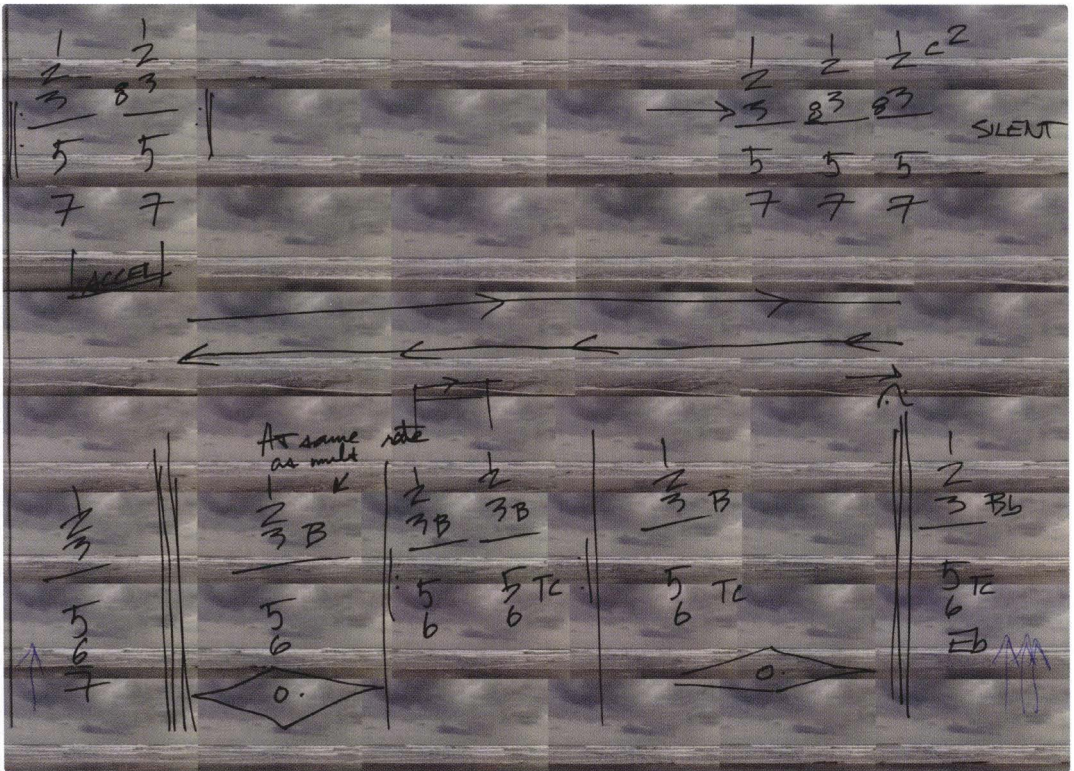
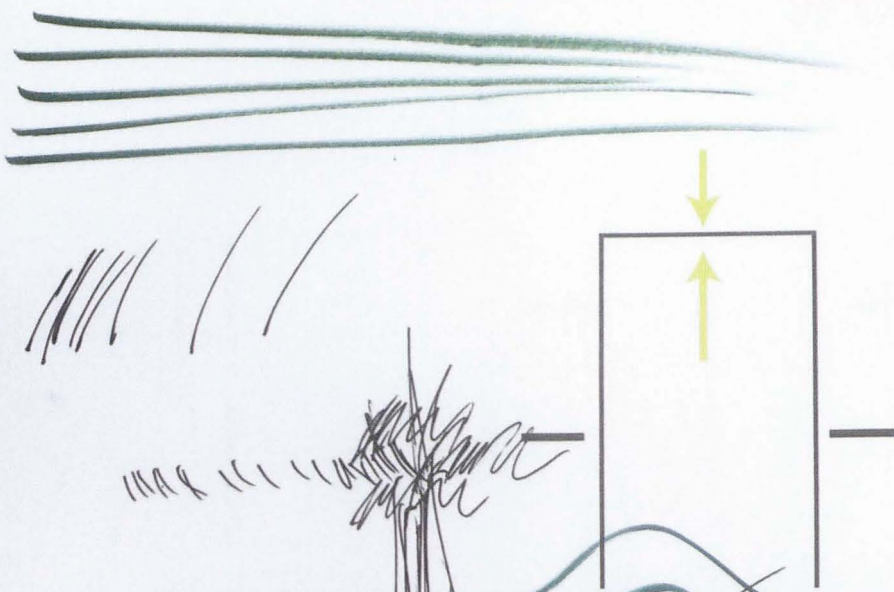


Fig. 1
 Playing into the ocean and its staff-like waves, this sketch and its left to right to left and upward motion respond to the sculptural elements of Weiner's text.

Figs 2-4
 The idea of a cul de sac and its other side had me thinking in the confining frames of staves. Moving between the impulses of the images, the words turned abstract graphic notation and the rhythms of those still legible, I made this proposal for a score. Jeff Henderson and Wytan Curnow electrified the room with their version of this.

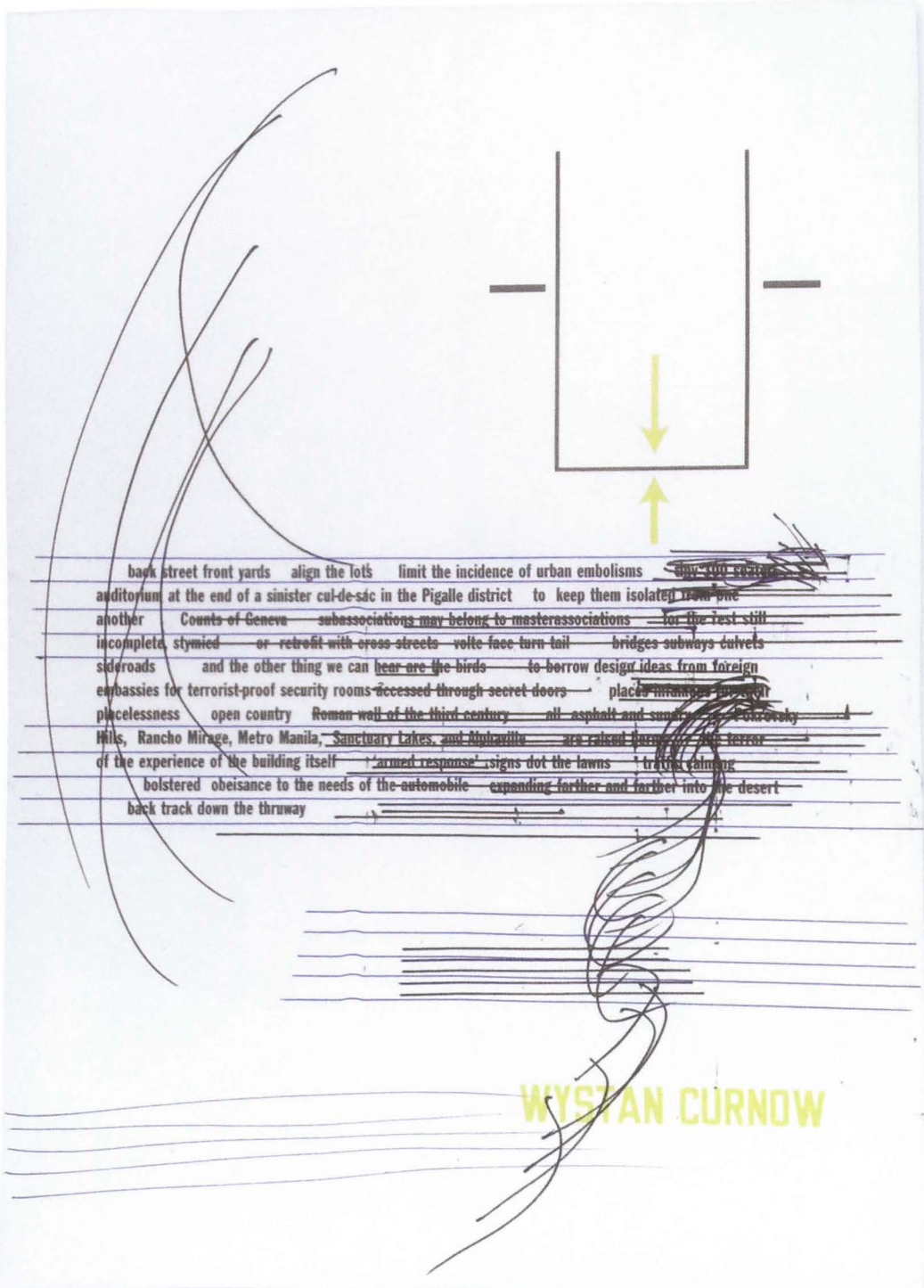


shored up the terraced and triangular retaining shortcuts underpasses residents eventually
 learnt the routes restoration of channels criminals sentenced to public display one two three
 four five houses surrounding a circular drive popping wheelies and turning tricks combined
 with lintels in braces 'alley' is of French origin meaning 'way to go' judder bars or sleeping
 policemen lollipop-shaped streets quantities of these passages have disappeared but despair not we
 will follow one of them during our visit transit hubs pub snugs on city streets during urban warfare
 cul-de-sacs springing up from Calabacas to Chula Vista age three through eight it's great. Beyond
 that you're a captive a lone stone bench right up against it neighbourhoods of the empire are
 abandoned dikes drive like paths hydraulic barricades defended Wall Street the New
 Urbanistas tightened in the narrow limits tiptoed in the dark and threatening Impasse Chaptal a
 new system for organizing connected cul-de-sacs, the Fused Grid 'why I did a poster for Geneva.'

some trouble finding forcible passage in the beginning the ground floor included an arcade
 housing either store or shop craftsmen and a narrow gate opening onto a long corridor leading to a court in
 which one cultivates a garden bridges subways culverts sideroads afterwards explanations and
 descriptions will take place there LARD's Operation Cul-de-Sac barricades a barrio in the Valley
 1900 miles of alleyways in Chicago spatially a type of enclave my own house
 generally unwalkable asphalt bars the way as with 'a barricade formed of the resultant
 debris as a wall came tumbling down' designation in words the kind of aggressive odour of the
 pork offal used for tricks expanding farther and father into the desert then forced to 'kiss the
 concrete' hundreds of years after another then without a trace trails lanes ditches drains the
 crenellated walls pierced by the three doors of St. Eger, St. Victor, and St. Antoine and an entries castle
 named Porta Latronum, or Door of Thieves chokers speed humps Grand Guignol bottlenecked
 way in the way out off-K' Road

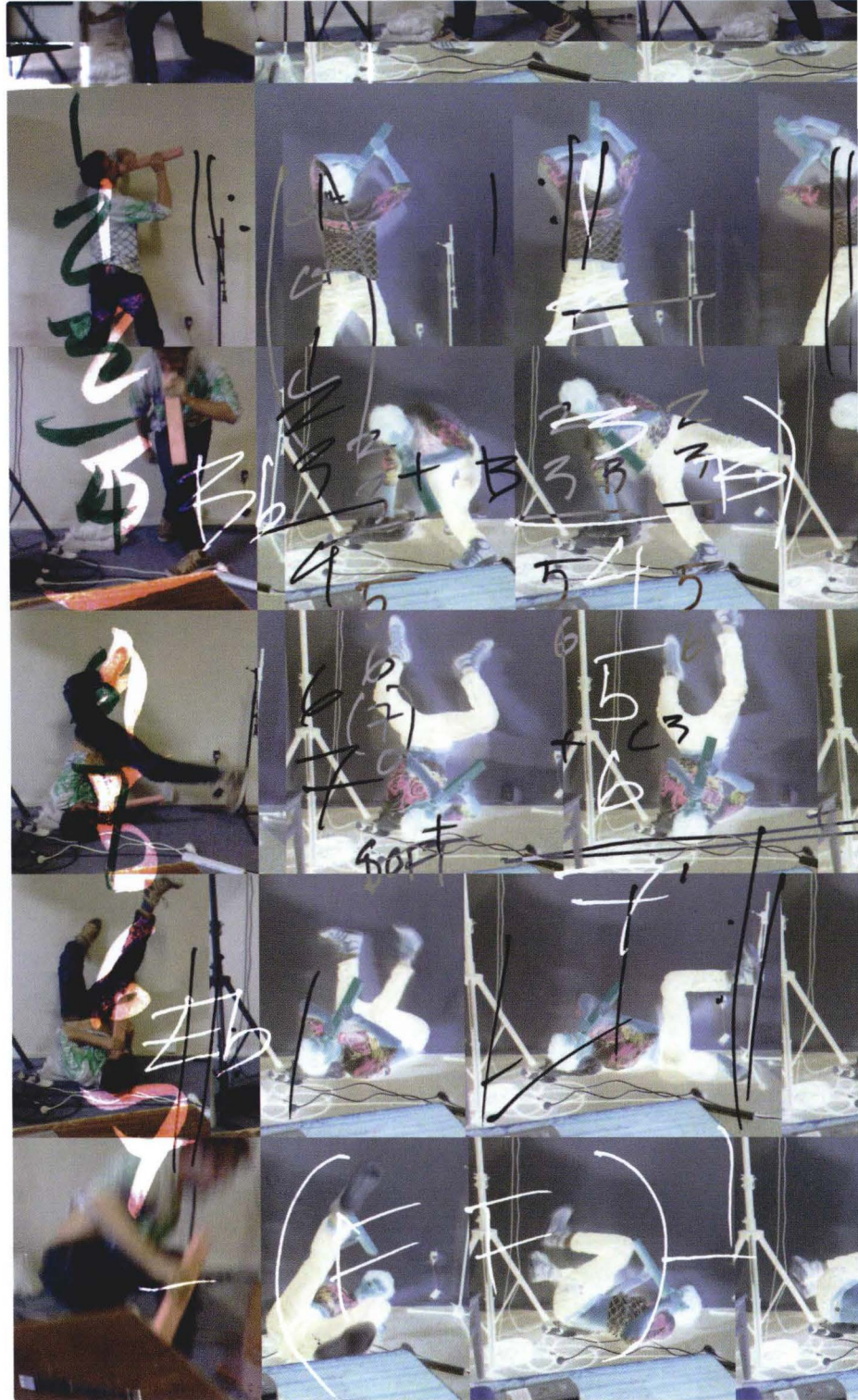


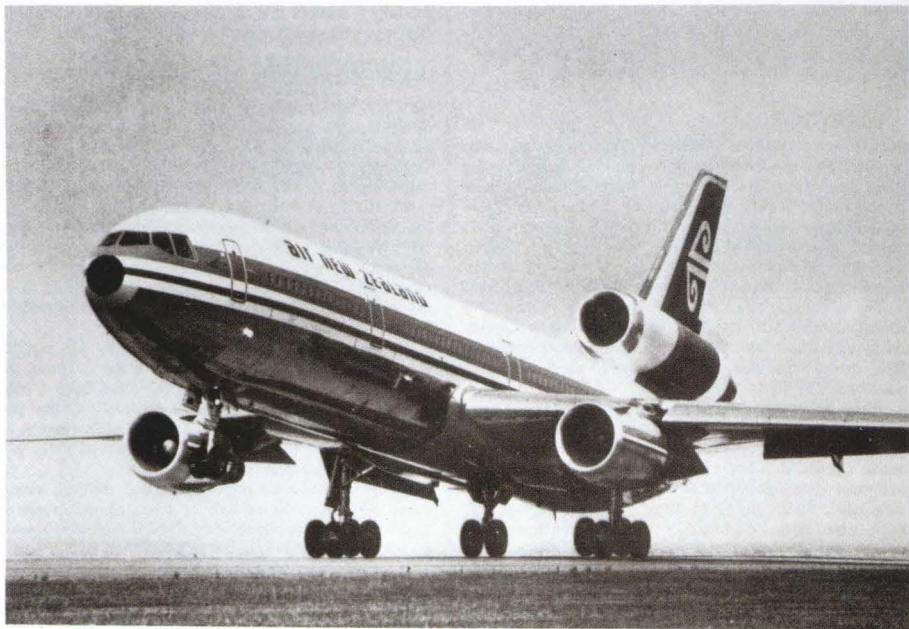
converging paths from the shore helps kerbs tightened in the narrow limits dig the
 ditches connecting the valleys entrenches the party given one of the narrow's suburbs
 will create along the path that descends access denied many pitfalls in the direction of
 Milan by January and by Vienna by September by 1850 fundamental for the narrow limits
 of the place prospect from bulwarks tightened in the narrow limits if you are flying over the
 suburbs back streets some of them communicate between streets and through buildings
 and endless aisles often private and therefore insulated from the prying eyes as many hidden treasures,
 slumped being integrated into the city the buildings still incomplete helping to a masonry
 quadrangle around a courtyard bordered by porticos beneath houses see roads that look like trees
 while neighbourhoods of the simple are abundant again behind a wall climbed dispute
 resolution look inward at the donut hole of plains in the middle
 overlooking the stone square catch her short view of the ceiling point in these those a
 livestock market at the location 'subject of numerous overpasses still incomplete some trouble
 finding my own house a sad procession of figures another explanation for the cosmology open city
 back door out but the culture is caldesac highway and byway a quiet bourgeois life frolics
 hosted by the college small neighbourhood of luxury a spickelway is a narrow place to walk
 along on the slopes east and south are two other high hospices your car is no longer an instrument
 of freedom but a prosthetic device so salt farmers in Geneva hanker for a spot on dead-end streets
 bottom of the bag pocket plaza let us now volte face to consider the Palais de Justice confusing
 mass of streets stymied stop anti-sprawl activists access to housing was provided by a spiral
 staircase sometimes included in the building pedestrian paths link roads over one hundred newly
 gated communities way out the way in



WYSTAN CURNOW

Fig. 5
Joshua Rutter riffing with gravity and a pink piece of wood (about the size of my soprano sax). A score over the act, I transposed my multiphonic fingering charts of instability on top.





Comfort in the air

You'll find it at 600 miles an hour flying Air New Zealand's Big-10.

Comfort in the air. You feel it the moment you step on board an Air New Zealand Big-10. There's a spaciousness. An air of harmony. You've room to move and relax. No seat is more than one away from wide twin aisles. Seats are fully adjustable and at the touch of a button the lumbar region adjusts to suit your individual spine. And in first class, each seat has its own lambswool seat cover. Not just woven wool, but a whole fleece.

Over indulgence? Perhaps. But then Air New Zealand have grown to be a widely respected international airline by caring more. We simply believe that people who choose to fly with us deserve the best. The best aircraft. The best service. The best food. And a timetable that gives you the best choice of departure times.

Our attitudes reflect the area we grew up in, and the country we're named after. And we aren't about to forget them.

 **AIR NEW ZEALAND**

Your international airline.

Together/Apart: Regional Networks in a Global Age: Imagining the Pacific in New Zealand, 1976¹

Christina Barton

The region, less encumbered by the various ideological or mythical mystifications that pervade the state, will be where history and analysis take place.²

Fig. 1
Air New Zealand
advertisement
*South Pacific Festival
of Arts Souvenir
Programme 1976*
internal page
South Pacific Festival
of Arts

A post-nationalist New Zealand art history has yet to be written. If such a narrative did exist, one of its later chapters would focus on the 1970s, for amongst other things it is at this time that the spatial coordinates of local discourse were renegotiated. If a nationalist (and modernist) art history has constructed a narrative of New Zealand art based on the particularities of our insular condition which, as Terry Smith has argued, privileges painting as medium, landscape as subject and the expressive agency of the normative Western subject,³ then the 1970s is the moment when the trajectories of cultural flow shift and art's meaning and purpose are redirected. Crucial to this process was a new awareness of and response to the geographical fact of our situation in the Pacific.

Historian James Belich has described the period of 1965 to 1988 as New Zealand's era of "decolonisation", when internal and external pressures forced the country to question the authority of the traditional values and beliefs upon which "British" New Zealand had depended. The country underwent rapid change, due to advances in communications, transport, mass media and information technologies, as well as to the rapid growth of capitalism and changes in the shape and direction of global geopolitics. We were able to be more connected as the jet age arrived (Fig. 1),⁴ we got our first televisions,⁵ the price of long distance telephone calls dropped dramatically, and information began to reach us more quickly. But we were also made to feel more vulnerable when the oil shocks of 1973 and 1976 struck, when Britain joined the Common Market,⁶ and France and America tested nuclear weapons in the Pacific.⁷ There was as well the widespread suspicion that globalisation was another term for Americanisation, with its military and economic dominance, crass commercialism and pervasive popular culture.

If external forces were threatening New Zealand's status as an independent island nation, new internal pressures were also undermining its coherence. These were brought to bear by a raft of emergent social groups – women, youth, gays, left-wing radicals, alternative life-stylers, and new non-European immigrants (especially from the Pacific). Above all, Māori, due to rapid population growth, urbanisation, and economic advancement, were beginning to enjoy greater visibility, develop an articulate argument for the restitution of their land, and undertake vigorous steps towards cultural revival.⁸

This essay examines two cultural events that took place in 1976 – the second South Pacific Festival of Arts and the First Pan Pacific Biennale – as occasions when our location in the Pacific came into focus, which can be thought of as responding to the pressures and opportunities afforded by our changing circumstances. Both events challenge nationalist agendas and participate in the reconfiguration of New Zealand's sense of its place in the world, yet each was largely invisible to the other. My argument is that a close scrutiny of these two events reveals deep incommensurabilities in the nature of our engagement with the Pacific, at the same time as it testifies to the emergence of a new regional consciousness. Caught in the technological, political and economic conditions of their historical moment, the structural similarities and mutual incompatibilities of these events “undermin[e] the imagined community of the settler nation state”,⁹ redirecting the one-way flow from centre to periphery to the charged interfaces of internal difference and the borderless circularities of region and globe. By offering critical alternatives to established practices, new artistic networks posed challenges to master narratives to which New Zealand had long been beholden. Both therefore offer strategic, regionally-situated responses to the hard facts of our contemporary global repositioning.

Kodacolor not local colour¹⁰

The First Pan Pacific Biennale was a short-lived yet prescient attempt to introduce the international biennale as an exhibition model into the New Zealand context.¹¹ The exhibition featured recent work by artists from nations of the Pacific Rim: Australia, America, Japan and New Zealand and was staged at the Auckland City Art Gallery between 20 March and 20 April 1976.¹² Organised by Exhibition Officer, John Maynard, the show was one of the earliest exhibitions to reflect and take advantage of the technological advances of the era, proving it possible to connect with other developed nations in spite of New Zealand's isolation. Maynard and his colleagues exploited the portability of reproductive media and the strategies of display associated with conceptual installation to pull the project together in a short timeframe on a miniscule budget. His decision to give the Biennale a regional focus signalled a refusal to engage in the rhetorics of either an expressive nationalism linked to Britain or an international formalism associated with New York. Implicit then was a refusal of the modernist model of cultural transmission that Terry Smith had portrayed in his essay, “The Provincialism Problem”, published in *Artforum* in September 1974.

Subtitled *Colour Photography and its Derivatives*, the organisers' ambitions for this project were quite specific: to bring together artists using new colour reproductive technologies to showcase examples of "a substantial alternative movement" to what Maynard called "photographer's photography".¹³ The show was thus devoted to artists using photography in reflexive and critical ways, who sought to defamiliarise the medium, challenge its transparency, test its psychological effects, and find new ways to exploit its material qualities. Twenty artists presented photo-text pieces, photo-sequences, video and film installation, electronic video, large-scale colour photographs, Polaroids, pinhole camera-works and holograms,¹⁴ in ways that raised questions about the nature of perception and the mediating role of representation. This was often done with humour; the works' tone was mock-serious, quasi-scientific, interrogative, deadpan, even "trippy"; suggesting a deflationary intent. Consciously anti-expressive and anti-formalist, these works lacked the ambitions and markers of nationalist rhetoric, figuring instead an international mainstream that was, in different ways, shaped by local content.

Being drawn from the Pacific Rim did not mean that artists sought a regional identity to assert their independence. Quite the contrary, these artists tended to downplay the fact that they were based in Auckland, Melbourne, Tokyo or Los Angeles, even though they made work that drew in various ways on local perspectives, because they shared the larger concerns of what Smith has called a mobile "avant-garde" that was driven by counter-cultural commitments to resist the forces of global capitalism and work outside the culture of high modernism, from a variety of vantage points.¹⁵

Like other events of this kind, the Pan Pacific Biennale was a response to and product of globalisation, a necessary intervention on the part of a newly mobile and mobilised network of artists, critics and curators committed to reflecting critically upon their current situation. Such exhibitions were the contexts where the new art was nurtured, where conceptual practices, installation, performance, video, photography, film and sculpture were most comfortable, operating (at that stage) outside the market to "preserve the integrity of art in a materialist world"¹⁶ and to "contain and master the electronic environment".¹⁷ At the time, Catherine Millet saw biennale-type exhibitions as the consequence of political critique embodied in events around 1968. She believed they were the forums where an outmoded nationalism was averred, by contributors "eager to believe in the possibility of the full and entire internationalisation of art" who thought of art as "an element of universal communication".¹⁸

Artists participating in a contemporary show presenting "cutting-edge" practice, therefore, were a marked alternative to those who served as representatives of their native countries in exhibitions designed to define a painterly practice capable of expressing national character.¹⁹ Indeed, the fact that these artists

refused photography's transparency, to emphasise the image and the object's existential qualities – what Stuart Morgan called “looking at” and “looking in” but not “looking through”²⁰ – further problematised art's relationship to its subjects. For none of the artists presupposed that a photograph was a transparent window or mirror to the real, a record of an expressive response to the subject, an aestheticisation of experience. This suggests a different relation to place and to the subject, less emotional investment and metaphorical distancing (through the production of landscape pictures), than a dispassionate effort to grasp the phenomenological facts of being, via the ministrations of the photographic.

For example, Melbourne-based artist Robert Rooney, admitting that he didn't “particularly like photographers' photography”, bought himself a cheap preset instamatic camera to systematically document aspects of his everyday life in as prosaic a manner as possible.²¹ A number of such works were included in the exhibition. *Holden Park I and II* are two series of shots of his car parked at various locations determined by placing a transparent overlay with dots over a street directory. This was an idiosyncratic means to record his social milieu without resorting to any kind of aesthetic or expressive evocation. Such work located the artist in the minute and mundane specifics of everyday life without seeking romantic investment in place. This wrested art away from the ambitions of nationalism, to situate practice in the realm of the particular, without linking it, via expressive manipulation, to an individual subject. The camera took the picture, the artist set it up without artistic ambitions, in parodic replication of scientific methodologies that had been used to map the country.

If Rooney emblematised a “coolness” particular to Melbourne-based conceptualism, Tsuneo Nakai brought a zen-like attention to the specificities of the photographic medium. He wrote:

To treat film as raw material is not a matter of discovering the meaning of its existence only in order to quote plausible moments of things or landscapes, but rather to discover the existence inherent within it... by means of the events and incarnated ‘drama’ generated by the application to the film-roll of emulsion exposed to light.²²

Nakai did not use film as a means of documentation nor expression, but as “raw material” the meaning of which resided somewhere between the making and the viewing of the work. *Horizontal Line* (Fig. 2), the series of colour photographs he showed in Auckland, which all presented variations of an image of a hand in close-up held out to give the illusion of touching the horizon, denied the viewer the opportunity to become what he called “intoxicated” by the image, whereby seeing is confused with perception. He wanted the image to serve as a wake-up call, requiring us to “read the surface of things”, the thing in question being the photograph itself.²³

The Pan Pacific Biennale brought together a cohort of artists who shared an approach to photographic representation that was at odds with its instrumentalisation as mass-cultural entertainment, resistant to its alienation as artistic commodity, and wary of the photograph's realist or expressive claims. They all harked from developed nations around a specific territory and though their points of origin bore little relation to the Pacific *per se*, the gathering in Auckland offered a cogent alternative to a specifically American conception of the "Pacific Rim", which as Christopher Connery has persuasively argued, was a term coined by America in the wake of World War II and the Cold War. He claims it was "symptomatic of the particular crisis of self-imagining faced by the United States in that era",²⁴ when the Cold-War binary had lost its meaning, US expansion suffered its first downturn, and the successes of Asian economies threatened the idea that successful capitalism was a product of the West. The metaphor of the rim, according to Connery, kept the Old World and the Third World out and facilitated an idea of the flow of capital without origin or destination. He calls the idea of the Pacific Rim the "'spatial fix' for the perceived despatialising tendency of multi- or transnational capitalism".²⁵ In other words it functioned as a trope for capitalist universalism (an image that could be extended to incorporate the entire globe). In contrast, the Pan Pacific Biennale

Fig. 2
Tsuneo Nakai
Horizontal Line 1976
colour photograph
Exhibition documentation
E H McCormick Research
Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki



was a localised event, and its motives were to connect artists with each other in conscious defiance of nationalist identity politics by focussing on practices that undermined the aims of global capitalism and operated in critical relation to the claims of high modernism.²⁶

The canoe is afloat²⁷

The South Pacific²⁸ Festival of Arts was held in Rotorua over eight days, between 6 and 13 March 1976. This was the second of what would become a regular four-yearly event, with the first held in Fiji in 1972. An initiative of the South Pacific Commission, it was organised and managed in New Zealand by a committee made up of various government, local body, and Māori representatives, with an artistic and an administrative director (Dick Johnstone and Wishie Jaram) and was funded by the Departments of Internal, Foreign, and Māori Affairs, with additional funding from the Rotorua District Council and Te Arawa Trust Board. It saw 1,200 participants from 22 territories from throughout the Pacific²⁹ representing the peoples of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia, as well as later arrivals in the region, assemble to present traditional dance, music, arts and crafts.³⁰ This was a huge undertaking, not unlike a Commonwealth Games, with opening and closing ceremonies attended by heads of state, with a varied programme of 95 different components staged at indoor and outdoor venues throughout the city.³¹ Unlike the Games however, this was not competitive; it was designed instead as a celebration of the diverse cultures of the Pacific.

Importantly it was held in Rotorua, which was described at the time as the “capital” of Māoridom, being home to the confederated tribes of Te Arawa, an acknowledged centre for Māori arts and crafts,³² and New Zealand’s most popular destination for cultural tourism. Here organisers were able to accommodate participants on marae in and around the city, providing traditional settings within which Pacific Island groups could meet informally with their Māori hosts. The event was therefore the first major occasion when Māori and Pacific Island peoples came together, in a significantly “Māori” space, to acknowledge common heritage and ancestry and yet to validate individual difference.³³

The Festival’s principal goals were to assist the preservation and encourage the revival of traditional art forms as a means to assert and define cultural identity in the wake of colonisation. This must be understood as a cultural manifestation serving political ends, a necessary attendant to Pacific Island moves towards independence or self-government,³⁴ but also a means to stem the effects of Pacific Island diaspora in the wake of economic change.³⁵

Colonial history, however recent, was not the only prompt. There was also a strong feeling that new pressures brought to bear by advancing globalisation were threatening the Pacific. As the programme noted:

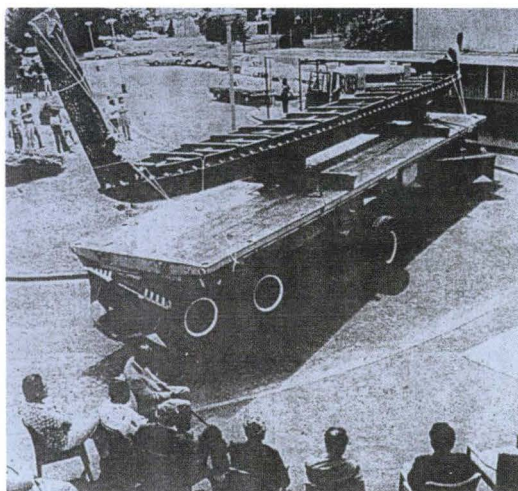
... strenuous efforts are needed to prevent these age-old arts from succumbing to the pervading sense of sameness that exists in much of our society, of being swamped by commercialism or cheapened to provide mere entertainment for tourists.³⁶

Using an oceanic metaphor to address this situation, one Pacific Island commentator envisaged the Festival as “.. an anchor at sea” helping Pacific cultures “ride out the waves of change in modern Pacific life”.³⁷

Tradition may have been the anchor that would slow the drift to homogeneity threatened by global forces, but the Festival also proved that Pacific peoples were not and could not be immune to change. The arts that were revived and presented were not identical with those of pre-colonial times, they were, in many instances, reconstructed for the occasion, and techniques and forms were adapted for quite new ends.³⁸ In a positive light, this proved the durability of Pacific cultures despite the impact of colonisation, signalling the adaptive capabilities of Pacific peoples that had been a feature of their entire history. But more bleakly it could also be thought of as re-invention in the wake of loss, a starting from scratch in light of historical destruction. Either way, the Festival “reflect[ed] the contradictions of Pacific societies emerging from a colonial age”³⁹ to “stage authenticity”⁴⁰ as a political act, the consequences of which we are still working through today.

If artists included in the Pan Pacific Biennale were interested in finding a fresh and critical means to locate themselves using the indexical and reflexive mechanisms of photographic reproduction, they did so in the interests of a new free-wheeling artistic agency in the deterritorialised spaces of contemporary art. In contrast, participants in the South Pacific Festival of Arts took advantage of new technologies and faster means of communication to conceptualise and assert an identity linked to a geographically precise location that was in the process of rapid expansion, but also threatened by external pressures.⁴¹

Faster and more regular shipping and air services and better communications underpinned the Festival, just as they facilitated the Biennale. And although new media were not on show, Festival organisers were highly successful in taking advantage of television, radio and newspaper coverage to further their interests. Furthermore, mobility, the catch-cry of globalisation, was commandeered by the Festival as its governing metaphor, laid claim to by Pacific Islanders as something specific to them, and knowingly used as a marketing tool. One might note here the relay of meanings that were generated by and operated between the Festival’s graphics used to promote the event and the physical objects displayed there. In both, the traditional canoe played a crucial role, on the one hand as a stylised logo used in all promotional and press material featuring a carved prow set against a rising sun (Fig. 3), and, on the other, as a display of Pacific craft drawn from local museum collections.



The centrepiece of this display was Te Awanui, a new canoe carved in 1973 by Tuti Tukaokao of Ngaiterangi (Fig. 4). Juxtaposed with historic craft, this vessel provided the physical link that proved the cultural continuity to which the Festival was dedicated. Carved from a single kauri log according to tradition, it was made with steel chisels (rather than stone implements) by a contemporary Māori artist. Trucked from Tauranga to Rotorua, this canoe was not utilitarian; its presentation in the Festival was entirely ceremonial. The canoe was symbolic, a three-dimensional corollary to the graphic sign used by the Festival, proving that tradition was to be revived via modernity and representation.⁴² Divorced from actual usage, this traditional mode of Island transport served as a sign of and for cultural continuity and renewal, and as a vivid metaphor for the physical acts of travel entailed in this gathering of Pacific peoples.

Such a grasp of media as a tool of representation serves as an important reminder of the new nature of this moment and its difference from the performance of culture in a pre-colonial, pre-modern era. The recall to tradition was not posited as some nostalgic return to a real but distant past, but a strategic political gesture to stake out a new identity and to reconnect with the mana of their ancestors, and to do so via the technological and by means of representation, in an already mediated space of a tourist centre. Thus the Festival staged culture as a form of identity construction, investing objects and performances not with expressive potential but with collective meanings passed down by custom, and presenting these as both public spectacle for mass consumption and in private interactions designed to foster a separate community's knowledge and understanding.

It is fascinating to discover, therefore, that the Festival was the first context where Māori artist Cliff Whiting's 7.6 metre-long mural *Te Wehenga a Rangi raua*

Fig. 3
South Pacific Festival
of Arts logo
*South Pacific Festival of
Arts Souvenir Programme*
1976
cover
South Pacific Festival of
Arts

Fig. 4
Te Awanui, the canoe
carved by Tuti Tukaokao,
arriving in Rotorua
Daily Post March 3, 1976,
page 3



Fig. 5
Cliff Whiting
*Te Wehenga a Rangi raua
ko Papa* 1969-74
National Library of New
Zealand Te Puna
Mātauranga o Aotearoa

ko Papa (1969-74) was presented (Fig. 5). Here it functioned as the centrepiece in a presentation of art, music and poetry by members of Nga Puna Waihanga, an organisation of Māori artists and writers formed in 1972, who were invited participants in the event.⁴³ The mural depicts the separation of Rangi and Papa, the foundational story within Māori cosmology. According to Whiting, the work was relevant to the Festival because its theme was the “very beginning of Māoridom” a theme that could relate to all tribes and peoples of the South Pacific in their individual and collective search for origins.⁴⁴ What is significant however is that Whiting believed this to be the first major expression of a traditional story in new materials and forms. Here a traditional subject was treated outside its conventional context and free from practical or customary constraints (the girth of a tree, the needs of a decorated house), in a different scale and format utilising native timber and fibres combined with synthetic board and acrylic paint. Whiting importantly saw this not as Western art made by Māori but an adaptation and development of Māori art. It has since been called a manifesto for the new Māori art.⁴⁵

The Festival, then, was an occasion to figure and reinforce difference. In their insistence on the tangibility of the past in the present and in their belief that objects were literally invested with living spirit, Pacific artists offered pointed resistance to the closures and reifications of Western formalism. They granted art a social function then still denied within the context of late modernism. The very proposition that traditional forms were the way forward put paid to the progressive logic of advancing modernisation. And the fact that art forms arose from and gained their meaning in relation to the specifics of place served as a critical alternative to the distancing devices of landscape representation and to the de-territorialising effects of globalisation. Context then was granted new importance in political and cultural terms, situating practices in both time and space as an alternative to nationalist idealisations.

Traditionally, art produced within a nationalist framework has relied on a conception of the individual as a centred, unitary, sovereign subject to give credence to art forms that are thought to be transparent expressions of that subject, who achieves self-knowing through the maintenance of distance between themselves and the world through the production of bounded, autonomous objects.⁴⁶ Alan Howard has argued that Oceanic peoples do not hold to Western conceptions of the “sovereign individual”, rather their identities are formed through connections between people, whereby feelings are the product of social relations rather than “inner emotions”.⁴⁷ Their sense of self is nurtured in small communities founded on kinship with intensive face-to-face relationships and a strong attachment to locality.⁴⁸ In these terms, the Festival set out to restore traditional forms to retrieve shared cultural knowledge and to reassert collective identities. The carver Tukaokao typically understood his task as not the pursuit of his own “artistic inclination” but doing “what his people expect[ed] of him”. The waka, Te Awanui, is therefore not an artwork in a Western sense, but what Katarina Mataira called “a testament to the artist’s social conscience”.⁴⁹ The Festival therefore salvaged notions of selfhood that functioned productively *for* Pacific peoples.

Indeed, offering up alternative subjectivities was not only challenging to a Western sense of self, it also undermined the concept of the nation, which depends on the existence of individual, self-aware subjects as its model citizens. Perhaps underlying cultural differences were the reason why tensions sprang up between Pacific Island participants and the mainstream media, and why criticisms were levelled at the organisers’ willingness to defer to the expectations of visitors seeking exotic displays of “otherness” rather than to facilitate genuine cultural exchange. But at a deeper, structural level, the Festival could be conceived – within an increasingly charged politico-cultural landscape – as the strategic co-relative to the realities facing resident Pacific Island communities.

By 1976 nearly 200,000 Pacific Islanders were living in New Zealand. Forming a visible minority in metropolitan centres, due to their distinctive dress, languages, customs, they formed ethnic communities where their distinctive cultures persisted. But with inadequate housing, crowded conditions, long hours for modest pay, lack of familiarity with European lifestyles and a commitment to supporting extended families still in the Islands, the pressures they faced often led to social dysfunction and the breakdown of traditional values. High crime statistics led to a white backlash, especially after 1973 in the wake of the economic downturn and increasing unemployment. The mainstream media encouraged anti-Islander feeling and many white New Zealanders felt threatened by their cultural difference.

The Festival was staged at the very moment when Pacific Island minorities were being targeted by the new conservative National Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Robert Muldoon, who brought in draconian new

policies to cut Island immigration.⁵⁰ He instigated the notorious “dawn raids” to extract “overstayers” from south Auckland and Porirua; an exercise based on a policy of scapegoating whereby Pacific Islanders were unduly singled out as violent and criminal as the economic situation deteriorated. Perhaps Muldoon’s heavy-handed approach was as much a panicky reaction to the challenge these Island cultures posed to someone deeply committed to the idea of “one nation”, as it was a response to the real or imagined crimes Pacific Island immigrants were committing. Indeed the dawn raids may be read in this context as a desperate effort to eject people who seemed to undermine the carefully tended figure of the ideal New Zealand family, whose nuclear state functioned metaphorically as a sign for the nation.⁵¹

Given the racial tensions that were immanent in New Zealand at this moment, it is extraordinary that the Festival was not marred by overt political dissent. Organisers may have gained the support of a Pakeha bureaucracy exactly because its focus was cultural not political, where participants presented the happy (and therefore safe) face of the Pacific. It is striking to note that Muldoon opened the Festival (Fig. 6) and declared his support, presenting himself as a benign figurehead who understood that the “conservation of the arts was essential for the stability of Island societies”.⁵² No doubt he thought he could

Fig. 6
Official party, including
Prime Minister Robert
Muldoon and Governor
General Sir Denis Blundell
at the opening ceremony,
March 6, 1976
National Publicity Studios,
Archives New Zealand
AAQT 6420 cng826





Fig. 7
Group from Tuvalu
disembarking at Mount
Maunganui, March 1976
Film still
Encounter Documentary
(Part 1)
TVNZ Archive

manipulate the occasion for his own ends, which included hammering home policies that would undermine the collective aims of the South Pacific Forum, staged in Rotorua simultaneously with the Festival, in the interests of Australia and New Zealand. In his terms, the Festival could be thought of as the cultural screen to the “real” negotiations taking place between Pacific leaders and their New Zealand host in the Forum meetings.

But such a view denies agency to Pacific people who were in charge of the event. Their grasp of the occasion’s significance was by no means unsophisticated. Festival organisers were highly successful in taking advantage of new broadcast media to ensure maximum visibility. It could be argued that the exotic nature of the cultures on display was an attractive draw card for the New Zealand media and one reason for the excellent television, radio and newspaper coverage it received. But it was exactly in this arena that participants could make cultural mileage. At one extreme, reports of standoffs between media and participants over the filming and photographing of sacred items and performances signalled different attitudes to an understanding of cultural ownership and a resistance to the consumption of culture as media spectacle. At another, regular coverage on New Zealand television of events at the Festival led to a new, unimagined level of visibility for Pacific peoples and a tremendous boost to self-confidence. Photographs in the daily press may have provided visual grist for ideological interests, with their images of exotic Pacific Islanders mixing amiably with audiences in Rotorua; but the four-part *Encounter* documentary made by independent producer Graeme Hodgson did far more. By tracing various Island groups from their preparations at home to their performances in New Zealand (Fig. 7), the filmmakers were able to show the stark distinctions between Island and New Zealand life, providing a valuable sense of the vital contexts from which the performances derived and giving Pacific peoples an opportunity to explain their cultures themselves.

What I can do in the space around me⁵³

Both the cultural producers of the Festival and of the Biennale denied nationalist sentiment and modernist expressivity. Pre-modern or post-humanist they worked outside the institutions of art, or in forms that were resistant to collection, collectively positing new (or old) notions of materiality and presenting themselves as products of and party to the workings of larger spatial and technical systems. There was in each a knowing negotiation of context and a realisation of the productive potential and problematics of representation. Yet aside from their temporal proximity and the fact they each treated the Pacific as their focus, they were utterly contrasting events. Each mapped an exclusive terrain: edge and centre, rim and basin, sea-ringed island and continental fringe; making the Pacific not one but two spaces, one conveyed by water, the other figuring light. Each dealt with the present by engaging different temporal directions: the Festival bringing together people from under-developed Island states challenged to deal with the modern world, who sought the way forward by re-presenting the past; the Biennale selecting artists eager to anticipate the future from advanced metropolitan societies.

The Festival provided a forum for non-European cultures to establish networks of their own using one of Māoridom's centres, Rotorua, as their base, to unsettle the monocultural bias of white New Zealand. The Biennale brought together a diverse range of artists whose purpose was not to express self or seek a national subject, but to connect with other artists and art communities tangential to traditional and established networks. Both events are therefore products of and participate in the progress of decolonisation that was at a critical juncture in the 1970s. Each proved to be a vital new context for indigenous and experimental artists to contribute critically to this process. They figure the nation, newly divorced from Britain, neither as a singular entity with a coherent national character, nor as a satellite to America, but multiple, de-centred, its boundaries irretrievably permeable, located somewhere (*in* the Pacific), but also mobilised as a point in networks of material and virtual exchange tangential to the one-way flow of dominant culture. In such a space the dynamics of cultural exchange and difference could and would play a larger role in determining New Zealand's identity as a nation of and in the Pacific.

1. This is a revised, amended and enlarged version of a paper delivered at the College Art Association Annual Conference, in Seattle, in February 2004.
2. Christopher Connerly, "The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 287.
3. Terry Smith, "Peripheries in Motion: Conceptualism and Conceptual Art in Australia and New Zealand," in *Global Conceptualisms: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), 87.
4. Air New Zealand (previously TEAL) was launched in 1965 and Mangere Airport, New Zealand's first international airport, opened in 1966. The age of mass jet travel was inaugurated with the arrival in 1973 of wide-bodied jet-propelled aeroplanes.
5. Television arrived in New Zealand in 1960 with national broadcasts available by 1969, colour TV in 1973, and a second channel in 1975. By 1970, 77% of New Zealanders had a television. Ironically, given the fascination of colour as a new apparatus for heightened realism, in New Zealand in 1976 access to colour television was limited, both because of Muldoon's fiscal policies which required consumers to have 60% of the cash up front before they could buy a television and because of a power crisis that threatened to limit the operating hours of the newly launched second TV channel.
6. Britain entered the EEC in 1973, which forced New Zealand to seek new economic and political allegiances (our exports to Britain halved in the 1970s). Britain's position as a world leader was also in decline in this

- period as many of its colonies sought and gained independence and Britain withdrew from strategic territories like the Middle East.
7. The impact of the nuclear age was felt in New Zealand. There was a strong anti-nuclear lobby protesting against American and French nuclear testing on islands like Bikini and Mururoa, and the presence of nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered vessels in the Pacific. Then Prime Minister Norman Kirk sent a cabinet minister on a Greenpeace protest voyage to French Polynesia in 1972. This took New Zealand on a solitary path, hazarding relations with Western powers. This position was softened during Muldoon's leadership, but strengthened considerably after the 1985 bombing of the Rainbow Warrior.
 8. The scale and rapidity of Māori urbanisation is astounding. In 1936 only 17% of Māori lived in urban centres, this rose to 26% in 1945, 62% in 1966, and then 83% by 1986.
 9. Rob Wilson, "Goodbye Paradise: Global/Localism in the American Pacific," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 313.
 10. A phrase borrowed from commentary in the exhibition catalogue to the *10th Biennale of Paris: International Exhibition of Young Artists* (Paris: Biennale de Paris, 1977).
 11. Short-lived because there was no second Pan-Pacific Biennale, but prescient as it offered a biennale with a regional focus that was only taken up in the 1990s in the context of Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial.
 12. John Maynard was an energetic Australian who had come to the position at Auckland City Art Gallery from the directorship of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, a public, local body-funded gallery that opened in provincial New Plymouth in February 1970. Maynard had been involved in the development of the policies and programmes of that gallery, setting it up as an institution dedicated to contemporary practice, with a regionally focused acquisitions policy embracing the "Pacific Rim", an inbuilt deaccessioning policy to ensure the collection remained relevant, and a programme dedicated to contemporary practice, in particular new sculpture and photography. In Auckland he continued in this vein instigating a ground-breaking series of "Project Programmes" that enabled artists to make use of spaces in the gallery for a range of site-specific and temporal interventions and performances. At this time Auckland City Art Gallery was running a "cutting edge" programme that is still unprecedented in the gallery's history. For a brief period between 1974 and 1978 the gallery became a responsive and open forum where new art could be presented and debated.
 13. See printed introduction to slide documentation, *First Pan Pacific Biennale* (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1976), n.p.
 14. Artists were from New Zealand: John Henry, Andrew Davie, Nick Spill, Boyd Webb (by then resident in England) and Adrian Hall (then based in Northern Ireland); Australia: Arthur and Corinne Cantrill, Robert Rooney, Francis Bennie and Michael Nicholson; the US (mainly West Coast): Lynda Benglis, John Baldessari, Robert Cumming, Selwyn Lissack and Michael Harvey; and Japan: Tsuneo Nakai, Keigo Yamamoto, Satoshi Saito, Tatsuo Kawaguchi and Nobuo Yamanaka.
 15. A point made by Terry Smith in *Global Conceptualisms*, 87.
 16. Gerald Forty, *10th Biennale of Paris: International Exhibition of Young Artists* (Paris: Biennale de Paris, 1977), 19. This is echoed by Philip Linhares, in the catalogue to the Sydney Biennale staged only months after the event in Auckland: "As the world seems to grow smaller due to increasingly efficient transportation and communication systems, there is a need for cultural exchange which, in the interest of goodwill and a new depth of human understanding, will someday take precedence over the exchange of goods and money." See Philip Linhares, "A California Communication," *Second Biennale of Sydney* (Sydney, N.S.W.: The Biennale, 1976), n.p.
 17. Russell Connor, *10th Biennale of Paris*, 55.
 18. Catherine Millet, *10th Biennale of Paris*, 21.
 19. We can contrast the Pan Pacific Biennale with earlier undertakings like Peter Tomory's *Painting from the Pacific* (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1961) where painters from West Coast America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand were selected on the basis of formal contiguities that Tomory argued demonstrated a shared response to the peculiarities of their environment: the Pacific light in particular. This show was undertaken in the interests of confirming national character rather than working against it.
 20. Stuart Morgan, "Global Strategy," in *Boyd Webb* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1987), 15.
 21. Robert Rooney quoted by Robert Lindsay in *Robert Rooney* (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1978), n.p.
 22. Tsuneo quoted in Solrun Hoaas, "Nakai Tsuneo: Interview and Translations from Nakai's Articles," *Cantrills Filmnotes*, nos 31-32 (Nov 1979): 44.
 23. Tsuneo Nakai, artist's statement, *Pan Pacific Biennale* catalogue (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1976), 18.
 24. Christopher L. Connery, "The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary," in *Global/Local* ed. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, 284.
 25. Connery quoting David Harvey, 284.
 26. A point made by Terry Smith in *Global Conceptualisms*, 87.
 27. This phrase is used by Albert Wendt (who quotes Marjorie Crocombe of the Cook Islands and editor of the *Mana Annual*, one of the first journals of contemporary Pacific literature and art) to describe the revival of the arts of what he calls the "new Oceania" in his survey of contemporary Pacific art, "Contemporary Arts in Oceania: Trying to Stay Alive in Paradise as an Artist," in *Art and Artists of Oceania*, ed. Sidney M. Mead and Bernie Kernot (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1983), 209.
 28. Epeli Hau'ofa tells us the "South Pacific" as a descriptor came into use, like the "Pacific Rim" in the Cold War era, gaining its significance in relation to Western security interests in the Far East. He argues that with the end of the Cold War this nomenclature was dropped and the notion of an Asia-Pacific region has since taken root. In both cases he argues the existence and interests of Pacific peoples were not taken into account. It is notable that the Festival in more recent times has been renamed the Pacific Festival of Arts in recognition of the problematic of that earlier terminology and in a conscious effort to resist, at the level of semiosis, the dangers facing Pacific peoples of falling into what Hau'ofa calls "the black hole of a gigantic pan-Pacific doughnut" (Hau'ofa, 393).
 29. Participants representing 26 ethnic groups were from: New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Australia, New Caledonia, Hawaii, Guam, Gilbert Islands (now Kiribati), Tuvalu (formerly Ellice Island), Tahiti, Fiji, Western Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna Islands, Pitcairn Island, Easter Island, and Norfolk Island.
 30. Dance was a key form presented at the Festival, usually accompanied by songs and music made from a vast array of instruments including bamboo pipes, guitars, ukuleles, pianos, slit gongs, pan pipes, sitar, gamelan, skin drums, lager phones (bottle tops nailed to a stick), didgeridoos, etc. Arts and crafts consisted of tapa, weaving, coral sculpture, bark painting, carving; the techniques of which were demonstrated in programmed displays. There was also puppet theatre (from Tahiti),

- mime (New Guinea), story-telling, as well as demonstrations of games and pastimes (including cricket, ball games, javelin throwing, spinning of shell tops, animal tracking). There were various satellite events including a film programme, exhibitions and demonstrations of crafts and arts by artists and craftspeople and historical displays of Pacific artefacts (from the Auckland Museum and a UNESCO travelling exhibition: *The Arts of Oceania*), these last presented in conjunction with new works and live demonstrations to reinforce the suggestion that these were living traditions.
31. These ranged from the Soundshell (an outdoor stage on the lakefront) and Sportsdrome, to churches, halls, theatres, the International Stadium (where opening and closing ceremonies were held) and even the concrete foundations of a never finished hospital in the grounds of the Government Gardens.
 32. These were fostered formally through the Māori Arts and Crafts Institute that had been established by Apirana Ngata in the 1920s to train students in the endangered art of carving, and informally through the well-developed tourist industry that had operated here since the nineteenth century, serving visitors seeking to experience the geothermal activity of the region.
 33. The timing of this event is significant, for it coincides with the period of most rapid change for Māori and Pacific Islanders as they moved in increasing numbers from rural homelands to urban centres and from the Islands to New Zealand, seeking employment, education and the advantages of modern living, thus speeding the process of de-culturation the Festival sought to resist.
 34. Pacific Islands achieved self-government or independence in 1962 (Western Samoa); 1968 (Nauru); 1970 (Tonga and Fiji); 1975 (Papua New Guinea); 1978 (Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands); and 1979 (Kiribati).
 35. New Zealand was a popular destination for Pacific Island emigrants, as it played a colonial role in the Pacific, both administering the dependencies of Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau, and distributing aid of various kinds to Western Samoa and Tonga. Pacific Islanders from Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau all had automatic New Zealand citizenship, Western Samoans were able to enter New Zealand due to a quota system instituted after independence in 1962, and Tongans were allowed entry on short-term work permits. However, this was a recent phenomenon. Prior to the 1960s Pacific Islanders did not figure largely in population statistics (in 1956 they numbered only about 8,000). Then urbanisation and the development of new manufacturing industries saw New Zealand seek cheap unskilled labour. Pacific Island immigration thus increased dramatically so that by 1976 they numbered 200,000, with 60% in Auckland and another substantial community in Porirua, near Wellington.
 36. *South Pacific Festival of Arts Souvenir Programme* (Rotorua: South Pacific Festival of Arts, 1976), 3.
 37. Hammer de Roburt of Nauru, Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, quoted in the *Daily Post* [Rotorua], March 17, 1976, 13. He was well placed to draw more political conclusions about the positive role of the Festival given that it coincided with a meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Rotorua at the same time. In his capacity as chairman he could therefore use the occasion to bring to the attention of more developed nations the desires of Pacific people for economic growth and stability.
 38. The nature of these adaptations and reinventions is too vast to canvas here, but some examples would include the use of steel tools in traditional carving, the creation of new forms using traditional techniques, the telling of new stories by traditional means (like the Aboriginal dancers from the Northern Territories whose dance related the passage of Japanese fighter planes over Darwin during World War II) or in the case of the Cook Islands, the composition of dance and song specifically as a means to preserve knowledge of customary practice (in one case a dance demonstrating the preparation of a traditional foodstuff).
 39. Geoff Chapple, "The South Pacific Festival of Arts," *Art New Zealand*, no.18 (Summer 1981):18.
 40. A term used by Karen Stevenson in "Festivals, Identity and Performance: Tahiti and the 6th Pacific Arts Festival," in *Art and Performance in Oceania*, ed. Barry Craig et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 29.
 41. Epli Hau'ofa describes the outcome of this process as the "new expanded Oceania", which he envisages as a criss-cross of social networks extending from Australia and New Zealand in the southwest to the US and Canada in the northeast, which was the result of the diasporic movement of Pacific peoples from their homes to various locations around the region. See Hau'ofa, "The Ocean in Us," *The Contemporary Pacific* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 392.
 42. The liminal nature of this moment, in its figuring of the trauma prior to recovery, is spelt out by Geoff Chapple writing on the next Festival in Port Moresby in 1980. He recalls the fact that the canoe appeared in Rotorua only as a "graphic symbol", but in Papua New Guinea the event was opened with the arrival of a flotilla of canoes from various island destinations (including one that travelled more than 1,000 kilometres). See Geoff Chapple, *Art New Zealand*, 19.
 43. Nga Puna Waihunga was formed to foster contemporary Māori arts by bringing urban-based Māori back to marae settings to get together, discuss issues and present works and thus to better ground their practices in their customary context as a properly collective enterprise.
 44. Whiting reported in the *Daily Post* [Rotorua], March 9, 1976, 1.
 45. Robert Leonard, Stout Lecture, Victoria University of Wellington, September 4, 2002.
 46. Donald Preziosi's discussion of the role of the museum and its treatment and presentation of objects in order to "produce" the modern nation state is useful in relation to this point. See Donald Preziosi, "The Art of Art History," in *The Art of Art History: a Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 507-25.
 47. Alan Howard, "Cultural Paradigms, History and the Search for Identity in Oceania," in *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, ed. Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poger (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 259-80.
 48. *Ibid.*
 49. See Katarina Mataira, *Maori Artists of the South Pacific* (Raglan: NZ Maori Artists and Writers, 1984), 39.
 50. In fact, 1976 was a critical year. Due to Muldoon's immigration policies there was a dramatic downturn in immigration statistics: from 24,000 in the period 1971-1976 to 7,000 between 1976 and 1981.
 51. Reports in the media of overcrowding amongst Pacific Island families were often less concerned with the health risks to which they were exposed than to revealing their "failings" as homemakers, unable to make use of the appliances and improvements given them (for example journalists relished stories like the one where families lit fires in ovens to cook their food because they had no idea about electricity).
 52. Muldoon's comments, made in his opening address to the Festival, were reported in the *Daily Post* [Rotorua], March 3, 1976.
 53. A phrase used by Tsuneo Nakai, one of the Japanese artists in the Pan Pacific Biennale. He stated: "I live in the countryside. It's pretty far out. I don't film much in the city — mainly sky, grass and so on. What I can do in the space around me — what I can see nearby — that's what I use." See Solrun Hoaas, *op. cit.*, 44.

Fig.1
Scrapbooks and albums of
Nicolai Michoutouchkine
and Aloï Pilioko
"Esnaar", Port Vila, Vanuatu
January 2013



Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Aloï Pilioko: The Perpetual Travellers

Peter Brunt

Illustrated here are a few pages from the scrapbooks of travelling artist and Oceanic art collector, the late Nicolai Michoutouchkine, a French-born Russian émigré, resident on the island of Efate in Vanuatu since 1961. Compiled over five decades, they contain collages of random ephemera – photographs, letters, business cards, newspaper clippings, sketches, visitor autographs, small objects and the like – that document a lifetime of travelling, collecting and exhibiting. There are more than a dozen books, currently in the possession of Michoutouchkine’s long-time friend and partner, Wallis Islander Aloï Pilioko, at “Esnaar” near Port Vila. Esnaar is the site of their homes and studios and a self-made museum, open to visitors and exhibiting some of their extensive ethnographic art collection and biographical memorabilia.

In January 2013, I examined and photographed some of the scrapbooks with the kind permission of Pilioko and Mr Paul Gardissat, a French-Algerian migrant long resident in Vanuatu (who sadly passed away in May, 2013) and a close friend of the pair. The books sat on top of a dusty borer-eaten cabinet, some visibly disintegrating and possibly unopened for decades. They were not created as “works of art” and they are not illustrated here as such. Yet what struck me as I browsed them was the correspondence between them and the aesthetic ethos that seemed to underlie Michoutouchkine’s general project as an artist, traveller and collector. On the one hand, there was the voracious accumulation of every scrap and bit of the artist’s life that could be pasted into a book – his “archive fever” – and on the other hand, the manifest neglect of those books, as if, having been “saved”, this archive could be left to the slow destruction of its inevitable material decay, to the silverfish and the weather.

Michoutouchkine was the son of White Russian Cossacks who had fled the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, eventually settling in Belfort, France where the artist was born in 1929. In 1953, at the age of 23, he left France

on a “world tour” and journey of “self-discovery” that would take him through the Middle East, Greece, India, Nepal, Burma, Ceylon and Australia before ending up in Noumea, New Caledonia in 1957, where he established a makeshift art gallery – the first in the Pacific Islands outside of settler states like Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii. There, in 1959, he met Aloï Pilioko, a Wallis Islander who had also left home as a young man in search of work, opportunity and experience, travelling first to Efate in the then New Hebrides before moving on to Noumea. Their meeting – and mutual attraction – led to a two year sojourn together on the island of Futuna near Pilioko’s home island of Wallis, where they painted, collected, interacted with the Islanders, travelled and enjoyed themselves.¹

Futuna was a “catalyst” that would change both their lives.² For Michoutouchkine, it shifted the tenor of his travelling adventure from its aimlessness and transcendental escapism to acquire a sense of purpose and commitment it did not have before. With Pilioko as his partner, he conceived a grand ambition to exhibit the objects they were already amassing in great numbers from the Pacific Islands in *the Pacific Islands* under the rubric of “Oceanic art”. Furthermore, they planned to establish a museum of Oceanic art in the Pacific Islands, indeed, in Futuna itself – though this idea was abandoned and transferred to their plans for the property they acquired near Port Vila, where they relocated in 1961. The historical significance of their ambition may be seen in relation to the general ideological recoding of ethnographic artefacts as “art” through various exhibitions and institutional initiatives in the metropolitan West in the post-war period. But where most objects were transferred from the Pacific to the metropolises of Europe and the United States, the novelty of their undertaking was to disseminate the concept and institution of “art” in the Pacific amongst Pacific Islanders.

For Pilioko, the sojourn in Futuna consolidated his commitment to becoming a modern artist, unprecedented for an Islander at the time. With Michoutouchkine, he produced dozens of paintings inspired by life on Futuna and his instinctive love of domestic animals and local flora that formed the basis of his first exhibition at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre at Port Vila in 1961. Within a few years, he also developed a signature technique called his “needle paintings” in which he used coloured wools sewn in multi-hued linear flourishes on brown sacking used for copra bales.

From their new base in Vila, then, the artists undertook an extraordinary series of travels throughout the Pacific Islands in the early 1960s, staging art exhibitions that typically combined their own modernist paintings with more traditional ethnographic objects from their ever-expanding collection. They staged them in ad hoc venues like hotel lobbies, school halls, churches, town libraries, diplomatic embassies, airline offices, village big houses and in ship cabins en route. They hitched rides on cargo boats and naval ships to get to

otherwise difficult-to-access islands like Tikopia and Santa Ana in the Solomon Islands; they swapped paintings for travelling favours with airlines and worked relationships with consuls and ambassadors to smooth their way into places like Tahiti and New Caledonia.

Pilioko's role in these travels was crucial. His presence opened doors of welcome that might have remained closed or limited if Michoutouchkine had been on his own. He was showing his friend his regional "neighbourhood" at the same time as he was discovering it for himself: meeting ancestral Polynesian cousins who lived in tropical villages like his own; who had comparable languages, cultural practices and colonial histories; who, in Tahiti and the Marquesas, spoke French as he did, and who were fascinated by the Wallisian and Tongan tapa cloth they exhibited because they had stopped making it. In Tonga, Pilioko was fascinated to see the islands and meet the people from whom Wallisians had historically originated, while among the Big Nambis of Malekula and the people of Santo, he was acquainting himself with his Melanesian neighbours as a recent resident of the New Hebrides. Today we take a pan-Pacific consciousness for granted as a cultural and political construction of decolonisation through the establishment of state alliances, regional games, cultural festivals, widespread migration, tourism, and recent rise of televisual and digital media. In the 1960s, Pilioko was on the leading edge of this consciousness, discovering the Pacific as an interconnected region in a very personal way.³

From the late 1960s and through the 1970s and 1980s, however, their roles were reversed when the two began a second phase of travelling and exhibiting, making forays into France, Switzerland and Sweden; and from 1979 to 1987 to the Soviet Union and Central Europe. The latter comprised an extraordinary sequence of exhibitions patronised by the Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Culture of the USSR and staged in primarily ethnographic museums in Moscow, Khabarovsk, Novosibirsk, Tbilisi, Erevan, Varsovie and Leningrad; as well as locations in Armenia, Kirghizstan and Uzbekistan (among others). Here, one could say, Michoutouchkine played host to his Polynesian friend, showing him his regional neighbourhood while also discovering it for himself.

Yet behind this grand ambition to exhibit Oceanic art around the world, to live as perpetual travellers and tourists, there is a certain pathos. These exhibitions and the massive organisational feats they no doubt entailed were driven by the will of a single individual (and his willing and useful friend) more than by any philosophical, intellectual or institutional brief – despite their pretensions to ethnography. Ethnographers is precisely what they were not. Michoutouchkine's vast collection of Oceanic artefacts that supplied these exhibitions was gathered in a frenzy of private purchase and opportunistic acquisition in the islands in the late 1950s and 1960s. The objects were not stolen or misappropriated. They were readily available for purchase or trade in the period to anyone who wanted them badly enough to travel to their source, whether

that source was a local festival, a marketplace, a village or a trading store. The artist acquired them, he tells us, because he “loved” them.⁴ That is a highly satisfactory explanation in my opinion. To him they were “works of art”. And he wanted to show them as such to everybody. He “saved” them from oblivion. But what he “loved” and “saved” in them was also, I think, the hole in him.

Travelling and exhibitions filled that void and mediated a certain home-coming for the artist. On one level, that home-coming was a literal one. His return to France in 1967 after more than a decade away included an exhibition in his home town of Belfort, where he was born and where his parents settled in the late 1920s. His tour through Russia reconnected him to an ancestral homeland he had never seen before. He saw cultures and peoples who were both strange and strangely familiar to him, who spoke the language of his upbringing. Locals teased him that he spoke with an old-fashioned accent from the Tsarist era, which made them think he was from the countryside. He met a previously unknown brother, the child of his father’s first marriage, not heard from since his father’s exile (the message from the family was “if you want us to survive, do not write”), as well as a niece, the grandchild of another relationship.⁵ In multiple ways, he discovered Russia and his “Russianness”, an identity increasingly important to him in the last two decades of his life. Yet it should not escape notice that the vehicle of this “return” was the eclectic assemblage of ethnographic artefacts gathered from here and there and exhibited under the name of Oceanic art.

On another level, however, “home” was elsewhere. Neither Michoutouchkine nor Pilioko returned to their natal homelands. They became permanent residents (and eventually citizens) of Vanuatu, where, over several decades, they created their own home at Esnaar in the image of their lives as travellers, collectors and exhibitors. Esnaar is a garden compound open to guests and tourists – a steady stream of travellers and strangers, like the artists themselves – who look around and ponder the buildings and objects on display. Near the lake is a Japanese style guesthouse and Pilioko’s home and studio, filled with a clutter of objects amassed over a lifetime of travelling. A few metres away is Michoutouchkine’s house and studio, an unfinished painting with Russian flags propped up on a table in the back porch, pretty much as he’d left it. Near Michoutouchkine’s house is another building, now abandoned, where they’d built their first house on the property. Upstairs, every square inch of its interior walls are covered with signatures and messages left by guests who had stayed there. Further on is the shed that houses the remains of Michoutouchkine and Pilioko’s Oceanic art collection: canoe hulls, tam-tam figures, Malekulan masks, decorated pots, slit gongs, fishing traps, etc. All this stuff is now poised between the one memory that holds it together in a single human story and its inevitable dispersal to friends, family, museums, galleries, libraries, auction houses and the rubbish tip, a process already under way. Closer to the public entranceway is a set of open air canopies with objects and paintings on display that constitute

the remains of their museum – or “anti-museum”, as Michoutouchkine preferred to call it. Like the scrapbooks, Esnaar as a whole is a palimpsest and a “memory palace” of the lives lived there but not a monument to their eternal preservation.

1. The artists' story is often told, in countless newspaper and magazine articles. A biography of Michoutouchkine, directly informed by the artist, was published in 1995. See Marie-Claude Teissier-Landgraf, *The Russian from Belfort: Thirty-Seven Years Journey by Painter Nicolai Michoutouchkine in Oceania* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies/University of the South Pacific, 1995). In addition, an exhibition catalogue accompanying a retrospective at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre was published in 2008, with essays by eight authors on various aspects of their life and work. See *Nicolai Michoutouchkine et Aloï Pilioko: 50 ans de création en Océanie*, ed. Gilbert Bladinières, (Nouméa: Éditions Madrépores, 2008). See also my essay, “Falling into the World: The Global Art World of Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Aloï Pilioko,” in *Mapping Modernisms: Transcultural Exchanges in 20th Century Global Art* ed. Elizabeth Harney, Ruth Phillips and Nicholas Thomas (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2014) (forthcoming).
2. See Christian Coiffier, “Futuna, Catalyseur de la Symbiose des Deux Artistes Aloï Pilioko et Nicolai Michoutouchkine”, *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, no. 122-123 (2006): 173-186.
3. On the life of Aloï Pilioko, see *Pilioko: Artist of the Pacific* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies/University of the South Pacific, c.1980). The unidentified author of this book is Nicolai Michoutouchkine.
4. Nicolai Michoutouchkine, “À Propos de ma Collection,” in *Nicolai Michoutouchkine*, ed. Gilbert Bladinières, op. cit., 135.
5. Marie-Claude Teissier-Landgraf, *The Russian from Belfort: Thirty-Seven Years Journey by Painter Nicolai Michoutouchkine in Oceania* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies/University of the South Pacific, 1995): 51-64, 55.

Figs 2–8 (pages 92–98)
Pages from three
scrapbooks with ephemera
from travels and
exhibitions in the Pacific
Islands c1959–1967

Figs 9–13 (pages 99–103)
Pages from USSR photo
album 1980–81

All photos: Peter Brunt
All images courtesy
Aloï Pilioko

mta
 ime
 I
 mar
 Sue
 Weng



ni fovei Anstode s.m.s.m



Patekham Cule
 1/2 rue Jean-Jacques
 B.P. 100
 Noumea V.I.C

Sésifo Chibawata
 Tepe - Mue - Wallis
 (Tenufo)

COMPTOIR POLYMERIE
LA SEULE piece
FARE UTE

TAHITI
PRIX MODERES
VENEZ et comparez
OUVERTURE TOUTS LES JOURS
10 H A 12 H ET 18 H A 21 H

POST CARD
FROM SANTO
NEW HERBIDES



en particulier dans
son atelier. Comme il
pluvait à verse il n'y
avait que le compas et le
ciseau venant à bout de
dans la maison.

un petit baret à
mots, vous allez voir
plus... entendre.

LA LITHOGRAPHIE DE VARESE
LA BAVONAISE

ALOY -
Did you know that in October I had a heart ailment and the
doctor said I must have six months rest ?
I then went to Melbourne for six weeks - hospital and all -
I found the temperament of the people there quite unsuited
to me.
Did you know that at present I am resting at my beautiful villa
at HAI KI TINI - where we always make so well prepared by
my brother Agapito ? + Alofofa (Alofofa ALOY)
who receives our Lord, the Lamb, and remembers Him in Christ.
If my house was filled with your things, and I was allowed
to keep them, I would like to put some of the
really great there - flowers and the like. But there is nothing
stations forever - because I always know that I cannot keep the
them to be always displayed in a beautiful place. So I wanted
piece. I gave them to him and he has framed them nicely, and
now they have a good home, and I can think of them there.
My good brother, HUGH
The eldest died. Please say a prayer for him



M. Agapito de Rai
1905 de A. P. Agapito de Rai

LIBRETTI
AGAPITO
NO 69
LIBRETTI
LIBRETTI
LIBRETTI

magazine

La Hiti

de

de

de

14

HOTEL BORA BORA

RAHATA A
et mon
premier action

photo
TIAU PIAU



MAUPITI
tour de l'île RICHARD NA



BORA BORA



EDITION
SPECIALE

ABON. 200FRS.
PAR MOIS

SAMEDI 2 JUILLET 1966

41000 N° 1527
ANNEE

LE JOURNAL DE TAHITI

Le quotidien le mieux informé

LE PLUS FORT TIRAGE ET LA PLUS FORTE VENTE DES JOURNAUX LOCALS
TELEPHONE 924-929 BOITE POSTALE 600 PAPEETE - DIRECTEUR: Jean JONARD

LA PREMIERE EXPLOSION NUCLEAIRE FRANCAISE DANS LE PACIFIQUE



LE GOUVERNEMENT FRANCAIS COMMUNIQUE :

Le Gouvernement français a proposé de réaliser au Centre d'Expérimentations du Pacifique une série d'expériences au cours de laquelle sera tiré un engin expérimental à fission de plutonium, dont la puissance se situe dans la gamme dite "tactique".

L'explosion a eu lieu au-dessus du lagon de

MORUROA à 15 heures 34 GMT (5 heures 34 ce matin).

Les conditions de sécurité fixées par les instructions du Gouvernement français étaient réunies au moment du tir et aucun incident n'est à signaler."

EU LIEU CE MATIN A MORUROA.

C'EST UN CHAMPIGNON ANALOGUE A CELUI-CI QUI VIENT DE S'ELEVER POUR LA PREMIERE FOIS DANS LE CIEL DE LA POLYNESIE. C'EST L'ABOUTISSEMENT DE TROIS ANNEES D'EFFORTS ACHARNES.

Mme Duval-Arnould

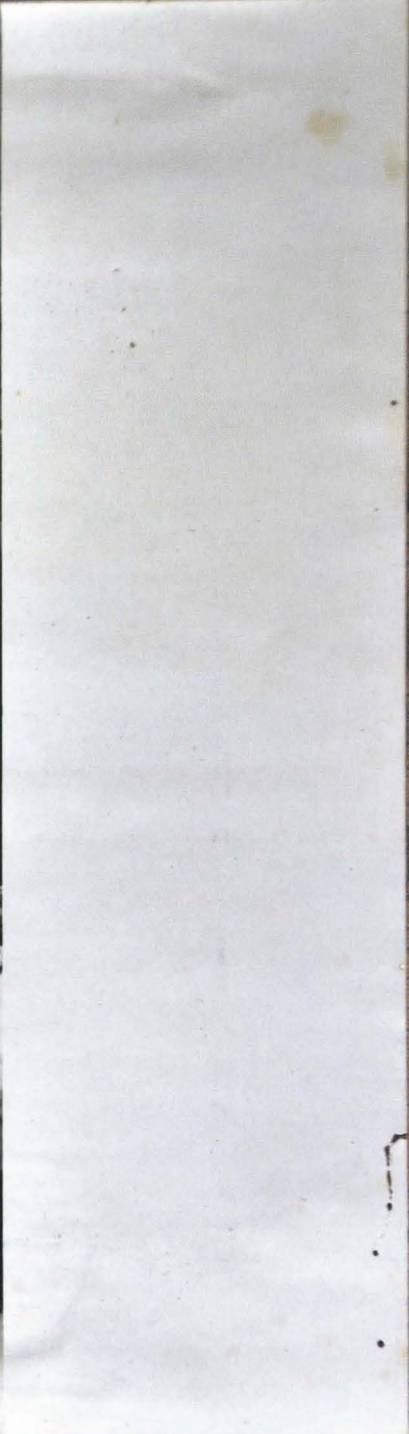
A PAR LE TAHITIEN







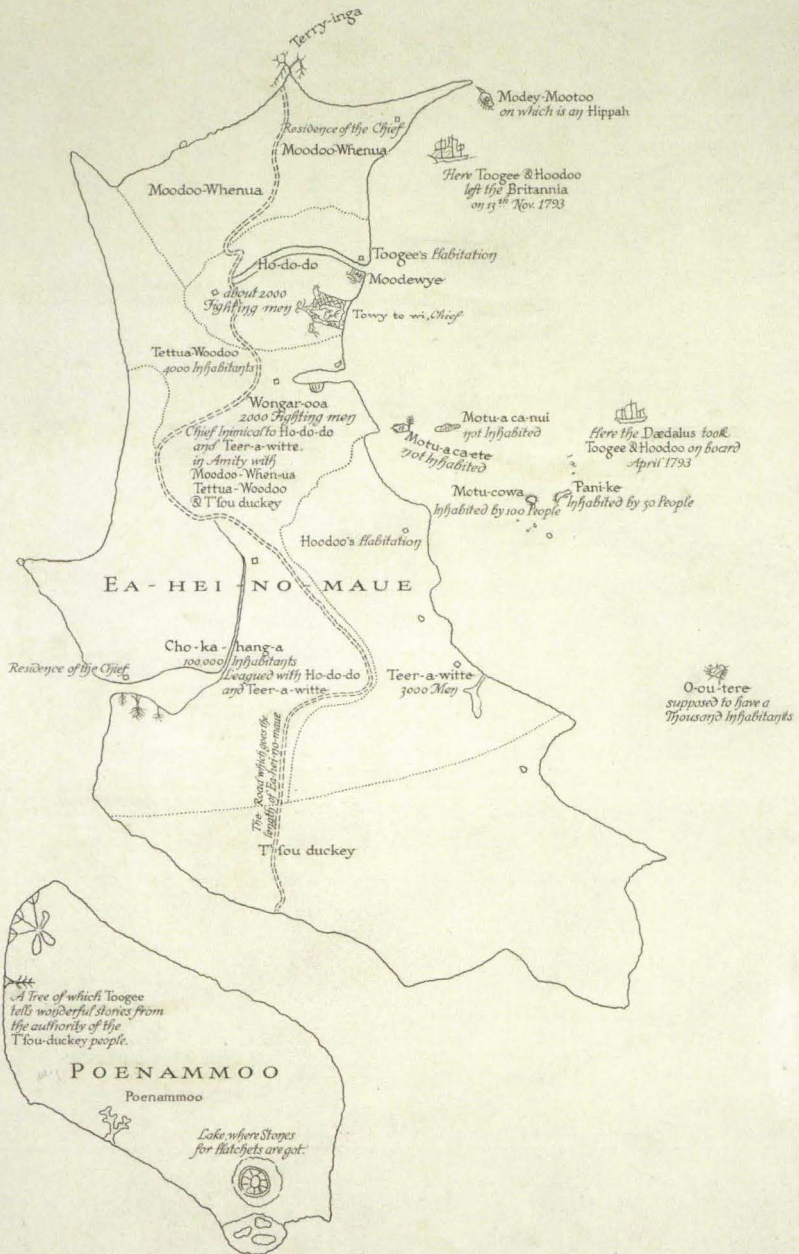
Қызыл Қызыл жұлдыз
Ашот Казарян 80.







Manouï Taoui
no Water on it



Where I'm Calling From: A Roundtable on Location and Region

*Coordinated and edited by Lee Weng Choy
with Michelle Antoinette, Jon Bywater,
Joselina Cruz, Sophie McIntyre,
Viviana Mejía, Joyce Toh and Nina Tonga*

Fig. 1

New Zealand Department
of Internal Affairs
Centennial Publications
Branch: Tuki's map
[copy of ms map] [c1940]
Originally by Tuki Te Terenui
Whare Pirau, b. 1769?
Ink drawing on cream
cardboard and attached
to cardboard frame
685 x 500 mm
Ref. MapColl-CHA-2/1/9-
Acc.36440
From the estate of R.R.D.
Milligan, 15 June 1964
Alexander Turnbull Library,
Wellington, New Zealand

Lee Weng Choy: Welcome to the roundtable for the “Elective Proximities” issue of *Reading Room*. As a way of starting, what I’d like to ask from each of you is this – locate yourself!

I don’t mean to ask you to give me your location simply in terms of a point: for instance, “I live and work in Singapore, that relatively little dot in Southeast Asia”. Instead, I’m asking that you talk about the “place” where you live and work as a “node that is intersected”, and intersected perhaps not only by what is geographically nearby, but also by the varied sources of your own baggage. In other words, what does it mean, for example in my case, “to live and work in Singapore.” How do I imagine Singapore? Who and what do I imagine are my neighbours, and my contemporaries? How do I imagine my own intervention in this place that I call home? What trajectories and detours – the latter also being very important – brought me to Singapore?

In thinking about our topic for this roundtable – the larger questions of regions and regionalisms – I thought to start with the theme of location, knowing full well how “location” slips in and out of both the “local” and the “regional”.

Michelle Antoinette: I live and work in Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory. Part of the idiosyncrasy of the city stems from its “constructedness” as a purpose-built government town; it was especially designed to serve as the seat of Australia’s federal parliament and was established exactly 100 years ago on politically “neutral” pastoral lands between the larger, already established cities of Melbourne and Sydney. Thus, aside from its pastoral history, the city is largely defined by its bureaucratic role as the centralised place of governance for the nation and along with this, by its public bureaucracies and government institutions, and by the public servants who fill these spaces.

Canberra is also famously home to the Australian National University, with which I have been affiliated for over 10 years. The university was established by the Australian government in 1946, beginning with a small collective of postgraduate research centres focusing on subjects of national interest. The ANU is world-renowned for its research strengths in the area of Asian Studies, so to some degree, my decision to move from Melbourne to Canberra to pursue further research on contemporary Southeast Asian art had to do with the ANU's strong profile in Asian Studies. But, more precisely, I came to the ANU because I was enticed by the opportunity to undertake a unique graduate programme in Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Research. I was deliberately interested to formalise my interconnecting interests in contemporary Asia and contemporary art, which prior to my move to the ANU were channelled as fairly distinct areas of study. Moreover, a small collective of arts professionals and researchers were carving out a presence at the ANU in the field of contemporary Asian art at the time, some of whom I'd encountered through my period of internship at the then Queensland Art Gallery leading up to the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in 1999. My personal travels to Asia, alongside related secondary and tertiary education in Asian Studies, Fine Art and Art History, were also influential in shaping this study trajectory.

Canberra is also host to a number of national cultural institutions: the National Art Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum of Australia, and the National Library of Australia. While the National Gallery of Australia is home to an impressive collection of classical Asian art and some contemporary Asian art, and the National Portrait Gallery and the National Museum of Australia have both exhibited contemporary Asian art in recent times, it is Brisbane's Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art which is the institutional home of contemporary Asian art in Australia. So to some degree, I am at a distance from the institutional "centre" of contemporary Asian art in Australia in terms of its collection and exhibition, but much closer to the wealth of secondary educative resources needed to critically reflect on that art.

In terms of thinking of Canberra as a node that is intersected, the "institutions" I've described above – of tertiary education, governance and culture – comprise key overlapping local axes, with academia being the primary springboard in facilitating my local, regional and international collaborations via the field of contemporary Asian art. Canberra is as a place marked by an acute presence of transitory interstate and international populations, such as visiting academics and students, exhibition-goers, diplomatic dignitaries and general tourists, who live and/or work alongside a more stable and settled population. So that is a further layering of particular local/regional/global dialogues within which I am positioned.

Increasingly, my neighbours and my contemporaries are less defined in terms of physical proximity – that is, here in Canberra or even Australia – than by my

engagements through international networks of scholarly discourse. These are the thinkers, writers, artists, curators and others who make up the fields of modern and contemporary Asian art. While our real-time “conversations” may be infrequent, they are often nearer intellectual neighbours to me than colleagues in my own academic corridors, whose interests lie in other research fields.

I would suggest that my intervention in Canberra lies with sustaining a presence for contemporary Asian art research in dialogue with others and encouraging interdisciplinary cross-cultural approaches for thinking through “Asia” and “art”. Part of this is about continuing to carve a space in the larger public imaginary about the importance of art and culture as vital subject areas for better understanding ourselves and others.

Jon Bywater: Defaulting to geography, I could locate myself by saying that I came to Aotearoa on my parents’ trajectory: I was born in England, and was three years old when they moved with me and my infant brother to the “far side” of the world.

As someone who writes about art, some of the most significant cultural baggage I carry probably could be related to these simple biographical facts. Rather in the way this family story puts my arrival here beyond my ability to elect it, though, any such connections seem over determined by vastly more general features of the place from which I find myself working; to begin with, New Zealand’s history as a colonial state, and “art” as an Anglophone term for a Western, modern conception of creative activity. In other words, while it may be true that my personal relationship to Europe has provided relative freedom to reflect on these things, it does not seem necessary to the way that, in a bicultural context, *what* or *who* is from *where* and *how* and *why* this matters are questions that have come to seem as urgent as they are familiar. In this instance, most basically, I would consider our shared use of English, and the concepts that underlie our common investment in contemporary art, as things to put in question in this way.

So what you are asking, Weng, puts me at ease, implying as it does principles I agree with: that place matters, as well as thinking it in its complexity. At a similar level of abstraction, I am occupied by the way such agreement might *locate us*. In my experience, a point of connection between your “point” and mine is that Singapore and Auckland have an asymmetrical relation to other locations that could come up in a conversation about contemporary art. At a physical remove from the concentrations of historical cultural and financial capital that influence the planetary circulation of art, I suspect that our localities mean we are both used to having to work actively to locate ourselves, rather than to be located?

Since July last year I’ve been based in Western Europe, precisely to consider the effects of living there – in Paris and Brussels – on my sense of how to articulate

the question of the importance of location to the production, circulation and reception of contemporary art. In the briefest of terms, my response to the uneven demand to account for where we come from is based in the sense that this – and much else – about my location in Aotearoa can be generalised, even while it forms a possible limit case, being as it is at an extremity of physical distance, insular in the sense that it is geographically removed by seas from other states and centres, even within any putative region, such as Australasia, Oceania or the “Pacific Rim”.

More succinctly, my hunch is that it might serve as a reminder that location is not something to be settled and put aside, but an *action* more than a fact, and one importantly shaped by context.

Joselina Cruz: When I was invited to take part in this roundtable, it was interesting to think through the propositions that were presented to jump-start the discussions. It brought to mind my interest in maps and mappings, map-making, location and space, our momentary possession of our place, only for it to slip with every minute tremor of the earth.

This is how I’ve always seen place, geographic or otherwise; my owning it never mattered, or it mattered little; and it was only ever slightly managed. The 4.4 magnitude earthquake that was felt in Manila not too long ago, which made my table wobble, was another instance wherein my place, and my location, shifted. (Although the possibility of it crumbling was also pretty much there as well.) We shift constantly. Discourses are tweaked with every conversation, every seminar, every conference, studio visit, even during exhibition openings. I find my detours many, much of them sought through fiction. Sometimes with theory and discourse. And necessarily, through travel. Where am I? I’ve arrived in a space, echoing empty, swollen with light, a site aspiring towards acquiring history, while at the same time pretending a past. The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design is an art space in a college built seven years ago, meant to become a laboratory of ideas. We’ve tried to keep to this initial directive, and with the aim to produce a programme that allows for exchange to materialise. The experience of having worked in collecting institutions, a large-scale exhibition and several small intimate shows feeds into my curating. The variety of contexts and media are also important. I locate myself in Asia, the specificity of my circumstance is unequivocal; so is the specificity of my experience.

Sophie McIntyre: Since receiving the invitation to join this roundtable, I have been travelling and working in Asia, criss-crossing borders, time zones, languages and cultures. I am a curator, lecturer and art writer from Australia (based in Canberra, while also working in Sydney), and over the past 25 years I have worked in Asia, and mostly in East Asia, as well as in New Zealand. “Locating” myself in the Asia-Pacific region has not been a conscious or strategic decision,

nor is it mere accident. For the past 20 years or more, since the rise of the Keating era, Australia has defined itself geographically if not culturally as part of the Asia-Pacific region and this has inevitably shaped my sense of identity and place in the world. Unlike earlier generations who grew up under the power and influence of the Empire, Australians as well as New Zealanders are visiting Asia, rather than Britain, as their first overseas destination, and they are choosing to study and work in Asia. I was one of them, and from the mid-1980s, when I was an art school student, I regularly visited and travelled around China where my parents were living. In the 1990s I lived in Taiwan and studied Mandarin and during this period I began researching and curating exhibitions of Chinese art (in a broad geo-cultural context). Since this time, both China and Taiwan have radically changed, and I am unsure what exactly compels me to return and invest significant time and energy researching art from this region. However, Taiwan especially is a place where I feel “at home”, despite the fact I am still essentially a foreigner there.

The island – as a geographical territory – is a concept that has always intrigued me, and I have lived on many islands, including Fiji, Tasmania, New Zealand and Taiwan. Islands are typically located on the geo-cultural margins, bounded by sea and overshadowed by a continent or a larger entity. By virtue of their isolation, there is often a tension that exists amongst peoples living on islands – between a desire to be part of the regional and global community, and the need to construct, preserve and defend the island’s identity and autonomy. It is this tension between the global, regional and local that interests me most, and how it is expressed in and through art. For a small island such as Taiwan – which is fiercely nationalistic and also international, and which is not recognised by most members of the United Nations – this tension between the local, regional and global prevails. In Taiwan, identity is not merely a theoretical concept, but it is an issue of survival and it concerns peoples’ livelihoods, their political and cultural freedoms and their future. Although I am not from and do not belong there, being in Taiwan has helped me understand what it means to have a sense of place.

Nina Tonga: Geographically my location in Aotearoa, New Zealand, is defined in relation to the Pacific Ocean, a vast body of water that covers one third of the world’s surface. For those outside of its bounds the vastness of the ocean has marred this region as distant and isolated. Yet for those living within its fluid border the notion of connectedness is inherent to an understanding of locality and belonging. Although globalisation and the ubiquity of real time communications and computing explain this growing sense of connectivity, the Pacific is always already a networked space. The exploration and settlement of Polynesia by ancient navigators is one of the greatest navigational feats that charted a lasting network that continually shapes and informs this region. In Aotearoa the *whakapapa* (genealogy) of *tangata whenua* (indigenous people of the land) to the land and ocean constantly reinvigorates this ancient network.

Envisioning the Pacific Ocean as a network serves as a powerful metaphor for the fluid and ever-changing nature of contemporary locality. The shifting geo-politics in the Pacific has drawn new lines of connection reflected in the development of transnational regional labels such as Pacific Basin, Pacific Rim and the most frequently used term Asia-Pacific. While these terms highlight the geographically and connotatively vast borders of Asia and the Pacific, they also highlight the Pacific as contested terrain. China and Taiwan's growing economic engagement in the South Pacific has shifted the balance of influence in the region from the Euro-American towards the Asian. Both China and Taiwan provide major sources of investment, immigration and tourism for Pacific economies. As local island governments negotiate the China-Taiwan rivalry and their growing political influence in the region they demonstrate the move in and out of the local, regional and global realms.

Living and working within the political and cultural networks of this region embodies a sense of mobility and a distributed sense of home. My home as an imagined place of belonging is defined through myriad connections to physical and intangible places. Collective memories of migration and my own experiences of growing up as a New Zealand-born Tongan have conditioned my view of New Zealand as a node of a large diaspora network. My transnational reality has made me feel "at home" in the network, a reality heightened by the pervasive nature of social media and web 2.0. Existing within a global networked public that crosses virtual and physical space has altered my sense of locality as being intersected and in constant connection with other places.

Joyce Toh: Weng, it's funny how you've opened up this roundtable, because I would actually reply, "I live and work in Singapore, that relatively little dot in Southeast Asia". Apart from the factual matter of such a statement, that "little dotness" of Singapore goes some way in elucidating my thinking about – as echoed in the real estate agent's dictum – "location, location, location".

Precisely because Singapore is physically diminutive, anxieties about survival as a sovereign nation always seemed contingent on its ability to connect to – and be a connection point for – the wider world, whether that "world", in expanding concentric circles, has been Southeast Asia (often defined by ASEAN) or Asia, Asia-Pacific or the "great beyond". The multiplicity of connections also occurs on criss-crossing levels and across unruly stratas, in fields ranging from the economic and commercial, to diplomatic and cultural. Perhaps this explains the perennial fondness for the word "hub" here in Singapore, and why the No. 1 (or not) ranking of the Changi Airport is an ongoing national fixation. In locating "the point of Singapore", is an attempt to situate it as nexus – a location-position that brings forth its own conundrums.

Indeed, what are our elective proximities? While Singapore is geographically located in Southeast Asia, it is not uncommon to come across Singaporeans

who prefer to situate it in affinity with other “world-class” cities like New York, London or Tokyo. Yet seeing Singapore in proximity to those other cities – not countries – is not entirely far-flung because this country, in its dotness, does not have “side” enough for a countryside. The country-is-the-city-is-the-country, and the metropolitan affiliations stem from an urban experience that pervade through and through this island, one degree north of the Equator.

In locating the self, many of the responses reveal the “geography” of the personal intersected with the professional (but perhaps to be expected, given the nature of this roundtable). In my case, it is also matrixed with that of an institution. I am a curator at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), which specialises in Southeast Asian contemporary art, and I oversee the Philippine portfolio at SAM. Ironically, I am often mistaken as a foreigner in Singapore but assumed to be a local when I am in the Philippines. The Museum has also taken on the organisation of the Singapore Biennale 2013, and with it, decided on a much larger focus on Southeast Asia, and to approach it via a co-curatorship model with several curators based in the various countries. In total, there are 28 co-curators, and for the Philippines, I have been working with four curators located in regions across the archipelago: Claro Ramirez Jr in the capital Manila, Central Luzon; Charlie Co in Bacolod, in the Visayas; Abraham Garcia in Davao, Mindanao, South Philippines; and Kawayan de Guia in Baguio, North Luzon. All four also happen to be artist-curators and deeply cognisant of centre-periphery dynamics, and have practices that crossover into cultural advocacy.

My work at SAM – and in particular with the Biennale – has thrown into sharp relief many of these questions about locus and also how that locus “looks” when seen from other points-of-view. Within SAM, the art that we exhibit, present and acquire has largely been situated in the context of Southeast Asia; similarly, questions about this region and “region-ness” itself were foregrounded when it came to our thinking about the Biennale. Yet it was not one shared or held by several of the co-curators: the vastness of Southeast Asia did not compel their interest as much as the question of dealing with the urgencies of their local conditions. At the start of the process, I think some of the Philippine co-curators also regarded my dual-position as a curator at a national institution and as a Singaporean – heading out to the Philippine “provinces” as it were – with a mixture of fascination, optimism, scepticism and doubt.

“Locating” is simultaneously an act of relating – relating to/with/alongside/against – and of getting one’s bearings, and it’s not so directionally straightforward when spatial and temporal co-ordinates are interlocked. Since the start of the Biennale process, I’ve found my location-position has, at times, become unmoored (delightfully so, perhaps necessarily too); it could well be a new locus at the journey’s end.

Viviana Mejía: I don't mean to defy your admonition of just resorting to geography to explain one's location. However, highlighting some coordinates of my physical status seems a bit necessary. I am a Colombian who is currently living in Singapore, and even though I arrived in 2008, I've lived intermittently in this country until just recently. I use the word intermittently because visa restrictions and obtaining the necessary employment permits derailed me from a linear trajectory here. In 2008, after living all of my life in Colombia, I came to Singapore to do my MA in Contemporary Art at the Sotheby's Institute of Art. Geographically, Singapore is almost the antipode of Colombia – Jakarta and Bogotá are approximately 200 kilometres from being exact antipodes – and thus I constantly get asked why would I move to the other side of the world to learn about art. And that is precisely the reason, because when I completed my MA in Modern and Contemporary art history and theory at Los Andes University in Bogotá, Colombia, I realised there is a lack of connections and exchanges between Asia and Latin America, especially in terms of art and writing. I wanted to create bridges and connections for these seemingly distant regions and to explore the possibility of these relations. There is so much history that is yet untold, so many critical connections to be made. Therefore, it seemed logical that in order to understand what was happening in the art scene in Asia, I had to live and study with the people responsible of creating and contributing to it.

Once I had decided to live here, I had this longing for Singapore – a feeling that intensified as I was pushed away from this place because of various visa troubles. I developed an uncanny desire and will to stay and work here. In the past five years, as I tried to construct a new “home” for myself in this country, I've had to constantly move around the region as well as go back and forth between Colombia and the city-state. Finally, I found a wonderful opportunity that allowed me to be part of all of this: I now work as a curator and gallery manager at Future Perfect, a contemporary art gallery in Singapore's new art precinct, Gillman Barracks. In the process of investing and dedicating so much time to understanding the region, especially Southeast Asia, I want to build an identity of being here – not just as a foreigner understanding the culture through her specific gaze, rewording it according to my previous frames of reference, but as someone engaging with this place as a local contributor as well. I've worked hard to make this potential a reality, with a sense of humility and a respect – because there is, of course, still so much I do not know – and I've also developed a strong sense of trusting that what I do here is right for me.

To be at home you have to find your place. I will always call Colombia “home”, as it is where I was born, raised, where my family and roots are, a place that comes to me inherently. But Singapore is the place where I have built a home, a location where I've chosen to practice as a curator and writer.

LWC: There is an online project that I've been working on for years that has just been launched – in a very beta version. It's called Comparative Contemporaries,

and it is a web anthology project that brings together art writing from across Asia. The project begins with Southeast Asia and with five editors who each have selected what they believe are key texts of art writing *from* or *for* this part of the world. The editors are Sue Acret, Patrick D Flores, Ho Tzu Nyen, Ly Daravuth and Keiko Sei.

Over time, new editors and their “proto-anthologies” will be added to the website. Far from attempting to establish a canon of authors, the aim of Comparative Contemporaries (CC) is to generate a community of writers, researchers, curators, artists and readers engaged in debating and discussing contemporary art and art writing from Asia. Comparative Contemporaries had its beginnings as a symposium and workshop organised at The Substation arts centre in Singapore in 2003, and the website is presented in collaboration with the Asia Art Archive: <http://comparative.aaa.org.hk>.

There's the saying that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but the Comparative Contemporaries project argues for the inverse: that it is better to understand “Asia” not as a whole, but as a loose and messy assembly of different parts. CC contends that Asia makes better sense when we do not frame it as a region, when we do not imagine it as being in any way containable or contiguous, but instead undertake to engage its various “sub-regions”. CC conceives of a sub-region as comprised of lateral and contingent associations. A sub-region does not assume to access a privileged view from up above; it is not framed by any such totalising perspective or presumption. Rather, its perspectives are from the ground. The identities of a sub-region are always in process, always in negotiation.

I'd like to ask you all, what are your own thoughts on the notions of “region” and “sub-region” – how do you understand these terms, and perhaps less from any abstract theoretical positions, but rather from the practical perspectives of your own research and work.

JB: As I've suggested, I'm interested in participating in a geographically-distributed conversation centred on contemporary art, with a belief in the value of attending to particularities of place. Considering location as a process is important, practically as well as theoretically.

For some mostly obvious reasons – that derive, to start with, from economic and governmental conceptions of identity – official and general culture is already embroiled in regionalism, generally of a chauvinist kind. In the face of this, while degrees of specificity of place, regions and sub-regions, are important, they have limits as a tactic in keeping the value of art works from being shrunk to forming representations of their origins (a danger of nationalism, for example). So writing about art from Aotearoa for me can often be more about implying continuities and connections than distinctions, and include

the task of frustrating readers' possible desire to relate something too quickly to any locational category.

To take a different example, while we were in Paris, my partner Louise Menzies and I were invited to collaborate with the people who run a great independent gallery there, castillo/corrales. The opportunity grew from the gallery's interest in making a presentation of the Audio Foundation book about underground music from Aotearoa, *Erewhon Calling*. This was extended into a gallery show of New Zealand-related art and events. The dangers of exoticism, of appearing to act as "native informants", and so on, were keenly felt by us, but we took the risk. The project's title, *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, was one small step in trying to play up what you, Weng, refer to as "looseness and mess". As well as echoing the Samuel Butler allusion in the music book's title, it might be recognised as a Canadian song, by Neil Young, once beautifully covered by a band from Tauranga, the Human Instinct. The lyrics celebrate a commitment to a far-flung place by ironising an outside perception of it. At a basic level, it was intended to reflect New Zealand art and music's offshore roots and audiences. We showcased the work of German label Unwucht and North American label Siltbreeze, reissuing and issuing archival material, for example. So external perceptions, and what might count as internal or external, were things we hoped to complicate, involving people with varying and no claim to being New Zealanders. Through strategies like these we hoped to remain open to the interest in what might be understood as something like a "New Zealandness", while making it hard to see this as anything determined in a simple way.

JC: The present day desire for a regional perspective in art and culture is one that is produced through a historical necessity – something akin to the desires and necessities felt during the era of colonisation, each specific to their particular time and circumstance. The inclusiveness of the "region" follows the formula of the much-critiqued system of colonisation, power and domination inherent in the act, thus allowing for very easy categorisation. How else can we look at this? We have the categories to break and question, to critique and re-model, to produce nuances and give agency to ideas and voices extracted from the dissected whole. Research is always done on the ground. Curators do not only (or should not) rely on one source. There is the necessity of exploration and exchange. More and more there are experimental constructs for the production, not only of art and exhibitions, but also how conversations are held and practice, enabled. How do we start thinking beyond boundaries? These "messy assembly of parts" need points of contact. How much fluidity can we give the loss, or the erasure of these frames of reference? I agree that research and conversations cannot be done from the large idea of a region, like an "Icarus flying above these waters".

Maybe it's worth re-reading Michel de Certeau on the practice of creating urban patterns and exploring it on the ground to recover it, rather than the voyeur who looks at the world from a distance (he positions this from the World Trade

Center) and transforms what he sees into text. The need for “understanding”, “to make sense”, usually finds those of us who take on this exercise in a pickle. What is the lowest common denominator? The privileging of ethnicity? How about political histories and current situations? There is a need for directional change in historical conversations (south to south, and the global south). It is, indeed, messy work. As a curator, exhibitions are personal. After having done a large-scale exhibition, I realised that intimate shows would be more interesting and even more exciting. There, conversation is keener, and there is more of it. Proposals and ideas are engaged with more depth. Past practice, of both the curator and the artists are discussed. The interest between the curator and the artists would have to be sympathetic.

I recently read a review by Dan Karlholm on *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* by James J. Sheehan. The book enumerated the “transnational, where art is seen to pass through the other parts of the world”, and the review seems to grapple with questions similar to those we are grappling with here. The book is pretty thorough, but again rather Western-centric: Russia and (East of) Europe, South and Central America, the Caribbean, China and East Asia, India, South and Southeast Asia, Oceania, Africa and West Asia – all the “regions”. But then the reviewer writes rather grudgingly: “I will not fuss about the fact that my particular part of the world, Scandinavia, forms no part of this universe of art. A Finnish artist is mentioned towards the end, Tea Mäkipää, but without national identification, and while the Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson is dealt with outside of a regional coverage, he is at least described as ‘Danish’. Perhaps the Northernmost part of Europe deserves to be left out of this account from modern to contemporary art, but on what grounds exactly?”¹ Yes, there is always another “region” that has fallen through the cracks.

VM: In thinking about this question, I was reminded about a conversation that took place at the exhibition *The Artist, the Book and the Crowd* curated by Ho Rui An, Ang Siew Ching and Karen Yeh at The Substation in Singapore. The exhibition features several local artists and thinkers, who were invited to select books and texts that were meaningful or influential to their career. Consequently, they could “curate” their own reading list, bringing to the gallery their own books, and the viewers were allowed to thumb through these very personal possessions and familiarise themselves with the selected titles. Numerous bookshelves were scattered around the gallery and accompanied by “a series of textual excerpts created by the participating artists, each of whom rewrites a text that has been formative to his or her practice.”

On the final day of the project, Rui Ann hosted a panel discussion called “Artist Book Club”, where four participating artists spoke about the books they had chosen, and why these were relevant to their lives. While listening to the panel, I was drawn to the similarities between *The Artist, the Book and the Crowd* and

Comparative Contemporaries. As one of the project assistants of the latter, I became quite familiar with its development and the idea behind curators, writers and artists reading other thinkers and authors of the region.

After each artist spoke, the floor was opened for discussion. One of member of the audience vehemently expressed her dissatisfaction regarding the selections by the artists. She highlighted how almost all of them had selected books by European and American fiction and non-fiction authors. Some of the usual suspects surfaced in the choices – Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatari's *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*; *The Politics of Aesthetics* by Jacques Rancière; *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud; Susan Sontag's *On Photography*; *The Impossible* by Georges Bataille.

In particular, it was the book *The Rise and Decline of the State* by Martin van Creveld that sparked her indignation. She accurately pointed out how the artists had selected books that were seminal documents of Western-centric discourse, which blatantly ignored Asia and Africa and/or referred to these continents from a Centre-Periphery dialectic. She emphasised her disappointment when observing how the older and younger generations of Singapore were speaking of their practice through the lens of a Western philosophy, leaving her to question their lack of reference to local and regional writings. Why wasn't there any mention of local and regional theorists, academics, art writers or even fiction writers? Why reference someone who doesn't belong to this part of the world? Why use the words of someone that does not acknowledge or cite the intellectual production of this region? Only Lee Wen on the panel had mentioned a local text.

During the panel discussion at The Substation, I expressed my agreement with the woman regarding the limitations of these selections. But while I agreed with her, I also believe that the development of regional and specifically local discourses require that these selected texts be processed and worked through, not only as possibly "universal" points of reference, but we need to learn the ways that they may not be indicative of our place and time here in Southeast Asia. In other words, it needs to be clear why and how they are relevant or irrelevant in the development of regional voices.

I also pointed out, that is not just Asia and Africa that are removed from these theories and discourses but also Latin America and the Caribbean. Thirty years have passed since Gabriel García Márquez won the Nobel Prize in 1982, and almost all the references I hear from people – all over the world, but especially in Asia – about Latin American literature allude to "magical realism". This is a concept that many contemporary authors in Latin American adamantly move away from. Using your own words Weng, it's like magical realism has become a "totalising perspective" that restrains the complexities of this intriguing sub-region that is Latin America.

LWC: Michelle, in addition to the above question about sub-regions, I'd like to follow-up with a question specifically addressed to you. It basically takes off from your last point in response to our opening question, and I'd ask you to elaborate on it. You say: "Part of this is about continuing to carve a space in the larger public imaginary about the importance of art and culture as vital subject areas for better understanding ourselves and others". When you speak of a "larger public imaginary", how do you feel your work in your location addresses or can address some of the larger public imaginaries in terms of "regional" or "sub-regional" registers? I have a sense that academic research in the field needs to better entangle itself with the preoccupations of artists and curators and writers.

MA: Given my line of academic work, it's quite difficult to disentangle the theory and practice invoked in this question – from my perspective, the work of *thinking and theorising* "region" is thoroughly implicated in my academic *practice* and the kinds of practical research and application associated with it. Part of this stems from the fact that the concept and practice of "regionalism" has in fact been a central concern of my academic work over the last decade. In particular, the region of "Southeast Asia" and how modern and contemporary art production by artists from Southeast Asian countries has gained currency within a Southeast Asian regional framework (this is evidenced for instance in your own Comparative Contemporaries project, albeit within a "sub-regional" framework). More recently, however, as part of a research project exploring contemporary art as part of "new Asian cultural networks", I have been pursuing the notion of regionalism through the wider frame of "Asia". Rather than seeking to engage Asia as monolithic totality however, the project focuses on key art-related case studies situated in multiple yet specific Asian locales, and subsequently explores, "at ground level" the kinds of intra-regional relation between them, considering what such relations suggest about "Asia".

Thus, to more specifically address your distinctions of "region" and "sub-region", in my opinion the critical "on-the-ground" work of "sub-regions" you describe for the Comparative Contemporaries project are conditions and operations which I see as equally applicable to the dynamics of "region" – that is, if we adopt a critical stance in approaching regionalism. For me, it is rather about being able to recognise how "regions" – whether "sub-regions" or other kinds of "region" – are put to varied tasks, and it is also about being able to distinguish their multiple purposes and effects. Thus, there is for me less of a distinction between region and sub-region *per se* and more of an interest in distinguishing between positive and negative, critical and uncritical applications of regionalisms of all kinds and their varied effects.

In answer to your question about how I feel my work in my location addresses or can address larger public imaginaries in terms of "regional" or "sub-regional" registers, I hope that my attention to Southeast Asia/Asia assists in deepening the Australian public imaginary about contemporary artistic and cultural practices

being pursued within Southeast Asia/Asia (including those which specifically engage the regional frame through Southeast Asian/Asian exchange and collaboration). My desire to continue to emphasise the importance of art and culture as a means for better understanding ourselves and others is, I feel, even more pertinent at present, as Australia seeks to reconsider its own geo-political and economic position in the “Asian Century”. Surely art and other cultural forms are key means by which we get to know other people and must go hand in hand with attempts to strengthen political and economic partnerships; even though Australia has a rich recent history of art and cultural exchange projects with Asia, this is something which I feel needs constant reminding.

I’ve also necessarily been alert to *competing regionalisms*, such as Southeast Asia *vis-a-vis* Asia, or Asia *vis-a-vis* Asia-Pacific, and what these different frames reveal or conceal about the politics of place and identification. With regard to my own cultural positioning from Australia, these issues are necessarily connected to Australia’s shifting geo-political, economic and cultural concerns, away from its physically distant colonial pasts and reconfigured within its more proximate Asian and Pacific geo-cultural contexts in line with present-day concerns. In the field of cultural production, this is demonstrated in projects such as the *Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* and the *Artists’ Regional Exchange* which preceded it (ARX, formerly *Australia and Regions Exchange*, 1987–99).

Beyond Australia, within the larger international imaginary of art, I hope my attention to Southeast Asia/Asia assists in widening the “global” scope of modern and contemporary art (i.e. to help recognise that there are vibrant histories of modern and contemporary art in Southeast Asia/Asia) and in so doing, reveals ways for perceiving modern and contemporary art differently across the world – more precisely as differentiated and situated projects which may also bear similitudes and parallels to art elsewhere. At a more straightforward level, my scholarship and writing forms part of the growing documentation of Southeast Asian/Asian art, and in so doing hopefully helps to elucidate the realities of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian/Asian experience to those less familiar with it. Furthermore, I also hope my work assists in discerning between critical and non-critical applications of regionalism, whether for the fields of art history and practice or other domains.

In terms of practical research and application of my academic subject, I’ve had to physically move between multiple Asian fieldwork sites for academic research (and relevant sites elsewhere in the world) so as to navigate multiple Asian histories, societies and cultures, and in so doing, I’ve adopted an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural approach to my work which is open to considering both the breadth and specificity of a region. With regards to contemporary Southeast Asian/Asian art, this has meant “zooming in” to focus on artists, artworks, art histories, and exhibitions, for instance, which are largely predefined by existing national frames and reviewing them within the context of current regional *and*

global imperatives. Thus, region is for me further connected to global impulses and influences, and with regard to the international dimensions of contemporary art in particular, regionalism provides an important intervention into otherwise hegemonic and homogenising global contemporary art narratives with a Euro-American bias.

I think the entanglement of theory and practice which I began with also ties in with your concerns about academic research and your suggestion that there might be need for “better entanglements” between academic research and “the preoccupations of artists and curators and writers”. If I read correctly, there is an implication in your statement that “artists and curators and writers” are more rooted applications of knowledge production which relate more directly to “on the ground” creative experience and that, as per its traditional reputation, the work of the academic remains a distant, “ivory tower” project. I do think this is a very “old school” perspective (admittedly, there are still some academics around who continue to seclude themselves from everyday life but I would suggest this is less the case now than it was in the past). For one, these days, academics are also often artists, curators or arts writers, switching between roles as they choose or attempting to fill gaps by covering multiple institutional territories. My work, by contrast, is a conscious positioning principally within academic work, with arts writing as another mode for thinking through, applying and relating my real world encounters with art.

Coincidentally, a Southeast Asia-based researcher and I were recently conversing on methodological approaches for writing art histories relating to the Southeast Asian region. A good deal of our discussion was about thinking through the pros and cons of proximity and distance with the subjects of our research and practice, especially artists (but this also includes curators, art writers and other academics). We agreed that the issue of academic methodology is necessarily also a personal and political decision, especially when the field of concern is contemporary art and we are engaged in the peculiar task of producing histories of very recent and ongoing creative endeavour, implicating living artist subjects, their art and their stories, in conjunction with other live and shifting fields of concurrent meaning production (curatorship and exhibitions, art writing, etc) and their perspectives, all available for close academic attention and analysis. In this context, there is some merit in a critical distancing which nevertheless remains connected at ground level, a tricky but I think achievable and valuable practice.

LWC: My next question is for everyone. Lately, I've been thinking about the question of “being curated”.

“We”—audiences, artists, critics, curators, and the other usual suspects of the art world—are accustomed to diverse constellations of activities called curating. We are very self-conscious and self-reflexive about curating. We gather and

conference about the decisions curators make, their concepts and conceits. We read magazines, books, catalogues, and the whole range of communications that promulgate and ruminate on curatorial projects and the conditions of their production. We talk about the intentions that motivate curating, but what about the experience of being subjected to curating? What does it mean to “be curated”?

“Being curated” may suggest a binary relationship, but I would not want the issue to be framed in terms of an opposition between curators and the subjects of their curation. There is a lot of grey area when it comes to who or what is being curated and how people are subjected to curating. It is not only artists and their collaborators, but also curators who are often curated. For instance, the independent co-curators engaged in a large project like a biennale might experience being curated themselves.

I have a pair of provocations:

1. To be curated is to be mapped.
2. Geography and ethnicity are often privileged in exhibitions featuring an international range of artists, so much so that one could describe this mode of knowledge as “ethno-geographic.”

Curators go far and wide to meet a great number of artists; they have so many fascinating encounters. Yet it is not easy to translate these encounters into forms of presentation. The distances that curators and the curated travel, as well as the distances between the places of art-making and the spaces of exhibitions—these are too often compressed or elided. Curators, critics, and artists often speak about global society’s increasing appetite for consuming cultural difference. Part of this desire for the other is the desire to make it instantly available, to erase the separations between distinct places and cultures. The impulse to map is over-determined by many desires, but one of them – to command a privileged view from above – is precisely about having the power to see it all and render distance abstract.²

So what does “being curated” mean to you?

JB: I can’t talk about being curated from an artist’s perspective, of course, and I wouldn’t want to equate my experience of working within the structures of large institutions and an artist’s too quickly. What I think you are suggesting by invoking the term “ethnogeographic” is visible even from the position of an audience member, though. Even while some works transcended this framing, the bright, curling ribbon that was used in the graphic design and publicity for the 2012 Biennale of Sydney: *all our relations* seemed to me to suggest the way it, for example, presented cultural differences neatly gift-wrapped, along just such lines! It would certainly be exciting to see more courage from curators in acknowledging the reality of the thing that this phrase “elective proximities” might name, regardless of – indeed, because of – the way audiences might

be slow to give up their assumptions about authenticity, about what belongs where and what doesn't, and so on.

Obviously there is map-making and there is map-making. There's more to your provocation than just that some curatorial work succeeds in engaging with what we do less imperiously than others, I think. From here in Aotearoa, things like Fijian Islander Epeli Hau'ofa's vision of a sea of islands "connected rather than separated by the sea" in Oceania, and the now famous map (Fig. 1) drawn by Northland chief Tuki Tahua in 1793 of our two main islands (Ea-hei-no-maue and Poenamoo, as their names were transliterated) for Lieutenant-Governor Philip King, have served for me as prompts to ask about the differences between maps. Whose naming conventions do they follow? Whose assumptions about space? And what uses do these things suggest for the information contained in them?"

LWC: Nina, a question specifically for you. May I ask that you elaborate on your comment that: "The shifting geo-politics in the Pacific has drawn new lines of connection reflected in the development of transnational regional labels such as Pacific Basin, Pacific Rim and the most frequently used term Asia-Pacific. While these terms highlight the geographically and connotatively vast borders of Asia and the Pacific, they also highlight the Pacific as contested terrain. China and Taiwan's growing economic engagement in the South Pacific has shifted the Euro-American influence in the region towards Asia." Could you speak to this notion of contested terrain, but perhaps in a register that is more felt on the ground rather than seen from above.

NT: Having visited Tonga countless times over the past 30 years and more recently the Cook Islands, I believe this shifting terrain can be both felt and seen on the ground. I am immediately reminded of the installation *Island Portrait* (2004) by artist Yuk King Tan who captures a snapshot of how diplomatic alliances with China and Taiwan translate and transform the land. The alluring title of the installation promises an idyllic island vista complete with white sandy beach. While the installation delivers on the leisurely imagery it also doubles as the setting of a group portrait of workers from the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation living in Rarotonga.³ The 63 workers who are featured in the video and photograph were sent by the Chinese government as "gifts" to design and build the national courthouse of the Cook Islands. Much like their temporary assembly on the beach, their stay in Rarotonga is short term and somewhat isolated, a reality reinforced by locals in the background that continue about their activities. Yuk King Tan offers a snapshot of the contested terrain that I mentioned in my earlier response where dollar diplomacy translates in the most visible signs of government buildings, sport facilities and infrastructure projects. While it is easy to suggest Pacific Island governments play a secondary role in simply accepting lucrative aid, they are highly active in this contested terrain as several governments strategically manoeuvre their diplomatic allegiances to their own benefit.

LWC: Sophie, a question for you. The topic of islandness is something that I've had to think about thanks in part because of you. We worked together on an exhibition on that theme. I want to ask you about how you think about islands not only in terms of landmasses, but also in terms of cultural or social and other human-made constructions. Is there a case of thinking about cities as islands? You've been travelling a lot of late – doesn't travel from city to city make one think of island hopping? I too was travelling recently in the United States, and when I visit there, I often don't think of visiting a country, but rather I think of myself as visiting friends and colleagues in their neighbourhoods. I am aware of the gaps, and how little that I actually enter into the United States when I travel there.

SM: It's interesting you raise this point Weng, as some of the issues we explored in *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan* resonate even more strongly with me now, eight years after the exhibition was held. For those who aren't aware of it, this exhibition (which Weng and I co-curated with Eugene Tan in 2005) focused on the concept of the island – not only as a geographical location but as a process of becoming. Focusing on artists' works from these three countries, we explored themes relating to colonisation and migration, and we reflected on the hopes, desires and anxieties we commonly experience when we arrive and become “islanded” in a new or foreign place.

Here in Australia, the refugee issue has reached a crisis point, prompting me to re-think some of the issues we explored in that exhibition. According to our politicians, Australia (“our home girt by sea” – as our national anthem describes it) is being invaded by boat people who are not legitimate refugees. The fact that the vast majority of us (with the exception of the Aboriginals) have come to this country from elsewhere, and mostly by boat, has been overlooked by our politicians who insist we must close our borders, turn back the boats, or send the refugees elsewhere ... to another island.

As you mention, I've been travelling a lot of late and I've been thinking about issues of migration and citizenship in relation to notions of place and belonging. Flying between countries, and mostly cities, is in some ways analogous to island hopping – however, this time I never saw a beach (though some people, confusing Taiwan and Thailand, believed I might!). Many of the cities to which I travelled, including Hong Kong, Taipei, Tokyo, Shanghai and Beijing are globally connected, densely populated urban metropolises. These cities have the resources (or at least the supply chains) and the populations to sustain themselves so that, in effect, their residents don't need to leave them. In a way these cities are akin to islands, having developed their own economic infrastructure, and socio-cultural customs and dialects (e.g. Shanghai and Beijing). In China there's a phrase commonly heard in the countryside: *shan gao huangdi yuan* (literal translation: “the mountains are high and the emperor is far”). This phrase expresses the widening gulf that exists between China's rural sector and

its political and economic urban centres, to which increasing numbers of rural people are migrating, becoming part of China's growing "floating population".

In an earlier question you suggested Asia might be viewed as "an assembly of sub-regions" whose "identities are always in negotiation" and I agree with you here. Asia does not have a collective or fixed identity, and it is also misleading to define it in binary terms as "Eastern" versus "Western". Perhaps it is also useful to introduce another stratum. When travelling to Asia, the vast majority of tourists and visitors go to the major cities (Tokyo, Hong Kong, Beijing, Mumbai etc.) and it is within this urban, cosmopolitan paradigm that most of us derive our experience of Asia. For example, when speaking of China, most people are in fact referring to China's major cities on the east coast, especially Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and so our conception of China is defined through the lens of these particular places. Given the popular rhetoric on globalisation and the erosion of national boundaries, I wonder if the Asian city has in fact displaced the nation and established itself as the centre of power and influence in our popular imagination.

1. See Dan Karlholm's review of James J. Sheehan's *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). <http://www.caareviews.org>, December 6, 2001.
2. See Lee Weng Choy, "On Being Curated," forthcoming in the Kunsthau Dresden publication, edited by Petra

Reichensperger, produced in conjunction with the series of exhibitions, *Auxiliary Constructions – Behelfskonstruktionen*, *How to Make – Ideen, Notationen, Materialisierungen*, and *Various Stages – Bedingte Bühnen*. (Hamburg: Textem, 2013).

3. See Yuk King Tan, *Island Portrait* (2004), <http://www.yukkingtan.com/projects/island-portrait>

Fig. 1
The Fourth Mildura
Sculpture Triennial 1970
Mildura Art Gallery
Catalogue cover
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick Research
Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki



Mildura Sculpture Triennials, Australia

Jim Allen

Mildura is an anomaly, situated in the interior, a border town to South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Flying to Mildura you cross miles of featureless desert. I did it once when there had been bush fires throughout the region and there was a vast expanse of smoldering countryside. The pilot said it covered an area the size of Belgium. “The size of Belgium” is something of a colloquialism in Australia as most natural and man-made disasters become the “size of Belgium”. Nevertheless the burnt area from the plane stretched from horizon to horizon. Mildura is famous for growing grapes to produce raisins and the area carries the name Sunraysia.

So how did such an isolated place in the midst of this island continent manage to mount a successful Sculpture Triennial for so many years? It was largely due to one man: Tom McCullough, who was appointed Director of the Mildura Arts Centre after the 2nd Triennial in 1964. The Centre had a long history of being supportive to artists, writers, musicians and creative people generally, and had held its first “Prize for Sculpture” in 1961. But Tom was interested in putting Mildura on a much larger map. He sold his idea for an international sculpture exhibition to be held every three years to the Centre’s board of management and the Mildura City Council. The main problem was Mildura’s isolation and the distances involved. He sought, and miraculously obtained, free transport from Melbourne to Mildura from a local business, MacGlashan Cartage Contractors. This one move enabled his dream to become a reality.

McCullough then set about producing an extensive advertising campaign to attract artists and contacted many artists individually as well. While the earlier Triennials were fairly modest affairs and took place in the Arts Centre with a few sculptures in the grounds, the 1967 Triennial took off, spilling over into the surrounding countryside, including taking in a theatre and a butcher’s shop in the township itself. The work exhibited was mainly environmental, landscape

art. There were a great variety of installations using a diverse range of materials. There were artists with their supporters, journalists reporting to the media, writers and critics reviewing for magazines from the main centres all over Australia and beyond, and a strong representation from New Zealand. Clement Meadmore, a well-known Australian sculptor working in America, was there. The numbers attending must have climbed into the thousands.

Mildura's popularity continued to increase over the succeeding years until there came a time when numbers began to be a problem for the townspeople and the behaviour of many attending became at odds with the social and cultural mores of the district. The City Council and the management of the Arts Centre demanded change and the three-yearly mayhem was brought to a halt. The proposed new guidelines were unacceptable to McCullough and he quit at the conclusion of the 7th Triennial in 1978. Many of the best and most experimental and innovative artists in Australia quit also. It says something of McCullough's standing in Australia at the time that he was appointed Director of the 1976 Biennale of Sydney following the 1975 Mildura Sculpture Triennial.

So what was so special about the Mildura Sculpture Triennial? To get an understanding I think you have to consider the state of art practice when the Triennial started in the early 1960s. At the time, Australia had a well-established art scene. The state galleries had substantial collections and there were strong dealerships figuring Australian colonial art, atelier, modernist and contemporary art. There was an awakening interest in aboriginal art but there was no substantial trafficking outside of museums and ethnographical collections. Indigenous painting was still considered an area of anthropological interest. The notable artists practicing at the time were Albert Tucker, Clifton Pugh, Barry Humphries, Sidney Nolan, David Rankin, Arthur Boyd, Fred Williams, and Russell Drysdale who all helped to define the era. The beginnings of change were becoming apparent and artists including Jeffrey Smart, Charles Blackman, Ainslie Roberts and John Brack were leading the charge. There was a further defining moment with the advent of *The Field* exhibition of hard-edged abstraction at the National Gallery of Victoria in the late 1960s.

The 1967 exhibition at Mildura heralded the beginning of another more dramatic and significant shift in art. The established systems by which art was collected and marketed did not accept change easily and the artists of the day were responding to new movements such as Pop Art, psychedelic assemblages, installations and environments, happenings and performance art. A smorgasbord of new media was being brought into the field of art for the first time, and many that first appeared in America were then taken up in Europe and the United Kingdom. The defining edges of disciplines such as painting, sculpture, photography and printmaking were beginning to crumble. The changes seemed to unleash a new vision for the future by the young contemporary artist of the day. As this change took place in Australia the significant supporting centres



Fig. 2
Sunraysia Bakeries,
 Mildura 1978
 Photograph
 E H McCormick
 Research Library
 Auckland Art Gallery
 Toi o Tāmaki

became more apparent. In Sydney, New South Wales; Gallery A, the Tin Sheds Gallery at the University of Sydney, and the far-reaching, short-lived, innovative Inhibodress Gallery with Peter Kennedy and Mike Parr, one of the first artist-run spaces in Australia, with the influential voice of Donald Brook in support. In Victoria; Bruce Pollard and the Pinacoteca Gallery, and the Ewing and George Paton Gallery directed by Kiffy Rubbo and Meredith Rogers at the University of Melbourne. Later, in South Australia, the Australian Experimental Art Foundation pioneered by Donald Brook and directed by Noel Sheridan. And later still, PICA (Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts) in Western Australia.

Hence, the first Mildura exhibition under McCullough was a leader in its field and came at a critical time. Mildura was aptly summed up by Pamela Zeplin as “sympathetic to an anti-institutional ethos” providing a focus and an opportunity for dissident artists seeking to escape the barriers of the status quo to a public presentation of experimental and innovative work. The fact that Mildura was such an isolated place on the edge of a desert making a physical as well as a psychological break, seemed to provide an added incentive. For all the same

reasons New Zealand artists followed suit. America and Europe were distant and Australia was first-hand and represented an easier opportunity to put your work up against those in another country and to seek a wider audience.

Responding to the evident interest by New Zealand sculptors in exhibiting at Mildura, the New Zealand Society of Sculptors and Painters took steps to facilitate the flow of work across the Tasman. Members were told that if they got their work to Elam School of Fine Arts neatly packaged, it could be put together and transferred in bulk to Mildura. The carriers who brought goods to Elam gave free carriage through customs to the ships. The Union Steamship Company managed transport to Melbourne for free. There were already existing arrangements for Australian work to go to Mildura via McGlashan's transport, so we just hitched a ride. We managed the trip both ways free of charge, a huge help in sustaining our representation at Mildura.'

Fig. 3
Canberra Telegraph c1974
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick Research
Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

CANBERRA TELEGRAPH

A CAPITAL IDEA.

EASTER TIME

Drawers open

IT COMES A NEW NEWSPAPER

Input is the key to Open Drawers, the outcome is a new newspaper. On the eve of 1974, Philip Dodson began devising a plan for an alternative communications listening post and resource pool. It was to mark the anniversary of a full decade of Fluxus exchanges. Since 1964, Fluxus, a low-profile, far-flung network of artists had managed to establish an international pipeline that reached across national, racial and linguistic borders into every major urban centre.

The intent was manifold: As a general process of enrichment, one was able to gain access to a tremendous diversity of ideas often generated in the context of remote cultures; as a political manoeuvre it was possible to make global links of a very real nature that penetrated the interfaces of conflict between governments to, in fact, establish and exercise a frame-work for relationships that are based on communication rather than on the wounding of brute power; and as an alternative media it provided, via audio tape, video tape and printed matter, an outlet that was not contaminated by the profit motive come greed of mass media.

The network operates with efficiency. It replaces a system wherein a person works in the service of a media monopoly, subordinating his or her ideas to editorial demands that often

emanate from political or monetary alignments rather than for the eventual welfare of society.

Ideas, produced within available means, often requiring no more than mimeo or xerox duplicating, are transported quickly and directly between people, regardless of distance, without deference to the policy and intent of magazine or journal. Likewise, audio and video tapes serve as a by-pass for communications that are suitable for but do not gain access to radio and television. Such tapes, as well, reach an international audience that, although small, exceeds Radio Moscow and Voice of America in range.

The plan, code named Open Drawers, was to establish a flexible system that provided a permanent address in Auckland to which printed material and requests from overseas could be directed.

With the collaboration of Valerie Richards, Drawers was located within the library at Elam so that there would be easy public access. The venture was first brought to the attention of a wide audience in the Inch Art Issue, an art edition released by way of The Daily Mail, London and The South China Morning Post, Hong Kong. This edition unique in the history of newspapers, was given worldwide distribution.

The remarkable feat of artists making headlines around the world was accomplished by two cash entrepreneurs, Robert Edward Kerr, former son of Wellington, New Zealand and Terrence Edward Reid, former son of Vancouver, Canada. Both demonstrate a committed flair for making the invisible visible, magnifying the minute and, in the case of the Inch Art Issue, making a mountain out of molehills. The issue was 5,940 square inches of newsprint containing inch size artworks from Fluxus artists throughout the world. Certainly it would be a candidate for the Guinness Book of Records!

Drawers had been pulled open in the Inch Art Issue, and soon opened again in Mildura. Kerr and Reid had been spurred by success and had determined to make another giant leap by starting a new newspaper called the Canberra Telegraph. Drawn from world sources, information was collected in Mildura for the largest gathering of art and artists in the South Pacific. The Telegraph, conceived for the purpose of dissemination information, went into operation in Mildura at Easter. Its intention to focus on and expand the interaction, making its pages available to participants in the belief that many issues raised in Mildura will be relevant in the world.



Photo Feltz
Trans-Tasman boys deliver the goods by Kangaroo Express to the Mildura Post Office and beyond.

MANY ISSUES IN MILDURA

An oasis of art blossomed again at Easter in the Australian desert. For the sixth time since 1961, Sunzaria has brought together the largest number of artworks and artists to simultaneously gather in the South Pacific for an exhibition. For sculpture it has been the singly most important ex-

ever, reveal an evolution of modes in the mainstream of sculpture.

Originally contained in a gallery, the exhibition spread with a need for space and air, in the manner of the works of Tony Smith and Isamu Noguchi, onto the gallery lawns. Later, with the advent of

intensely formal works such as David Wilson's steel and transparencies, Clive Murray White's open and inferred structures and Ron Robertson-Swan's

Planes of purple light. On the floodbanks of Sculpturascapes are many references to landscape, none which clearly fit the prescription of the international in 60's called earthworks as it is described in Smithson's and Oppenheim's investment of space with concept. Antithetically, there are a number of instances of imitation landscapes being overlaid on the rough terrain such as Robert Parr's 'The Tower on wheels' and Henry Smith's synthetic, geometric lawn. Al-

though more than any other work, this was the story of Mildura, one hundred and twenty-eight years of irrigation to make grow in the desert.

This, briefly, describes how all the venues used for the previous shows were used simultaneously in this one. As well, it describes some of the uses to which those venues have been put. Many more venues, however, have this year been added, and all of the additional venues are within Mildura itself. These additions are a critical alteration and art appears in unexpected places throughout the city. The least expected would be Deakin Avenue, the divided main thoroughfare. Its plantation is

to be artifacts manufactured in the studio. Entering the shop as an innocent shopper or as a gallery-viewer, people would find themselves examining the peculiar contents; shoppers with uncertainty, gallery-viewers with curiosity; and always, one man, very formal and very grey, would separate from the group perhaps move to the other side of the carcass, stare coolly into a visitor's eyes until the visitor would in discomfort move to examine something else, only to find he or she could not escape for the grey man in black suit came too. This was Kelly, come back to his shop. "Do not touch the meat," he would coldly demand.

The Ozone Theatre in Mildura, one of the venues for New Zealand sculpture, photographic works and video tapes, became the news centre for successive waves of Triennials thanks to Bob Kerr and Terry Reid. If the news was a bit dull they spiced it up. Their international coverage extended to 1000 artists around the world from whom they received very creative replies, including some from countries not even heard of yet. The *Sunraysia Daily* reported that Reid and Kerr took many copyright liberties in their newspaper to which they made a typical Ozone response: “I hope they feel it has some Reideming features,” from Kerr. “Kerr plop, a newspaper lands in your lap looking like the same old thing,” added Reid. “But its mighty good Reiding,” concluded Kerr. Always getting in the last word Reid added, “I hope they let it O’Kerr again.” This, in a short column adjacent to a suggestion by the city council for a floral clock.

Not all Mildura residents were happy and they expressed their disappointment at being burdened by “this load of junk.” These comments were in sharp contrast to the glowing headlines appearing in their own *Sunraysia Daily* and national newspapers across the country; “Natural setting for exciting sculpture,” (Patrick McCaughey, Melbourne); “No praise ‘too much’ for Mildura show,” (Elizabeth Young) and so on. At the height of Mildura’s success was a suggestion that Mildura, a neutral city between two states and bordering on a third, should become Australia’s first city-state, autonomous with its own cultural tradition.² McCullough responded by saying: “THIS COULD BE THE START OF SOMETHING BIG.”

It was not to be, however. Mildura became a flashpoint between the town and country divide, and – this time – the country won.

1. I exhibited at Mildura four times. *Slotzyman and Slotzywoman* in 1967 (purchased by the Mildura Arts Centre), *New Zealand Environment No. 5* in 1970, *Community*, the little triangular tent shaped pieces, in 1973 and *Arumpa Road*, a collection of branches which I cut from the bush near Mildura in 40 degree heat laced with speakers repeating a statement about art politics, in 1975.

2. Work purchased by the Mildura Arts Centre included Greer Twiss’ *Cloaked Acrobat* (1964) in bronze. Maree Horner made a lovely sculpture called *Probe* for Mildura, which was also purchased by the Arts Centre in 1973.



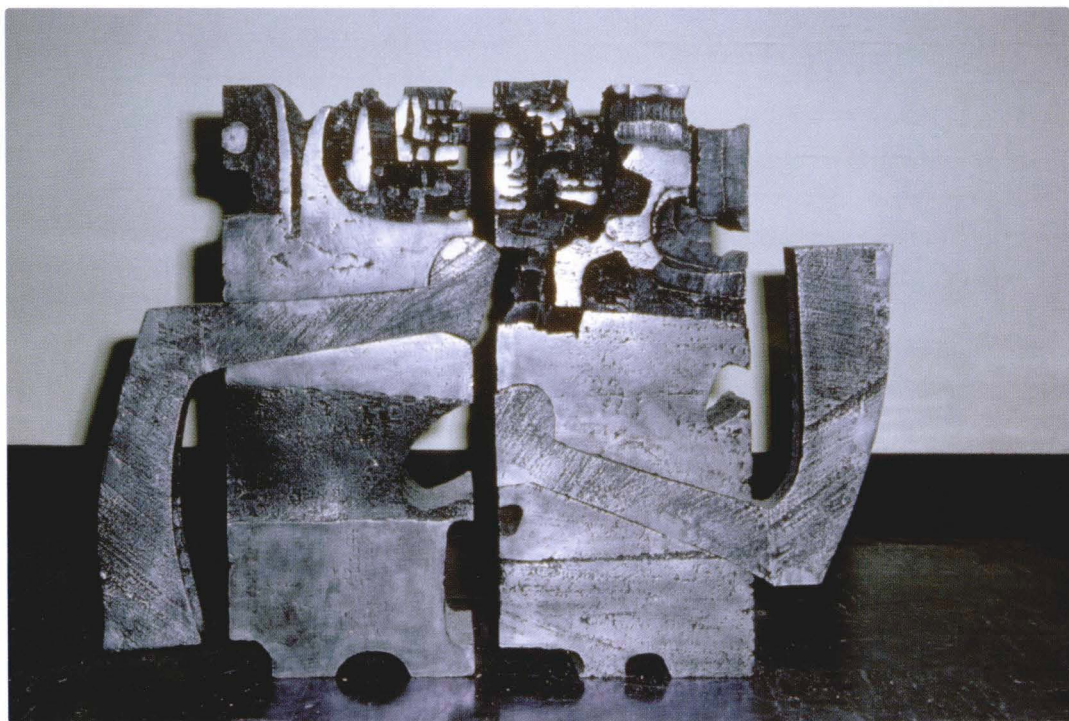
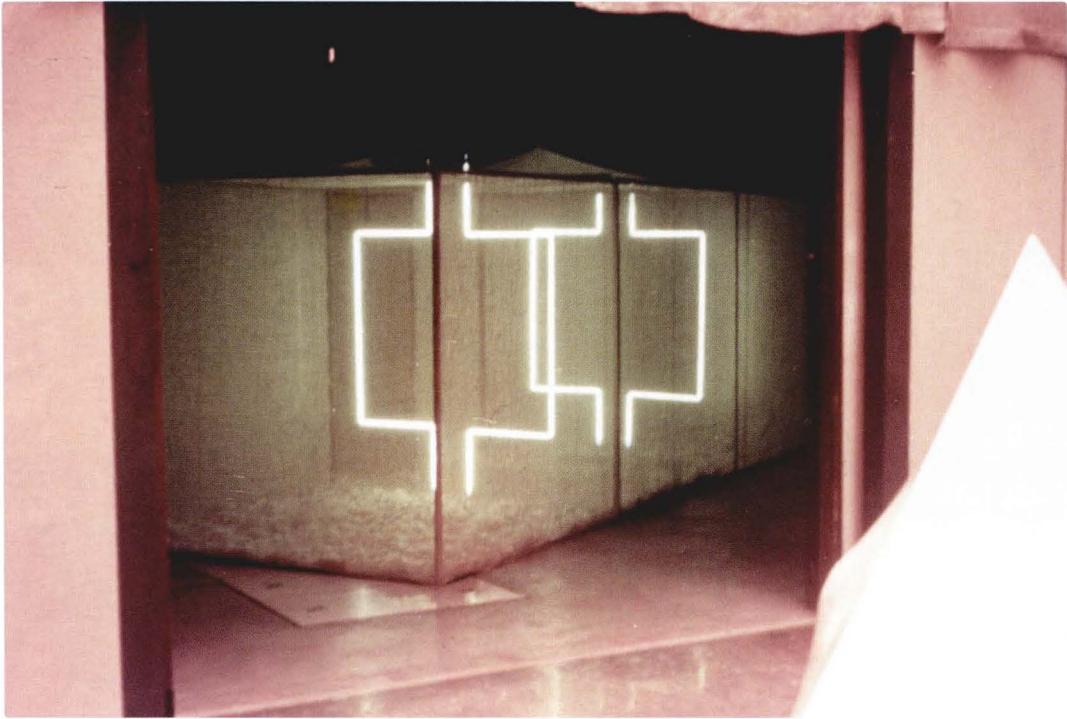


Fig. 1
 Alison Duff
Sir Edmund Hillary 1965
 Bronze
 330 mm
 Installation at *Mildura
 Prize for Sculpture 1967*
 Julia Davis Slide Library,
 Art Gallery of New
 South Wales

Fig. 2
 Jim Allen
*Slotzyman &
 Slotzywoman* 1967
 Aluminium
 810 mm
 Installation at *Mildura
 Prize for Sculpture 1967*
 Julia Davis Slide Library,
 Art Gallery of New
 South Wales



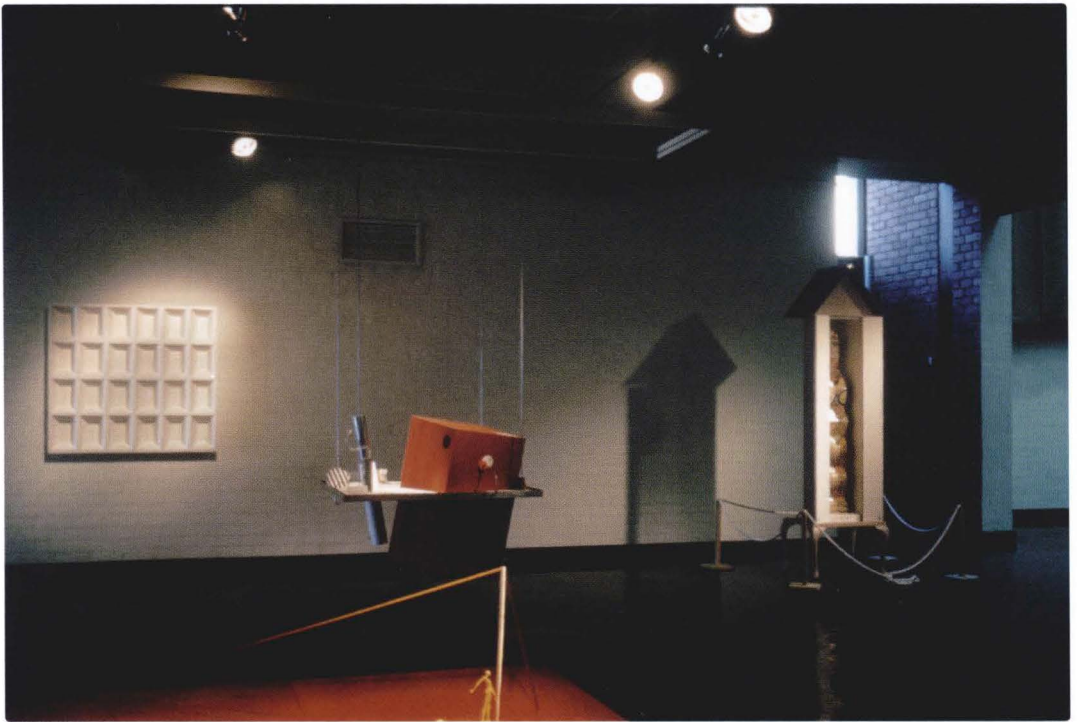


Fig. 3
 Jim Allen
*New Zealand
 Environment No. 5* 1969
 Scrim, steel tube, greasy
 wool, sawdust, tow
 underfelt, nylon string,
 barbed wire and neontube
 1830 x 1830 x 5490 mm
 Installation at *The Fourth
 Mildura Sculpture
 Triennial 1970*
 Julia Davis Slide Library,
 Art Gallery of New South
 Wales

Fig. 4
 Greer Twiss
Red Space 1970
 (in foreground)
 Timber, fiberglass, bronze
 760 x 2440 x 3660 mm
 Installation at *The Fourth
 Mildura Sculpture
 Triennial 1970*
 Julia Davis Slide Library,
 Art Gallery of New South
 Wales

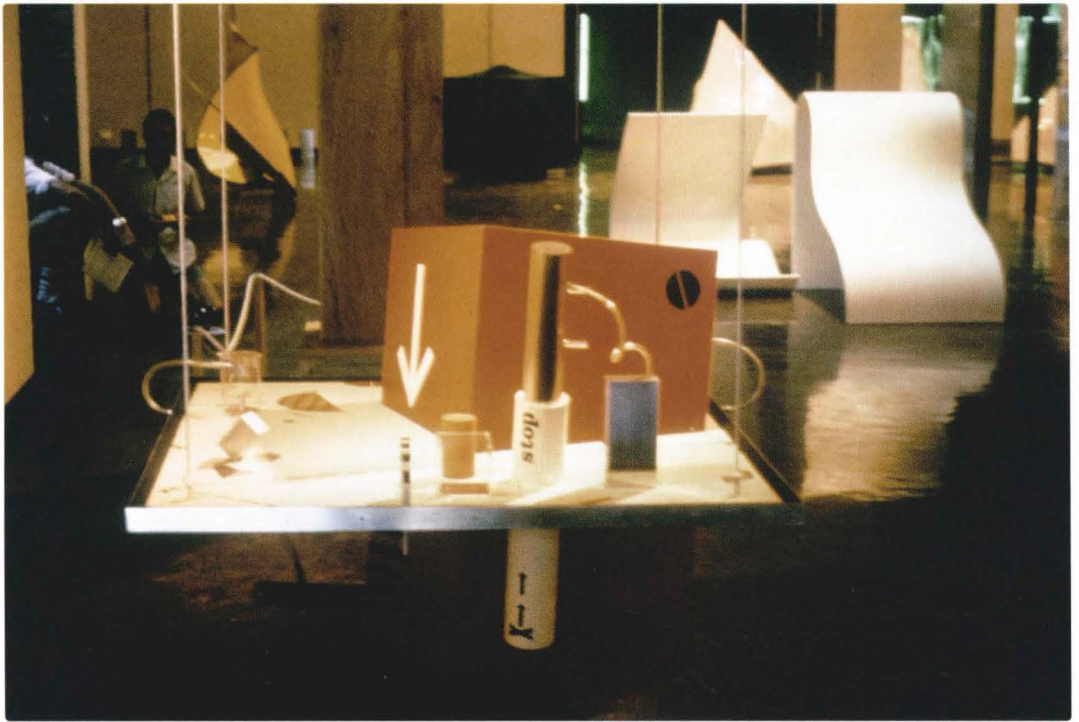




Fig. 5
Warren Viscoe
Easy Chair I and II 1969
(in background)
Fibrolite and PVC
1220 x 1830 x 2440 mm
Installation at *The Fourth
Mildura Sculpture
Triennial* 1970
Julia Davis Slide Library,
Art Gallery of New South
Wales

Fig. 6
Peter Nicholls
City Square Project (No. 5)
1973
Kanuka (NZ Tea Tree)
Installation at
Sculpturescape '73,
Mildura
Julia Davis Slide Library,
Art Gallery of New South
Wales

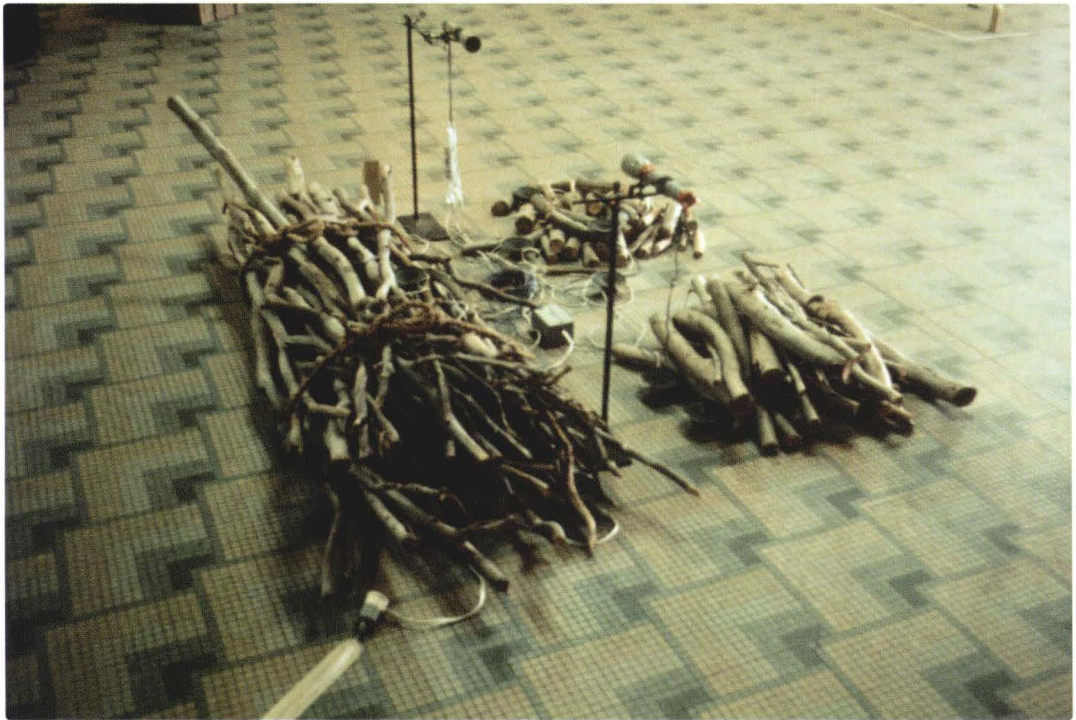


Fig. 7
Jim Allen
Arumpo Road 1975
Mallee wood, infra red
beams, amplifiers,
speakers and car battery
1830 x 1830 x 610 mm
Installation at *6th
Mildura Sculpture
Exhibition [1975]*
Julia Davis Slide Library,
Art Gallery of New South
Wales

Fig. 8
Andrew Drummond
Performance (title
unknown) 1978
From *Seventh Sculpture
Triennial at Mildura Arts
Centre [1978]*
Julia Davis Slide Library,
Art Gallery of New South
Wales



Sculpture in Sunraysia: New Zealand Artists at the Mildura Sculpture Triennial

Eric Riddler

In 1961 the Victorian regional centre of Mildura, in the Sunraysia fruit-growing district of the Murray Valley, launched a series of triennial sculpture competitions, which included both outdoors and indoors exhibitions. These competitions were acquisitive, allowing the city to purchase examples of contemporary sculpture. At first, the competition was held within Australia. The New Zealand born or trained exhibitors were expatriates based in Australia, like Esther Belliss and Gordon S. McAuslan, with the singular trans-Tasman exception being Paul Beadle, who had only recently arrived in Auckland from Adelaide.

In 1964, New Zealand was included in the competition, with entries from Paul Beadle, again, and Greer Twiss, whose work was acquired for the collection. However, when Tom McCullough took the reins for the third triennial in 1967, he developed an enthusiasm for the New Zealand contemporary sculpture scene. Australian critics were impressed by the contemporary strength of the New Zealand contingent, from Alison Duff's angular take on heroic portrait sculpture (Fig. 1) to the pop and minimal work emerging from young Auckland sculptors. W. R. 'Jim' Allen won a prize for *Slotzyman and Slotzywoman* (Fig. 2). Donald Brook observed that the work from New Zealand was "all very distinctly of this decade", while Daniel Thomas would later recall that it made Australian sculpture appear backward by comparison.¹

As the 1960s drew to a close, contemporary art was questioning the rigid definition of painting and sculpture, and this was reflected in the works selected for the 1970 Mildura Sculpture Triennial. Just months after Christo and Jeanne-Claude had taken sculpture out into the landscape in Sydney with *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay*, Jim Allen brought the New Zealand landscape bodily into an Australian gallery. With its grass, barbed wire and wool, bathed in an eerie green light, *New Zealand Environment No. 5* (Fig. 3) engaged the critics, with some regretting that the Mildura Arts Centre had declined the opportunity to acquire it for the permanent

collection.² Other works, too, like Greer Twiss' *Red Space* (Fig. 4) and Warren Viscoe's *Easy Chairs* (Fig. 5), made it clear to visitors to the 1970 Triennial that the environmental context of contemporary art played an important role.

So it was, in 1973 that, as well as the Mildura Arts Centre and its gardens, the Triennial expanded through the centre of town to the red dusty banks of the Murray River: it was time for *Sculpturscape '73* (Fig. 6). Not only did the artwork leave behind outdated boundaries, an attempt was made to make *Sculpturscape '73* truly international. This, however, was complicated by the threatened withdrawal of local region artists in protest at the inclusion of French artists, at a time when French nuclear testing in the South Pacific was emerging as a serious issue in postcolonial politics.³

The next Mildura Triennial was brought forward a year, as part of a promotion for the arts in regional Victoria in 1975.⁴ The New Zealand contingent at the 1975 *Sculpturscape* (Fig. 7) were teamed up with emerging photography, video and performance artists to form a touring exhibition, *Twelve New Zealand Artists*,⁵ which made its way from Mildura Arts Centre to the Art Galleries of South Australia and New South Wales.

Although the majority of local critics were impressed by the exhibition when it arrived in Sydney, visitor numbers were low and the *Australian* declared the exhibition to be "one of the dreariest shows to come to the Art Gallery of NSW", taking up "valuable exhibition space without much reward".⁶ The trustees' response was to close the exhibition early, leading *Art and Australia* to ponder whether, if the exhibition had been "billed as American or English rather than New Zealand in origin, the instinctive reaction of viewers may have been more positive".⁷

So far, this history has been presented from an Australian point of view. That is partially due to a lack of art journal coverage coming into Australia between the demise of *Ascent* at the close of the 1960s and the emergence of *Art New Zealand* in the mid 1970s, not to mention the lack of interest of the Australian art press in following up the curatorial enthusiasm being generated by Tom McCullough, Donald Brook and Daniel Thomas. However, something happened in New Zealand at the start of 1978 that would have repercussions for public performance art in both countries.

In March 1978, not long before the next Mildura Triennial was scheduled to begin, Andrew Drummond's performance, *Crucifixion*, was staged as part of the *Platforms* exhibition at the Christchurch Arts Festival. Visitors to the neighbouring pottery exhibition took offence at the sight of a naked man on a St. Andrew's cross, and police removed photographs documenting the event and charged the artist with offensive behaviour in a public place. These charges would later be dropped but not before Drummond had shaved his beard and hastened, incognito, across the Tasman (Fig. 8).⁸

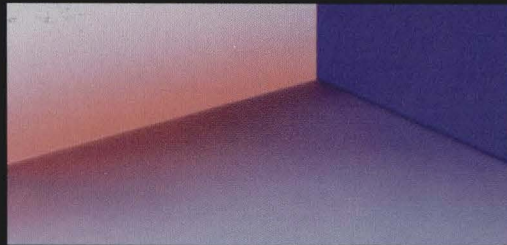
Meanwhile, in Mildura, the City fathers, who had watched their efforts to enhance their public art collection with contemporary sculpture spiral into the extremes of 1970s avant garde performance, were not going to let a blasphemous influx of angry hairy naked Kiwis disturb the decent folk of the Sunraysia district this time around. “Nudity, obscenity, pornography and bloodletting” were all proscribed by the local authorities.⁹ It became difficult for performers from both sides of the Tasman to carry on their work unimpeded.¹⁰

Nonetheless, the New Zealand contingent managed to contribute greatly to the exhibition, remaining fully, if occasionally scruffily, clothed. Notwithstanding this, the local council, in their final victory against Tom McCullough, seized all but two copies of the post exhibition book and had them pulped.¹¹

When the Mildura Triennial returned in 1982, it was without Tom McCullough and without New Zealanders.¹²

In memory of Dr Pamela Zeplin.

1. Donald Brook, “Mildura ‘67,” *Canberra Times*, April 25, 1967; Daniel Thomas, “Sculpture at Mildura,” *Sunday Telegraph* [Sydney], March 8, 1970.
2. Ann Galbally, “More Fancy than Plain,” *Age* [Melbourne], March 2, 1970; Daniel Thomas, “Mildura Sculpture Triennial,” *Art and Australia* 8, no. 1 (June 1970): 50–9.
3. Noel Hutchinson, “Sculpturescape ‘73,” *Art and Australia* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 76–86.
4. See *Art and Australia* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1975).
5. *Twelve New Zealand Artists* comprised the six Mildura artists with those in the touring exhibition *Six New Zealand Artists* (1974) organised by Antoinette Godkin and sponsored by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.
6. Sandra McGrath, “Narrow Focus in an Empty Gallery,” *Australian* [Sydney], September 19, 1975.
7. Ian Maidment, “12 New Zealand Artists,” *Art and Australia* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 136.
8. Jenny Harper, “Crucifixion,” in *Andrew Drummond: observation/action/reflection*, Jennifer Hay [et al.] (Christchurch: Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, 2010): 68–71; see also Drummond’s contribution to *The Mildura Experience* (Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, 1978); some details come from anecdotes related to the author during a discussion about this topic at the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, Victoria University Wellington, 2011.
9. Tom McCullough, “Nudity, Obscenity, Pornography and Bloodletting: the Impact of Mildura Sculpture Triennials on Australian Contemporary Art,” *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 240 (June 2011): 11–13.
10. Nicholas Spill, “The Trans-Tasman Tie Up or Seven New Zealand Artists at Mildura,” *Art New Zealand*, no. 12 (1978): 34–41.
11. Brad Leonard, “The First Australian Sculpture Triennial: an Historical Perspective,” *Art Network*, nos 3 and 4 (Winter-Spring 1981): 20–3.
12. Main chronological references: exhibition catalogues and Graeme Sturgeon, *Sculpture at Mildura: the Story of the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, 1961–1982*, (Mildura [Vic]: Mildura City Council, 1985).



5th fiji biennale pavilions
(we don't have the money, so we have to think)
a project by mladen bizumic 2003-ongoing

2013

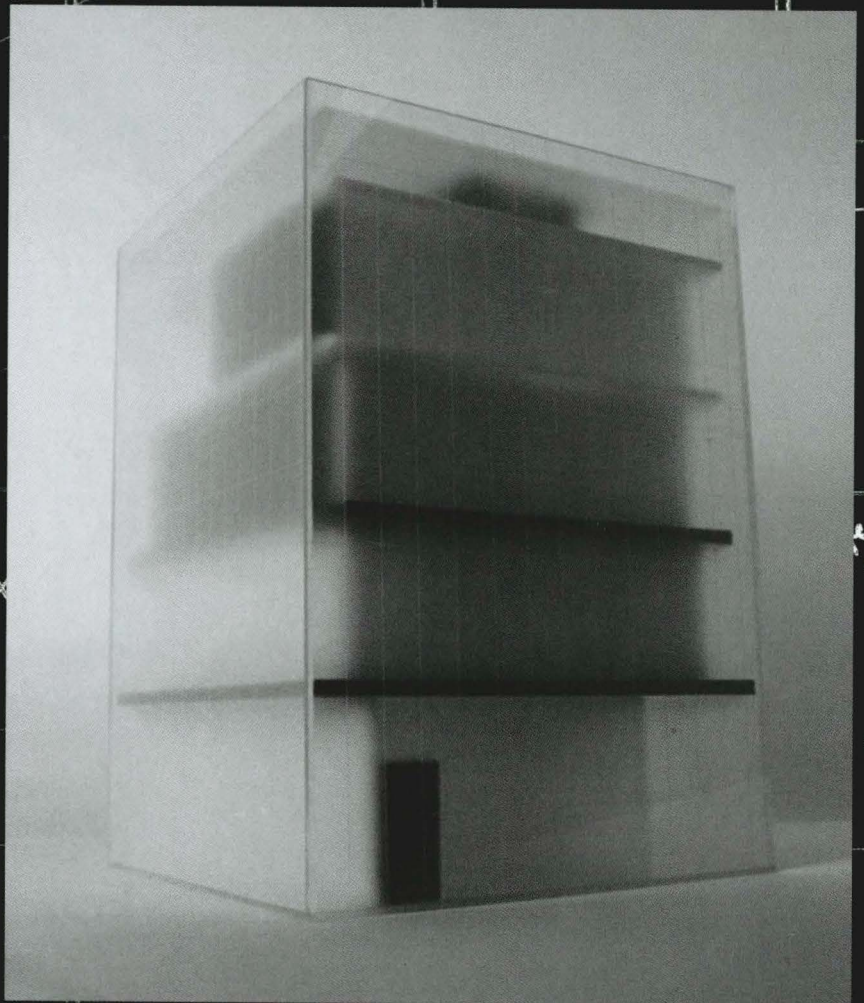
CLAUS FÖTTINGER

For the Fiji Biennale I would like to build a replica of Gane's Pavilion 1936 by Marcel Breuer. It will be constructed from bamboo sticks and woven palm leaves. It will be 30% smaller than the built structure, and erected inside the pavilion. I would also make a 1:1 scale replica of Joseph Beuys' iconic work Haltestelle 1976 that Beuys made for the German Pavilion at the 1976 Venice Biennale, to install within my bamboo pavilion. Haltestelle would function as a bar within the pavilion, and like my pavilion will be constructed from local materials. I would finalise the installation details in situ or, if unrealised, develop it as a model in a future show.

IN BAMBOO ON FIJI

PROPOSAL)

→ ① GHOST GUESTS A-



RENT PLEX

Y S

IT'S

ANTI

ANI O'NEILL

Vainu (coconut water) project

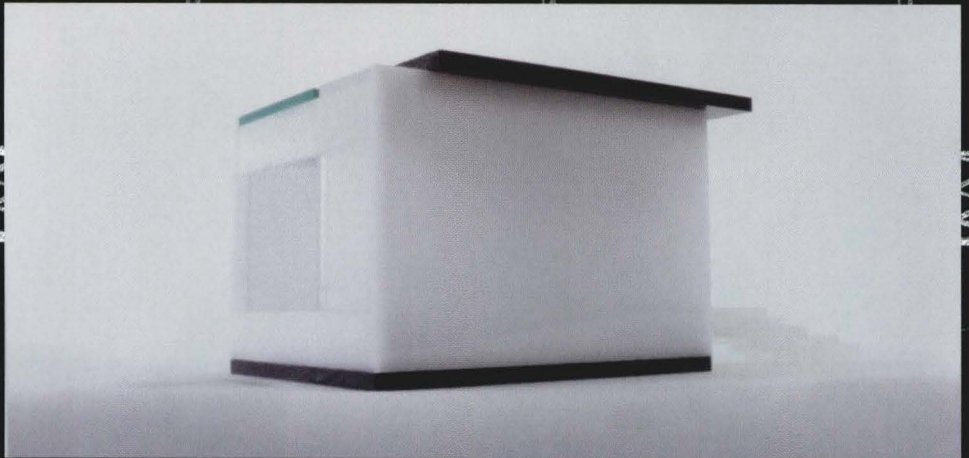
I would like to make a space within the Fiji Biennale which is an indoor/outdoor liquid refreshments station, similar to the 'Illy' coffee areas and the SUPERFLEX guarana stand in 'Utopia Station' at Venice Biennale in 2003. This area will be site specific to the Fiji Islands and its people, with Yaqona (kava), Niu (green drinking coconut), coffee and tea, local fruit juices, traditional medicinal tonics, and bottled 'Fiji Water'. Each 'stall' in this open plan area will be run by local people/businesses who specialise in this beverage, and visitors are invited to share a beverage, with a fixed donation to that business/person. Mats to sit on and shadeto sit under will be provided by trees and tarpaulins.

The idea is to create an area where liquid refreshments are available, where the visitor and the vendor are able to relax together and put their feet up after a long hard day of looking at art, or maybe an early morning of picking and squeezing limes... time to relax and maybe even chat. I am interested in how it is a thirsty work to seem happy and care-free when working at catering to a tourist, and what would happen if the line between those being served and those doing the serving was dissolved, and all of us were just thirsty people together sharing a coconut. I am interested in giving a visiting audience an 'authentic experience' of Fiji, and genuinely achieving this by dropping a few rules no doubt expected from those in the tourism industry. I encourage the visitors to try and husk their own coconut!

US ...
T WE DO (ART, ARCHITECTURE OR BANK
ER THAN AN AESTHETIC POINT OF V

If selected for this project, I would like to first visit Fiji and conduct some research into these areas. Details may change, but essentially, a seat in the shade, a cool drink and loving people are the main ingredients. I imagine it will be a wonderful time, and potentially very funny if there is even one grumpy argument about 'not having time to waste' in this area of the Biennale.

Finally, if there is only one stall and I was expecting five on a given day, I would consider it still a success, circumstances will decide. Maybe we all shut shop and put up a sign that says 'meet you at so and so's house'.



PRE
MODERN ?
THAT

③

△

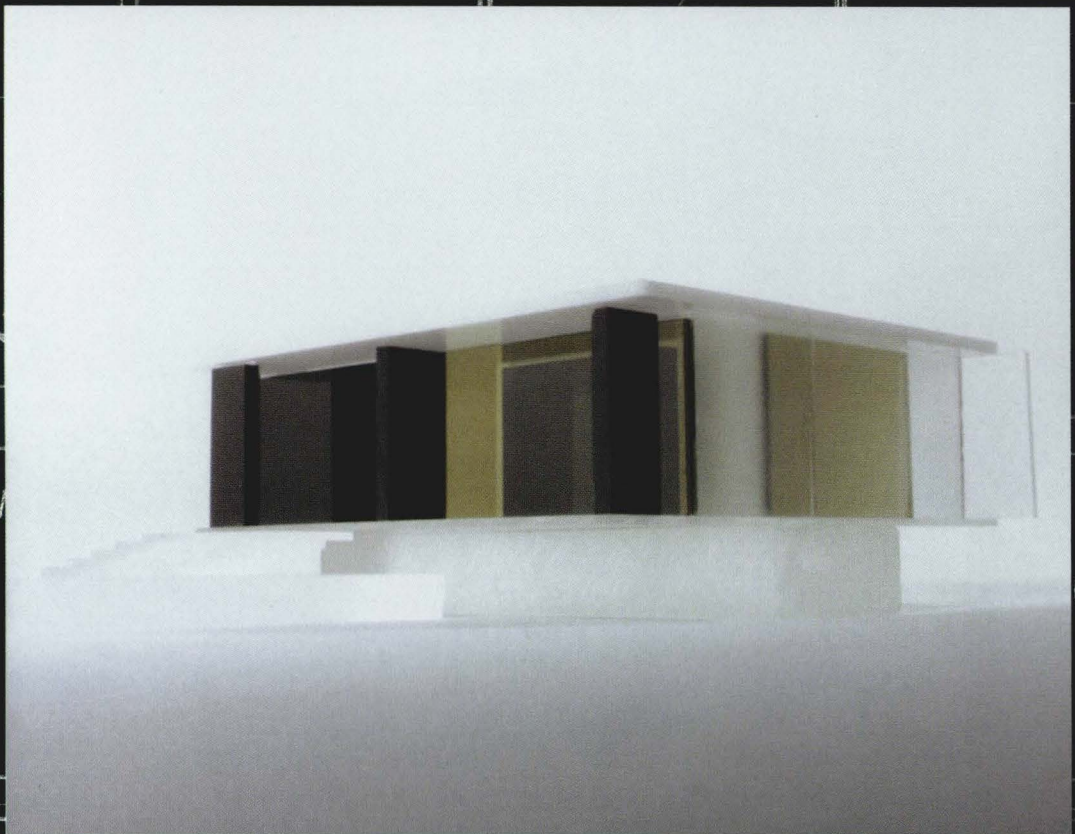
BLACK WOODEN WAY)

1 - 12 ← QUESTIONS ABOUT

SIR DAHLEM'S PROPOSAL) SIR (A) THOMAS

?

?



BJÖRN DAHLEM

My plan is to build a setting of lights in an outdoor location. The lights will be arranged in a very special geometric structure, which is meant to send secret messages into space at night time. If the plan works out, these messages will attract aliens from space to land somewhere in Fiji. Once they hand landed, I would borrow one of the alien spaceships for the period of the Biennale. The spaceship would then hover above the light construction for the whole duration of the biennial. The aliens will be hosted by the Biennale organisation and made familiar with tourist customs: they would stay in a nice Fijian resort hotel and introduced to drinking culture, prevalent to holidays, at the Claus Föttinger Gane's Pavilion Bar.

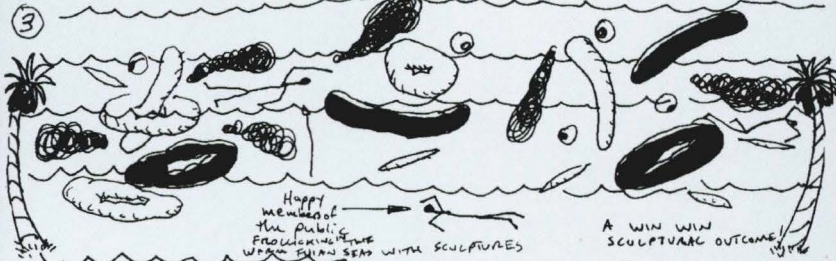
FIJI BIENNALE PROPOSAL

BEACH SCULPTURE - PETER ROBINSON

- SCULPTURAL (A COMMUNITY PROJECT)
- ① A SERIES OF A FORMS ARE PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC ON A BEACH IN FIJI. (DURING LOW TIDE) THE BEACH IS ONE WHICH IS SUBJECT TO SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN HIGH AND LOW TIDE (LEVELS)



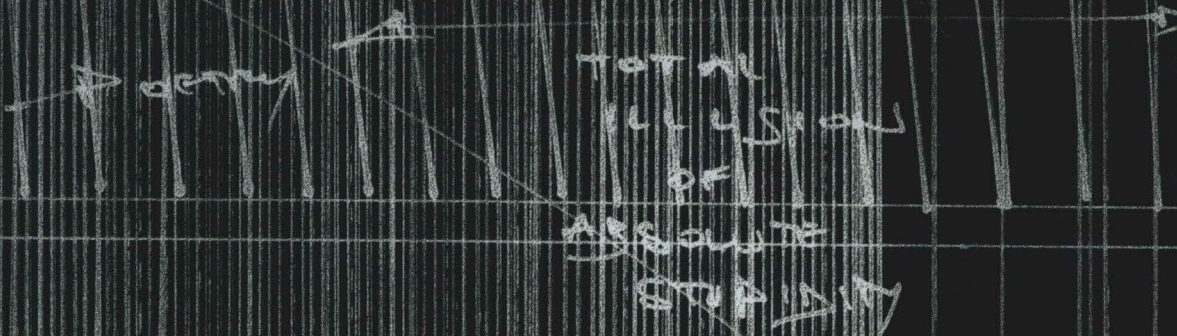
- ② DURING LOW TIDE THE PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN SCULPTURES FROM THE FORMS PRESENTED



ONCE THE PUBLIC HAVE FINISHED CONSTRUCTING THEIR SCULPTURES THE SCULPTURES ARE LEFT TO THE FORCES OF THE INCOMING TIDE THE PUBLIC IS ENCOURAGED TO THEN SWIM AMONGST, FLOAT ON AND PLAY WITH THE SCULPTURES

CONSTRUCTION

EQUIVALANCE



WHAT IF ETHICAL

REASONS

REAL QUESTION

GRIO DE JANE

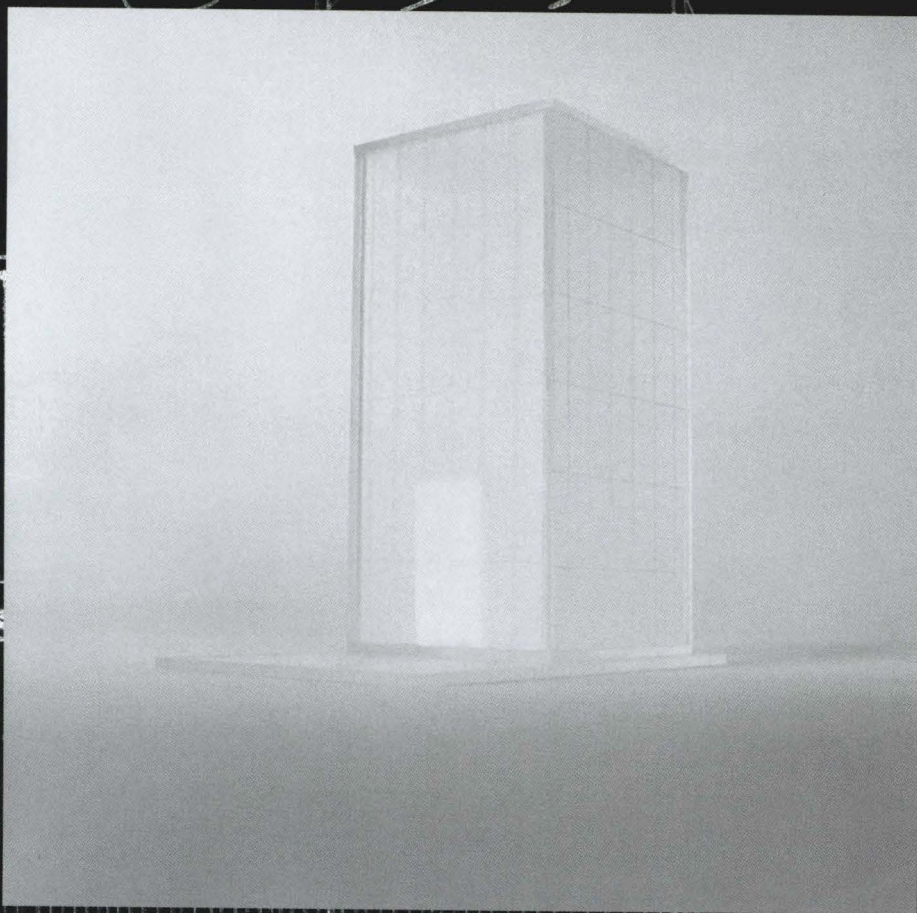
CORPORATE EVALUATION

PROPOSAL FOR GRAFFITI ON
BALDESARI'S PAVILION

① WE HAVE ADDED HONESTY
TO OUR POVERTY

② WE HAVE SOLD OUR ELEGANCE
~~FOR~~ FOR YOUR MINIMALISM

③ YOU PAID US THE MINIMUM WAGE



US

(MIX)

⑤

KATHY TEMIN

The work would consist of 15 mirrored palm trees that were set up in a room painted pink. Cream shag pile carpet would be set up in mounds to imitate sand. The trees would be set up in the way that you would view the palm trees in a picture perfect postcard. The mirrored palm trees would be double sided, allowing viewers to walk around them. The aim is to create an obviously fake and synthetic environment that is the opposite of the natural beauty and habitation that I imagine exists in Fiji. I have never been there and I am proposing this based on fantasy. Fantasy and projection have been a focus in previous works. The pink room and mirrored palm trees best represent the girlie and childish fantasy of exotic locations in music videos. I have used these elements in a work about fandom, titled *My Kylie Collection 2001 – 2003*. None of these elements have any direct relevance to Fiji except that it is a place that one references for relaxation and escapism, fun in the sun. Those ideas are not so far removed from the entertainment and escapism that is often projected in popular music.

SAM DURANT

I will spend one year (or parts of) in the Captain Cook!!!! Going down, down under, dark continent of Fuji, Fungi, no, Fiji living off the land, the fruits of the sea, communing with... mud-covered grass huts, etc. Searching for, staging beauty pageants... I will need asatellite television system and a DVD recorder...a videocompilation of the speeches from the winners of beauty pageants for the year in which I'm a native of the dark and humid island of Fiji, utopian paradise-native girls and boyswill welcome me, they will intuitively understand, without language on the most pre-lingual, bestial level, no, natural level how I've come to their exotic and dripping, er, ...come to to to come to to try and understand the role of the... Of course I will eat the local cuisine and imbibe the local drinks, offering myself to the local natives – that they may learn to speak and understand – we'll show every televised beauty pageant in the world while native girls, etc., etc... to research aspects of the relationship between art and primal, er, beauty. ART and Beauty. This work will examine the mediated and culturally constructed ideals of, er, feminine beauty from underneath a global perspective, from down-under. Topless, bottomless, etc, etc, submerged, swim fins, surfing, California, Schwarzenegger... in the footsteps of our pioneer-PIONEER with a capital "P", Gauging, Gauging-, Gauguin; and make my report from the sensuous, fecund center of the Polynesian... maybe I need a video projector too and some cable to connect...

Respectfully submitted,
Sam Durant

MOODY PLACE

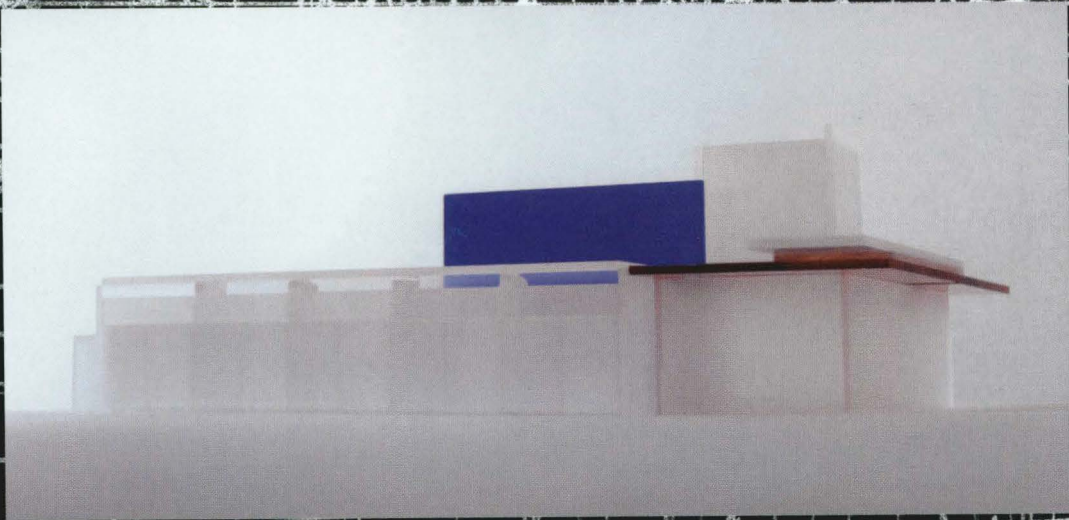


FOR
BUT
THERE
IS N
UTO

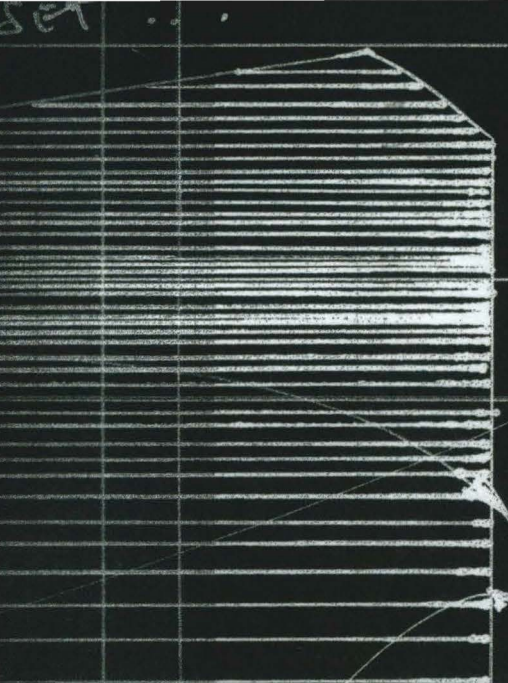
IT CAN ONLY HA

CORPORATE, CORPORATE, EROTIC

OR BE OR BEHIND THINK ARE



CONTEMPORARY



COLONY

$$Ax + y$$

FREE LABOUR

$$= \overline{UT}$$

(8) What is FINLAND
DOING IN SPAIN

LENNART
IN Fiji

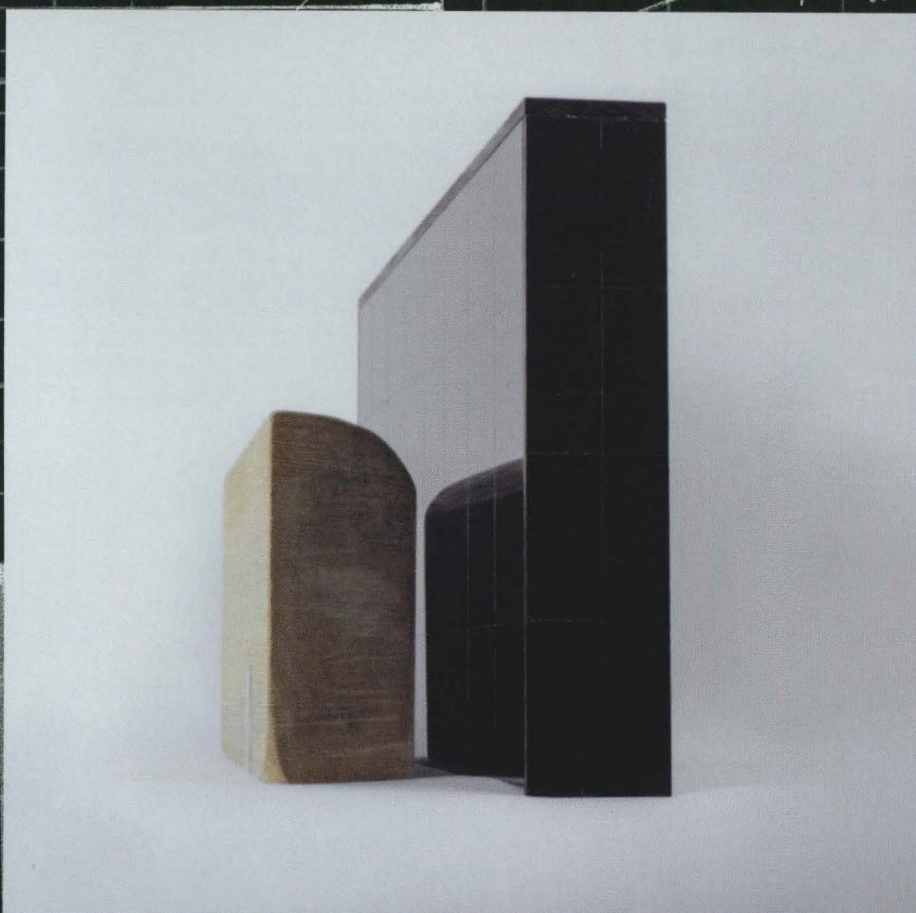
PPING

FORMULA

CORE
THOMAS

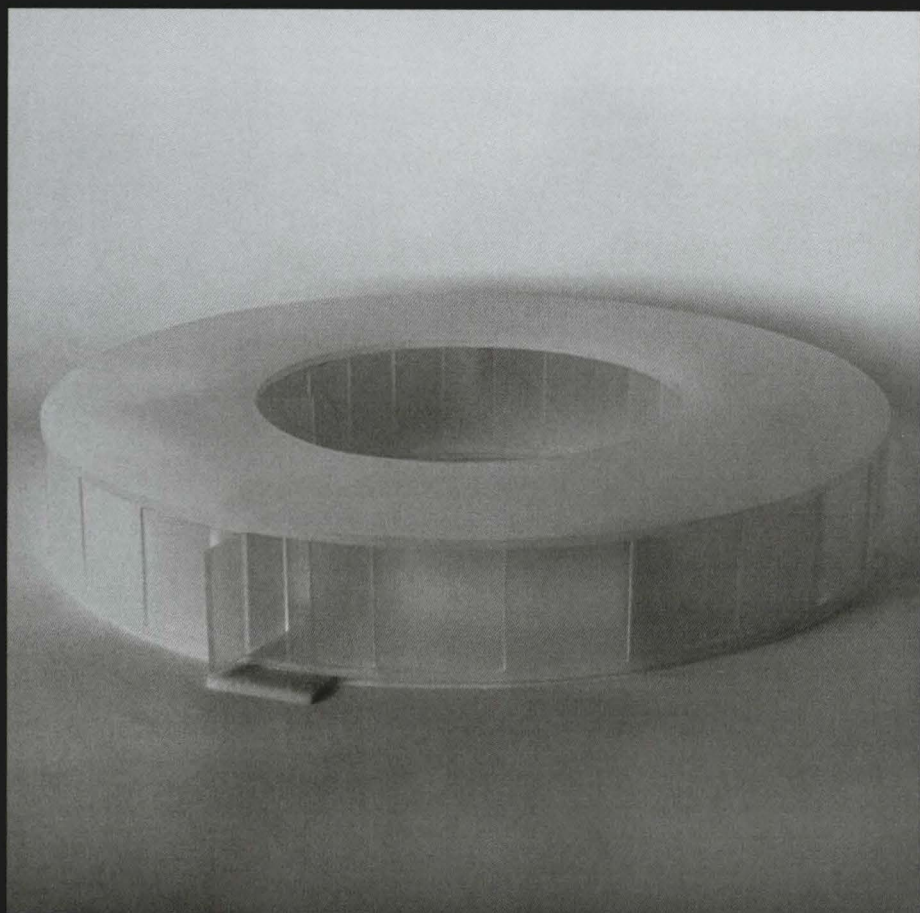
THE

UTOPIA



MAYBE

R



coming soon to your town

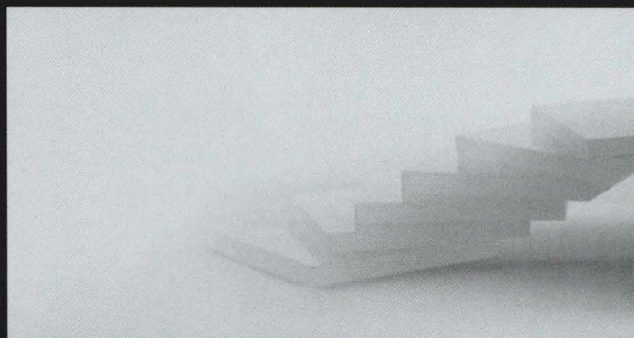




Fig 1

Jim Allen with kiln c1953
 Black and white
 photograph
 Jim Allen Archive,
 E H McCormick
 Research Library
 Auckland Art Gallery
 Toi o Tāmaki

Between 1952 and 1960 Jim Allen worked for the Art and Craft branch of the Department of Education; first in the Far North as a Field Officer, under Gordon Tovey's Northern Māori Project, an experimental art education initiative, and then from 1956 as Liaison Organiser, Auckland. Although he was not a trained teacher, education was to become a significant focus for the next several years as he moved from working with primary and secondary schools on to tertiary education, becoming an important figure in arts education in New Zealand and Australia. The first step was connecting with the schools in the Far North as part of Tovey's experimental scheme, and most significantly with Elwyn Richardson at Oruaiti School. For Richardson, the experimentation lay in the integration of all areas of the curriculum. This was put into practice though the creation of a learning environment that went against the formal teaching style of the time where the approach would involve rote learning, copying from the blackboard, and lessons limited to one area at a time delivered in a prescribed order. Richardson dispensed with the prescriptive curriculum dictated to the teacher to deliver to the children, and the "local environment became the text book" as he based education in the real and felt experience of the children.¹

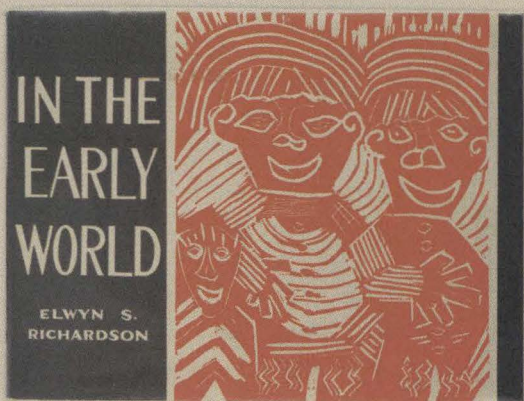
In 1952 Allen had just returned from London after completing his formal education at the Royal College of Art and needed a job; most of the offers were "mainly church work. The kind of criteria for which they were looking for was something I couldn't accept. They were wanting Madonnas carved with tears and

things like that, so I didn't know what I was doing."² In Wellington on Lambton Quay, Allen bumped into Dick Sealy "who'd been a student, another returned service person from Canterbury" and Sealy took him to meet Gordon Tovey. "I met Gordon and he did one of those far away stares, obviously thinking what he was going to do with him, if he was going to do anything with me at all."³ Tovey, whose "charismatic style of leadership inspired a national network of specialists who transformed drab schools into environments ablaze with life and colour", had been appointed as Supervisor of Arts and Crafts for the Department of Education in 1946.⁴ By the time Allen came along Tovey had artists such as Fred Graham, Ralph Hotere, Katerina Mataira, and Muru Walters working as art advisors, so he had begun to implement plans to get artists into schools. This meeting with Tovey set Allen on the path of educator.

In Allen's archive there is a copy of the 1957 issue of *Viewpoint*, the New Zealand Art Teachers Association annual publication. Allen contributed an article called "So You Want to Play With Clay". He writes "there is no surer bridge between adults and adolescents than mud."⁵ The article is upbeat and wryly observant of the challenges that children working with clay placed on some; there are "those who won't have it at any price, those who hover on the brink of equating it with the awful consequences with a volatile third form and the enthusiasts..."⁶ Allen goes on to describe his first encounter with an "enthusiast and one, in particular, who shall be nameless but who, being responsible for my conversion, has made certain of his place in the

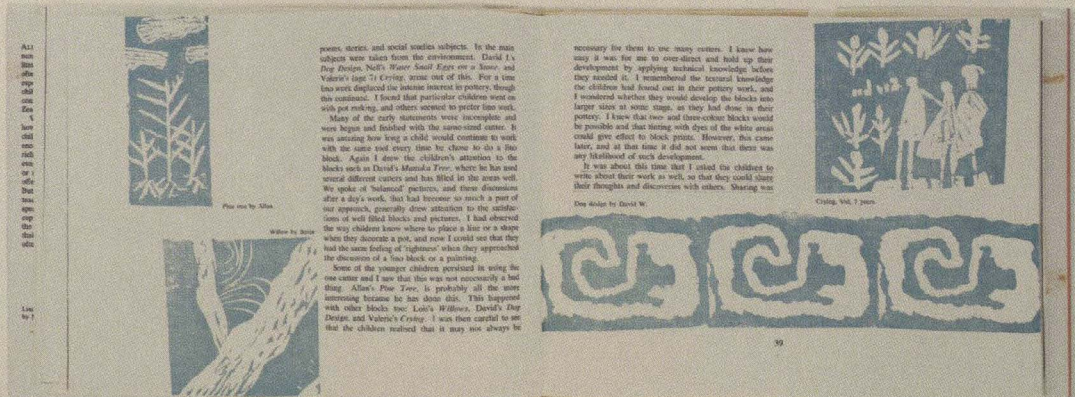


Large pot decoration, David and Allan



Figs. 2 and 3
Elwyn S. Richardson
In the Early World 1964
New Zealand Council of
Educational Research
Cover and internal page
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick Research
Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tamaki

Fig. 4
Elwyn S. Richardson
In the Early World 1964
New Zealand Council of
Educational Research
Internal pages
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick Research
Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki



next world if the principals of a muddled trail of post-primary schools are to be believed.”⁷ This unnamed enthusiast is no doubt Elwyn Richardson who Allen describes as greeting him “with a happy grin”⁸ The abundant energy of the students harnessed to dig and work the clay to prepare it for use is apparent in the writing, and their enthusiasm for the work is clear. Elsewhere Allen has spoken of the serious fun he and Richardson had working with the children. In an Art New Zealand interview with Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard in 2000 he described the decision of his and Richardson’s to bring imaginative, spontaneous play into the classroom, how they “deliberately set out to re-examine each teaching situation in these terms... Art making was linked to the three Rs and vice versa with amazing results. It was an exploding chain reaction.”⁹

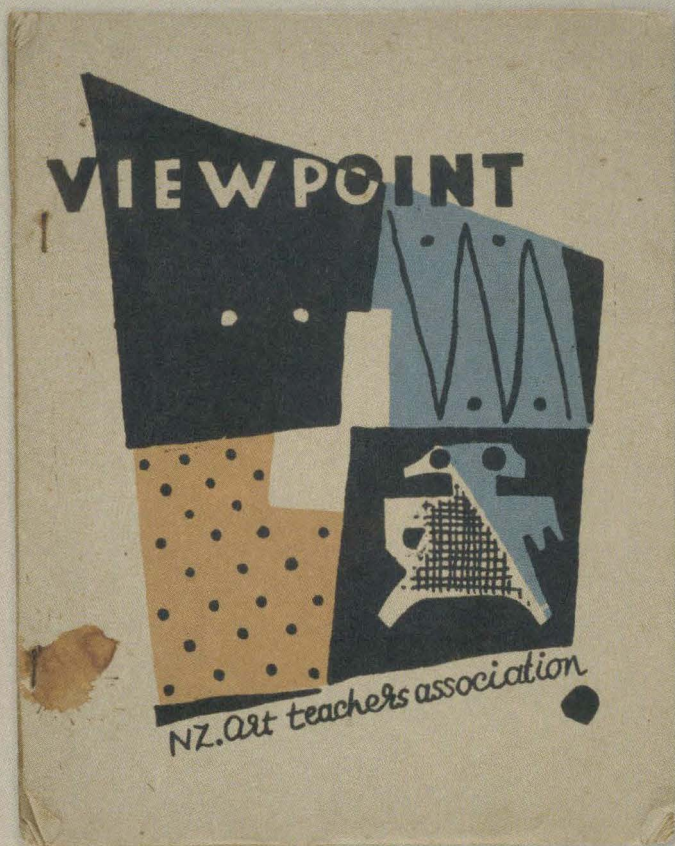
Underpinning Allen’s approach was the fact that he was not a trained teacher, and yet in this role he was working in a teaching environment supporting both teachers and students. Allen was well aware of this. While he had “a great deal of curiosity about

education” he had discovered at about the age of 25 when faced with filling in for a sick teacher’s Standard One class that he had “none of repertoire teachers draw upon.”¹⁰ This was a quick lesson in the “gulf between” trained teachers and those not trained to teach.¹¹ In a letter from the archive written to a researcher Allen says, “As an untrained teacher I was both advantaged and disadvantaged to fulfill this task. As I wasn’t equipped to teach per se I spent a lot of time observing children particularly at play in break periods. From this observation I believed that if means could be found to bring the imagination play and initiative displayed in the playground into the classroom amazing results could be achieved.”¹² Allen and Richardson shared an interest in exploring the possibilities that art and craft presented for teaching and student engagement in general.

On August 4, 1953 Allen wrote to Tovey to give him a report of his activities and findings since being in Northland. Allen begins the letter with a relaxed “Dick has passed on that you would like some report on how

RIGHT
Fig. 5
Viewpoint May 1957
New Zealand Art
Teacher's Association
Cover
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick
Research Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

FAR RIGHT
Figs. 6 and 7
Bernard Leach
A Potter's Book 1940
Faber and Faber
Cover and internal page
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick
Research Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

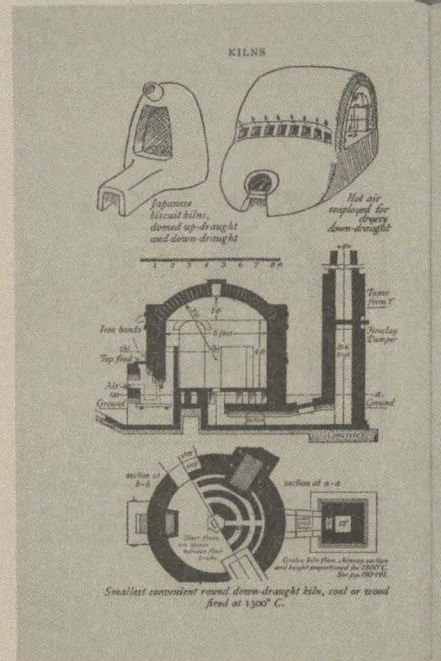
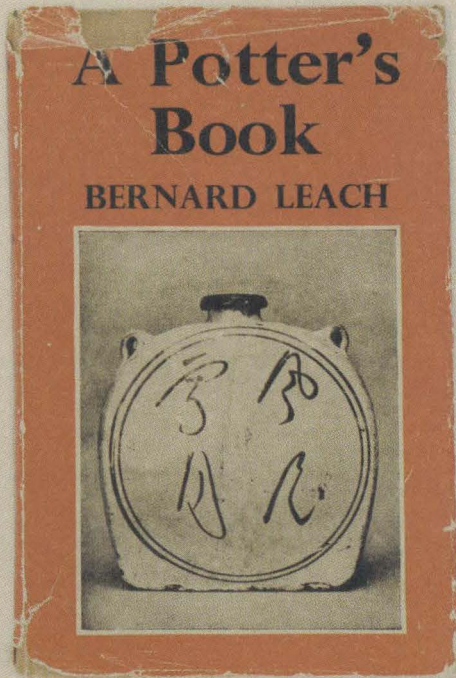


things are going up here.”¹³ He proceeds to list the activities that have been undertaken and starting with pottery, which “has been the most successful activity”,¹⁴ he expands on each of the activities: pottery, stick figure, fabric printing, linocuts, bark and wire, wood carving, pumice carving, modelling, stone carving, and includes discussion on how both the teachers and students are responding. The eight-page letter ends with the conclusion that excepting Richardson at Oruaiti and Simpson of Te Kao District High School, the “creative activities have had no special significance for teachers, they continue to regard art in all respects as a separate activity and I think will continue to do so until they get some conscious direction from Dept. and Inspection.”¹⁵

Other letters Allen wrote during his time in the Far North included letters to Tovey and others requesting tools and materials and giving estimates of cost, accompanying packages of students’ screen-printed textiles Allen sent to Tovey and others as examples, and mileage both done and estimated most often to

the Public Service garage. A letter to Tovey dated August 18, 1953 he declares he has done 2,790 miles “at the time of writing with the addition of a probable 300 miles” in his Public Service garage vehicle expected to be done by the end of term.¹⁶ All these letters, preserved as carbon copies in a letter-writing book housed at the E H McCormick Research Library as part of Allen’s archive, give an inkling of the distance Allen travelled and the ground he covered in his role as Field Officer. In effect, they communicate the general mobility that characterised Allen’s life at the time; expressed physically in kilometres driven, and philosophically in the expansion of Allen’s learning about approaches to teaching.

At the conclusion of his work as Liaison Organiser Art and Craft Branch in December 1960, Allen wrote a report on the Teaching of Art and Craft in Post-Primary Schools to the District Senior Inspector. He says that he was “greatly concerned and disturbed by three factors in the teaching of this subject in our schools.”¹⁷ First, was the lack of adequate professional



background and limited appreciation of the potential of creative activities; second, was the absence of understanding of the subject at secondary school level by principals, heads of schools and teachers of other subjects; and third, pupil attitudes. For Allen "the root cause of these three problems... rests with the inadequate and extremely limited professional background and qualification obtained by teachers at the Canterbury University School of Fine Art and the Auckland University School of Fine Art, before entering the service."¹⁸ This lack of professional competence was a problem in the delivery of art at secondary schools at the time, as well as in art school graduates who went on to teachers college. There was a lack of "fundamental... knowledge and absence of philosophic basis..." so that it required the introduction of "professional studies along with those of immediate pedagogical concern."¹⁹ In his report Allen went on to call the "standards and philosophies" that determine art teaching "derive from the art school background... which is openly acknowledged as being 'academic Victorianism' in outlook."²⁰

It was also in 1960 that Allen began teaching at tertiary level when he joined the Elam School of Fine Arts.²¹ Again it seems he arrived at, and contributed to, a time of change in art education. In correspondence with a researcher in 1997 he writes, "When I first joined Elam (1960) senior staff made a concerted effort to prevent students from reading books and using the library. It was accepted that a little knowledge let loose on an untrained mind was a recipe for disaster. If uncontrolled it could only lead to argument and rejection of staff teaching."²² Once again Allen was faced with a rigid and joyless educational environment, one that seems to have been afraid of the consequences of creative and critical enquiry. By now, Allen had formed an approach to teaching that embraced an explorative approach to making and doing, one that was equally encouraging of critical reflection through questioning and discussion. In the same 1997 correspondence, he writes of two attitudes fundamental to him: "Attitude 1. Avoid the closed mind.... Attitude 2. Support and encourage and provide security towards developing confidence to step off into the unknown." He adds,

W. R. Allen
C/- Mangon P.O.
4th August.

Dear Mr. Tovey,

Dick has passed on that you would like some report on how things are going up here. If I state the ground covered perhaps we could use it as a base for discussion when you come up and then for that I could perhaps write something of a more analytical nature.

Activities

Pottery
Stick figure
Fabric Printing
Lino cuts
Bark and wire
wood carving
Pumice carving
Modelling
Stone carving.

Pottery

has been the most successful activity, possibly because it has been given emphasis, but apart from this the work has immediate appeal. Children readily learn the simple techniques and take obvious pleasure in turning out one

ABOVE
Fig. 8
Letter from Jim Allen
to Gordon Tovey
4 August 1953
Carbon copy
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick
Research Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

RIGHT TOP
Fig. 9
Letter from Jim Allen
to Gordon Tovey
18 August 1953
Carbon copy
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick
Research Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

RIGHT BOTTOM
Fig. 10
Letter from Jim Allen
to Gordon Tovey
29 May 1953
Carbon copy
Jim Allen Archive,
E H McCormick
Research Library
Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

W. R. Allen
Cf. Mangrove P.O.
19th August 1957.

Dear Mr. Torrey,

We are excited to possibility of getting a quantity of material to be held in store at our kitchen office. Elwyn has given me a list to pass on to you. He has left some quantities for your decision and of course availability from store.

Bananas	8 doz.	
Cardboard	coloured, plain	
Coloured paper		
Leaves	200 yds.	
Leis cutters	3 doz. set	or (spare) list and handlings 203
Tampara colours		
Two tubes	Tube of colour orange	
Paper Kraftmat	yellow stuff	
Cartridge paper		
Laminite rolls		
Marumi Twines		

I also asked Elwyn to let me have a list of material and have enclosed same.

My list for experimental work —
forms, weaving materials, Raffia, Thin Card.

W. R. Allen
Cf. Mangrove P.O.
Northland.
29th May 1957.

Dear Mr. Torrey,

I was successful in getting a vehicle from the P.S. garage, in actual fact to save as I had lost them.

I took the letter re Reclusionism into Mr. Bennett, unfortunately he was away, so left it to be passed on to him. An enclosing Elwyn's copy for your office record. Elwyn thought the passing of your letter to Bennett was very happy just and his mind is considerably eased on this score. He is just bristling with ideas and schemes, and in me convinced that even that this is the right way the enclosing list of one of the most recent efforts. He is a twelve year old.

Best wishes
Jim Allen

from his personal experience that he “was well aware that teaching was a dangerous practice capable of closing minds as well as opening up the vision to limitless possibilities.”

In light of this Allen’s “personal teaching direction was to set up an active creative supportive environment” one that was free from ridicule where “criticism was utilized as a constructive element. My own development paralleled that of the students – new media exploration and I guess developing a more thoughtful and reflective approach to what was going on, increasingly preoccupied with the dominance of conceptual concerns.”²³ This plus the updating of the Elam library holdings with serials in particular, must have galvanised the atmosphere at Elam.

By 1975, when American art critic and curator Lucy Lippard visited New Zealand at the time of the Auckland Art Gallery’s showing of *Some Recent American Art* a lot of the work being made locally was comparable, in that it was questioning the conditions of its own making, to the work of conceptual artists in America. In her response to her visit to New Zealand on the occasion of this exhibition written for the *Gallery Quarterly*, Lippard noted that she “was, rather condescendingly, amazed to discover how well-informed about, even familiar with this work [from the *Some Recent American Art* exhibition] were the New Zealand artists seeing it for the first time; much of the art being made in Auckland now either bypasses or is already extending the issues exposed here.”²⁴ A little knowledge and a supportive critical approach let loose on untrained

minds spurred a richly productive time, one that is acknowledged as a significant period for art in New Zealand. For Allen it seems evident that his time in Oruaiti watching and contributing to Richardson’s own exploration of teaching that broke from the prescribed delivery was the catalyst for an approach to education that was open ended; “I think Oruaiti gave me the sense to recognise differences.”²⁵

1. Narrator in *The Song of the Bird*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYMdmvminFIM>
2. Jim Allen, transcript from *Interview with Jim Allen, Janita Crow and Victoria O’Sullivan – June 14, 2013*, unpublished.
3. Ibid.
4. Carol Henderson, “Tovey, Arthur Gordon - Tovey, Arthur Gordon,” from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 30-Oct-2012. URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5t17/tovey-arthur-gordon>
5. Jim Allen, “So You Want to Play With Clay,” *Viewpoint* (1957), n.p. 6–8. Ibid.
9. Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard, “Contact: Jim Allen talks to Wystan Curnow and Robert Leonard,” *Art New Zealand* (Winter 2000): 48-9.
10. Jim Allen, transcript from *Interview with Jim Allen*.
11. Ibid.
12. Jim Allen to Bevan Mudie and Jon Brake, September 4, 1997, 3.
13. Jim Allen to Gordon Tovey, August 4, 1953. 14–15. Ibid.
16. Jim Allen to Gordon Tovey, August 4, 1953.
17. Jim Allen to Mr. A. Thom, December 16, 1960. 18–20. Ibid.
21. Allen taught at Elam from 1960-76 and then at Sydney College of Arts from 1977-87 where he was the Founding Head of the School of Art.
22. Jim Allen to Bevan Mudie and Jon Brake, 4 September 1997, 3.
23. Ibid, 5.
24. Lucy R. Lippard, “Notes on seeing Some Recent American Art in New Zealand,” *Gallery Quarterly*, 59 (1975): 2-3.
25. Jim Allen to Margaret MacDonald, n.d.





Fig. 1
 Ruth Buchanan
A mezzanine, a staircase, a curtain
 2013
 Hand latch-hooked rug
 910mm x 650mm
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland

One should read this image top to bottom, or turn the page clockwise and read it right to left. When read in this way what is encountered is the floor-plan of a portion of the Auckland Art Gallery c 1959 produced through the siphon of time. That is to say, given the nature of the gallery and its multiple, multiplying iterations, a particular type of materiality seemed in order. This form is produced in an attempt to understand a place.

Make a case for movement.

Or ways of moving.

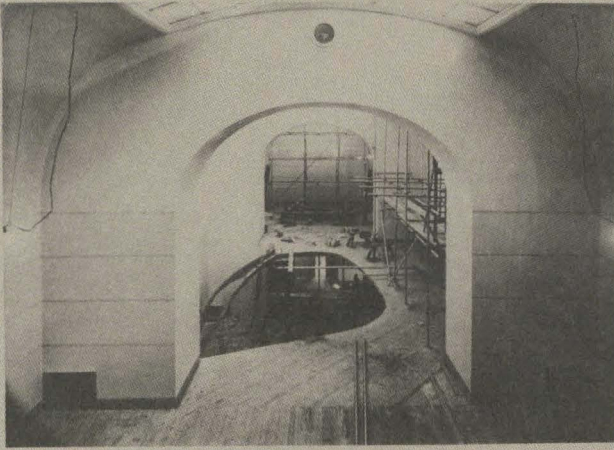
Start with a space with a palimpsest of uses and tones all bridged via subheadings and lines mapped out on pages. The space becomes a means by which to both reflect and entangle, or if nothing else suggest there is a certain type of physicality here. The Auckland Art Gallery is just such a space, having undergone renovations, additions and splits constantly in its 125 years of existence. The biography of the building is a veritable glossary of spatial propositions and organisational divides: public library, gallery, art school, art society, studio, council chambers, concert venue, research library and archive.

From here step out, or step in, adjusting the sight line toward that of a flickering, or a fluttering. Omitting the centre or focusing on an edge we move to part of this space made up of a mezzanine, a staircase, a curtain: an angle, a curve, a wavy line. We move to part

of this space that no longer exists, or exists only as a set of plans held in a basement, images in plastic folders, and wisps of memories in the back of minds. Draw a line through and across, unfolding this glossary of activity into a set of timeframes or sight lines acting out concurrently.

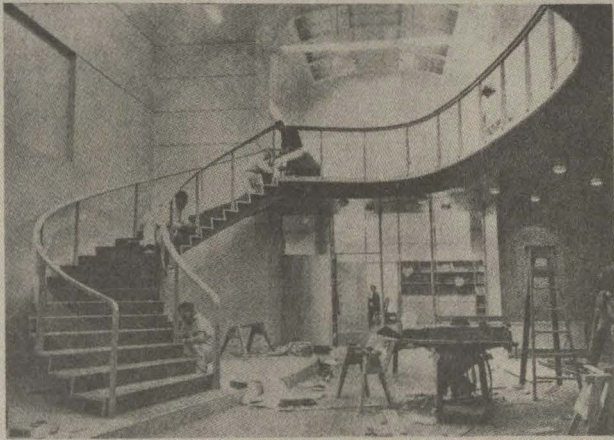
Draw a line through and across, unfolding this glossary of activity into a set of timeframes or sight lines acting out concurrently. A photograph of a space encountered in an actual space, now. A photograph of a space encountered in an actual space. These two things, the photograph seen and the space in which it is viewed become related or are related: the interior producing a complex problem. Placed side by side, or underneath and on top, superimposed or traced, a hand moves back and forth between the two, the table where the photograph sits, the edge of the photograph itself.

The photograph in question pushes us away from the stair and mezzanine and toward the curtain. While not



Figs 2 and 3
Construction of the
Mezzanine Gallery 1953
Black and white
photographs
E H McCormick Research
Library, Auckland Art
Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Fig. 4
Art Gallery Auckland
proposed new entrance
galleries c1952
Floor plan
Auckland Council Archives



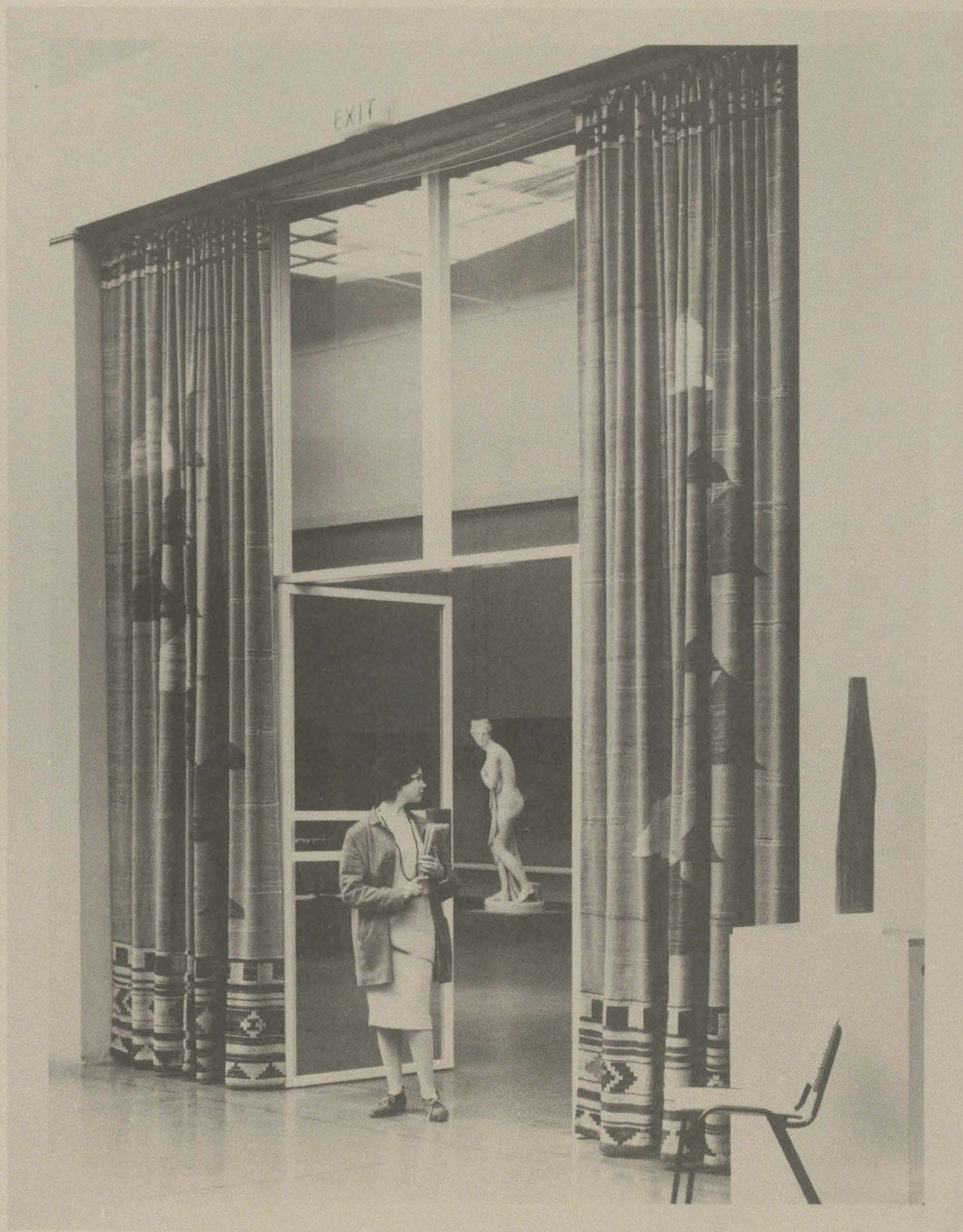


Fig. 5
Ilse von Randow curtain,
Auckland Art Gallery c1958
Black and white photograph
E H McCormick Research
Library, Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki

Fig. 6
Reading room,
E H McCormick
Research Library, 2012
Photo: Catherine
Hammond



the only image of interest it becomes a central character, a figure in its own right. An image that both faces us and turns away, creating an entry and frame but also delineating a border, a crossing. Viewed from a distance or up close the photograph produces a circuit, head looking right, a head turning left, a door ajar, an opened curtain, a seat waiting for an occupant. The photograph, or the image of the photograph, create an opening to be filled up, a beckoning.

The space in question is one we have seen before, like many of the sort, a small room with tables organised in a large group and as individual workstations with barriers between, shelves housing books to the other side of the room, a counter, some screens. This particular room is located on a floating floor, slicing through what was previously ceiling, a large circular window becomes a half circle. The room floats over the director's office, hovering, the glass panelling at the west-facing end of the room allows you to catch a glimpse of the activity below. The room sits, cushioned by air, inserted.

The two, the photograph seen and the space in which it is viewed become related: the image encountered projected onto the surface of the space of encounter. A surface, a projection, the interior producing a complex problem. A mirror placed between the two reveals similarities that are both mutual and contingent. A mirroring emerges between the two, producing a loop. Viewing the photograph in the space today becomes a process of stratification, the drifts and eddies of the structure of the gallery and its manner of organisation, one thing placed on top of the other. Seen through the logic of a circuit of encounter, we may read this relation in two ways: the relationship is particular, the relationship is a trope.

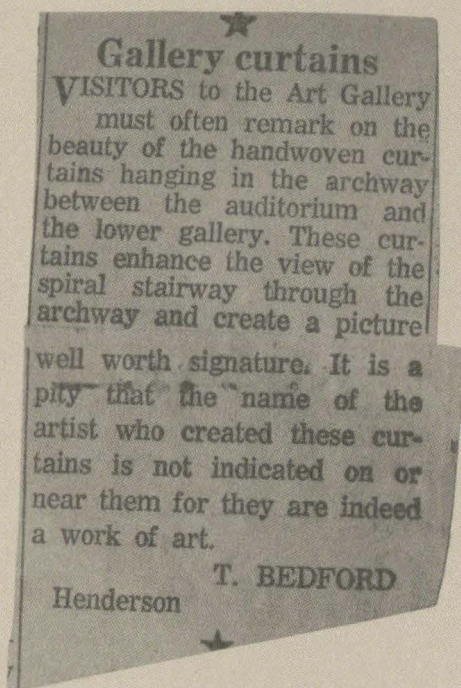
1. The relationship is particular

Both the curtain and the early iterations of the E H McCormick Research Library appeared in the 1950s at a time of rapid change in the gallery. As well as the renovations that occurred including the addition of said curved staircase and mezzanine, there was the

boxing in of pilasters, the covering of ornamented ceilings, the addition of a stage and a large glazed doorway, and significant shifts in the way the gallery was run. In 1952 the first full time director, Eric Westbrook, was employed following the 39 year stint of City Librarian John Barr. When Westbrook moved to Australia in 1956 he was replaced by fellow Englishman Peter Tomory. Both Westbrook and Tomory were keen to modernise the gallery physically as well as intensify its cultural, social and political position within Auckland: the reading room and the curtain were just two of the results of this fervour.

The curtain was produced by German born Ilse von Randow (1901–1998) in a weaving room at her home in Blockhouse Bay following the termination of her occupancy of the Gallery's tower as a studio. Woven on multiple looms simultaneously and then hand-stitched together, the curtain was made in just four months and hung over the glazed gallery doorway in the autumn of 1958. Double-sided with a strong graphic design depicting triangles, or mountain ranges or islands, the curtain was an impressive piece of (modernist) weaving and addition to the gallery, operating as both a spatial divide, backdrop and sound insulator. Hung without any information about its maker, the Auckland Star received a letter to the editor commenting on the curtains' striking beauty and requesting further information about the producer: "it is a pity the name of the artist who created these curtains is not on or near them, as they are indeed a work of art".¹ In the commissioning and budget notes we can discern the curtains were indeed not specifically categorised as art, nor craft but rather as a special work, along with the glazed doors they covered, new stackable chairs and the installation of a fire alarm system.

The curtain remained in this location for approximately a decade; it was probably removed just prior to the Gallery once again preparing for further major renovations. Details about who managed its custodianship following its removal from the Gallery, or if there were plans for it to be rehung, are scant. Today



the curtain is kept on large rolls in the Auckland War Memorial Museum's underground storage facility.

2. The relationship is a trope

The archive and the curtain appear together here in this drama, appearing as characters in this drama and become a trope. As they appear together, they also act in the same way. One might even say the curtain and the archive are the same, and this sameness is irrevocable when encountered in this way: as a reflection and projection of the other. Think one thing through something else. An organisational system through a curtain, a curtain through a stack of papers, a pile of boxes. Both slip and jam. That is to say they are the same because they both rely on movement in order to function, in order to be read as a curtain, in order to be read as an archive. A curtain that doesn't move is a wall. An archive that doesn't move is a storage facility. Make a diagram of this: an arrow in, an arrow out, a catchment area. Both require movement, airflow, jams, splits and changes in order

Fig. 7
"Gallery curtains"
Letter to the editor
Auckland Star,
October 1958

Fig. 8
Parks and Library
Committee, Art Gallery
Expenditure 1958-59
Auckland City Council
Annual Report,
March 31, 1951
Auckland Council
Archives

'AJW

21.
PARKS & LIBRARY COMMITTEE

ART GALLERY

EXPENDITURE 1958/59

<u>Job No.</u>	<u>Estimate 1958/59</u>	<u>Expenditure to 31.3.59</u>
Salaries & wages	9,660	9,923
Superannuation	1,000	148
Uniforms	60	80
Rent & insurance	155	217
Building maintenance	1,125	1,566
Water, power, fuel	500	449
Purchases for Permanent Collection	2,000	2,000
Framing, restoration	600	650
Loan Exhibitions	2,000	1,635
Lectures & concerts	280	568
Reproductions & Reference Material	500	513
Publications for Sale	700	1,182
Travelling expenses	200	176
Telephones & postages	90	212
Printing & stationery	200	250
General office maintenance	113	242
Advertising	200	236
	<u>£ 18,783</u>	<u>20,047</u>

SPECIAL WORKS

4237	Re-furnishing the two spaces each side of front entrance to Gallery & replacing wooden doors with glass doors.	450	151
4238	Re-plastering & painting back staircase	340	188
4239	Re-painting & removing of high skirtingboard in 1st floor gallery	450	452
4240	Purchase of 90 stacking chairs	400	387
4241	Curtain for glass partitions between City & Mackelvie Galleries	150	159
4242	Fire alarm installation	250	322
		<u>£2,040</u>	<u>1,665</u>

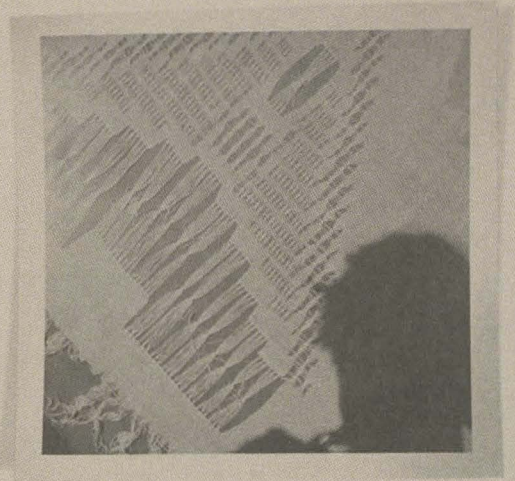
RECEIPTS

	<u>Estimate 1958/59</u>	<u>Receipts to 31.3.59.</u>
Publications for sale	400	503
Lectures & concerts	200	571
Loan Exhibitions	1,300	2,641
Pictures Restoration	100	126
Hire of rooms	80	212
	<u>£ 2,080</u>	<u>4,053</u>



Fig. 9
Ise von Randow curtain
in storage at Auckland
Museum, 2013
Photo: Ruth Buchanan

Fig. 10
 Ilse von Randow test
 piece, date unknown.
 This test piece is
 photographed by von
 Randow herself, the
 shadow of her head is
 visible.
 Ilse von Randow Archive,
 Auckland Museum



to function, in order to be read, encountered as the space or object that they are.

Both the archive and the curtain require movement to exist as such. Additions invited or not, readings and misreadings of categories, information kept and cared for over time; an unrolling or unravelling, planned, improvised or redirected. Wilfully used, wilfully expanded. A curtain that doesn't move is a wall. An archive that doesn't move is a storage facility.

With this in mind, this particularity of relating, or this relating that produces its own taxonomy, we reiterate the case for movement, an angling towards, a swerving away. The curtain, the archive, situated here, together, as an image within one frame – acutely aware. A looking at or towards, an activity that incites or binds. Pause, pause and then direct: we choose to create a bustle of activity here, pulling on curtains and pushing at piles; pulling, pushing, lifting, piling, turning. As one does this, as this is done we may note that this relationship produces a mirror. However, this mirror

is more than a figment or symbol, it is an object. An object that casts shadows and fills rooms, an object through which the many may pass, an object or set of objects that shudder, an object or set of objects that will not keep still. With this in mind, we can make a case for movement.

1. T Bedford, "Gallery curtains", *Auckland Star*, c. October 1958.



Bochoy chiu
Okinawashima

Tropic of Cancer

Formosa

Hongkong

Palawan

Luzon
Manila
Philippine Islands

Marianne or Ladrone I^s

M I C R O N E S I A

Caroline Islands

Marshall Islands

M E L Equator

Gilbert I^s

Mindoro
Mindanao
Samar
Leyte

Sulawesi
Celebes Sea

Sumatra
Java
Banda Sea

New Mecklenburg or New Ireland
Bismarck Arch^{ipelago}

Solomon I^s
Choiseul
San Christoval
Santo Cruz I.

Ellice I^s

Timor
Sandalwood I.

Port Moresby
Gulf of Carpentaria
Cooktown

New Hebrides

Fiji Islands
Viti Levu
Suva

Northern Territory

Queensland
Brisbane

New Caledonia
Loyalty I^s

Tonga I^s

Western Australia

South Australia
Great Australian Bight

New South Wales
Sydney

Tropic of Capricorn

Victoria
Melbourne

Adelaides
Kosciusko

Norfolk I.
Howe I.

King George St

Tasmania
Hobart

T A S M A N S E A
Auckland

NEW ZEALAND
Wellington
Christchurch

Dunedin
Stewart I.
Bounty I.
Antipodes

Auckland I.
Campbell

Macquarie I.

120°

140°

160°

East 180° W

"He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother":
Reading Room Presents a Record of New Zealand
Artists Exhibiting in Australasian Networks
 Tom Irwin

"Elective Proximities" is a title which suggests an action has been taken or a decision made, to establish a connection in a given situation. This exhibition history illustrates a time when New Zealand artists actively sought to exhibit in Australasian networks. From the earliest example listed here, the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, links were forged which introduced a phase of significant trans-Tasman exchange in contemporary art. With the aim of further documenting this discourse, the New Zealand participants in formal and ongoing exhibition series have been recorded.

There are well-known arguments for the pros and cons of trans-Tasman exchange not covered here, but perhaps it is worthwhile mentioning that the period coincides with the rise of post-object art and post-colonial politics. There is a sense from the material that as artistic forms and ideas about art were changing, progressive artists on both sides of the Tasman may have found more common ground amongst one another than they did at home.

With the benefit of a little passing time, the space exists that these efforts and associations can be seen in continuity. The resources provided are designed to show how the relationship moved and shifted as

opportunities were created and how the intensity of the attachment waxed and waned.

It is hoped the piece will provide a useful reference. It has been of particular interest to observe, not only which artists exhibited where and with whom, but other phenomena, such as trends in the titling of exhibitions and times when staging such large scale events on a two or three year schedule became too much.

Where possible exhibition titles have been transcribed, sentence-style, exactly as they appeared in the exhibition catalogues to serve as a historical record. Exhibition dates have been incorporated where not present and date forms standardised for the reader's benefit. Exhibition venues have only been included where considered significant. Every effort has been made to ensure all New Zealand artists shown at exhibitions have been identified and their names presented correctly. We apologise for any errors or omissions in this regard. New Zealand artists are defined here as, born or active in New Zealand or closely involved with New Zealand networks.

ANZART

ANZART Christchurch
17 - 30 August 1981

Jocelyn Allison
Colleen Anstey
Ron Brownson
Geoff Chapple
William Collison
Paul Cullen
Wystan Curnow
Phil Dadson
Andrew Drummond
Claire Fergusson
Jacqueline Fraser
Di Ffrench
Stuart Griffiths
Terrence Handscomb
John Hurrell
Paul Johns
Rosemary Johnson
Morgen Jones
Alison McLean
David Mealing
Don Peebles
Pauline Rhodes
Shona Rapira Davies
Philip Trusttum
Nicholas Register
Peter Roche & Linda Buis
Warren Viscose
Peter Walden
Evan Webb
...

ANZART: in Hobart
19 May - 12 June 1983

Colleen Ansley
Mary Louise Broune
Linda Buis
Debra Bustin
Gill Civil &
Virginia Were
John Cousins
Chris Cree Brown
Phil Dadson &
From Scratch
Andrew Drummond
Kim Oyatt
Fetus Productions
Di Ffrench
Greg Fox
Tony Green
Adrian Hall
Chris Hignett
Last Laugh Productions
Vivian Lynn
Cilla McQueen
Grant Leigh Mitchell
Peter Roche
Richard Von Sturmer
Stefan Tyler-Wright
Charlotte Wrightson
John Young
Ivan Zagni
...

ANZART: Australian and
New Zealand artists
in Edinburgh
3 August - 1 September
1984

John Cousins
Andrew Drummond
From Scratch
Richard Killeen
Colin McCahon
Marata Mita
Gregor Nicholas
Maria Olsen
Philip Trusttum
Peter Wells
...

ANZART Auckland '85:
a trans Tasman artists'
exchange
13 - 26 May 1985

Juliet Batten
Linda Buis
Debra Bustin
Paul Cook
Chris Cree Brown
Marion Evans
Greg Fox
Jacqueline Fraser
Peter Gibson
Stuart Griffiths
Bridie Lonie
John Miller
Russell Moses
Peter Roche
Mike Sukolski
Paul Sutherland
Jeff Thomson
David Watson
Gail Wright
...

ARX

ARX '87: Australia
& regions artists'
exchange, Perth &
Freemantle, Western
Australia
6 - 20 September 1987

Greg Burke
City Group
Fetus Productions
John Hurrell
Len Lye & Humphrey
Jennings
Merata Mita, Leon Narby
and Gerd Pohlmann
Stewart Main
Julia Morison
Patrick Pound
Julia Shakespeare
Richard Reddaway
The Front Lawn and
Grant Campbell
William Toepfer and
The Front Lawn
Merylyn Tweedie
...

Metro mania:
catalogue of the 1989
Australia & regions
artists' exchange, Perth,
Western Australia
1 - 14 October 1989

Fiona Clark
Derrick Cherrie
Ruth Watson
...

The third artists'
regional exchange, ARX 3,
Perth, Western Australia
1 - 15 April 1992

Maureen Lander
Barnard McIntyre
Lisa Reihana
Peter Robinson
...

Torque: ARX 4: the
fourth artists' regional
exchange, Perth
23 March - 16 April 1995

No New Zealand
representation
...

ASIA-PACIFIC TRIENNIAL
Queensland Art Gallery,
Brisbane, Australia
(APT)

The first Asia-
Pacific Triennial
of contemporary art
18 September -
5 December 1993

Neil Dawson
Rebyn Kahukiwa
Selwyn Muru
Anne Noble
Peter Roche
Michel Tuffery
Robin White
...



The second Asia-Pacific Triennial of contemporary art
27 September 1996 -
19 January 1997

Chris Booth
Bronwyn Cornish
Brett Graham
Judy Millar
Ani O'Neill
John Pule
Lisa Reihana
Peter Robinson
Marie Shannon
Yuk King Tan
Ben Webb
...

Beyond the future:
the third Asia-Pacific Triennial of contemporary art
9 September 1999 -
26 January 2000

Bill Hammond
Michael Parekouwahi
...

APT 2002:
Asia-Pacific Triennial of contemporary art
12 September 2002 -
27 January 2003

Ralph Hotere
Pacifka Divas
Lisa Reihana
...

The 5th Asia-Pacific Triennial of contemporary art
2 December 2006 -
27 May 2007

Michael Parekouwahi
John Pule
Michael Stevenson
Sima Urale
Gordon Walters
Tapeeru Williams
...

The 6th Asia-Pacific Triennial of contemporary art
5 December 2009 -
5 April 2010

Katchafire
Reuben Paterson
Campbell Patterson
Tiki Taane
Upper Hutt Posse
Rohan Wealleans
Robin White
...

APT 7: the 7th Asia-Pacific Triennial of contemporary art
8 December 2012 -
14 April 2013

Graham Fletcher
Joanna Langford
Richard Maloy
Greg Semu
Sopolemalama Filipe Tohi
...

AUSTRALIAN
SCULPTURE TRIENNIAL
(AST)

The First Australian Sculpture Triennial at Preston Insititute of Technology & La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria
28 February - 12 April 1981

Ross Boyd
Mary-Louise Browne
Linde Buis
Alison Clouston
Andrew Drummond
Rosalie Gascoigne
Stuart Griffiths
Adrian Hall
Alwyn Harbott
Christine Hallyer
Ian Hunter
Morgan Jones
Frances Mary Joseph
Ngairé Mules
Terry Reid
Peter Roche
Pauline Rhodes
Dorothy Thompson
Michael Trudgeon
Warren Viscoe
...

Australian sculpture now: second Australian Sculpture Triennial, Melbourne
6 November 1984 -
28 January 1985

Rodney Broad
Rosalie Gascoigne
Maggie Turner
...

Third Australian Sculpture Triennial, Victoria
16 September -
22 October 1987

Brett Ballard
Alison Clouston
Rosalie Gascoigne
...

Fourth Australian Sculpture Triennial, Victoria
13 September -
28 October 1990

No NZ representation

Fifth Australian Sculpture Triennial, Victoria
1993

Rebecca Turrell
...

BIENNALE OF SYDNEY
(BOS)

The biennale of Sydney Opera House
23 November - December 1973

Colin McCahan
William Sutton
...

Recent international forms in art: the 1976 Biennale of Sydney at the Art Gallery of New South Wales
13 November -
19 December 1976

Jim Allen
John Lethbridge
Terry Powell
Terry Reid
Greer Twiss
...

European dialogue:
the third Biennale
of Sydney
14 April - 27 May 1979

Bruce Barber
Phil Dadson
From Scratch
Rosalie Gascoigne
Gray Nichol
Peter Roche
Nicholas Spill
Terry Reid
...

Vision in disbelief:
the 4th Biennale of
Sydney
7 April - 23 May 1982

Billy Apple
Ron Brownson
Christina Hellyar
Richard Killeen
Annea Lockwood
Peter Peryer
Philip Trusttumm
Boyd Webb
...

Private symbol / social
metaphor: the fifth
Biennale of Sydney
11 April - 17 June 1984

Ralph Hotere
Colin McCahon
Eva Yuen
...

Origins, originality
+ beyond: the sixth
Biennale of Sydney
16 May - 6 July 1986

From Scratch
Richard Killeen
Colin Lancelo
Robin White
...

From the Southern Cross:
a view of world art c.
1940-88. 1988 Australian
biennale presented by
the Biennale of Sydney
Sydney: 18 May -
3 July 1988
Melbourne: 4 August -
18 September 1988

Neil Dawson
Rosalie Gascoigne
Len Lye
Colin McCahon
Maria Olsen
Caroline Williams
...

The readymade boomerang:
certain relations in 20th
century art: the Eighth
Biennale of Sydney
11 April - 3 June 1990

Bill Culbert
Megan Jenkinson
John Lethbridge
Merylyn Tweedie
...

The boundary rider:
9th Biennale of Sydney
15 December 1992 -
14 March 1993

Julia Morison
Ruth Watson
...

Jurassic technologies
revenant: 10th Biennale
of Sydney
27 July -
22 September 1996

Peter Peryer
...

Every day:
11th Biennale of Sydney
18 September -
8 November 1998

Joyce Campbell
Gavin Hipkins
Denise Kum
Ani O'Neill
Peter Robinson
Jim Speers
...

Biennale of Sydney 2000:
12th Biennale of Sydney
26 May - 30 July 2000

Rosalie Gascoigne
Bill Hammond
Pacific Sisters
Lisa Reihana
...

2002 Biennale of Sydney:
(the world may be)
fantastic
15 May - 14 July 2002

Michael Parekouwai
Michael Stevenson
...

Biennale of Sydney 2004:
on reason and emotion
4 June - 15 August 2004

Michael Harrison
Daniel Malone
Daniel Von Sturmer
...

Zones of contact:
2006 Biennale of Sydney
8 June - 27 August 2006

Stella Brennan
Brett Graham
Rachael Rakena
John Reynolds
...

Revolutions -
forms that turn:
2008 Biennale of Sydney
8 June -
7 September 2008

et al.
Simon Denny
Len Lye
...

17th Biennale of Sydney:
the beauty of distance:
songs of survival in a
precarious age
2 May - 1 August 2010

Shane Cotton
Daniel Crooks
Brett Graham
Jason Greig
Julia Morison
Fiona Pardington
Reuben Paterson
Yvonne Todd
Rohan Weallans
...

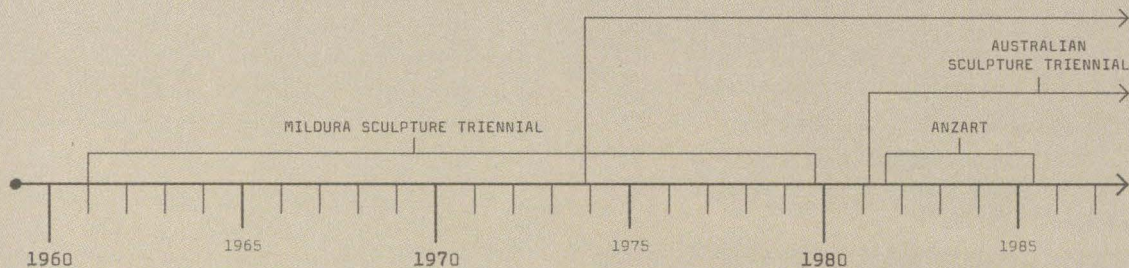
All our relations:
18th Biennale of Sydney
27 June -
16 September 2012

Peter Robinson
Tiffany Singh
Sriuhana Spong
...

MILDURA SCULPTURE
TRIENNIAL
(MST)

Mildura Prize for
Sculpture 1961,
organised by the
Mildura Art Gallery

Paul Beadle
...



Mildura Prize for Sculpture 1964, organised by the Mildura Art Gallery

Paul Beadle
Alan Ingham
Gordon McAuslan
Greer Twiss
...

Mildura Prize for Sculpture 1967, organised by the Mildura Arts Centre
22 April - 13 June 1967

Jim Allen
Don Driver
Alison Duff
Alan Ingham
Darcy Lange
Terry Powell
Warren Viscoe
...

The Fourth Mildura Sculpture Triennial 1970, organised by the Mildura Arts Centre

Jim Allen
Tanya Ashken
Paul Beadle
Paul Dibble
Don Driver
Terry Powell
Lyndon Smith
Marte Szirmay
Greer Twiss
Warren Viscoe
...

Sculpturescape '73: an exhibition in Mildura, Australia
April - June 1973

Jim Allen
Bruce Barber
Paul Beadle
Graeme Brett
Edward Bullmore
Betty Cutcher
Phil Dadson
Maree Horner
Molly Macalister
Peter Nicholls
Lyndon Smith
Carl Sydow
Marte Szirmay
Greer Twiss
...

6th Mildura Sculpture Exhibition: an opening feature for Arts Victoria 75
1975

Jim Allen
Bruce Barber
Rodney Broad
Stephen Furlonger
Kim Gray
Ken Griffiths
Bob Kerr
Darcy Lange
John Lethbridge
Peter Nicholls
John Panting
Terry Powell
Terry Reid
Terry Smith
Nicholas Spill
Greer Twiss
Boyd Webb
...

12 New Zealand artists: Mildura Arts Centre, (touring exhibition)
The Art Gallery of South Australia, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1975

Jim Allen
Bruce Barber
Stephen Furlonger
Kim Gray
Ken Griffiths
Darcy Lange
John Lethbridge
Peter Nicholls
John Panting
Terry Powell
Greer Twiss
Boyd Webb
...

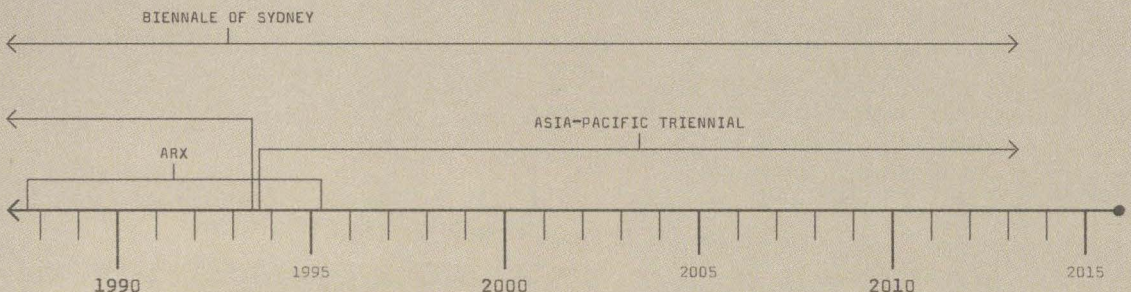
Seventh Sculpture Triennial at Mildura Arts Centre
25 March - 28 May 1978

Rodney Broad
William Collison
Paul Cullen
Phil Dadson
Bing Dawe
Neil Dawson
Don Driver
Andrew Drummond
Jacqueline Fraser
John Lethbridge
Matthew McLean
David Mealing
Gray Nichol
Peter Nicholls
Terry Reid
Nicholas Spill
Terry Stringer
Warren Viscoe
Denys Watkins
...

N.Z. Sculptors at Mildura: National tour (of N.Z.), organised by the G.E. II Arts Council of N.Z.
5 October 1978 - 3 November 1979

Ian Bergquist
William Collison
Paul Cullen
Phil Dadson
Bing Dawe
Neil Dawson
Don Driver
Andrew Drummond
Jacqueline Fraser
Matthew McLean
David Mealing
Peter Nicholls
Gray Nichol
Nicholas Spill
Terry Stringer
Warren Viscoe
Denys Watkins
...

The Mildura Sculpture Triennials continued until 1988 but without a New Zealand contingent.



Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Staff Publications and Presentations
2012—13

Books and Exhibition Catalogues

Ron Brownson, *HOME AKL: Artists of Pacific Heritage in Auckland*. Foreword by Chris Saines; editor Clare McIntosh, with contributions by Albert L Refiti, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, Ema Tavola, and Nina Tonga (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2012).

Ron Brownson, "Postcards of Eternal Love...Say You Love Me," in *Postcards from the Edge: Bepen Bhana* (Auckland: Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, 2013).

Natasha Conland, *A Puppet, a Pauper, a Pirate, a Poet, a Pawn and a King: from the Naomi Milgrom Art Collection* (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2013).

Natasha Conland, *The Walters Prize 2012* (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2012).

Hou Hanru, *The 5th Auckland Triennial: If You Were to Live Here ...*. Foreword by Chris Saines and Derek McCormack, with essays by Christina Barton, Pascal Beausse and Felicity Fenner (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2013).

Ngahiraka Mason, "Creativity & Spirituality," in *Kura: Story of a Maori Woman Artist* (Auckland: Māngere Arts Centre, 2012).

Ngahiraka Mason, "The State of Māori Art in an International Context," in *Sakahan: International Indigenous Art* (Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada, 2013).

Chris Saines, *Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki: A Place for Art*. With contributions by Fiona Connor, Jennifer French, Bernard Makaore, Patrick Reynolds, and John Walsh (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2013).

Journal and Magazine Articles

Ron Brownson, "My Photography Addiction," in *Auckland Art Fair* (Auckland: Auckland Art Fair, 2013).

Mary Kisler, "Images Bred from Chaos," review of *Francis Bacon: Five Decades*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, *Listener*, December 22, 2012.

Caroline McBride, "Keeping Track: The Tony Fomison Studio Papers," *Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture*, no. 5 (2012).

Caroline McBride, "Artist Archives at the Auckland Art Gallery: Processes and Meaning," *Archifacts: Journal of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand* (April 2013).

Ngahiraka Mason, "Changing the Paradigm: The Art of Kura Te Waru Rewiri," *Art New Zealand*, no. 142 (Winter 2012).

Ngahiraka Mason, "Who Would Have Thought!" *South* (2012).

Ngahiraka Mason, "Visesio Poasi Siasau," *Contemporary Pacific* (2013).

Mathew Norman, "Salvatore Castiglione's *Oriental Head*," *Print Quarterly* XXX, no. 3 (2013).

Zara Stanhope, *Humanities Research Journal, World and World Making in Art* XIX, no. 2 (2013), co-editor with Dr Caroline Turner and Dr Michelle Antoinette.

Zara Stanhope, "Iterations: Again," *Art & the Public Sphere* 1, no. 3 (November 2013).

Zara Stanhope, "Re-imagining Dutch Urban Life: The Blue House in Amsterdam," in *Re-imagining the City: Art, Globalisation and Urban Space*, ed. Elizabeth Grierson and Kirsten Sharp (Intellect, October 2013).

Zara Stanhope, "The World and World-Making in Art: Connectivities and Differences," with Dr Michelle Antoinette, *World Art* 2, no. 2 (September 2012): 167–171.

Julia Waite, "If Not Concrete Then What? Kate Newby's *I'm just like a pile of leaves* Archive," *Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture* no. 5 (2012).

Online Publications and Websites

Rhana Devenport, "Director's choice," from Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's collection for *Google Art Project*, <http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collection/auckland-art-gallery-toi-o-tamaki?projectId=art-project&hl=en>

Catherine Hammond and Caroline McBride, *Find New Zealand Artists: A Database of Artist Names*, 2013, www.findnzartists.org.nz.

Sarah Hillary and Ute Larsen, "Merging Techniques – New Research into Lindauer's Use of Photographs," *Whakamīharo Lindauer Online*, 2013, www.lindaueronline.co.nz.

Mary Kisler, 32 entries from Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki's international collection for *Google Art Project*, <http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/collection/auckland-art-gallery-toi-o-tamaki?projectId=art-project&hl=en>

Ngahiraka Mason, "Behind The Brush," *Whakamīharo Lindauer Online*, 2013, <http://www.lindaueronline.co.nz/background/behind-the-brush>

Mathew Norman, *Wenceslaus Hollar: Portrait of a Traveller* (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2013), <http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/events/2013/march/travels-with-mr-hollar/wenceslaus-hollar-portrait-of-a-traveller>.

Conference Papers

Ron Brownson, "Shigeyuki Kihara and the Shadow of Photography," keynote address at *The Art of Shigeyuki Kihara: A Research Symposium*, The University of Otago, May 4, 2013.

Sarah Hillary, "Liberation Down Under: The Early Use of Synthetic Emulsion Paints by New Zealand Artists," joint author with Tom Learner, Herant Khanjian, Michael Schilling of the Getty Conservation Institute, and Melanie Carlisle and Katherine Campbell of Te Papa Tongarewa Museum

of New Zealand. Presented at AICCM conference at Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, December 10, 2012.

Mary Kisler, "Silken Slippers, Wooden Shoes – the Rise and Fall of Fashion," keynote address at *Town and Country*, 11th Annual Symposium of the Costume and Textile Association of New Zealand, Suter Gallery, Nelson, July 20, 2012.

Mary Kisler, "Abstinence and Plenitude – Food and the Gaze in European Art," paper presented at *Art and Food* Symposium, Dunedin Art School and Otago University, August 23, 2012.

Mary Kisler, "All that Glisters is Not Gold: The Complex Relationship between Art and Money in the Renaissance," paper presented at *Art and Money* Symposium, Dunedin Art School and Otago University, August 30, 2013.

Caroline McBride, "Artist Archives at the Auckland Art Gallery: Processes and Meaning," paper presented at the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) Conference, Wellington, October 23–25, 2012.

Annette McKone, "Changes and Challenges: Sculpture Conservation at Auckland Art Gallery," lecture presented at the New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Materials (NZCCM) Conference, Auckland, October 23, 2013.

Annette McKone, "Degrade, Replace, Reuse?" poster presented at POPART- Preservation of Plastic Artefacts in Museum Collections Conference, Paris, March 7–9, 2012.

Contributors

Jim Allen is the retired inaugural head of Sydney College of the Arts, School of Art which later became Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney University. Since 2000 he has been a practising artist located in Auckland, New Zealand. Recent exhibitions include *The Skin of Years* at Michael Lett, Auckland (2012); *Points of Contact: Jim Allen, Len Lye, Helio Oiticica* at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth and Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University, Wellington (2011–12); and *Contact* at Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany (2012).

Dr Michelle Antoinette is currently an Australian Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow based at The Australian National University. She is a researcher of modern and contemporary Asian art, and has been convenor and lecturer at the ANU for courses on Asian and Pacific art and museums. Most recently, she has been researching the emergence of new networks of contemporary Asian art and museums as part of the ARC-funded project, "The Rise of New Cultural Networks in Asia in the Twenty-First Century." Her ongoing research focuses on the art histories of Southeast Asia and her forthcoming book explores the emergence and representation of contemporary Southeast Asian art on the international art stage from the 1990s (Rodopi, forthcoming).

Christina Barton is co-editor of *Reading Room: A Journal of Art and Culture*. She is an art historian, writer and curator who is currently Director of the Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Mladen Bizumic has had solo exhibitions at ARTSPACE, Auckland; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland; Adam Art Gallery, Wellington; Neuer Kunstverein Wien, Vienna; Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; MOCA, Belgrade, amongst many others. His work has been included in group exhibitions such as

the 10th Istanbul Biennale; 9th Lyon Biennale; 1st Auckland Triennial; *Envisioning Buildings*, MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna; *Was is Kunst?*, KM- Künstlerhaus, Graz; *HideTide – New Currents in Art from New Zealand and Australia*, Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius and Zacheta – Museum of Art, Warsaw etc. Currently, he is a PhD Candidate in Art Theory and Cultural Studies (Prof. Dierich Diederichsen) at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Mladen Bizumic is represented by Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna and Frank Elbaz, Paris.

Peter Brunt is Senior Lecturer in Art History at Victoria University of Wellington. He is co-editor of two recent books, *Art in Oceania: A New History* (Thames & Hudson and Yale University Press, 2012) and *Tatau: Photographs by Mark Adams: Samoan Tattoo, New Zealand Art, Global Culture* (Te Papa Press 2010). Other publications include "History and Imagination in the Art of John Pule," in *Hauaqa: The Art of John Pule* ed. Nicholas Thomas (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2010) and a round table on the concept of "Oceania" in *Reading Room* no. 4, 2010.

Ruth Buchanan (Te Ati Awa/Taranaki) is a New Zealand artist currently living in Berlin. Using methods and media such as sculpture, photography, text, video, performance, sound and graphics, Buchanan constructs both literary and built spaces that investigate the parameters of artistic action. Recent exhibitions include: *On or within a scenario*, Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland (2013), *Version Control*, Arnolfini, Bristol (2013), *Put a curve, an arch, right through it*, Krome Gallery, Berlin (2012), *A wavy line is drawn across the middle of the original plans*, Koelschiner Kunstverein, Cologne (2012), *Eigenwillige Zeichensetzung*, Grazer Kunstverein, Graz (2011). Buchanan regularly initiates and contributes to print based projects.

Jon Bywater writes about art and music, and teaches at Elam School of Fine Arts, The University

of Auckland. At the time of the Roundtable he was based in Brussels, Belgium, working on questions of globalism and globalisation in contemporary art. On the significance of place from a post-colonial perspective, excerpts from his essay "Interrupting Perpetual Flight" are included in the anthology *Situation* (Whitechapel & MIT Press, 2009).

Lee Weng Choy is an art critic. He has lectured on art and cultural studies, and was artistic co-director of The Substation arts centre in Singapore from 2000 to 2009. Lee is currently president of the Singapore Section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA Sg), and also serves on the academic advisory board of the Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong.

Joselina Cruz is a curator and writer. She is currently the Director and Curator for the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) Manila, Philippines. She previously worked as curator for Singapore Art Museum, The Lopez Museum in Manila and was one of the curators for the Singapore Biennale 2008. She was an Asian Public Intellectual in 2010, and later published her text *SEA Art: Narratives of a Region*. She continues to write texts for various publications.

Phil Dadson is a sound and intermedia artist with a transdisciplinary practice including video and sound installations, sound performance, building experimental musical instruments, sound sculpture, musical composition, free improvisation, drawings and sound stories. He is the founder of the legendary music-performance group From Scratch (1974–2004), internationally known for its rhythmic and distinctive performances on original instruments. Phil Dadson is represented by Starkwhite, Auckland and associated with Bowen Gallery, Wellington.

Charlotte Huddleston is the director of St Paul St Gallery, AUT University. In 2006 while working at

the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery she curated Mostly Harmless: A Performance Series, which included the Performance News by Jim Allen.

Tom Irwin is the Assistant Librarian at the E H McCormick Research Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. His professional interests include artists' books, collection development and the acquisition and description of ephemera and other guerrilla art resources.

Sophie McIntyre is a curator, lecturer and art writer. She completed a PhD at the Australian National University focusing on Taiwan art and has published widely on this field. Sophie is currently curating an exhibition from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and she is lecturing at the University of Sydney as well as at the Australian National University where she is also a Visiting Research Fellow. She has worked as a museum director and curator in art museums in Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan and she has curated several exhibitions that have toured nationally and internationally. These include *Penumbra: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* (2008); *Islanded: Contemporary Art from New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan* (co-curated with Lee Weng Choy and Eugene Tan, 2005); *Concrete Horizons: Contemporary Art from China* (2004); and *Face to Face: Contemporary Art from Taiwan* (1999–2000).

Viviana Mejia is a writer and curator and gallery manager of Future Perfect, which is based in Singapore's new art gallery precinct, Gillman Barracks. Originally from Colombia, Viviana came to Southeast Asia to pursue an MA in Contemporary Art from the Sotheby's Institute of Art, Singapore. Her dissertation, *Tropicality: A Narrative of an Uncanny Territory*, argued that the notion of the tropical has, historically, entailed a projection of desire and myth, whereas tropicality can offer a self-aware critique of everything that the tropical supposedly lacks.

Anna Parlane is a writer and curator based in Melbourne. She is currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Melbourne.

J. G. A. Pocock is the Harry C. Black emeritus professor at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore and was professor of history there from 1974–1994. His early career was spent in New Zealand teaching at Canterbury University College, the University of Otago and the University of Canterbury before moving to the United States as professor of history and political science at Washington University in St Louis (1966–74). His published writings include *The Discovery of Islands: Essays in British History* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and he is currently preparing Volumes V and VI of *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 1999–).

Eric Riddler is Image Librarian and Researcher at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. He has worked on a number of projects documenting art and exhibitions in Australia and New Zealand in the twentieth century. This article is based on a paper delivered at *Contact*, the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, Victoria University of Wellington, December 2011.

Joyce Toh is a Senior Curator at the Singapore Art Museum and she oversees its Philippines collection and Publications portfolio. She holds a Masters in Aesthetics (Philosophy of Art) from University of York and a BA in Art History from Syracuse University. Her past exhibitions include *Thrice Upon A Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines* and *is it tomorrow yet? Highlights from the Daimler Art Collection*.

Nina Tonga is a doctoral student and a professional teaching fellow in Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. Her research areas include contemporary and traditional Pacific art and recently, internet art and digital avatars. Nina is also the coordinator of the University of Auckland Pacific Heritage Artist in Residence Programme.

André Vida is a Berlin-based composer and saxophonist who has performed widely as a soloist and has collaborated with a diverse group of artists including Anthony Braxton, Kevin Blechdom, Tim Exile, Yona Friedman, Jean-Baptiste Decavele, and Jamie Lidell. Most recently he has worked closely with Anri Sala on multi-media installations at the Serpentine Gallery in London, the Roman Ampitheatre in Arles (produced by the LUMA foundation), the Museum of Modern Art in Louisiana, Denmark, and the 5th Auckland Triennial in Auckland, New Zealand.

Reading Room is a journal of art and culture
published annually by the E H McCormick Research
Library at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

ELECTIVE PROXIMITIES
ISSUE/06.13

Contributors Jim Allen, Michelle Antoinette,
Christina Barton, Mladen Bizumic, Peter Brunt,
Ruth Buchanan, Jon Bywater, Lee Weng Choy,
Joselina Cruz, Phil Dadson, Charlotte Huddleston,
Tom Irwin, Sophie McIntyre, Viviana Mejía,
Anna Parlane, J.G.A Pocock, Eric Riddler, Joyce Toh,
Nina Tonga, and André Vida.

**AUCKLAND
ART GALLERY
TOI OTAMAKI**

THE MARYLYN MAYO FOUNDATION



9 771177 254008 >