

BRIGHT
Paradise





BRIGHT
PARADISE

THE 1st AUCKLAND TRIENNIAL

ASHLEY BICKERTON
MLADEN BIZUMIC
ADAM CHODZKO
GREGORY CREWDSON
LISA CROWLEY
BILL CULBERT
TONY DE LAUTOUR
STAN DOUGLAS
BILL HAMMOND
KENDAL HEYES
GAVIN HIPKINS
RONI HORN
DAVID KORTY
JUSTINE KURLAND
SASKIA LEEK
JOHN LYALL
IAN MACDONALD
JAMES MORRISON
PAUL MORRISON
MARIELE NEUDECKER
ANI O'NEILL
SABINA OTT
MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI
SÉRAPHINE PICK
PATRICK POUND
HARU SAMESHIMA
ANN SHELTON
MICHAEL SHEPHERD
PAUL SIETSEMA
RONNIE VAN HOUT
RUTH WATSON
BRENDON WILKINSON

**BRIGHT
ParADISE**
EXOTIC HISTORY AND SUBLIME ARTIFICE

ALLAN SMITH
EXHIBITION CURATOR

THE 1st AUCKLAND TRIENNIAL
March — April 2001

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
WITH ARTSPACE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Published by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. PO Box 5449, Auckland 1, New Zealand. Copyright © 2001 Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Allan Smith, the artists and authors. ISBN 0-86463-241-X. This book is copyright. Except for reasonable purposes of fair review, no part may be stored or transmitted in any form or 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 by any other means, unless a licence has been obtained from the publishers or their agent. Editors: Allan Smith and Robert Leonard. Design: Inhouse Design Group. Printed in Auckland by Pan Print. Photography: Auckland Art Gallery, Jennifer French p49, 60, 61, 64, 73, 75, 100, 112, 113, 114, 115; Michael Roth p14, 53, 79; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Bryan James p57. Museum reference numbers p40 B.38508, p47 BHC1906, p89 BHC2370. All dimensions given in millimetres, height before width before depth. Published on the occasion of The 1st Auckland Triennial *Bright Paradise: Exotic History and Sublime Artifice* 2001 at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki; Artspace and The University of Auckland Art Gallery, 3 March – 29 April 2001. Front cover: Ashley Bickerton *The Five Sages* 1998 (detail); back cover: Ani O'Neill *The Buddy System* 2001 (detail).

Bright Paradise

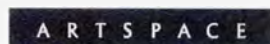
CONTENTS

1	Foreword: Paradise Then and Now <i>CHRIS SAINES</i>
11	The Paradise Conspiracy <i>ALLAN SMITH</i>
25	Infectious Rhythms <i>NIGEL CLARK</i>
33	Big White Males (Tearing Down The House) <i>LEIGH DAVIS</i>
43	Life Ho! <i>IAN WEDDE</i>
49	The Exhibition
83	Iceblink <i>PETER BRUNT</i>
89	Blue-Lip'd Cannibal Ladies <i>TOM RYAN</i>
97	Landscape in David Korty, Paul Sietsema, Vincent Ward <i>GIOVANNI INTRA</i>
101	Fantasy Islands: Hollywood's Samoa <i>CAROLINE VERCOE</i>
107	Odyssey in the Supermarket <i>GREGORY BURKE</i>
111	Piano Recital <i>ANNIE GOLDSON</i>
117	The Wrong Sea <i>JANE SAYLE</i>
121	List of Works and Artists' Biographies

CURATOR'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Curating *Bright Paradise* has been an aesthetic and intellectual adventure. My first thanks go to the artists for their generosity and the rich content of their work. The parallel investigations of the catalogue writers have also opened up valuable perspectives on paradise. Sincere thanks and appreciation are due to Gallery staff with whom I worked closely on the project: Chris Saines, Louise Pether, Ngahiraka Mason, Roger Taberner, Penny Hacking, Fiona Wilson, Jennifer French, Paul Kowalski, Catherine Hammond, and Claudine Björklund. Thanks also to Sarah Hillary, Ute Strehle, John McIver, Jane Browne, Amanda Springett, Geoff Penrose, Richard Wormley, Xanthé Jujnovich, Kate Woods, Kate Gallagher, Libby Brookbanks, Michelle Menzies, Kesa Mahina, Natasha Keating, Adam Woods, Katrina Fletcher and Caroline McBride. The shipping of offshore work was meticulously overseen by Corneel Verlaan of

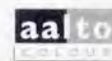
Seifert Verlaan Inc. Numerous gallerists here and abroad were exceptionally helpful including: Ivan Anthony; Gary Langsford and Melanie Roger; Hamish McKay; Darren Knight; Sue Crockford and Isha Welsh; Anna Bibby; Peter McLeavey; Natalia Mager; Rodney Hill; Barbara Thumm and Astrid Mania; Matthew Rowe; Giovanni Intra; Lisa Overduin; Jason Ysenberg and Laura Bloom; Angela Choon; Bridget Alsdorf and Jodi Myers; Deidre Kelly. Many individuals generously supported curatorial research, travel and exhibition development: Sandra Honey; Maggie Smith and Peter Clarke; Susannah Andrew and Nigel Cox; Helen Klisser-During; Jenny Todd; Jenny Bornholdt; Dorita Hannah; Max Gimblett and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett; Kelly Carmichael; Louise Garrett; Michael Roth. Arch, Jane, Alan and Emma at Inhouse Design were a pleasure to work with. Robert Leonard's creative and critical support was invaluable. – Allan Smith



THE 1ST AUCKLAND TRIENNIAL could not have been realised without the assistance and cooperation of:



JENNY GIBBS
ROBIN & ERICA CONGREVE
TREVOR & JOHN FARMER



Paradise Then and Now

FOREWORD

*Here I am in paradise,
paradise, paradise...*

*When you sing it makes me cry
For at last I've found paradise...*

–Emma Paki "Paradise"

IN INITIATING THE Auckland Triennial the Gallery plans a series of exhibitions that will give an international context to contemporary New Zealand art at home. The first instalment, *Bright Paradise: Exotic History and Sublime Artifice*, takes as its theme that journey we sometimes make to extraordinary places, to dream-worlds, to utopias found, lost and found again. Paradise has been invoked for millennia to affirm a pantheon of religious and secular belief systems. It is a place to which we can all take spiritual, earthly or imaginative flight. Our idea of paradise today owes much to artists of the past, artists as diverse as Fra Angelico in the early 15th century and Paul Gauguin in the 19th. If Fra Angelico transports us to a celestial beyond, Gauguin's sensual utopian vision reminds us that paradise can be found – and lost – here on earth.

Fra Angelico's *Last Judgement* of 1431 richly illustrates biblical paradise as it was understood in the Renaissance, contrasting the brilliant destiny of the Saved with the miserable descent of the Fallen. Paradise begins at the edge of a great medieval city, the gates of which open to flood new arrivals in a torrent of golden light. Fra Angelico's vision of a heavenly paradise is a convergence of culture and nature at their most civil and splendid; a place given over as equally to dance as to reverence – an ideal site from which to bear safe witness to our terrible day of reckoning.

The South Seas paradise to which Gauguin adventured was another thing entirely: a distant Tahiti beckoned to the highly urbanised Parisian. In his 1897 magnum opus *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, Gauguin presents a cosmos filled with things that, in his own words, "grow nowhere on earth and are only to be found in Paradise... Fragrant flowers grow

up from all sides, children play in the garden, girls pick fruit..." In such pantheistic images Gauguin searched for an atmosphere solemn as a religious ceremony, melancholy, and cheerful as children. His influence on the contemporary topos of paradise cannot be overestimated.

Gauguin's "miserable adventure", as he later called his trip to Tahiti, left its trace in subsequent reveries, the South Seas increasingly coming to symbolise paradise itself. You can hear that longing in the melancholy lyrics of Emma Paki's song "Paradise", written a century after Gauguin and more than five after Fra Angelico. Not without irony, Kerry Brown's video clip for "Paradise" locates Paki's thoughts among the scented frangipani and the gently cresting waves of a contemporary Pacific utopia – part old world Eden and part new world Blue Lagoon. But her paradise is distinct from both Fra Angelico's celestial vision and Gauguin's sensual one. Neither sacred nor exactly secular, Paki's paradise is found deep within the human spirit. Her song is a personal revelation about exquisite pain and beauty found in love.

Today's paradoxical and conflicted visions of paradise are connected with historical antecedents. The varieties of the paradise story, past and present – in New Zealand, in its Maori and European cultures; in the Northwest Pacific; in Polynesia; in Northern Europe; and on the American open road – are everywhere apparent in *Bright Paradise*. Taking paradise to be a relative condition, the artists in this exhibition rely on the past as a means to filter and project multiple new propositions.

THE WORKING THESIS of this project is that here in New Zealand we are ideally situated to speculate on what the curator Allan

Smith has called "the paradise conspiracy". Our rich historical imagination, he argues, is stocked with vivid and troubling images of exchange between Europeans and Oceanic peoples, as different visions of paradise have played themselves out in the region. Our journey to paradise now, whether through art, tourism, love or social planning must find its way in a world divided; a world caught between the desire for new discoveries, information and experiences on the one hand, and salient memories of corrupt histories and decimated oceanic and garden paradises on the other.

While focussing on New Zealand art, a key premise of the ongoing Triennial project will be inviting international artists to participate, chosen for the powerful way in which their work echoes and focusses imperatives and compulsions within the New Zealand art scene. Their work will look different here, and will in turn liberate unexpected meanings in the work of our own artists. Rather than attempt a panoramic view of current practice, each Triennial will address a specific theme. *Bright Paradise* sets the stage for a continuing dialogue between the visual arts of New Zealand and the wider world.

IN THANKING THOSE who helped us realise this ambitious project, I turn first to our exhibition partners. *Bright Paradise* is a three-venue exhibition, in conjunction with Artspace and the University of Auckland, through its new gallery in the Kenneth Myers Centre. The project includes this publication, a symposium developed with the assistance of the University's Centre for Continuing Education, a website, and a public programme.

At the University we must thank Vice Chancellor John Hood, Dean of Arts Doug Sutton, and acting gallery director Robin Stoney,

and acknowledge pivotal contributions from Carole Sheppard at Elam School of Fine Arts and Peter Shand and Elizabeth Rankin in Art History. Our relationship with the University has helped lay an outstanding foundation for the future of the Triennial. Similarly, Robert Leonard, Artspace director, with generous support from the Artspace Board, has worked tirelessly to assist the project in numerous ways, not least in co-editing this publication. Together, the University of Auckland and Artspace have helped to give a genuinely Auckland scope to *Bright Paradise*.

With essays by eleven New Zealand writers, including expatriates Nigel Clark and Giovanni Intra, this publication creates an expansive field of critical and historical discussion around *Bright Paradise*. The writers explore such topics as voyages of exploration and discovery, Hollywood and the Pacific idyll, the sublime technicolour landscape of Los Angeles, and the way contemporary art both celebrates and questions the utopian vision. I join the co-editors Allan Smith and Robert Leonard in thanking our writers for their always insightful and provocative contributions.

As we work to explore and affirm our identity in a rich international context, our links with key cultural agencies such as Creative New Zealand, The British Council and Germany's Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen have been critical to the project's gaining developmental traction. Their encouragement and enthusiasm – best found in Elizabeth Caldwell, Paul Smith and Barbara Procter, Dr Ursula Zeller and Dr Gerrit Bretzler, respectively – have helped facilitate curatorial travel, the shipment of works, and visits by artists that would otherwise have been beyond our reach. We have always looked to the Chartwell Trust, and its founder Rob Gardiner,

when seeking to extend our contemporary art project. Chartwell is at the forefront of this enterprise as it has been with so many others. The Trust has a long-term, deeply held commitment to the role of contemporary art within contemporary life and culture. We hope *Bright Paradise* will help it to extend the impact of its aims.

Securing the support of a new contemporary trust proved a turning point in our decision to commit to the Triennial. In 2000 the Gallery became the beneficiary of the Sue Fisher Art Trust, whose purpose is to enhance public understanding of and access to contemporary art. The Trust has ensured on-going viability of the Triennial. Our debt to it, and to Sue Fisher especially, is great indeed.

No less instrumental were the Gallery's Patrons' Group, once again steadfast and generous in their support of contemporary art. I wish to particularly thank their Chair Jenny Gibbs, and members Erica and Robin Congreve and Trevor and Jan Farmer for embracing the idea and aspirations of the Triennial from the outset. The project has been greatly enriched and encouraged by their support.

I want to also acknowledge our sustaining sponsors, Aalto Colours and CityLife Hotels. Led by Prue Cook and Ronnie Ronalde, Aalto continue to lend the kind of support that is utterly impossible to do without.

It is to the Auckland Art Gallery project team to whom I turn finally. Allan Smith, Curator of Contemporary Art, has led this multi-dimensional project with unfailing acumen, tenacity and good will. But while none has worked more assiduously in support of its vision, many have played pivotal roles. Louise Pether, Manager of

Art and Access, steered the project's complex planning and development, just as Kaitiaki Maori Ngahiraka Mason, Curator of Education Roger Taberner, and Registrar Penny Hacking, have contributed significantly to its website production, symposium and logistics. My thanks go to the entire Gallery team and to those beyond it whose efforts have helped to begin this journey.

Chris Saines
Director
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki



The Paradise Conspiracy

ALLAN SMITH

10
11

AMAZON.COM LISTS 2,339 books with "paradise" in their titles. These books range from bodice-rippers to botanical studies of the South American rainforest; from tales of political corruption, tax dodgers and drug syndicates betraying island innocence, to scholarly readings of Pacific history and failed social experiments. New Zealand is a good place from which to speculate on notions of paradise and the allure of utopian ideals. The historical imagination in New Zealand is illuminated by dreams of long white clouds and natural bounty, by memories of Pacific plenty, South Seas arcadias and promised lands of antipodean splendour. Geographically set in the South Pacific, but imaginatively split between visions of local and global culture, New Zealand has distinctive perspectives on the pleasures and ironies conjured up by the prospects of paradise now.

Within a general matrix of loss and longing *Bright Paradise* looks for utopian content in dreamscapes of modern history; in narratives of exploration, discovery, travel, collecting and leisure. It follows the trails of the beautiful, the sublime and the uncanny through real and fictitious landscape settings. *Bright Paradise* embraces Pacific sunsets, Disneyesque scenography, the shaggy damp of New Zealand bush, silky rivers and ragged coastlines, rotting whales on the beach and scenarios of shipwreck and cannibalism. It discovers Paradise backing away and frozen in time, like stone figures in a fun park.

Paradise is multiple but often in trouble.

VENTURING FORTH

The earth here always has its summer only in distant lands, the best fruits are cooked up there. The nautical yarn paves the fantastic way to them and is itself the most fantastic of all

fairytale; an enormous fairground booth, with nothing but the South Seas inside.

— Ernst Bloch *The Principle of Hope* (1)

"THE SAIL", SAYS Ernst Bloch, "releases us from the mainland and makes the high seas navigable." (2) The sails and sailing ships in the work of Kendal Heyes, Gavin Hipkins, Mariele Neudecker and Haru Sameshima acknowledge the place of the sea journey in the foundational narratives of Pacific and European culture. They also operate as signs of imaginative travel and release from the known.

Early in his major opus on hope, Bloch declares: "Thinking means venturing beyond." (3) Thinking driven by hope, that is. Utopia's attraction is revealed in anticipatory dreaming, attitudes of questioning wonder and astonishment. Hope's true energy and significance is at work in the process of sketching out, in imaginative projection. Hope is stirred up by embarkation, travel and arrival, more so than permanent occupation. New Zealand history provides evidence enough that utopia as legislated ideal, as imposed concept, is more likely to crush paradise. Hope is productive energy, not finished product. As Louis Marin explains, utopia is not a concept but a possibility: "wrapped in fiction and fable-making... the utopic figure... floats, variegated, on the ether of the imaginary with phosphorescent, multiple impressions." (4)

In a subsection of *Hope*, "Eldorado and Eden, The Geographical Utopias", Bloch sifts through a medley of mythic quests and travel romances, tall tales and true about voyages of exploration and discovery. He tracks the search for paradise and utopian isles through the Argonaut's hunt for the "brilliant glow" of the Golden Fleece and the Christian Grail's archaic origins in Indian and Germanic myths of the sun's magic cauldron. Bloch describes



The Sea of Ice MARIELE NEUDECKER 1997

Columbus's conviction that he had discovered the islands of the Hesperides, that the lost garden of Eden awaited him near the Orinoco delta; and how he "hallucinated the song of the nightingales in the forests of Haiti."⁽⁹⁾ The Golden Fleece, the golden Grail, the golden apples of the Hesperides, Hoffman's golden pot in Atlantis, the "golden America" of 18th century alchemists – gold and paradise repeatedly form a fantastic amalgam of desire and promise. Ruth Watson evokes this seductive amalgam in her *A Map of Paradise (English Version)* (2001), with its gold fabric and perforated shell disks.

In history even more than fable mystical obsessions and craving for the far-off exotic were often fatefully wedded to the pursuit of pecuniary gain and national commercial enterprise. As Bloch says: "Both the legendary dream-journeys and those that were actually carried out used [gold and paradise] as a navigational guide, in the hope of loot and marvels all at once."⁽¹⁰⁾ The curious conspiracy of money and marvels, gold and God, cinnamon and souls frequently operated at the expense of those already inhabiting the designated paradisaical shores. Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English accounts of trade and exploration during the 16th and 17th centuries in particular provide abundant examples of this colourful and violent history.

The eerie polar stillness of Mariele Neudecker's *The Sea of Ice* (1997) would seem to have little to do with the hot chromatics of gold and the paradisaical tropics. There is, in fact, a very significant connection. Neudecker's work is based on Caspar David Friederich's 1822 painting *The Wreck of the Hope*, sometimes called *The Sea of Ice*, in which a crushed ship has almost disappeared beneath a spectacular mountain of shattered ice. It is thought that

Friederich's painting was inspired by the much publicised British Arctic explorations in the first half of the 19th century. The cumulative industry of Arctic adventure at this time gained so much momentum that its coherency has been likened to "a plot".⁽¹¹⁾ One of the best accounts of these polar adventures, including sober descriptions of Arctic chill, and a "deathlike stillness of the most dreary desolation", was William Edward Parry's *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage* of 1821.

For Arctic explorers in the 19th century, locating a Northwest Passage had more to do with national prestige and the "intangible magic of an idea"⁽¹²⁾ than anything else. In previous centuries it was sought as a route to the Pacific Ocean; more direct, therefore more commercially useful, than going around the bottom of Africa or South America. The intrepid journey through the seas and mountains of ice was to enable a ship to burst into the warm waters of the Pacific ready for business. The first ships to be trapped and crushed in the Polar ice were the two commanded by Dutch mariner William Barents, on route to the Indonesian Spice Islands in 1596. The engravings of Barents' ship and crew wrecked on the ice were forerunners of a 19th century minor genre; those romantic sublime paintings of ice-bound ships marooned in a mysteriously beautiful, empty landscape.

As explorers such as Parry, Ross and Franklin were to discover, the polar world was one in which "the observer was always aware of light – or of its absence".⁽¹³⁾ At times, as in Dante's *Paradiso*, the radiance and reflected light of the place were so dazzlingly intense they could blind. The rare mauve and indigo tints in the ice, the nocturnal pyrotechnics of the aurora borealis, and the haunting sounds of cracking and shifting ice in the distance



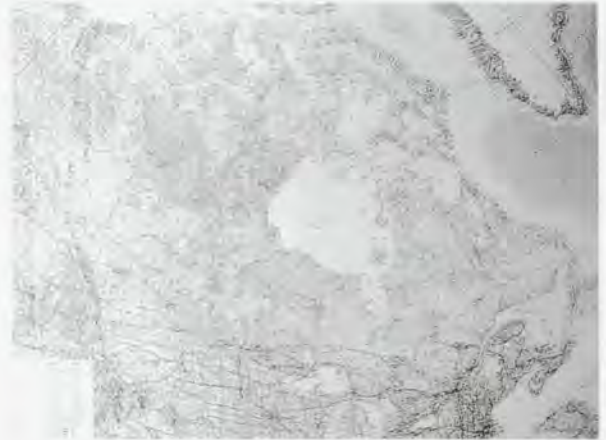
Interior (map) Auckland Institute and Museum
HARU SAMESHIMA 1990

prompted one observer to declare that “the Arctic world has a romance and an attraction about it, which are far more powerful over the minds of men than the rich glowing lands of the Tropics.”⁽¹⁰⁾

When Parry set out in the 1820s, several fantastic ideas about the North Pole were still current. For centuries there had been speculation that an open polar sea, a warm-water tropical paradise, existed beyond a rim of icebergs and glaciers at the top of the world. American John Cleves Symmes was convinced that if the right expedition could be adequately funded, a “newer New World”⁽¹¹⁾ would be discovered inside the earth and accessible at the Poles. “To All The World”, said Symmes in 1818, “I declare the earth is hollow, and habitable within; containing a number of solid concentric spheres, one within the other, and... open at the poles.”⁽¹²⁾

Some of Symmes contemporaries held that the verse in *Genesis* describing the earth as “without form and void” proved his theory. Others claimed in support the Mohawk legend of an ancestor who lived in the interior regions of the earth and followed a hole to the surface to discover deer and warm earth. Some of his tribe joined him in this new land where “they began a new life with the planting of corn and hunting.”⁽¹³⁾ Though hard to believe now, it was said at the time that Symmes’ lasting fame would eclipse that of Columbus.

Fables of far-off riches, the Grail of Arctic exploration, the myths of a polar paradise, the theory of a hollow earth – each of these provide an Archimedean point from which to gain imaginative purchase on the world. In all these fanciful schemes and epics of discovery what is crucial to us now is the value of their narrative capital, their “proliferation of imaginative life.”⁽¹⁴⁾ There is merit in these incredible projects which survives their inevitable



Freefall LISA CROWLEY 1999

failures. Like many contemporary artists Stan Douglas sees potential relevance in anachronistic and discredited utopias: “Both in terms of presentation and the subject matter of my work, I have been preoccupied with failed utopias and obsolete technologies. To a large degree, my concern is not to redeem these past events but to reconsider them: to understand why these utopian moments did not fulfil themselves, what larger forces kept a local moment a minor moment: and what was valuable there – what might still be useful today.”⁽¹⁵⁾ Much of what is still useful today awaits extraction from forgotten, repressed and even distasteful historical material.

Bits of utopian possibility are found probing in the gut of darkest history, where paradise has been an alibi for hellish greed. Consider the huge gulf between Columbus’s genuine dreams of locating the true Eden and the eventual realities of Conquistador avarice. Bloch comments: “The fact that Eden then later only turned out to be Antilles, that no white gods but criminals like Cortez and Pizarro then penetrated into the continent beyond, that the earthly paradise as a whole is not a fact but a problem of *hope and a latency*: this does not rob the intention pursued by Columbus of its strength and dignity.”⁽¹⁶⁾ And in the brightest, most glaring space of the exclusive paradisaical holiday resort, here too the desire for a psychic, even spiritual regeneration exists as a hope-trace, not entirely seared by the goldcard culture of privilege.

By the end of the 18th century it was generally recognised that explorers such as Cook and Vancouver had not only advanced substantially the reliable geographical delineation of the world and the Pacific in particular, but they had also confirmed a new empirically based methodology of charting, mapping and surveying



Panorama **TONY DE LAUTOUR** 1999-2000

right: Beachcomber's Float Between King and Williamson Passages
from the Nootka Sound series **STAN DOUGLAS** 1996

the regions they visited. What such "dispassionate investigation of the truth" had taken pride in banishing from the equation were all "theoretical navigators", "hypothetical projectors", and all proponents of "vague and improbable stories".⁽¹⁷⁾ Cook's exploration of the Antarctic latitudes and his proof that the great southern continent was a fiction, heralded the virtual end of a world space divided between known and unknown, exotic and familiar. The differential scales of mythic and local truth were gradually relegated to the basement of history as the empiricism and uniformity of a global knowledge took centre stage. In the contemporary world, one creative function of the utopian scenario, the fantastic fable or the language of myth, is to open up ambiguous and unsettling spaces within an overly abstracted world; the seamless world of global networks and information technologies. The eruptions of incompatible time scales, irreconcilable geographies and troubling border conditions are chinks of possibility, cracks of difference in the uniform surface of the modern world.

Jules Verne's 1864 novel *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* appeals to Roni Horn because it affirms the value of the hypothetical projection, because Verne's improbable story depends on imaginative extrapolation from, rather than pedantic fidelity to, the known. In Symmesian fashion, Verne set the entrance to the interior of the Earth, if not at the North Pole exactly, then close by in Iceland. Horn, fascinated by Verne's poetic transfiguration of a spare landscape through writing, has titled a book of her photographs of the pitted and fissured surface of Iceland, *To Place: Verne's Journey* ⁽¹⁸⁾ The utopian value of Verne's novel lies in its superimposition of an impossible place over the terrain of the actual so the actual is never the same again; it is always more than itself.

WHAT SEAS WHAT SHORES WHAT GREY ROCKS AND WHAT ISLANDS ⁽¹⁹⁾

... he cherished that phantom of history... he still wanted to say that Mocha Dick was alive in whatever sense mattered and that without this belief we were tourists in a paradise that had turned malignant, cocksure bushwalkers with no snake serum because "there are no snakes".

- Ian Wedde *Symmes Hole* ⁽²⁰⁾

IAN WEDDE'S 1986 novel *Symmes Hole* is a bright paradise shot through with the muck and luminescence of Pacific history. A less respectable version of the multi-storeyed, Elizabethan picture of concentric heavenly spheres, or Dante's stratified cosmos in *The Divine Comedy*, *Symmes Hole* is an allegory in which access to the Earth's core suggests getting inside a Big Secret, or a swarming host of little secrets. The imaginatively appealing, but ludicrously impractical, vision of John Cleverly Symmes, gives Wedde leverage to parody the omnipresent operation of Ideology as hidden power, exercising control from the secret centre of the world. Peddlers of mythemes and saleable wish-modules; big-screen projections of life as it should be and PowerPoint presentations of Paradise Now... we never really know who or what we are up against, but we sense the scale of the game.

In Wedde's novel these powers merge in what he calls a "sustained daydream of Pacific history".⁽²¹⁾ The shifting grids of this history map a world in which the Enlightenment quest for savage innocence and sexual ease, imperial territorial mandates, Wakefield's New Zealand as a home-away-from-home, whaling as the world's first global industry, and American fast-food franchising and naval aspirations all converge on the South Pacific. Plugging into past and present grids of international power and



communication, Wedde draws wattage from the sublime scale of their planetary hubris. The conspiratorial glee and maniacal laughter which permeates his evocations of the Big Picture take energy from the movements of corporate capital and the rhetoric of sea-borne imperialism, but also disperse these energies in historical delirium and wanton narrative surges.

Symmes Hole's picaresque cast of characters and its stories of grandiose power plays are set afloat in aquatic tumult. Historical interpretations, conversations, paranoid soliloquies and all the novel's intricate physical detailing are left to drift or drown in oceanic dispersion. It is the all-pervasive descriptions of the sea, its depths, surfaces and fringes, which give the novel its primary textures: oily meshes and greasy foam sliding over humps of swell and chop, the sweet broth of seashore, cooked shellfish and sexualised swimming bodies, the secret life of tides and whales, cloud-wrack and trade winds, the labyrinths of coral reefs, the ever-changing light. Ashley Bickerton, whose work also has an exhilarated complicity with the culturescapes he vilifies, once said he fantasised the "idea of pieces that float in the ocean, and are blown across the ocean, specific markings or pieces that are dropped out of airplanes and land in the rainforests with parachutes attached, or pieces that glide, land there and hang in the trees or just rot. Or you let them go in a jet stream and they end up on some rocky shore in Antarctica." (22)

Images of water play a key role in *Bright Paradise*. Thirteen of Haru Sameshima's photographs are, directly or indirectly, about water; their subjects include a replica of James Cook's *Endeavour*, a dugout canoe, fish, whales and ice. Such is the cumulative effect of the blur of rapids, the iridescent flick of trout, and the marbled spume of churning wake, that Sameshima's panorama of images

gets carried along by the luminosity of moving water. It posits New Zealand history as aqueous flow and tidal traffic. Lisa Crowley matches large photographs of foaming river turbulence to oversized maps, promoting perceptual instability and disorientation as cartographic data starts to move in flows and eddies, and river currents mimic mappable terrain. The almost engulfing glare from the water in her 1999 *Freefall* series reminds the artist of the scene from David Lean's *Dr Zhivago* when the brilliant white of a sheet of ice, completely encasing a train's doorway, momentarily fills the screen and dazzles the viewer. To similar effect the seven photolithographs of Roni Horn's *Pooling-You* (1995-7) draw the viewer into a complex foam of fraying ledges, twists, folds and frills of churning water. This fizzing chaos becomes an infinity of particles in the colour-haze of the final images. A sense of falling and drowning is induced as all spatial coordinates are turned to grainy vapour. When exhibited individually, the first image from this series is appropriately captioned *Untitled (A Brink of Infinity)*.

Paul Virilio writes: "The first marketplace was the beach." (23) Another chapter in our waking dream of Pacific history takes place near the beach in what James Cook named Nootka Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Cook's arrival, in March 1778, may have occasioned the first contact between Europeans and Nootka's aboriginal inhabitants, the Yuquot Indians. While the Spanish would later claim priority of encounter, Cook's ships the *Resolution* and the *Endeavour* were certainly the first to engage in sustained trade with the local people. Stan Douglas's 1996 video project *Nu*tk*a* was preceded by photographic investigation, which resulted in a series of 30 images of the islands, tidal inlets, rocky wooded foreshores and mountains of the Sound. These images, of a location still accessible only by air or sea, have



Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique **JEAN-GABRIEL CHARVET** and **JOSEPH DUFOUR** 1804-5
Collection National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

a brooding atmosphere. At first triggering touristic pleasure in the recognition of an unspoiled wilderness, their true content is more troubled.

The shots of Gold River Mill and Tahsis Mill acknowledge recent and sustained disputes over planned clear-felling of the Sound's virgin rainforest. Forestry roads and cuttings scar the dark green hillsides and smoke from industrial mills merges with low cloud. The dark, weedy cavern of an abandoned mine, and the half-buried timbers of abandoned sites hint at an uncomfortable settler past sleeping fitfully amidst its scattered remains. The conflict at the heart of Douglas's melancholic retelling of the Nootka story, is between the Spanish, the English, the Americans and the Yuquot as the Europeans press home their respective claims on the region and attempt to dominate the lucrative sea-otter trade.

When Yuquot canoes first greeted Cook's ships in the Sound, the Indians sprinkled feathers and red ochre on the waters around the boat as a sign of peaceful intentions. Twenty-five years later one of the local Yuquot chiefs led a massacre of the crew of an American ship, the *Boston*, in reprisal for what he regarded as years of European lies, theft, rape and murder. Functioning as part of what Douglas calls his "Canadian Gothic" project, with its uncanny return of the repressed, the rich red ochre of the exposed soil in his photograph *Collapsed Structure at McBride Bay* (1996) may now more readily signify "The stain of blood that writes an island story".⁽²⁴⁾

Michael Shepherd's trompe l'oeil paintings of island maps and profiles are impressed and inscribed with the colourful nomenclature of real and imagined bureaucracies. The tragi-comic gap between grand ideals and regional political history is signified

by the name of one of Shepherd's invented islands. "Motu Paradiso" is a conjunction, he says, of Dante and a local icecream. Shepherd's miniaturised Pacific fantasies unravel like a Dufour panorama, printed voyages to insubstantial horizons.⁽²⁵⁾ Swift's *Robinson Crusoe*, Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr Moreau* and Melville's "Enchanted Isles" are conjured up, only to be matched with allusions to equally incredible stories of black-birding, asset stripping and tax evasion; equally picaresque histories of self-appointed potentates, colonial protectors and plenipotentiaries. The real story of Niue is weirdly telescoped in Shepherd's *Savage Island* (1996). Niue, named "Savage Island" by Cook, was annexed by Lord Ranfurly in 1900; planting a flag, he declared the island a British Possession under New Zealand control. The stamps in this Shepherd painting include the moniker of Savage Island's residing governor – the "resident"; an obliterated New Zealand "long fiscal" tax stamp; and endorsement of the London Missionary Society and the British Admiralty.

S raphine Pick's paintings are the populous dreams of an hallucinating littoral imagination. They are vivid confusions, fringing reefs and archipelagoes of the troubled New Zealand psyche. In *Summer Wind* (2000) exotic flowers sprouting society-page heads, a Blessed Virgin on her grassy pinnacle, a tiny sinking Atlantis, floating eyes, ghosts of juvenile surfers, beach babes, the Bay of Islands Bodhisattva and snarling faces all mill and hover in bights and coastal harbours like Nereus's 50 Nerieds, sea-going nymphs and naiads and all other denizens of the deep which filled oceanic charts before Enlightenment mapmakers drew the coastal contour as the line which divided reason from chaos, the line which staved off "the shipwreck of reason".



Tracking the Plenipotentiary's Footsteps Through the Colourful Islands
MICHAEL SHEPHERD 1996

SHIPWRECK

... all the way from Paradise to Tartarus; while mixed with the relics of distant beauty you will sometimes see fragments of charred wood and mouldering ribs of wrecks.

- Herman Melville "The Encantadas" (26)

GETTING TO PARADISE or utopia entails crossing a limit. This is why travel narratives and fabulous journeys are central to utopian texts; they enact a transition from somewhere to the no-place. Such journeys require some type of shipwreck: a productive rupture in the familiar fabric of social space, a traumatic interruption in time. The storm-tossed, shipwrecked traveller is dazed and confused, therefore susceptible to strange new content. Kendal Heyes' nine pseudo film-stills *From a Shipwreck* (1985) construct a stagey melodrama of the maritime romantic sublime. They summon up the classic 18th or 19th century shipwreck theatre of wind-slapped canvas, drunkenness, tragedy on storm-tossed decks and cryptic messages from sailors lost at sea. In the shipwreck scenario, says O.H.K. Spate, "Tempest and wreck are 'a whirl, not just in the practical but in the psychological sense... a temporary death followed by the rebirth to a new life', with purification by being washed ashore".⁽²⁷⁾ Through this catastrophe, "which is the sublime way to open a neutral space, one which is absolutely different",⁽²⁸⁾ time and geographic space are scrambled; displacement preceding utopic play.

Louis Marin calls the carpark at Disneyland a shipwreck, analogous to a loss of consciousness. When visitors leave their cars, "they abandon what brought them to this suburb of Los

Angeles" and enter the dystopic arena of the theme-park.⁽²⁹⁾ The vestibule space which leads to the cell of Patrick Pound's fictitious collector in his work *Scrapbook Arcade* (1999-2001) functions as a structural shipwreck, implying a transition in imaginative space. Similarly, in John Lyall's photographs of a museum during refurbishment, demolition releases an unruly profusion of birds, animals and display technologies in new combinations. Crowley's and Horn's turbulent waters assume another kind of narcoleptic break in consciousness and an inundation by light. Images of curtained entrances in both Hipkins' and Sameshima's photographs gently nudge us across thresholds.

In Justine Kurland's photographs of young girls in contrived arcadian tableaux, various threshold devices mark a ritualised entry into the bondings and adventures of post-adolescence; often these devices mimic conventions of 19th century academic history and landscape painting. Kurland's liminal moments include: exploring the border of a road; sleeping in a group at twilight; entering the darkened world of the river by raft; climbing over a fence into private property; and a blood-bonding ritual. Saskia Leek's decorated caravan is also a container for transport by reverie, birdsong and pictorial vista. It figures the suspended temporality of "time-out" – childhood memories of holiday and vacation by sea or lakeside.

A centuries-old language of spatial and temporal displacement is affirmed in Ruth Watson's *A Map of Paradise (English Version)*. In his essay "Mapping Eden: Cartographies of the Earthly Paradise", Alessandro Scafi discusses the productive incompatibilities which emerge as empirical geography meets mythic cosmography.⁽³⁰⁾ While modern cartography insists on homogeneity of spatial and



From *a Shipwreck 2* KENDAL HEYES 1985

temporal coordinates, the medieval *mappa mundi* described a heterodox geography which made room for Eternity. Medieval mapmakers depicted paradise as an earthly garden, in the world but not of it. At key points an exotic paradise imago was superimposed on the mundane world, implying a permeability of boundaries and a sophisticated idea of location. Through its title, Watson's *Map* also calls up the great terra incognita of the Southern Ocean and the continuing primacy of the tropical Pacific as the location for the condition of Edenic innocence lost to Old World Europe. As O.H.K. Spate has explained, "from Francis Bacon onwards the Pacific has ever been the home of Utopias, and dreams of Terra Australis Incognita seduced alike philosophes and hard-headed propagandists of mercantilist empires."⁽³¹⁾

James Morrison's *Shipwrecked* (2000) and *Revolutionary United Front, Long March* (2000) both seem like contemporary legatees to the tradition of Austral utopias. In a bright and shaggy landscape, *Shipwrecked* presents a new hermaphroditic Adam, and an Eve who has arrived by spaceship. Their children and pets suggest a bizarre rewiring of the evolutionary programme. Their hermaphroditism, the arrival via "shipwreck", the richness of the vegetation and the sense of "splendid isolation", echo elements of Gabriel de Foigny's classic 1676 work *La Terre Australe Connue*.⁽³²⁾ In *Long March* Morrison, who is a trained florist, has arranged a floral foreground of rank and garish abundance with Grevilleas, Billy Buttons, Warratahs, Trigger Orchids and Coxinea Banksias, and a yellow parrot. In the background, in an Albert Namatjira-styled desert landscape, a platoon of child soldiers in camouflage fatigues have just destroyed the Pine Gap American spy station.

FLOWERS, ARCADIAS AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

... and the light became so bright and so blindin'
in this layer of paradise
that the mind of man was bewildered.

— Ezra Pound "Canto 38" (33)

FLORAL ABUNDANCE IS a persistent trope in paradise fantasies. In the Middle Ages, the Garden of Eden was "seen as the archetype of a magic garden, which inexorably spreads a fragrance and radiance across its boundaries."⁽³⁴⁾ When Joseph Banks came to the Pacific with Cook to collect and classify flora and fauna, he believed that "the South Seas was a kind of floral El Dorado".⁽³⁵⁾ It became common in the Enlightenment to perceive the botanical garden as a *hortus conclusus* concentrating the floral and vegetal plenitude of the exotic New World. It was a way of bringing paradise home when home was becoming over-urbanised, over-industrialised and overcrowded.

Because Eden was where Adam gave names to all the plants in the dawn freshness of a young world, Carl Linnaeus, Swedish natural historian and scientist of classification, referred to the Garden of Eden as "the first and noblest botanical garden."⁽³⁶⁾ Like the island, the garden is a special sort of container – it offers intimacy, natural profusion and intensity of organisation. Patrick Pound and John Lyall engage with and parody this Banksian and Linnaean heritage.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, Banksian collectors accumulated copious specimens of plants, seeds, animals, birds, insects, minerals and soil samples from China, Africa, the Pacific and the Americas. The Herculean labour of sorting and ordering



Shipwrecked JUSTINE KURLAND 2000

these specimens depended on the principles of “mobility”, “stability” and “combinability”.⁽³⁷⁾ These same principles syncopate the potentially endless chaos of printed and photographed specimens in Pound’s *Scrapbook Arcade*, caught by the “butterfly nets” of the camera, printing press and photocopier. Starting with the motif of the tree-house in *Swiss Family Robinson*, Pound gathers and collates images and texts on the theme of the world as a model accommodating them in the prelapsarian paradise of his collection.⁽³⁸⁾

Lyall’s project is driven by his endless delight in the construction of what he calls “diasporic paradises”.⁽³⁹⁾ The diasporic paradise flourishes as big grids of Linnaean-style Old World knowledge buckle, tear and reconfigure on the intractable terrain of the local. Lyall’s diasporic paradise is a feral and regenerative one, rich in unexpected possibilities which breed in the compost of big plans. In one of Lyall’s photographs from his series *The Naming of the Parts (The Auckland War Memorial Museum): a Natural History* (1987-2000), brightly coloured birds from different parts of the globe perch on green plastic mesh. Temporarily freed from their conventional habitats and taxonomies during renovation, the birds represent a kaleidoscopic reshuffling of the parts. This is an image of paradise, because in its chaotic juxtapositions Lyall finds generative abundance. Lyall revels in the brightness of heterogeneity, the confusing “glare”⁽⁴⁰⁾ of too many different things, which the Linnaean system was to protect against through taxonomic modulation into likeness.

Paradise is often excessive. A mound of carved and black-lacquered Arum lilies cascade to the floor from the lid of Michael Parekowhai’s grand piano. Paradoxically the lilies signify both



Stratum PAUL MORRISON 2000

melancholia and exuberance; an overflow of feeling toward the diva who has just left the stage. Parekowhai left school intending to become a professional florist; he talks with pleasure of how his mother now pursues floral art as a passionate hobby. The lacquered flowers on the piano and the big arrangements of artificial flowers in *The Consolation of Philosophy* (2001), Parekowhai’s recent series of photographs, are at home with their own artificiality; they take pleasure in their kitschy, craftsy falsehood and naturalise a synthetic exoticism through functioning as gifts and memorials.

Ani O’Neill’s grid of variegated crocheted flowers in multi-coloured wools generates a ripple effect, a spreading tessellation over a sky blue wall. The artist’s video instructions on crochet technique and her installation of lounge furniture retain links with the everyday world of home decoration; invited to make additional flowers, viewers may participate in a communal chromaticism which disperses ownership of the artwork through a multiplicity of small contributions. O’Neill’s work always emerges from her sense of being grounded in a Rarotongan/Cook Island heritage, and in all the “traditional” crafts of tivaevae, crochet, sewing, hat-making and weaving she has been taught since a child. Just as some of these skills testify to Pacific Island improvisation on European crafts, so O’Neill’s *The Buddy System* (2001) furthers a witty cultural fusion by asserting a hands-on populist pleasure principle over the formal closures of the modernist grid. In Sabina Ott’s installations and paintings the letter “E” stands for Eros, the supplementary cipher of bliss which turns a utopia into the pleasure garden of a eutopia. In the manic profusion of Ott’s garden of earthly delights, the painterly rhetoric of stripes, petals, buds and bouquets, cultivates



The Consolation of Philosophy **MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI** 2001

a rococo language of floriate hyperbole. Ott's decorative excess is an ever-renewed attempt to equate the matrix of ornamentation to the utopian longings of the dream-space; to trace out paradise through the alchemy of decorative inscription.

Ashley Bickerton's aesthetic vision is often read as a "botched paradise", a waking dream of exotic island scenarios phosphorescing in tropical decay. The heads which sprout flowers and rant obscenities in *The Five Sages* (1998) manifest a tropical strain of Tourette's Syndrome, a state of advanced psychic breakdown and delusional paranoia. Many of the titles the artist uses, such as *Self-Portrait: Desert Island Head*, *Suicide Shoals* and *Just Another Shitty Day in Paradise – Travelogue* read as place names or journal entries from a utopian tale of discovery gone sour. Bickerton's 1993 move from New York to Bali, from world capital of international art to perfectly groomed tourist paradise of palm-fringed lagoons, has more than confirmed the artist as a pseudo castaway, a shipwrecked buccaneer, or as Indonesia's latter-day Gauguin. This move has invested the theatre of Bickerton's personal biography with an exotic aura to match the extravagant scenography of his art.

Paradise and arcadia often go if not bad exactly, then decidedly weird. Take the work of Bill Hammond, Gregory Crewdson, Ronnie van Hout and Tony De Lautour. These artists all deal in landscape reveries which move between haunting beauty, maniacal humour and malevolent whimsy.⁽⁴²⁾ Tony De Lautour's "revisionist history" paintings are naive antique-shop landscapes occupied by his own fictional cast of characters. At the heart of their sylvan glades or on their ferny riverbanks, we often find a

map of New Zealand as an open grave. Cut deep into the soil, De Lautour's death maps of national history are surrounded by human bones, as though the whole country were still participants in psychic if not actual cannibalism. Gregory Crewdson's vivid diorama photographs of occult and sinister garden life amongst the birds, beetles and butterflies preserve the mixed thrill of fascination and fear which children feel on glimpsing, without warning, the violence of death, sex or disease in the adult world. Crewdson's images seem like an adult's obsessive restaging of such moments of ambivalent encounter. No matter how macabre the object he finds in his fictional neighbourhood – a scabrous leg, the arm of a floating corpse – Crewdson is "enthralled by bringing it to life as a beautiful hopeful image of transcendence".⁽⁴³⁾ He really wants access to "the treasure concealed in the dark and secret hoards".⁽⁴³⁾

It has been said that Ernst Bloch "holds up a light-meter to history to test its utopian content".⁽⁴⁴⁾ For hope, light is always allegorical; the full scope of its flaring up, fading and eclipse, registers private and social states of utopian consciousness. Like Dante's *Paradiso*, Bloch's world is stratified; shot through with signatures and traces of hope. Utopian expectations train us to be compulsive readers, re-readers and interpreters of a world which is always active deep within, coded and animated by transfiguring impulses. Ann Shelton's *Abigail's Party* (1999) photographs articulate a spent dream whose tarnished idealism gains new currency in its retelling. Carefully nuanced through a range of golds, faded oranges, ambers, creams, coffee browns and yellows, the candy sweetness of light in Shelton's retro-styled interiors is almost cloying. Shelton's embalming light and chromatics are tired – they match



Interior of Church at Yuquot; New Logging Road near Head Bay
from the Nootka Sound series **STAN DOUGLAS** 1996

20
21

the stains and abrasions on the furniture – yet their tonal syrup also preserves a remembered glitter and fosters a mood of anticipatory dreaming, a transfiguring “nostalgia for the future”.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In Adam Chodzko’s video projection piece *Nightvision* (1998), dark greenish specklings transport the viewer into the lugubrious space of dreams. The cross-grain of the dream is read for its faintly visible content. We watch lighting technicians, rendered ghostly through a night lens, rig lights and cables in a wood. We hear them in voiceover describing how they would light heaven if given the brief. In the Enlightenment, the sublime account of the war in Heaven in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* was often cited as the limit case for the interpretation of fireworks.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Their sheer beauty and utter transience gave fireworks a special role in baroque and Enlightenment political culture; they could both signify overcoming-darkness-through-artifice and signal revolutionary eruption. The red distress flares of Chodzko’s *Flasher* works (1996-2000) call up this history: the *feu d’artifice*, the artificial sublime of fireworks, as opposed to the natural sublime pyrotechnics of volcanoes. The *Flasher* images are production stills from a series of 50-second videos of signal flares in the landscape. Chodzko dubbed his *Flasher* footage onto rented videos following their closing credits and returned them to the store for others to discover by accident. Small acts of incendiary subversion, gratuitous bursts of incandescence.

PARADISE NOW?

I don’t know how humanity stands it
with a painted paradise at the end of it
without a painted paradise at the end of it

Ezra Pound “Canto 74”⁽⁴⁷⁾

PARADISE AND UTOPIAS: can’t live with them, can’t live without them! Pound’s bitter lines leave him caught within the circle of his doubt; like Melville’s Ahab, alienated from the comfort of sunset colours by his own abstracting vision and so “damned in the midst of Paradise”.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Pound’s contrary thinking takes us right to the heart of *Bright Paradise*. The *mappa mundi* of the exhibition is full of superimposed, incompatible versions of paradise found, lost and variously regained.

The paradisaical vision available today, in New Zealand or anywhere else, can only be a conflicted one. A conflicted vision of paradise is both historically knowing and presently hopeful despite this knowledge. As Ernst Bloch would say, paradise now is full of “propensity towards something”, of a tendency towards “a world which is more adequate for us, without degrading suffering, anxiety, self-alienation, nothingness.”⁽⁴⁹⁾

One of the smallest and one of the largest individual works may be contrasted to summarise this arc of meanings in *Bright Paradise*. An image of Nature’s violent unpredictability, Brendon Wilkinson’s diminutive diorama of a Maori whare almost buried under volcanic mud is an exquisitely fashioned symbol of crushed hopes, of the inundating force and aftermath of the colonial plan. “The world of colonisation and its modern manifestations is ... a world that crushes, a world of awful silence.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ As with Ian MacDonald’s photographs of dead and decomposing whales on Muriwai beach, it is hard to avoid reading Wilkinson’s model as a signifier of social and psychic trauma, of a world in which hope can only regenerate slowly.

Wilkinson’s miniaturised landscape is based on a Burton Brothers photograph showing the devastation following the



Whale Stranding at Muriwai Beach **IAN MACDONALD 1974**

right: Mural (Sailing Ship) Mangawhai Heads **HARU SAMESHIMA 1998**

eruption of Mount Tarawera in 1886. The model encapsulates the colonial processes by which the histories and life-world complexities of Maori were translated into the artifice of the static image and the wonderland aesthetics of the tourist trade. Burton's image of the buried whale, and Wilkinson's repetition of this image, sum up an aspect of colonial photography worldwide. In the late 19th century European photographers often felt they were recording the fragile remains of cultures that were dying out, also-rans in the progress of civilisation. From this perspective the devastation wreaked by volcanic eruption is a sign of how natural, albeit violent, is the evolutionary eclipse of one culture by another.

Maori artist Michael Parekowhai's ornamented concert grand piano is an ardent and theatrical declaration of the regenerative powers of art and the imagination at work on present and local reality. Like Wilkinson's whale, Parekowhai's piano also acknowledges the reality of a Paradise Lost in the wake of colonial history. Parekowhai has reconditioned an archetypal European taonga, creating in the process a richly ambivalent hybrid of hope and mourning. Its polished black body piled with flowers resembles a burial casket. The intensity of emotion that seems stored in this object, however, is not only about regret and loss. The piano's overflowing mound of carved flowers carries a celebratory fullness; charged with an excess of yearning, the floral cornucopia lightens and leavens the gravitas of history and its weight of suffering. The Arum lilies are tribute to an unrepeatable performance, an unrecoverable music.

While Parekowhai says, we are "never going to realise the utopian dream – never going to find paradise" (51) or recover what we thought we once had, *The Story of a New Zealand River* (2001)

sustains a melancholy hope. Though paradise appears buried, the piano anticipates a resurrection of hope through transformation of the given, whatever it is, wherever we find it. The piano's silence is not a terminal condition; the piano is always waiting for someone to play it again. The lightboxes which background the piano in the exhibition are of glades in the Woodhill State Forest. The trees are pines, imported trees, like those grown in Michael's father's plantation. They damage the soil, they leach out its nutrients, but they signify productive labour and capital value and they look beautiful in the light.

Allan Smith is Curator of Contemporary Art at Auckland Art Gallery. His recent exhibitions include Fear and Beauty: New Zealand Art at the End of the Millennium (1999) and The Crystal Chain Gang: Prismatic Geometry in Recent Art (2000). He borrowed his title for Bright Paradise from Peter Raby's book about Victorian scientific travellers.

1. Ernst Bloch *The Principle of Hope* (trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight) Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986. p753. **2.** Ibid. p747. **3.** Ibid. pxxxiii. **4.** *Utopics: Spatial Play* (trans. Robert A. Vollrath) MacMillan, New Jersey, 1984. p8. **5.** Ernst Bloch, op cit. p775. **6.** Ibid. p756. **7.** Chauncey C. Loomis "The Arctic Sublime" *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (eds. U.C. Knoepfelmacher and G.B.Tennyson) University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1977. p100. **8.** Francis Spufford *I May Be Some Time: Ice and The English Imagination* Faber and Faber, London, 1996. p54. **9.** Chauncey C. Loomis, op cit. p102. **10.** Ibid. p112. **11.** Francis Spufford, op cit. p71. **12.** cited in Alan Gurney *The Race to the White Continent: Voyages to the Antarctic* W.W. Norton and Company, New York and London, 2000. p94. **13.** Ibid. p95. **14.** Mach, cited in Ernst Bloch, op cit. p774. **15.** cited in *Stan Douglas* (eds. Scott Watson, Diana Thater, Carol J. Clover) Phaidon Press, London, 1998. p116. **16.** Ernst Bloch, op cit. p777. my italics. **17.** Cited in Glyndwr Williams "The Achievement of The English Voyages, 1650-1800" *Background to Discovery: Pacific Exploration from Dampier to Cook* (ed. Derek Howse) University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford,



1990. p77. **18.** *To Place – Book IV: Verne's Journey* Walther König, Cologne, 1995. **19.** T.S. Eliot's "Marina" *Selected Poems* Faber and Faber, London, 1967. p103. **20.** Penguin Books, Auckland, 1986. p283. **21.** See Ian Wedde's essay "Life Ho" in this catalogue. p43. **22.** cited in Shaun Caley "Ashley Bickerton: A Revealing Exposé of the Application of Art" *Flash Art* November-December, 1988. p81. **23.** cited in Paul Virilio and Sylvère Lotringer *Pure War* (trans. Mark Polizzotti) Semiotext(e), New York, 1983. p5. **24.** Allen Curnow "Landfall in Unknown Seas" *Selected Poems* Penguin Books, Auckland, 1982. p75. **25.** See Xanthe Jujnovich "A Pacific Performance in Interior Decoration" *Pander* 8 July 1999. pp16-8; and *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (ed. Vivienne Webb) Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2000. **26.** *Billy Budd and Other Stories* Penguin Books, New York, 1986. p71. **27.** O.H.K. Spate "The Pacific: Home of Utopias" *Utopias* (ed. Eugene Kamenka) Oxford University Press, Melbourne and Oxford, 1987. p25. **28.** Louis Marin "The Frontiers of Utopia" *Utopias and the Millennium* (eds. Krishan Kumar and Stephen Bann) Reaktion Books, London, 1993. p14. **29.** *Utopics: Spatial Play* op cit. p242. **30.** *Mappings* (ed. Denis Cosgrove) Reaktion Books, London, 1999. pp50-70. **31.** O.H.K. Spate, op cit. p20. **32.** David Fausett "Splendid Isolation" *Writing the New World: Imaginary Voyages and Utopias of the Great Southern Land* Syracuse University Press, 1993. pp130-44. **33.** *Selected Cantos* Faber and Faber, London, 1967. p49. **34.** Ernst Bloch, op cit. p 760. **35.** Jane Brown *The Pursuit of Paradise* Harper Collins, London, 1999. p179. **36.** cited in *Geography and Enlightenment* (eds. David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers) University of Chicago Press, 1999. p80. **37.** David Philip Miller "Joseph Banks, Empire, and 'Centers of Calculation' in late Hanoverian London"; and David McKay "Agents of Empire: The Banksian Collectors and Evaluation of New Lands" *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature* (eds. David Philip Miller and Peter Hanns Reill), Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp21-37; 38-57. **38.** Susan Stewart "The Collection, Paradise of Consumption" *On Longing: Narratives of The Miniature, The Gigantic, The Souvenir, The Collection* Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1993. pp151-66. **39.** The artist in conversation with the author, December 2000. **40.** The term is Oliver Goldsmith's, cited in Paul Carter *The Road to Botany Bay* Faber and Faber, London, 1987. p19. **41.** Allan Smith "Bill Hammond Paints New Zealand: Stuck Here in Paradise With The Buller's Blues Again" *Art AsiaPacific* 23 1999. pp46-53. **42.** Gregory Crewdson, cited in *Gregory Crewdson: Dreams of Life* Ediciones Universidad De Salamanca, 2000. p22. **43.** "The Book of Isaiah" 45:3 *Tanakh* The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, New York and Jerusalem, 1985. p714. **44.** Plaice, Plaice and Knight "Translators' Notes" in Ernst Bloch, op cit. pxxxi. **45.** Stella Brennan *Nostalgia for*

the Future Artspace, Auckland, 1999. **46.** Kevin Salatino *Incendiary Art: The Representation of Fireworks in Early Modern Europe* Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles, 1997. **47.** *Selected Poems* Faber and Faber, London, 1977. p145. **48.** *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972 (1851). p266. **49.** Ernst Bloch, op cit. p18. **50.** Geoff Park "Going Between Goddesses" *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand* (eds. Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Hilary Ericksen) University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1999. p182. **51.** The artist in conversation with the author, January 2001.



Infectious Rhythms

NIGEL CLARK

Now don't look horrified — if you had had a modern intellect, you would not have suffered half as much as you have about coming to these wilds, for you would have known that something surprising would turn up.

— Jane Mander *The Story of a New Zealand River* ⁽¹⁾

SAMPLING THE ISLANDS of the South Pacific on Cook's first voyage, botanist Joseph Banks reputedly pressed his choicest specimens between the pages of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He would have had no shortage of strange and surprising biota. Islands are hotspots of biodiversity, rich in species found nowhere else, and here, in Aotearoa, Earth's largest remote oceanic island, odd lifeforms were especially prevalent. In observing this unique locale in his *Endeavour* days, Banks was far from disinterested. He went on to play a vital role in establishing a global traffic in seeds and plants, sustained by British sea power and in the service of Empire. Just as the European voyages of the late 18th century opened new conversations between previously unacquainted cultures, Banks and his colleagues wove the world's biological life into an unprecedented intimacy.

An early source of inputs to the global vegetal database, Aotearoa would later find itself on the receiving end. When it came to colonising these islands, settlers sought to transplant "everything of England but the soil and the climate". ⁽²⁾ New Zealand was a European concept rendered in living matter, an attempt at a biological and topographical makeover more akin to terraforming than "taming nature". The ongoing repercussions of this project are the subject of *Tutira* (1921), a New Zealand literary classic — a story less of paradise lost or regained than permanently postponed. Herbert Guthrie-Smith's account of the transformation of a single block of farmland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries documents subsiding hillsides, threatened native species, livestock turning feral, and, not least, the arrival of invasive weeds. After some hundred and fifty pages devoted to advancing "vegetative aliens", Guthrie-Smith concludes:

Had the vast change sketched in preceding chapters been fulfilled according to the inclination of man, only grasses and fodder-plants for his domesticated beasts, shrubs, flowers, fruit for his taste, and forest trees for the pride of his heart, would have been acclimatised — Tutira would have been as the Garden of Eden, nourishing nothing but what was good for food and pleasant to the eye. Such an ideal condition is impossible to maintain; the pioneers of every colony set in motion machinery beyond their ultimate control; no legislation can regulate the dissemination of seeds. As the sun shines and the rain falls alike on the just and the unjust, so fleets, railroads, and and highways convey seeds good and bad to a like common destination. ⁽³⁾

Guthrie-Smith's idiom may be Victorian, but a prescient "antipodality" animates his observations. He is aware that Tutira is on the receiving end of processes set in motion years earlier and a hemisphere away. Through the transmutations of life and landform unfolding on a single farm, we see projected dreams distorted by local conditions — grand colonial designs warped by the encounter with a novel ecosystem. But Guthrie-Smith's astute eye also detects small miracles amidst frequent catastrophe. If *Tutira* marks a crisis of faith in civilisation's assumed march from shadowy barbarism to bright, reconstituted paradise, it also intimates new and unforeseeable possibilities.

Do sea-encircled lands have their own dynamic? The successive shock waves of weedy invaders that washed over Tutira hint at what we might call a logic of islands. Islands pulse to periodic invasion, they reel to infectious rhythms. Whatever breaks their seclusion — plant, animal or human — tends not merely to arrive, but to irrupt. When a delicate equilibrium is disturbed, unruly proliferations prevail. Never simply annexed, nor relenting



English missionary medicinal and pot-herbs from Herbert Guthrie-Smith's **TUTIRA** 1921

left: A satire of Joseph Banks raving from Pole to Pole catching specimens 1772

to step-by-step advance, islands require a passage, an approach, a breaching. The ocean is sometimes a barrier, sometimes a medium, but the shoreline always constitutes a change in pattern, a radical discontinuity underestimated by some new arrivals. Oceanic histories show that those who think they rule the waves frequently founder when they hit land, their linear calculations corrupted as they broach the beach.

Historically, western visions of oceanic islands have been a paradoxical blend of the unmoored and the too solidly grounded, of unbridled hallucination and staunch determinism. In times of transition and turmoil, when foundations felt shaky, European thinkers would conjure imaginary worlds where culture and nature bedded down in timeless harmony. As microcosmic mindscapes, gardens were good to think with, but islands were better. As tranquil and luxuriant as gardened plots but more fully insulated, ocean-encircled islets suited reverie and mental circumnavigation: you could get your head around them. When successive bouts of maritime adventure turned up actual archipelagos, fantasy was fuelled, substance added to utopian scheming. From the "fortunate isles" of the Atlantic to the enchanted islands of the Pacific, reports of real paradise beckoned the opportunistic and enterprising.

But even sustained contact was slow to revise European preconceptions that islands slumbered in a primordial time-warp and that their people – variously indolent or barbaric – were essentially children of nature. Ironically, while European visitors cast islands as static and timeless, some islanders saw sailing ships as wooded islands on the move – an idea with more than merely poetic appeal. Ships were not simply slanted cross-

sections of metropolitan society, not just imperial bachelor machines beating south. They were biogeographical offshoots of their lands of origin, fissured continental fragments loaded with lifeforms, licit and illicit. With livestock and seeds from home, plants and animals picked along the way, stowaway scavengers and a rich microbial complement, they formed an unsettled community: a volatile ecology looking for somewhere to erupt.

Though culturally and biologically unprepared for contact, islanders were hardly paragons of unworldliness or inertia. Many Pacific peoples held their earliest European visitors in high esteem, being appreciative of a good voyage because they were long-distance travellers themselves. By contrast the European navigators, inheriting a relatively recent seafaring tradition, were unaware they were entering the cultural space where ocean transit and navigation had been pioneered. Of course, island sanctity had been breached long before representatives of our species figured out ways to work with wind and current. The very antithesis of "purity", most oceanic islands have been utterly reliant on intrusion to seed them with life: human and non-human arrivals alike adding the flesh and foliage to enliven otherwise arid outcrops. "Every living thing on an island has been a traveller", anthro-historian Greg Denning reminds us. "Every species of tree, plant and animal on an island has crossed the beach."⁽⁴⁾

For larger island formations like Aotearoa New Zealand, some of whose biotic inhabitants have been rafting on continental shards for million of years, periodic invasion added a vital shaping force. The island story is always one of discontinuity: alternation between the finitude of land and the vastness of ocean, between contamination and closure, equilibrium and irruption. These wildly



syncopated rhythms render life on islands far more precarious than on continents – where a greater landmass modulates the flow of arrivals and departures. When arrivals from neighbouring islands can upset a local ecology, the effects of an invasion that leaps tropics and meridians can be catastrophic. But what makes islands vulnerable also makes them generative. Though more easily convulsed, oceanic islands provide opportunities. Interlopers may escape competition, predation, the usual restraints; while a restricted territory also concentrates and exaggerates. “On islands each new intruder finds a freedom it never had in its old environment. On arrival it develops, fills unfilled niches, plays a thousand variations on the theme of its own form.”⁽⁶⁾ Or, perhaps, is played upon.

THE CLASSIC MARITIME exploration of the Enlightenment era has been described as a “voyage into substance”,⁽⁶⁾ on account of the way that shipboard scientists and artists sought out a confrontation with the unmediated stuff of the world. Nowadays, however, we have grown suspicious of those who take their bearings straight from nature. We look instead to “ungrounded” flows of culture or circuits of “immaterial” information. But perhaps some contemporary thinkers abstract “culture” too enthusiastically from the “bedrock” of nature. Those of us living on islands, especially, might do well to recall the grainy inconsistencies of the physical world, to wonder how its varying textures, its alternations of solid and fluid, still make a difference.

Today we tend to think of encounters between the cultural traditions of islands and continents as interplays of accommodation and resistance, and New Zealand artists are quick to reflect on what it means for our artistic premises and practices to have

trundled across the sand, taken root here and been transformed. John Lyall takes this transposition a step further, probing the genuinely unprecedented events that arise out of the entanglement of cultural and physical processes; processes usually considered discrete. For Lyall, the project of reconstructing this country by transposing elements forged in another hemisphere courted catastrophe and deviation from the outset. No “enlightened” calculus could predict the transformative effects of a novel terrain and a new ecology. Even the languages we apply to our new environment – the imported cultural codes and techniques – were bound to run wild and readapt.

Lyall’s museum photographs allegorise these feral adaptations. In the civilising process, as it was intended to unfold, museums play a strategic role. By stockpiling the outmoded, museums reveal the fatality intrinsic to progress. In laying out fragments of the past, they also underwrite the future, providing visible evidence that development has a direction. As Walter Buller reflected late in the 19th century: “everything relating to the early history of the land of our adoption should be carefully recorded and observed for the student of the future.”⁽⁷⁾ In this way, the plan to totally transform these islands required their museumification: the arts of the conservator joining the tools of the developer. But as Lyall observes from a later vantage point, the transposed display conventions of the specimen, the vitrine and the diorama are themselves doomed to obsolescence.

During the recent refurbishment of the Auckland Museum, Lyall photographed threatened or extinct local species captured within 19th century museum display technologies also on their way to extinction. A moa skeleton, wearing its label like a dog tag, is



The Naming of the Parts **JOHN LYALL** 1987–2000

reflected repeatedly in the glass of a dismantled cabinet, as if its fate is to endlessly relive its own demise. There is a synergy of sadness here, a mirroring of condemned cultural and biotic forms. But from this melancholy terrain, Lyall salvages fleeting moments of vitality and enchantment. As the deconstructed containers of extinguished lifeforms randomly spill their contents, there is another chance for mingling and miscegenation, a window of opportunity for symbioses as yet unseen. For an instant the living, the dead and the endangered dance across the same stage, presenting, perhaps, a more profound challenge to the conventions of linear narration than any recently conjured hypertextual medium.

Lyall suggests that even prior to its physical disassembly, the museum's narrative has been unravelling. Cataloguing and organising "everything", when it includes the elements being displaced as well as those on the ascendant, turns out to be a self-defeating task. The intended order of the classical museum convolutes into a maze of reflections and refractions: the local and the introduced, the natural and the artificial, the extinct and the extant bounce off each other in ways curators and conservators could never anticipate. Unintentionally reproducing the uncertainties of an island ecology in turmoil, the museum is revealed to be a microcosm of the world beyond its walls, but it is a world characterised by generative chaos rather than orderly improvement.

BRITISH-BASED ARTIST Mariele Neudecker also generates new life from declining modes of display, reformating great romantic paintings as dioramas in vitrines. Adrift in a chemical mist that simulates the atmospheric effects of the painterly seascape, a fully rigged sailing ship ghosts its way to an unknown destination; or



Ship **MARIELE NEUDECKER** 1996

perhaps it's bound for disaster, a journey cut short by the crush of pack ice. As these at once moving and turgid scenes are replayed in a claustrophobic world under glass, we come face to face with the self-defeating impulse to grapple with sublimity – the folly of representing the unrepresentable. At the same time, seeing the great moments of European culture so reduced offers a disturbing intimation of what decontextualisation, containment and obsessive recrafting might inflict on artifacts of other cultures.

In New Zealand we are finding our own way to showcase the romantic theme of the human presence set against an imposing natural backdrop. Jane Campion has made the piano – paddled through surf, planted on the beach and hefted up bush trails – into a national icon. Her film *The Piano* (1993) underscores both the rugged beauty of our native landscape and the tenacity of the pioneers who insisted on installing themselves here. While her piano stands for an unhealthy attachment to a world left behind, her film itself is reliant on landscape imagery and a musical score which remain firmly within the European romantic tradition. With its monumental exterior and rigid bar divisions within, the piano is an instrument of authority. Incongruous in its new surroundings, it announces a divide between civilisation and nature: a gulf between what arrives from abroad and what came before.

There is a similar tension in the novel that perhaps inspired Campion's screenplay. Jane Mander's *The Story of a New Zealand River* (1920) is a romantic account of new world potentiality which opens with a piano being punted down a tidal creek. A real-life parallel was enacted by Cantabrian pioneer and author Samuel Butler. In spite of his abiding interest in the way ideas and organisms interchange with their surroundings, Butler would not



Ten Guitars **MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI** 1999

part with his own weighty cultural luggage. In the recollection of one of his fellow settlers, Butler “took up a run at the back of beyond, carted a piano up there on a bullock dray, and passed his solitary evenings playing Bach’s fugues.”⁽⁸⁾

The piano seems a strange and melancholic medium for conveying what is special about this country. Michael Parekowhai’s installation *The Story of a New Zealand River* (2001) presents a grand piano with immaculately carved black lilies resting on its lid and around its feet. Impervious and forbidding, the flowers are not of this place yet link with the “all black” brandings of New Zealand, heightening the tension between imposition and adaptation. Refusing to buy into the piano as a domesticated icon of romantic resistance, Parekowhai reads it as an instrument for edifying this unruly backwater, one whose haunting melodies would presume to accompany savagery’s eclipse by civilisation. Parekowhai’s *Story* offers the feeling of both a magnificent performance just passed, and a funeral in progress.

The Story of a New Zealand River offers a new chapter in a musical history Parekowhai opened with his 1999 work *Ten Guitars* – which celebrated the instrument Maori fully appropriated, along with the Engelbert Humperdinck song they took as an anthem. This work evoked a roving band of players who carry their music across the country, performing a thousand variations on a standard: “And very soon you’ll know just where you are.” Where we are, Parekowhai’s guitars seem to say, is in a landscape of compromise and fleeting opportunity. Not some rarefied realm where a well-rehearsed high culture rhapsodises unsullied nature, but a bumpy, irregular terrain, where unleashed refrains bend and shape to the lay of the land. A place where improvisation is the order of the day.

BUT HOW FAR will these improvisations take us? How might the “giant ecological field experiment” that is Aotearoa New Zealand unfold? At its best, music, like birdsong or animal morphology, is a kind of open-ended search, the probing of a realm of possible forms. No one can say in advance what patterns or structures will emerge. You can glean this from Darwin, especially from his observations of island life. Or, like the early fatal impact theorists, you can take something quite different from his theorem: a faith in “superior forms” destined to win the struggle for existence wherever they come to roost.

In the eyes of 19th century ornithologist Walter Buller, most of New Zealand’s native birds would “erelong exist only in museums and collections”,⁽⁹⁾ his own exorbitant stockpiling of specimens helping ensure his prophecy would be fulfilled. Rebounding from this scenario, Bill Hammond’s bestiaries open up another space of evolutionary possibilities. Part bird, part human, the denizens of his alternative antipodes inhabit an uneasy interzone. Sheltering on forest or coastal fringes, or reclining on the uppermost branches, they seem to be gathering for some further form-building adventure. Hammond’s paintings explode Buller’s imperially-adapted Darwinism by pushing it to its extreme. If New Zealand avifauna had radiated out to fill many of the niches normally taken by terrestrial species, then the displacement of bird-life by an influx of aggressive bipedal colonists implies that it is our fate also to spread outwards into these vacated posts. “Hammond’s bird-people”, it has been suggested, “are people on their way to becoming birds, not vice versa.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Mournful of the diversity decimated in the drive to remake this land, Hammond’s chimeras point to co-evolutionary potentials

Huias and Saddlebacks from Sir Walter Lawry Buller's
A History of The Birds of New Zealand 1888



that might still be redeemed: morphogeneses that could occur if the remnants of local life were released from the museum. In place of Buller's "fascination at the ancient life of a primeval paradise failing to adapt to the empire",⁽¹²⁾ there is the more intriguing prospect of finding ourselves at the frayed end of empire doing the adapting. The thematic variations that might result would not only be biological – written in genes and tissues – but scripted in all the markings that compose our inhabitation. So many of Hammond's bird-people are clothed in a second skin, a graphic film of copper-plate script, musical notation and decorative fern motifs. While such inscriptions should mark their separation from nature, Hammond's bird-people wear them as camouflage to merge with the irregular and variegated topography. Perhaps the land has designs on us, as much as we have on it. Hammond glimpses a slender opportunity for open-ended excursions into fields of untested form and structure, a narrowing chance for choosing self-transformation over terraformation.

VIEWED FROM NORTHERN metropolises, oceanic islands began as mirages of tranquillity and timelessness only to rematerialise as cauldrons of chaotic fecundity. But are we grasping the specificities of the insular and the antipodean at just the moment they cease to make any difference? Now the planet seems to be stitching itself into a single landmass, a supercontinent strafed by jet streams and bathed in electronic communication. Even in the mid 19th century, however, Samuel Butler was amazed at the brevity of his journey from Britain to New Zealand. He was still more enthralled by the new telegraph from Lyttelton to Christchurch, which prompted his speculations on global interconnectivity, published in the *Canterbury Press* in 1863:

We will say then that a considerable advance has been made in mechanical development, when all men, in all places, without any loss of time, are cognizant through their senses, of all that they desire to be cognizant of in all other places, at a low rate of charge, so that the back country squatter may hear his wool sold in London and deal with the buyer himself – may sit in his own chair in a back country hut and hear the performance of Israel in Ægypt at Exeter Hall – may taste an ice on the Rakaia, which he is paying for and receiving in the Italian opera house Covent Garden. ⁽¹³⁾

BUTLER'S HYMN TO "the grand annihilation of time and place" ⁽¹³⁾ takes its impetus from the lived experience of specific landscapes, its celebration of weightless instantaneity offering a counterpoint to the gravity of pianos and other baggage hauled up hills and across oceans. This high-country scholar inspired French philosopher Gilles Deleuze to write of the tensions between an abstract placelessness and the encounter with the materiality of particular sites: "Following Samuel Butler, we discover the mythic Erewhon, signifying at once the originary 'nowhere' and the displaced, disguised, modified and always re-created 'here-and-now'." ⁽¹⁴⁾

It is not only on islands that the slickness of unencumbered mobility and the grainy particularities of place grate against each other. Across great landmasses the growing intensities of commerce that draw regions together also eat into ecological communities, eroding them into enclaves severed from their surrounds yet subject to sudden invasion from almost anywhere on the planet. Once buttressed from the sorrows of islands, continents now worry themselves over the perils of interconnectivity and runaway, self-perpetuating accidents. But here in oceanic testing grounds, amidst the fallout of failed terraformations and



among the museum's ruins, we seem to have gained some familiarity with events that defy prediction or containment. Perhaps here too we are seeing intimations of arts and sciences that play on the same irruptive terrain, engagements that hew to shifting and discontinuous ground, responses that are sensitive to their own infectious rhythms.

Nigel Clark recently transplanted himself from Auckland to London. He teaches social science and environmental studies at the Open University, Milton Keynes. His recent academic publications explore the continuities between cultural and bio-physical processes, particularly in relation to environmental issues. He curated the art exhibitions alt.nature (1997) and Shrinking Worlds (1999).

1. Vintage Books, Auckland, 1999 (1920). p37. 2. Jonathan Lamb "The Idea of Utopia in the European Settlement of New Zealand" *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand* (eds. Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Hilary Erickson) University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1999. p81. 3. Herbert Guthrie-Smith *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* Godwit Press, Auckland, 1999 (1921). p294. 4. Greg Denning *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880* University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1980. p31. 5. Ibid. p32. 6. Barbara Maria Stafford *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature and the Illustrated Travel Account 1760-1840* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984. 7. Cited in Geoff Park *Nga Uruora: The Groves of Life: Ecology and History in a New Zealand Landscape* Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1995. p192. 8. Butler's neighbour, Sir Joshua Williams, cited in George Dyson *Darwin Among the Machines* Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1997. p17. 9. Cited in Geoff Park, op cit. p174. 10. Allan Smith "Bill Hammond Paints New Zealand: Stuck Here in Paradise With The Bullers' Blues Again" *Art Asia Pacific* 23 1999. p52. 11. Geoff Park, op cit. p170. 12. Samuel Butler, cited in George Dyson, op cit. p33. 13. Ibid. 14. Gilles Deleuze *Difference and Repetition* (trans. Paul Patton) Athlone Press, London, 1994 (1968). pxxi.



Big White Males (Tearing Down The House)

LEIGH DAVIS

32
33

1. HUNTING THE PLOT

If it is anything at all paradise is a big idea. It is also usually a big problem, because it hides; and because there are so many versions of paradise: heaven, Xanadu, the differing enthusiasms of art, good retail. But if the thing itself is hard to know, arriving at a commonsense definition that will do for now isn't: paradise is a classic pattern in events or experiences which, when recognised, triggers some fulfilment of intense meaning. This classic patterning is a work of language. Paradise is therefore a property of knowledge and language. It is of the same grain as prophecy.

Two large paradise narratives touch upon public culture in New Zealand. For ease of reference, I call these One and Two. One is residual, and Two is emergent. Both have their roots in constructions taken from white New Zealand history, specifically constructions made of the diaspora from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere in the 19th century. (I have a feeling for how Maori thought of paradise over this period, but that is all.)

To begin to get at these concepts, I will have to sketch, and roam, and join Herman Melville, and Saatchi and Saatchi, and Colin McCahon.

Paradise One is a state found in the conditions of mapping and identity. Paradise, in this story, is understood as a type of landfall. It is represented in the culmination of a journey from an origin to a new destination viewed as an improved version of the origin. Despite appearances to the contrary, this paradise is actually the result of a loop movement: not a one-way voyage from origin to destination, but a journey from origin outwards and back. The journey results in the discovery of a place that is an intensification

of origin conditions. It is a virtual circumnavigation; one leaves a place and journeys to its broadly symmetrical twin: analogous with the origin, but better. The dominant metaphor here is the hemisphere: the southern being symmetrical with the northern, so that both form one round world or globe.

Paradise One has an empirical bias, being resolved through intensive occupation, experienced in the concrete details of place. It is a story of fixed land and not fluid sea; sea is just what one crossed to get to get there. The world, viewed as an open system, with the insubstantial possibilities of space, time, and media, is closed by an act of landfall, fetching up upon a new concrete country. In this view the sea, that risky intermediate realm crossed, is displaced by a beachhead that is rich, verifiable and confirming in its cultural and natural history facts.

Insofar as it is an economic story, such a paradise promises new economic opportunity and scope for progress along all of the axes, in all of the same critical areas, that characterised the conception of progress in the place of origin.

This paradise condition is therefore a paradise condition for farmers.

Paradise Two is a narrative of not-mapping. It can be abstracted from the whaling industry that was so influential in the region's history. It is a narrative in which the symmetry that characterised Paradise One is broken. Instead, Paradise Two has the classic features of a gap: between land or fixed edge and horizon; between poles, each bounding and charging the other. It is not a story of landfall but of coastal space. If Paradise One is land-facing, Paradise Two is sea-facing ("water-gazers"). It is a maritime story characterised by a bias for abstraction.

Paradise Two is less semiotically precise. We get to know its tell-tales well enough, but have to acclimatise to a more abstract register to give it expression. Here, I set out some pointers only, since to do more would turn this essay on its head.

Paradise Two is an intermediate place. It is less a specific content than a set of recognisable conditions or effects, or a characteristic mode of attention, where meaning is something you have to work at because it is not obvious to you any more. A relative emphasis accrues as objects you contemplate retreat back from familiarity to primary phenomena: of colour, speed, size, texture, and so on. Signifiers hunt, as though roving over the frequency band of a radio. Ascribing appropriate context, proportion and scale to the things you study consumes unusual attention. Characteristically, in accounts of Paradise Two, a certain glissando effect emerges through attention directed at lists and quantities. (Paradise Two puts the "poly" back in Polynesia.) There is renewal by reinvention. And argument proceeds by negative definition to an unusual agree, since positive definitions are relatively less well known or are what you are trying to get to. Boundarylessness is seen by the viewer, who is located on a boundary.

The economics of this paradise differ as well. Here paradise is not petty bourgeois. It is not organised around an "economy of one", not set upon the personal grammar of a life of incremental self-improvement. Rather, we view an industrial capitalist paradise, presented impersonally. Paradise here is a place in Adam Smith, or the *Communist Manifesto*, or *Red Herring* magazine. It is a space of unbelievable markets, of invisibly patterned enterprise creation and destruction.

This paradise condition is a paradise condition for hunters.

2. EXHIBITS FOR PARADISE ONE

Everything was ultra couleur de rose. Such land – such Country – such crops – such vegetables... the carrots were not like ordinary carrots, they out-carroted carrots...

– Edward Gibbon Wakefield ⁽¹⁾

But New Zealand, like the British Isles, consisted of two main islands; it was very roughly in the antipodal latitudes. For the crusaders this was enough. The Britain of the South motif and its variants, along with paradise and progress metaphors, pervaded crusader literature... (New Zealand) Company literature portrayed New Zealand from the outset as a "LAND of PROMISE"...

... the crusaders outpublished their critics, and comparisons of New Zealand with both Paradise and Britain became common and uncontroversial. Arcadia, Utopia, "the Eden of the World", and "earthly paradise" and the "land of milk and honey" appeared... in later crusader literature... in company tracts. The titles of books on New Zealand published between the 1850s and the 1880s included The Land of Promise, The Wonderland of the Antipodes, The Wonderland of the World, An Earthly Paradise, The Future England of the Southern Hemisphere, The England of the Pacific, The Britain of the South and Brighter Britain!

– James Belich ⁽²⁾

Better or Greater, New Zealand was to be the Britain of the South, and was also to be an impressive list of specialist paradises – for brides, governesses, carpenters, gentry, invalids, and investors. English wood pigeons "would find New Zealand a paradise", and so too would balding humans. After two years in Auckland, wrote one woman settler, "My hair, from being thin and weak, is now so thick that I can scarcely bear its weight."

– James Belich ⁽³⁾

3. EXHIBIT FOR PARADISE TWO: MELVILLE'S MOBY-DICK

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world...

There now is your insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs – commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward. Its extreme downtown is the Battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land. Look at the crowds of water-gazers there.

Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall northward. What do you see? – Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries...

But look! Here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremist limit of the land: loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice. No. They must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand – miles of them – leagues. Inlanders all, they come from lanes and alleys, streets and avenues – north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite. Tell me, does the magnetic virtue of the needles of the compasses of all those ships attract them hither?

... why is almost every robust healthy boy with a robust healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were now out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and still deeper

is the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, wild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.

... I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did...

Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale himself. Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my curiosity. Then the wild and distant seas where he rolled his island bulk; the undeliverable nameless perils of the whale; these, with all the attending marvels of a thousand Patagonian sights and sounds, helped sway me in my wish. I am tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote...

By reason of these things, then, the whaling voyage was welcome; the great floodgates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, midmost of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air.

– Herman Melville Moby-Dick ⁽⁴⁾

... how comes it that we whalers of America now outnumber all the rest of the banded whalers in the world; sail a navy of upwards of seven hundred vessels; manned by eighteen thousand men; yearly consuming 4,000,000 of dollars; the ships worth, at the time of sailing, \$20,000,000; and every year importing into our harbours a well reaped harvest of \$7,000,000. How comes all this, if there be not something puissant in whaling?

– Herman Melville Moby-Dick ⁽⁵⁾

4. SECOND EXHIBITION FOR PARADISE TWO: THE EDGE CAMPAIGN

Our domestic economic future lies totally in our relationship with the international. Selling New Zealand as the hottest destination on the planet for international travellers is the most important economic job this country has.

Kevin Roberts
Address to New Zealand Tourism Industry
August, 1998.

The Need

"The world is getting smaller and smaller, just as the number of people with the means to see it grows larger and larger. More than NAFTA and more than GATT, international tourism has naturalised cultures, goods, language and even scenery and made it into an increasingly homogenous place. And it is precisely this flattening of difference that inspires the industry to the ever more desperate pursuit of exoticism and authenticity – which renders the world ever more ordinary and unauthentic. Millions of us are on the road and in the air, going nowhere."

Barry Katz
Professor, Stanford

Our competitive frame rather than a country or countries is the *commoditised* middle. A middle typified more by the explored, the dangerous, the unfriendly, the crowded, the big and the commercial.

In communication terms our competitive frame is those responsible for propagating the ever more ordinary and unauthentic – international tourism marketeers.

The Need

New Zealand has positive values it must build on, negative ones it must remove and in line with its ambition new values to add.

To Remain	To Remove	To Add
Natural	Rural/Provincial	Energy/Active
Scenic	Unsophisticated	Intrigue/Mystique
Beautiful	Empty	Popular/Hip
Friendly	Isolated	Excitement
Clean & Green		

These are the Brand's values.

The Answer

The Truman Show, written by Auckland's Andy Niccol, was a runaway Hollywood critical and commercial smash in 1998. A heavy favourite for a fistful of Oscars at this year's Academy Awards, it's grossed over \$500 million dollars at the worldwide box office. Some critics consider it the most influential film of the 1990s.

The story of Truman Burbank, a man whose every moment is unknowingly filmed for the pleasure of a vast world television audience, dazzled cinema-goers with its conceptual audacity. In satirising television's role in society, *The Truman Show* proved how possible it is to attract a global congregation if the content is truly special. Truman's viewers crossed creeds, colours and continents. They were everyday people from all walks of life, going about their business, who were hooked on its "reality".

The Answer

Our intention is to adapt the premise of *The Truman Show* as the basis of our tourism strategy.

In an unprecedented move of logistics, we will position cameras, locked off and mobile, throughout the country, and film the best things about New Zealand and New Zealanders, without pause, for an entire year. Every second of what we'll do as a nation from 1 July 1999 to 1 July 2000 will be satellite-fed to a clued-in audience of millions, who will be watching us live our days and nights on giant TV monitors in prime international locations at the same moment we're doing it.

Everything will be Totally Real. Unfaked. Unscripted. And each moment will be very, very live.

The Answer

The juxtaposition in time zones and seasons only serves to heighten the value of *The New Zealand Story*. There is as likely as many different prompts to think "holiday" as there are people, but one thing is constant. It is in direct contrast to what that person is doing right now.

Most tourists have only brochures, word of mouth and travel guides to help them decide where to go on holiday.

Our viewers can inspect us at their leisure. They have an entire year to get to know our place, check us out, observe our customs, chuckle at our habits. They'll marvel at some of the cars we (still) drive, drool at the fish we catch, ogle at the scenery landscaping our backyards, and discover the people up close: New Zealanders of all shapes, sizes and hairstyles – like them. They'll see tidy streets, warm to our smiles, and know we're safe, good people to meet and holiday with.

The Answer

When *The New Zealand Show* first screens in London, New York and elsewhere, it will kick-up a storm of attention. We hope it's where the world will go to kick-start every day. In a unique moment of broadcast and tourism synergy, New Zealand will become the subject of its own television show, a never-ending production which overcomes age, language, cultural and distance barriers. For 366 continuous days and nights, New Zealand will never go off-air. Spanning six different time zones, viewers in the world's great cities will cross seasons with us... go to work when we're sleeping, come home when we're getting up... dress for winter while we're larking at the beach... observe what we eat... how we play... where we go to have fun.

The Answer

From 1 July 1999 we'll be filmed every second for an entire year. (That's over 30 million seconds, half-a-million minutes, 9,000 hours of screentime to fill.)

It's a truism great art imitates life. Andy Niccol penned *The Truman Show* from what he'd observed.

The New Zealand Show will reverse this process, and reflect Andy's art. There is one critical conceptual difference: In *The Truman Show*, Truman Burbank was an unknowing participant in the filmed story of his life. Unlike Truman, New Zealanders will be openly recruited to play their part in *The New Zealand Show*. We need them: they're the core cast.

In a futuristic first, we'll turn the country into a de facto "studio" and enthusiastically enrol our three-and-a-half million citizens as TV characters, admittedly without credits.

The Answer

But the pictures the world will see, the how and where they'll see them, justifies this approach. Our TV show offers excitement, drama, hardcore action, comedy, amazing visuals, romance, beauty and oodles of humanity: the spectrum of life on the edge in its full glory – and unpredictability.

The idea confirms New Zealand's position as the playground on the edge because the proposition is authentic. It falls within our budget (surprisingly so), captures every single variety of experience we've thought of telling the world and then some. It's new; we know no country's ever marketed itself this way, yet the risks in going in first are insignificant. On the contrary, New Zealand will probably be lauded for its vision. Importantly, this idea is in keeping with the most venerable New Zealand tradition of all, ingenuity.

It integrates everything to promote New Zealand currently, and everything we have fantasised about doing in the future, and all that has helped us grow the brand in the past.

All via one common communication: TV.

The Answer

The first key theme of *The New Zealand Show* will naturally be...

The Playground on the Edge of the World.

We will show the world how New Zealand can bring together such diversity and variety, all within the same country. A country half the size of Texas, a third the size of New South Wales.

5. INTERVIEW

You draw the reader's attention to documents outlining a Saatchi and Saatchi creative and communication strategy where New Zealand is portrayed as "the edge". It is a strategy that has so far not been taken to market. It is just a pitch. So what's up?

I love the Saatchi proposal. It has more cock-a-doodle than Chaunticleer. It is a huge priapic story with hunting spirit not farming spirit. Serious moxie. There is an exuberance of scale and traffic in large numbers, of audience ratings, minutes of footage, and size of impact. There is a lot of political reinvention going on, in the framing of the meaning of the country, and the strategy of creating market share. The agency pitches up a big idea of paradise that by implication is almost ready to become dominant in the public culture. Take a close look at the material. Two years ago the government of farmers could still turn it down. The campaign may have been killed by Lilliputians but it drives off the whaling side of things.

The "whaling side?"

It thrums and murmurs Melville, not least because it does the one single thing that makes *Moby-Dick* great: it connects the money with the poetry. There is industry in meaning. The Saatchi idea is to set up an immense virtual gap: New Zealand as a not-like-here alive thing set in a sea of video, thrust in the face of its northern hemisphere target audience. It is a face-off: big audience, and, opposing it, a big electronic billboard in which New Zealand is a trophy of fluid images. An aggregate of roving camera content. And New Zealand pictured as "the Edge"; therefore the campaign says that the world is flat... you can get to the edge of it and then you have a gap, an uncategorisable place, over which you scan and in which you see wonders.

The agency views a market of would-be tourists. It proposes that they assume the emotional position of, say, the crew of the *Pequod*. They could stand as with the fretful crews of Columbus too. Both crews/audiences are taken where they can apprehend the end of the world seen as a whale of images. You are in Times Square, that mystical co-ordinate in "old Manhattoes", looking up, and gazing at the silver screen. Straightway feeling like an Ishmael:

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago – never mind how long precisely – having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world... (7)

I want to take this very literally. Think of the television medium as the South Pacific ocean. Think of the television audience proposed by the campaign as having a strong resemblance to that mentioned in the opening chapter of Melville's novel, a public made automatic, gravitating en masse to the beach. You have to see this great campaign proposal and this massive failure of government not to run it out. The Saatchis' idea makes Christo's draping the Reichstag look like the act of placing a table napkin on a salt shaker and a pepper shaker.

Aren't you pushing this all a little too far?

Nah. No no no. It just keeps going, tough guy. Yours is the anxiety of farmers. For example, Saatchis' great strategy would have made the North Atlantic public audience stir as a vast mammal, to feel themselves as residing in the brain of a whale. They were to look at an unimaginably large flow of New Zealand virtualism televised on a giant outdoor screen over, say, Times Square. Imagine the public, looking up at this flow, at once, and then around at the traffic in the Square, and then at the screen, and then back. They are

placed in an abyss. They become possessed of split-screen vision, as are whales, according to Melville. Hear this (reads):

Moreover, while in most other animals that I can now think of, the eyes are so planted as imperceptibly to blend their visual power, so as to produce one picture and not two to the brain; the peculiar position of the whale's eyes, effectually divided as they are by many cubic feet of solid head, which towers between them like a great mountain separating two lakes in valleys; this, of course, must wholly separate the impressions which each independent organ imparts. The whale, therefore must see one distinct picture on this side, and another distinct picture on that side; while all between must be profound darkness and nothingness to him. (8)

Oh. Uh-huh. Well, I've gotta go ...

(ends)



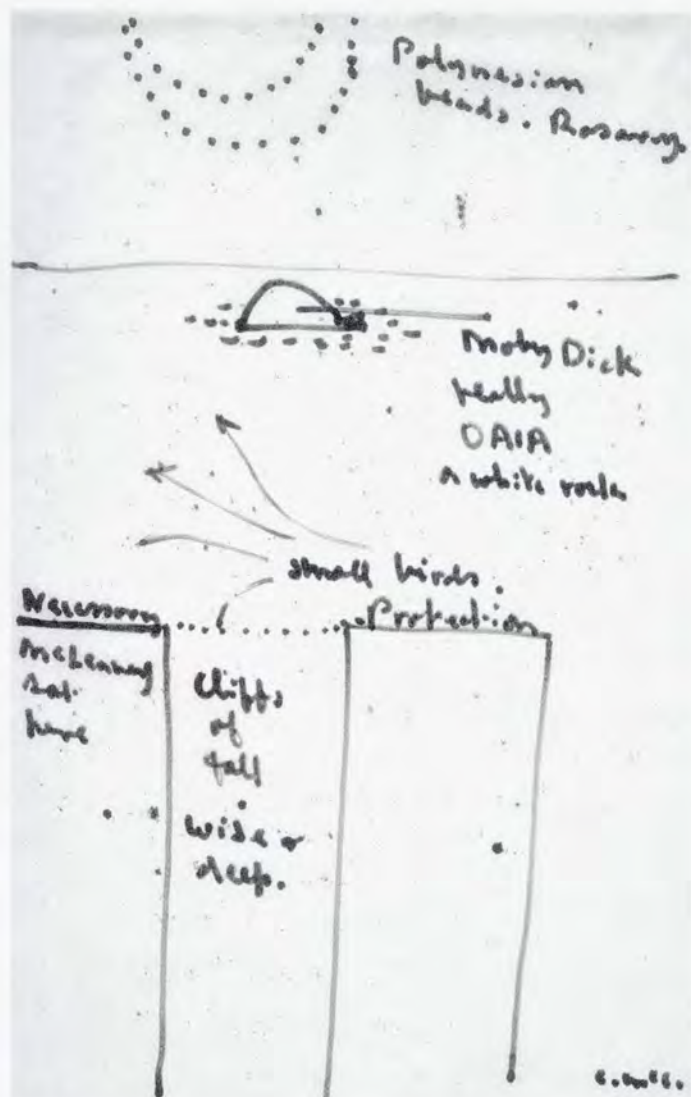
Truman Burbank

6. McCAHON'S GREAT SKETCH

You stare at it and you can't believe it. It is as a treasure map, drawn urgently, to set out a crucial location. You recognise the situation immediately. It is the coastal strip, the gap of the not-mappable paradise. Prodigious, and in the middle distance, and astonishingly, lies Moby Dick, which causes the whole scene to be translated. Moby Dick is no cutesy fish. It is one of the great emblems of disruption and tormenting infinity. McCahon's depiction of the Muriwai island Oaia as Moby Dick is riveting. It could perhaps be a casual Arcadian cartoon, but to take this view one has to look for less satisfying readings of the scene portrayed under the resonant "Necessary Protection" title.

The Muriwai cliffs are constituted as the poop of the *Pequod* and/or the edge of the world viewed as flat. In sight of Moby Dick is a zone of moment. It is only in this context that one gets why McCahon's protection is deemed necessary: classically, this is a place of possible mortal collision and annihilation. A Polynesian necklace hangs over the scene. If McCahon invokes Moby Dick as "monomaniac incarnation" then he also, at least partially, invokes Ahab's magnetic viewpoint in this drawing. The White Whale is in part a blank cut-out (more edges) or perforation through the wall of visible reality, revealing blankness;

Hark ye yet again. All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event – in the living act, the undoubted deed – there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps



me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. ⁽⁸⁾

And McCahon's great sketch can bring upon the viewer some faint echo of the identification that Ishmael, and the *Pequod's* crew, had for Ahab's obsession:

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest... A wild, mystical, sympathetic feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. ⁽⁹⁾

Leigh Davis is a partner in an investment company, a verbal artist and critic.

1. Cited in James Belich *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* Auckland University Press, 1986. p301. 2. James Belich, op cit. pp298-9. 3. Ibid. p311. 4. *Moby-Dick* Penguin Classics, New York, 1992 (1851). pp3-8. 5. Ibid. p119. 6. *The New Zealand Edge* idea started by Brian Sweeney and Kevin Roberts continues to rock equilibriums at www.nzedge.com. The Saatchi campaign for the New Zealand Tourism Board was conceptualised by Geoff Vuleta and a team of his fellow Saatchi and Saatchi patriots 7. *Moby-Dick* op cit. p3. 8. Ibid. p360.



Life Ho!

IAN WEDDE

42
43

MEMORY

Looking for a place to start with the idea of a “maritime sublime”, I climb up into the attic to retrieve the journal of James “Worser” Heberley. Worser was a young whaler who came ashore off Cook Strait on April Fool’s Day 1829, and I used his journal as a source in writing the novel *Symmes Hole*. ⁽¹⁾ Poking my head into my orderly pataka of archive boxes, I’m thinking how storytelling provides consciousness with a symbolic grammar, enlivens information and awakens memory. Worser tells the story of himself climbing into a pataka at Te Awaiti inside Tory Channel. And in *Symmes Hole*, in a section called “Ghost Writing” in homage to Melville’s querulous, grinning hero, Dr Long Ghost, I resorted to the cheap trick of exiling my dangerously dissociated narrator, a contemporary counterpart of Worser’s, under the roof of his house in order to indulge in a long, uninterrupted daydream of Pacific history.

GHOST WRITING

“Ghost Writing” begins with this history-maddened narrator recalling that “today was Robert Louis Stevenson’s birthday.” His subsequent voyage through a Pacific history recollected from romantic maroons, twists and contorts around such hallucinating narrators as Stevenson and Melville. These 19th century funambulists, teetering along their swaying Pacific narratives above a sublime abyss at once exhilarating and abject, represent the mid-point for an intellectual enterprise we now look back on as having been inaugurated in Europe’s Age of Reason, seasoned in the Enlightenment, excited by Romanticism, exaggerated by the intellectual tourism of ethnology, brought to crisis by modernism, and made banal and sensational by the tourism of television’s Discovery Channel. They show us where

the strange trauma of the sublime – that shot-through-with-lightning cloudy tale of the philosophes – had got to before “mechanical reproduction” made merely commonplace the capture of sublime effects such as the painterly handling of the sea in J.M.W. Turner’s *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying: Typhoon Coming On* (1840). With breathtaking dissociation John Ruskin described the painted sea in this work, also known as *The Slave Ship*, as “the noblest certainly ever painted by man”. ⁽²⁾

THE SUBLIME

Ruskin was operating within a discipline of art history invented by mid-19th century middle-European philosophes as a branch of moral philosophy, and further legitimised by Alexander Baumgarten’s invention of aesthetics, a quasi-science establishing the experience of beauty as the sensory recognition of perfection. That Ruskin could so blithely ignore the horrific content of *The Slave Ship* to concentrate on its aestheticised sublime affect is symptomatic of the traumatic nature of the sublime, and its dissociation from the conditions of (extra)ordinary lives, like Worser’s. Winston Churchill famously characterised life before the mast for the ordinary sailor in Her Majesty’s navy in the Age of Enlightenment as “rum, sodomy, and the lash.” The Pogues made this the title of an album. The phrase reminds us of the undertows of narrative reality that tug at lofty rhetoric.

What was I hoping to find up in the attic of my house? “Every passion borders on the chaotic”, wrote Walter Benjamin, “but the passion of the collector borders on the chaos of memory.” ⁽³⁾ I used this seductive quote as one of the epigraphs before the “Ghost Writing” section of *Symmes Hole*.



Slaves Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon Coming On
J.M.W. TURNER 1840, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
 right: detail

Another one was “Life ho!”, from Melville.⁽³⁾ Somewhere in the archive boxes, pretending to be orderly but in fact a chaos, is evidence of a life at once ordinary but also incredible, a life of astonishing adventure driven obsessively by a desire to find a way of being “somewhere in particular” as Donna Haraway puts it in her essay “The Persistence of Vision”.⁽⁴⁾

THE EVIDENCE

Worser’s life-yarn was the narrative spine of *Symmes Hole*. Looking at the sea without seeing the drowning slaves in it, the 18th and 19th century philosophes of the sublime were largely unaware of records such as Worser’s. Their “vision” was entirely metaphysical, not “embodied clear sight” in Haraway’s sense. Worser’s vision, on the other hand, while having a yarn-spinner’s fabulous dimension, was also clear and somewhere.

One of the somewheres Worser described is the narrow passage of Tory Channel, through which a swirling tide enters and exits the winding gut of Queen Charlotte Sound off Cook Strait. These days we are blasé about Tory Channel, because the Wellington-Picton ferry, like an apartment block with a pointed end, goes routinely in and out there. Earlier navigators were much closer to the surface and submarine depth of the water and not so indifferent to it. Just inside the heads is Whenui, whose Maori name records the Polynesian navigator Kupe’s encounter with a giant octopus. Watching the fast, groping sinews of tidal water and the streaming arms of bull kelp, it’s plausible to imagine that Kupe’s victory was over a monster of water not flesh, or that the wheke was both a brute and a brute of a current.

SURFACES AND DEPTHS

It’s helpful to think of oceans as rivers, which is closer to the “embodied vision” of close-to-the-water navigators like Kupe than it is to the blue expanses of mapmakers who privilege the sublime vastness of ocean. Oceans, and especially straits, pour strongly; banks border them; their currents flow over mountainous, chasmed seabeds. Cook Strait is itself a narrow tidal river through which the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean slosh quarrelsomely in and out of each other, and the Strait has a fissured floor over which the tides drop or are heaved up, especially at the so-called “Karori Rip”, where the water racing across a great submarine sill makes what yachties call “the washing machine”, a maelstrom of directionless chop that a sou’easterly wind can push up into a chaos of three and four metre high waves breaking in all directions at once across the swell.

Being very close to the surface of this, and indeed close to the deep below, is certainly “awesome” and can be “terrible” in the Burkean as well as the scared-shitless sense. All the more so when modernity’s navigation instruments – the magnetic compass, chronometer, and, more recently, the GPS – have dissociated us from that surface, much as Baumgarten’s aesthetics and professionalised art history dissociated consciousness from visual narrative, particularly from the enlivening narratives of memory.

A TERRIBLE CROSSING

Last summer my cousin and I, with two of my sons, were anchored in a sheltering bay off the main arm of Tory Channel waiting for a sou’easter to blow over. For days the whitecaps had been tearing past the mouth of the bay like a crowd of headbanded marathon runners, and the surrounding hills, a horizon of dark, lashing



treetops, had seemed to be forever falling forward as the clouds raced across them. Finally the wind died and the marine forecast indicated a temporary window in the weather. Crossing Cook Strait from Tory Channel to Port Nicholson, you have to time your run to get to the Karori Rip at slack tide, otherwise you get the “full benefit” of the Rip. In addition, the tide needs to be running east once you’ve cleared the Rip. All this is customary knowledge among yachties who sail this water, as it would have been for the canoe navigators Captain Cook didn’t notice treating the strait as a convenient water bridge. We did our navigation sums, and set off in the dark to clear Tory Channel about 3.30 a.m. There was little wind; the sheltered sound was calm.

You expect it to be rough just past the heads, and it was. In the dark, we were not surprised to come out into a violent rearing and breaking chop. There was not a lot of wind, but too much anyway, about twenty knots. The preceding days of sou’easter had pushed the swell up and the tide gushing from Tory Channel was playing havoc with it. The trouble was, hours later, nothing had changed. The black water broke over us, the kids clung to the sides of the cockpit and spewed, and it was nearly impossible to get any sense of direction. As the dark outline of the South Island coast fell astern, we looked for the Karori Light but had to keep pointing up east to cope with the big sea. The diesel thudded reassuringly, but then began to sound and smell crook. John got the engine covers off and found water filling the bilges – the boat’s electric bilge pump had failed. On hands and knees, retching and swearing, Penn heaved at the hand-pump in the cockpit. When dolphins joined us at dawn, no one was much enraptured. The “washing machine” section of the Karori Rip lasted about four hours instead of the

usual hour or less. The sun came out. Barrett’s Reef appeared as a broken line of white surf and black rocks. Twelve hours after leaving Tory Channel we puttered up Wellington harbour past the toy-house hillsides of Seatoun. Their aspect was comforting, not sublime. The fast-ferry crossing takes two and a half hours from berth to berth, and cannot be described as an “adventure.”

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Three things occur to me:

1. The oral mapping represented by Kupe-names like “Whekenui” embodies the clear sight and close contact required by Donna Haraway in her refocusing of the word “vision”: a rebuttal of the sublime, and of modernism’s romance with transcendence.
2. The boat John, the boys and I were in was a seaworthy cruising yacht with a motor. We wouldn’t have gone out in that weather in a wooden waka. Nonetheless, the body of water Cook called “Cook” in a rare act of egoism was a common thoroughfare for waka.
3. What are the different discourses of “Whekenui” and “Cook Strait” as names? One probably contains a mnemonic narrative that tells navigators what to do. The other is an example of the Imperial Project’s mode of dissociated naming.

NAMING RIGHTS

The official history of the emotional lives of Western societies has usually been recorded by and for an élite intellectual class defined by various combinations of literacy, patronage and privilege. Consequently the drama of the sublime suggests an absurd arc of consciousness in the emotional life of the West, originating in a mis-attributed neoclassical moment in the 1st or 2nd century A.D.,

when Longinus is supposed to have authored "On the sublime", a famous rebuttal to the poet Horace. "On the sublime" is no more likely to have mattered to people outside the circle of philosophes than Ad Reinhardt's flat rejection of originality did in the 1950s. And yet, there is a tantalisingly familiar tension in both moments: between decorum and originality, tradition and invention.

The "vision" of Horace's odes was steadfastly if ironically "somewhere in particular"; their prosodies were brilliantly satisfied with academic, Greek-derived models. Longinus, the philosophes claimed, wanted less "somewhere" and more sublimity – more originality. The philosophes wanted "Longinus" to want unearthly, not commonplace, beauty.

The most succinct record of the late-modernist crisis of the sublime is captured (usually misquoted) in the now mythic exchange between the transcendently inclined Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb, and the academically rigorous Ad Reinhardt. In 1943, with arch Sublimist Barnett Newman egging them on, Rothko and Gottlieb announced that "There is no such thing as good painting about nothing."⁽⁵⁾ Reinhardt's rebuttal proclaimed that "There is no such thing as a good painting about something."⁽⁶⁾

This was the moment that the sublime's personality split: one half wanting abstraction to provide transcendence, as Ruskin wanted Turner's catastrophic seascape to be without foreground narrative, to be all sublime affect; the other wanting abstraction to be, so to speak, "de void of content", the sublime's ultimate abyss or maelstrom, into which all meaning has been plunged, extinguished, and sealed over – in black, of course, a black that is utterly inscrutable and affectless.

And while it is absurd to suggest that the emotional history of the West can be sourced in Longinus, transported in the sublime, and routed through Reinhardt, many societies record such

binaried tensions, between longing for the more of invention and transcendence, and satisfaction with the less of custom and material reality. And not just Western societies: the anxiety provoked by Maui throughout the Pacific is precisely on account of his making trouble between decorum and originality. In the West though, the anxiety may be more pronounced, producing a trauma like the sublime, as a result of what might be summarised as dissociation – sometimes called the great gift of modernity to civilisation. Negotiating between transcendence and materiality, and between originality and custom, will be less traumatic in cultures where such realms are imbricated rather than separated.

In addition, as the sublime, bulked up with awesome reports of voyages, began to tsunami towards the 19th century, the great Linnaean project of renaming everything in the world was hastening the dissociation of nomination from narrative. The West's Imperial Project opened up a gap of dissociation into which the romantic sublime rushed, like a typhoon into a low-pressure zone.

TOURISM AND THE SUBLIME

Into the same gap rushed tourists, those creatures of the sublime, as well as anthropologists and ethnologists, creatures of sublime dissociation and of instrumentation. Their combined longing for sublimity and taxonomic certainty not only increased and accelerated the dissociation of names and symbols from narratives, and of senses from the natural world, it also separated "spirit" from "material", "form" from "function", and "commodity" from "value". Longing for adventure, sublime tourists mistook the customary for the exotic. Thirsting for transcendence, they drove themselves like wedges between complex, integrated realms of the natural and the supernatural. Picking their way through mountains of over-aestheticised or de-narrativised souvenirs, the philosophes sorted



A View of Cape Stephens in Cook Strait, New Zealand, with Waterspouts **WILLIAM HODGES** 1776
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

them into museums that may forever remain memorials to the sublime trauma.

SUBLIME REAL ESTATE

The contemporary brochure language of tourist resort real estate is also a museum: a linguistic display-case of fragments left over from the sublime heyday. You can Get Back in Touch with Nature, Find Yourself, Be Somewhere Timeless, Be Awe Inspired. Your experience will inevitably involve Views and will be Scenic. Both can be purchased, as can Adventure. A new twist: 18th century Burkean Terror, the keystone of overarching Romantic sublime emotion especially as experienced by the 19th century sublime traveller, or by Percy Bysshe Shelley putting up too much sail on the *Don Juan* off Spezzia in 1822, is replaced by Eco-terror, the frightening but morally uplifting experience of immersion in ecological consciousness. The contemporary sublime backpackers do WOOFA time on an organic farm; their wealthier safari counterparts video endangered animals in Africa.

RETIREMENT AND SOLITUDE

Advertising for retirement homes and modern tourist guides both contain the sad echoes of the sublime longing for solitude. Lonely Planet Guides, driving that old 19th century class and value distinction between "travellers" and "tourists", herd the 21st century's Wordsworths into Lake Districts organised as historic theme parks around promises of solitude; the "traveller" will, however, enjoy the bunk-house company of similarly mis-guided "tourists". An old snobbery is at work here, as old as the sublime philosophe's imperial desire for first-contact naming-rights. And so the observing pronoun of Mungo Park's account of his epic voyage down the Niger in 1796, *Travels in the Interior of Africa* (1799), has been replaced by the

observing lens of Animal Planet's video camera. Lonely, perhaps, but not alone in the virtual community of viewers, the "retired" elderly watch the backlit processions of endangered species – "Ecoterror!" – silhouetted against the sunsets of an Africa that is all Park.

SPIRITUALITY

Similarly dispiriting is the bogus over-rhetoricising of the contemporary sublime's promotion of "spirituality". The various leech-gatherers and charcoal burners who became players in Wordsworth's sublime hagiography probably subscribed to a robust animism under a veneer of Christianity, and would not have been too concerned to distinguish natural and supernatural realms. That's what's gone now, replaced by a prim, neo-Victorian pseudo-reverence towards the indigenous "spirituality" of the 19th century sublime's missionary converts.

GET A LIFE

I descend my ladder, leaving Worser undisturbed in the pataka of memory. The sounds of waterspouts (wind gusting over sixty knots) fade; I can still taste salt. "Life ho!"

Ian Wedde was introduced at an early age to the rattle of gales under the corrugated iron of a bach on the snout side of Waikawa Bay in Queen Charlotte Sounds, where he would complete his novel Symmes Hole. He goes back most years, preferably under sail. He works as Curator for Humanities at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

1. Ian Wedde *Symmes Hole* Penguin Books, Auckland, and Faber and Faber, London, 1986
2. John Ruskin *Modern Painters* Vol.2., J.M Dent and Co, London, 1906 (1843), p110.
3. Walter Benjamin "Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting" *Illuminations* Schocken Books, New York, 1978. p60. 4. Donna Haraway "The Persistence of Vision" *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* Routledge, London and New York, 1991. pp188-96. 5. Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb cited in Edward Alden Jewell "The Realm of Art: A New Platform and Other Matters: 'Globalism' Pops into View" *New York Times* 13 June 1943. 6. Ad Reinhardt "Documents of Modern Art" *Pax* 13 1960.

The Exhibition



















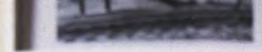
Untitled (Beautiful Place) film frames **PAUL SIETSEMA** 1998

Duck Character, Mouse Character **RONNIE VAN HOUT** 1999





58
59



Complete Plans for new Garage E2





60
61



Motu Paradiso (A.N.Z. Dependency Tax Haven)
MICHAEL SHEPHERD 1996
Savage Island 1996







62
63





Gold River Mill; Collapsed Structure at McBride Bay
from the Nootka Sound series **STAN DOUGLAS** 1996



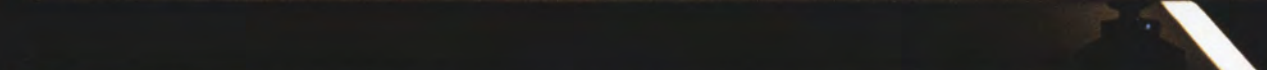
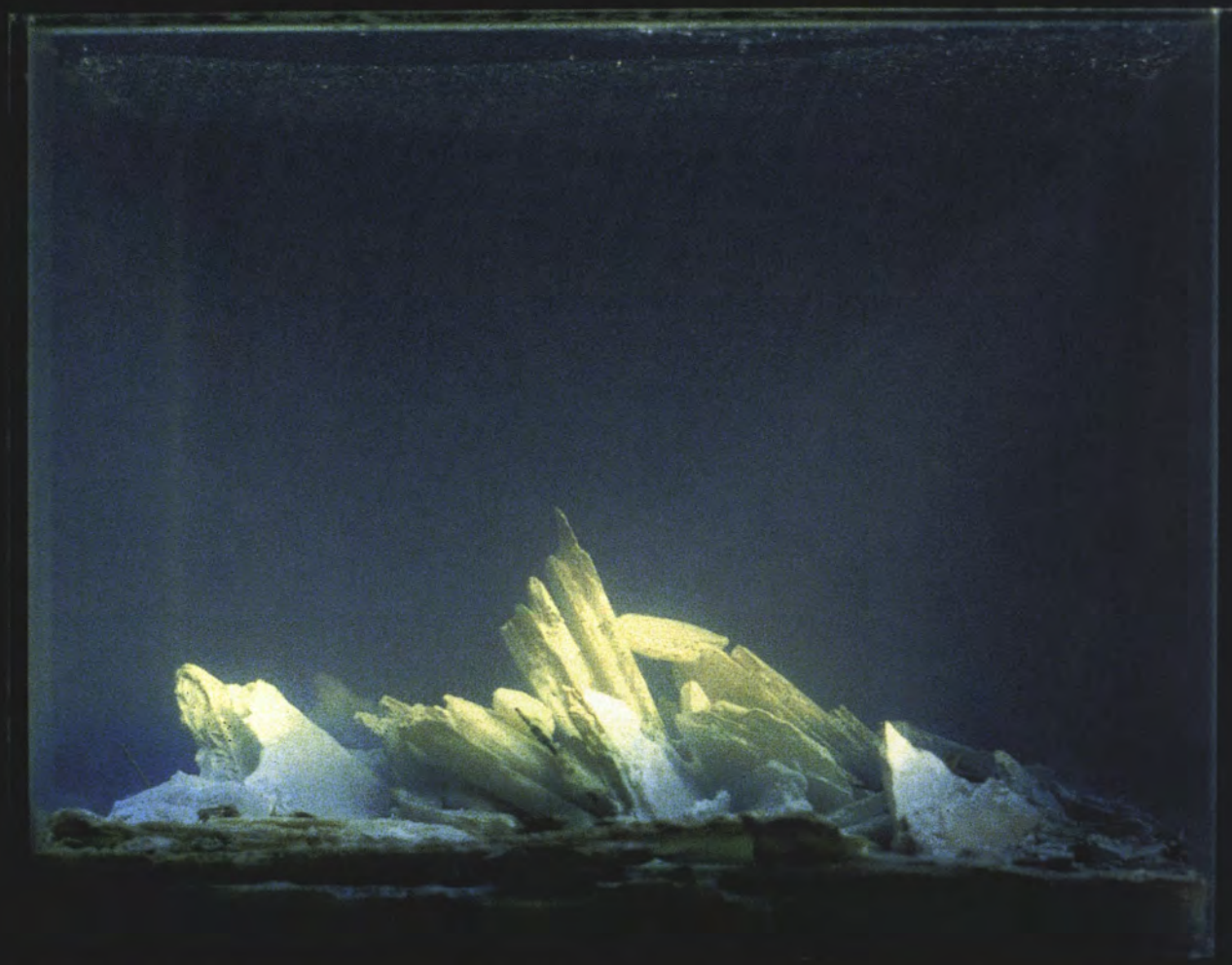


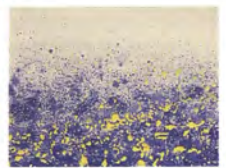


From a Shipwreck 3 **KENDAL HEYES** 1985

The Sea of Ice **MARIELE NEUDECKER** 1997

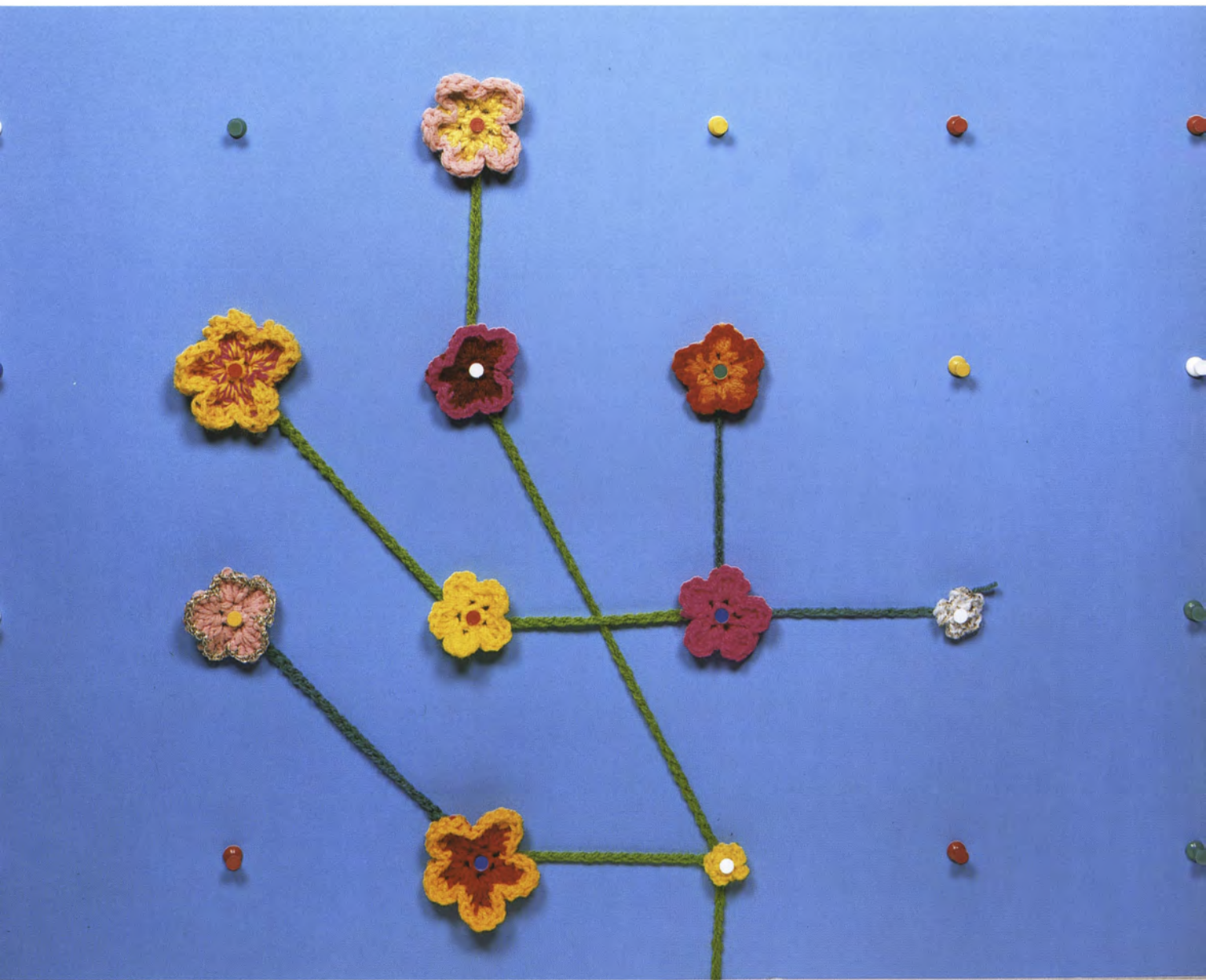






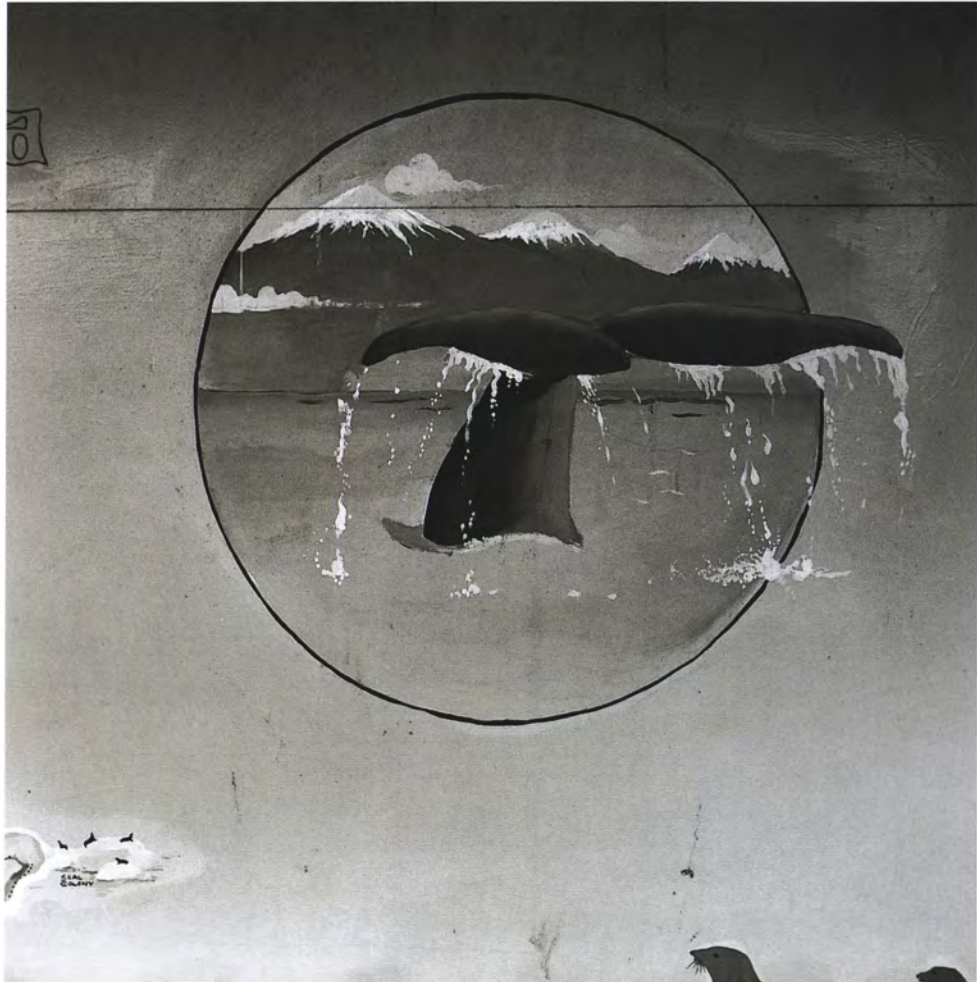


E



















Iceblink

PETER BRUNT

82
83

IN 1768 CAPTAIN COOK left Great Britain on the first of his three voyages around the world. In December of that year, the Royal Academy of Art was instituted under the signature of King George III and its inaugural address was delivered by Sir Joshua Reynolds in January 1769. Indeed Reynolds' annual Discourses would run concurrently with Cook's explorations in the Pacific for the next decade. Both ventures proclaimed their importance to the nation. Reynolds called the Academy an "ornament... to its greatness... the last effect of opulence and power",⁽¹⁾ while the Lords of the Admiralty promised that Cook's voyages would "redound greatly to [its] Honor... as a Maritime Power, as well as to the Dignity of the Crown of Great Britain."⁽²⁾

These ambitious ventures in the 18th century were complemented by a revival of an ancient discourse on sublimity. The sublime named a feeling, widely cultivated and commented on at the time, corresponding to the imperial scope of such adventures. Even today we cannot contemplate the legacy of Cook's voyages, widely credited with having laid the foundations of global capitalism and world-wide nation-states, without some heady feeling for their magnitude.

Yet both projects, in important respects, failed. What is more, they failed in terms of the very idealism which prompted them in the first place.

COOK'S FIRST VOYAGE was commissioned under the assumption, made explicit in his official "Instructions", that a "Continent or Land of great extent... may be found to the Southward..." It was in search of this continent that he was "requir'd and directed to put to sea..." The anticipated discovery of this continent was

not something incidental to the voyage, additional to more important goals, such as discovering "Countries hitherto unknown", "Attaining a Knowledge of distant Parts", or advancing the "Trade and Navigation" of Great Britain, also mentioned in the Instructions.⁽³⁾ To the contrary, it was the primary goal.

The continent was not found on the first voyage and a second put to sea in 1772 under the same directive. Indeed, Cook would spend eight months in the southern Pacific on that voyage – two excursions of four months each – searching for the elusive prize.

There is something extraordinarily compelling about that extended sojourn in the Southern Ocean that sets it apart from the rest of the voyage. Every day Cook records in his journal the ship's geographical position, sets down its exact latitude and longitude, describes the weather, the shape of icebergs, the kinds of birds observed; but otherwise, nothing happens. Every day for eight months – water water everywhere – it is the same thing. On the one hand, there is the tedium of time's passage, held together, day after day, only by ship's business and the linguistic tissue of endless description. On the other hand, the voyagers were never closer to their prize than in that element of monotonous waiting in which the facticity and finitude of existence – is this it? is this all there is? – must have pressed itself home with peculiar intensity.

According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, the fundamental condition of the Burkean sublime is fear "kindled by the threat of nothing further happening". The sublime looms in the terror of privations: "privation of light, terror of darkness; privation of others, terror of solitude; privation of language, terror of silence; privation of objects, terror of emptiness; privation of life, terror of death." All of these terrors confront or imagine the suspension of those daily



Ice Islands with Iceblink **GEORGE FORSTER**
(previously accredited to William Hodges) C.1772-3
Image Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney

textures of space and time we take for granted. One word always follows another; the world we see and move through makes sense; after this day there is the next. But what if this temporal continuum in which we exist stopped? For Lyotard, the terror kindled by that possibility – or by occasions which give rise to it, real or imagined – prepare the experience of the sublime. The sublime is not that terror itself, he adds, but the “relief” or “delight” (Burke’s terms) provoked by its cessation in an occurrence, an event, an *It happens that*. ⁽⁴⁾

Such an event, I suggest, occurred in the Southern Ocean on Sunday 30 January 1774. For it happened on that day that Cook, coming square up against an “immense field” of treacherous ice mountains, decided to turn around. He writes in his journal:

A little after 4 am we perceived the Clouds to the South near the horizon to be of an unusual Snow white brightness which denounced our approach to field ice, soon after it was seen from the Mast-head and at 8 o’Clock we were close to the edge of it which extended East and West in a straight line far beyond our sight; as appear’d by the brightness of the horizon; in the Situation we were now in just the Southern half of the horizon was enlightned by the Reflected rays of the Ice to a considerable height. The Clouds near the horizon were of a perfect Snow whiteness and were difficult to be distinguished from the Ice hills whose lofty summits reached the Clouds. ⁽⁵⁾

Cook was not given to aesthetic reverie and did not make a fetish of the scene before him. Nonetheless, his account bears the hallmarks of an authentically sublime encounter. The keywords are not the descriptive details of the spectacle – its vast extension, its “lofty summits”, and so on – but (as we have learnt from Lyotard) the references to “interruption” and “relief” found in the passage

following. Taking the occasion to reflect on the character of his own ambition, Cook continues:

I who had Ambition not only to go farther than any one had done before, but as far as it was possible to go, was not sorry at meeting with this interruption as it in some measure relieved us, at least shortned the dangers and hardships inseparable with the Navigation of the Southern Polar Regions; Since therefore, we could not proceed one Inch farther to the South, no other reason need be assigned for my Tacking and Standing back to the north, being at this time in the Latitude of 71° 10’ S, Longitude 106° 54’ W. ⁽⁶⁾

The decision to retreat here is more than the judgment of good sense. For in this moment and before this scene, this “bright paradise”, Cook confronts the limits of his ambition (itself an aspect of the sublime, according to Burke). He renounces the search for the Southern Continent. And he forecloses the horizon of possibility for which it had stood. In a sense, Cook confronts the dream of that continent in the guise of its spectral double: not as a land of endless bounty and profit but a limitless expanse of white ice, “extended in a solid body quite to the Pole”. In his journal, a week later, he is emphatic: the “assertions and conjectures” of “all authors who have written on this subject... are now intirely refuted...” ⁽⁷⁾ All that has since transpired in the wake of Cook’s voyages has done so in the shadow of that cancelled idea.

THE FAILURE OF the Royal Academy was also the failure of an idea. Moreover this failure was intimately linked to the broader significance of Cook’s voyages. But while the latter laid the foundations of global capitalism, the Royal Academy’s objective was to contest the primacy of commerce as the *raison d’être* of



*The Resolution and Adventure, 4 Jan 1773,
Taking in Ice for Water* **WILLIAM HODGES** c.1773
Image Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney

English nationhood. According to Reynolds, the authentic ground of English identity ought not to be traffic in mere commodities, but culture and taste, as determined by the artistic ideals and civic values of classical Renaissance humanism. The Academy was founded in a bid by the British élite to appropriate that tradition as the rightful inheritance of the English nation and as the standard-bearer of its culture.

In this, however, it too failed. The eclipse of the classical tradition and the demise of its aristocratic social order and institutions is part of the story of modern European history. As for the Royal Academy, while there was no single cause of its failure, among its many (sublime) "interruptions" was the impact of Cook's voyages and in particular of what Reynolds called, in his "Seventh Discourse" of 1776, "the authority of others".⁽⁸⁾

In the rhetoric of Renaissance humanism, the "other" had always constituted a central category, incorporating in different ways both the fellow citizen and the subordinate. As Reynolds makes clear however, this social vision did not extend beyond the cultural map of Western Europe, despite his references to the "universal". By contrast, the "other" who irrupts into consciousness in the "Seventh Discourse" bears a face barely recognisable in the mirror of Enlightenment Europe. There are references to Cherokees, Tahitians, Eastern nations, Orientals, and women; not to mention those others within, merchants and traders whose commercial life-ways had threatened the aristocratic culture of the Academy from the beginning. Tahitians tattoo the body, English women strait-lace it, Cherokees paint their faces, Europeans shave their beards and wear wigs... The sheer "horizontality" of the world, made palpable by the extraordinary ethnographic report of Cook's

voyages, is registered in such a way as to force Reynolds to fundamentally compromise the ideology of the Academy.⁽¹⁰⁾ The complex role of local custom and habit, of native prejudice and particularity in the formation of social identity, is privileged in striking contrast to an earlier rhetoric of reason and universality. In fact the classical tradition itself is reduced and relativised to one "custom" amongst others, to simply "the prejudice we have in favour of the ancients".⁽⁹⁾ That prejudice may be old and ours – its remaining virtues, for Reynolds – but it is otherwise bereft of metaphysical necessity.

COOK'S VOYAGES AND the Royal Academy project diverted from their courses; both "failed". Cook abandoned the search for the Southern Continent and headed towards the South Island of New Zealand; Reynolds abandoned the universalist rhetoric of the earlier discourses – even as it was being appropriated by middle-class radicals – to advocate the stabilising virtues of national customs.

But the failure which really matters to me here is a more ambiguous affair. It is a failure that cannot be told in the past tense or as a matter only of historical record. These failures or turning points are not just bends in the historical plot; they are ruptures, openings in the continuum of time, suspended in an ambivalent, agitated present. They are bright with the "here and now". I am speaking of the failure that lies between the sojourn in the Southern Ocean and the "interruption" of the ice fields; between the encounter with that spectacle and Cook's decision to turn about; between his "I will not say it was impossible anywhere to get farther to the South" and his "Since we could not



Unrecallable Now MARIELE NEUDECKER 1998 Melbourne Biennale

proceed one inch farther to the South"; or the failure betrayed by the historically irrelevant fact that he writes his entire journal entry for 30 January 1774 twice. He replaces "lofty summits" with "mountains"; "vastly large" with "very large"; he deletes "vast Ice Mountains" and writes in "prodigious Ice Mountains", ⁽¹¹⁾ and so on. But otherwise the differences are insignificant.

These minimal differences and vacillations register an experience of indeterminacy which gives rise to the sublime. To be sure, Cook acted decisively, as he usually did. Yet the encounter with the southern ice fields included, I suggest, a prior moment when the "next step", and the history unfolded by it, was not a foregone conclusion; a moment when the expanse of ice seemed to present the sign of an impasse, an end of the line: the end of Cook's ambition, the end of a national quest for a Southern Continent, the end of an era of imagining. The vision of the ice fields is sublime because, through the very "terror" of "nothing further happening" that it engenders, it becomes a sign of the undetermined, a primordial condition of possibility and agency to which the sublime bears witness.

MARIELE NEUDECKER'S 1998 installation *Unrecallable Now* is a large floor piece, an archipelago of luminous white mountains in an opaque white sea. Through its artifice, this installation returns us to a scene of sublime encounter analogous to Cook's. By it we are made to confront the legacy of romanticism, whose protean sensibilities have shaped modernity and its culture for the past three hundred years. We are implicated in this legacy, yet the work also registers our estrangement from it. Where once the quest for the sublime generated objects of transcendence – God, Nature, History and the

Exotic in various guises – now we are faced with the disarray of used-up figures and tropes from the past as so many familiar conventions and clichés.

Neudecker's work re-presents such a trope, not so much in its acculturated banality, but as possessed of a strange and still-compelling afterlife. The work repeats the essential gesture of the sublime, since we are again presented with the effect of an impasse, of something unattainable. What is different this time around is that the unattainable is located in the past, as an object of memory. We remain within the loop of the sublime, but the question is no longer "Is it happening?", "Is this it?", as Lyotard suggested, but "What happened?" as a question asked in the present of the past. The question is not answered by history. Rather we are returned to history as to the scene of an event somehow crucial, yet forgotten: "Unrecallable Now".

Peter Brunt lectures in the Art History Department at Victoria University, Wellington. He is engaged in research on the sublime in representations of the Pacific.

1. Sir Joshua Reynolds *Discourses* (ed. Pat Rogers) Penguin, London, 1992. p79. 2. Cited in Grenfell Price *The Explorations of Captain James Cook in the Pacific* Dover Publications, New York, 1971. p18. 3. Ibid. 4. Jean-Francois Lyotard *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby) Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1991. p99. 5. James Cook *The Journals of Captain Cook, Volume Two: The Voyage of the Resolution and Adventure, 1772-1775* (ed. J.C. Beaglehole) Hakluyt Society, Cambridge, 1961. p321. 6. Ibid. p323. 7. Ibid. p325. 8. Reynolds. p192. 9. Ibid. p199. 10. For an extended analysis of this ideological shift in Reynolds' *Discourses* see John Barrell *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* Yale University Press, New Haven, 1986. 11. James Cook, op cit. pp320-4 for both versions.



Unrecallable Now **MARIELE NEUDECKER** 1998 Spike Island, Bristol



Blue-Lip'd Cannibal Ladies: The Allure of the Exotic in the Illicit *Resolution* Journal of Gunner John Marra

TOM RYAN

88
89

WILD NATIVE OR WILD GOOSE?

Some future faunist, a man of fortune, will, I hope, extend his visits to the Kingdom of Ireland; a new field and a country little known to the naturalist. He will not, it is to be wished, undertake that tour unaccompanied by a botanist, because the mountains have scarcely been sufficiently examined... The manners of the wild natives, their superstitions, their prejudices, their sordid way of life, will exort many useful reflections. ⁽¹⁾

IN 1776 SCIENTIST Gilbert White proposed an expedition into Ireland, part of Britain's imperial heartland. The programme of scientific investigation he recommended was very similar to that employed by his friend Joseph Banks during James Cook's first Pacific voyage, six years earlier.⁽²⁾ Ironically, just as White was making his plans for Ireland, one of the Emerald Isle's own "wild natives" was having published, illicitly and anonymously, the first account of Cook's second – and arguably most successful – voyage of exploration in the Antipodes.

The *Journal of the Resolution's Voyage* ⁽³⁾ first announced to the world how Cook had decisively proved that no Southern Continent existed in the temperate zone. It was also the first account of Cook's discovery of the great ice-mass subsequently known as Antarctica, and of the expedition's diverse encounters with natural elements and native peoples in the South Pacific. While the publication was something of a private coup for its author, it was of great concern to the Lords of the Admiralty, who had been assured by Cook that no such unauthorised journals existed, and to the officers and "scientific gentlemen" of the voyage, who were already locked in battle with their superiors and with each other over limitations being imposed on the publication of their own accounts.

Soon after arriving back in England in mid-1775, Cook heard rumours of a pending publication by one of his *Resolution* crew. He sent a subordinate around their London haunts and printing houses to investigate. Eventually the focus turned on John Marra, a gunner's mate, who admitted having sold his journal to Mr Francis Newbery of St Paul's Churchyard. He also stated that two other crew members had "each kept a Journal which they had offered to the Booksellers but they were so badly written that no one could read them"; at least three other lower-deck seamen were also named as having kept some written record. On hearing this, and on being advised that Marra's account was "not... worth regarding", Cook dropped the matter.⁽⁴⁾ The journal was duly published in London in late 1775, with a pirated edition being printed in Dublin in 1776, and German and French translations appearing in 1776 and 1777. ⁽⁵⁾

In the two centuries since, "Marra's journal" has been totally overshadowed by officially sanctioned accounts written by Cook himself (1777), by the scientists George Forster (1777) and Johann Forster (1778), and by several other gentlemen and officers. The eminent historian of Pacific exploration, J.C. Beaglehole, described Marra's effort as "a small book even when blown up by the editor, but interesting enough". ⁽⁶⁾ Without a doubt he has a point: the frequent subordination of Marra's individual voice to an overall editorial authority, plus the inclusion of extracts from the works of earlier Pacific voyagers and some entries from the journal of a seaman on *Adventure*, companion-ship of the *Resolution*, does make this an unconventional voyaging text. But, I ask, can a book of 328 pages be dismissed as "small", and should the journal that



"The large Fields of Ice by which their Passage was obstructed". Enderby Land, southeast of Copetown – probably the first published illustration of Antarctica. Engraving from a sketch by John Marra.

constitutes the bulk of its content realistically be treated as insignificant?

Cook first encountered Marra at Batavia in December 1770, during the final leg of his first Pacific voyage. The seaman had deserted from a Dutch ship which was demanding him back, arguing he was "Jan Marre, a Dane, from Elsinore". Much in need of replacements for his own depleted *Endeavour* crew, Cook refused to surrender him, claiming him as a British subject, "John Marra, a young Irishman of Cork". With this re-found identity and allegiance, the 22-year-old Marra sailed from Java, and began familiarising himself with the ways of Banks and his scientific associates.⁽⁷⁾ Once in England he remained in Cook's service, and appears to have been an early volunteer for the projected second voyage. His main recorded distinction at this time, however, was being punished for mutiny and desertion during preparations for the July 1772 departure of *Resolution* – a taste of things to come.⁽⁸⁾

Marra's record of continued insubordination to British naval authority played a large part in subsequent generations of scholars bypassing his account. It is my view, nevertheless, based on a careful reading of his published journal, that Marra was far from the semi-literate misfit he is generally assumed to have been. Take, for example, his detailed account of how, just before their return to England, Cook called together all the men of the *Resolution* to congratulate them on their collective achievements, and to demand that "all those officers who had kept journals... deliver them into his custody, to be sealed up in a chest, not to be opened till delivered to their lordships at the proper office".⁽⁹⁾ It is both a

masterpiece of subversive humour and a serious exposition of how standard British naval practice automatically assumed that ordinary seamen lacked the ability to produce such documents. Consider also Marra's description from 15 December 1773 of the *Resolution's* encounter with the ice-packs in the southernmost depths of the Pacific, as it pushed its way across the Antarctic Circle in terrain never previously encountered:

Here the ice-islands presented a most romantic prospect of ruined castles, churches, arches, steeples, wrecks of ships, and a thousand wild and grotesque forms of monsters, dragons, and all the hideous shapes that the most fertile imagination can possibly conceive. About these islands the penguins are heard continually screaming, and add to the horror of the scene, which cannot be beheld by the most intrepid without some emotions of fear.⁽¹⁰⁾

Or, from 30 January 1774, another entry by "our journalist aboard the *Resolution*", during Cook's deepest – and final – plunge beyond the Antarctic Circle:

This day [we] passed by a great island of ice, and heard many dreadful cracks, as if the whole earth was cleaving asunder. Saw several whales and a strange bird as before. Taking a view from the mast-head nothing was to be seen but a dreary prospect of ice and sea. Of the former might be seen a whole country as far as the eye could carry one, diversified with hills and dales, and fields and imaginary plantations, that all had the appearance of cultivation; yet was nothing more than the sports of chance in the formation of those immense bodies of congregated ice. This second attempt at discovery of land in this dreary region being attended with no more success than the first, the captain thought it advisable to give over the pursuit of the present, and once more to direct the ship's course to the northward.⁽¹¹⁾

"A remarkable high Mountain".
Probably Freezeland Park, South Sandwich Island,
South Atlantic. Engraving from a sketch by John Marra.



Marra's writing is far more literary than navigational notes and diaries kept by other lower-deck crew of Cook's ships. It even reads more eloquently than the published journals of the Captain himself, and of some of his officers and "scientific gentlemen". This suggests that John Marra was, relatively speaking, not lacking in education. If, as seems likely, he was Catholic, this education would probably have been gained in the illegal "hedge schools". Until the Penal Laws imposed by their British Protestant overlords began to be dismantled from the 1780s, such schools provided Ireland's "wild natives" with their only access to basic learning. Marra was probably also one of those thousands of refugees remembered in Irish history as the "Wild Geese", who during this period sought education, employment and freedom in Continental Europe and beyond.⁽¹²⁾ Which is how, presumably, this particular "wild Irishman" came to be in the service of the Dutch in Batavia.

Marra's account is refreshing because it has not been shaped or limited by the homogenising "scientific" atmosphere of the upper deck and grand cabin, and, by extension, the diverse agendas of the Royal Society and the Royal Navy, and their aristocratic and commercial patrons. It reflects more the everyday dramas, gritty realism and battered souls of the lower deck. This view does not negate the other; they are entangled, alternative accounts of this particular encounter with the Antipodean exotic.

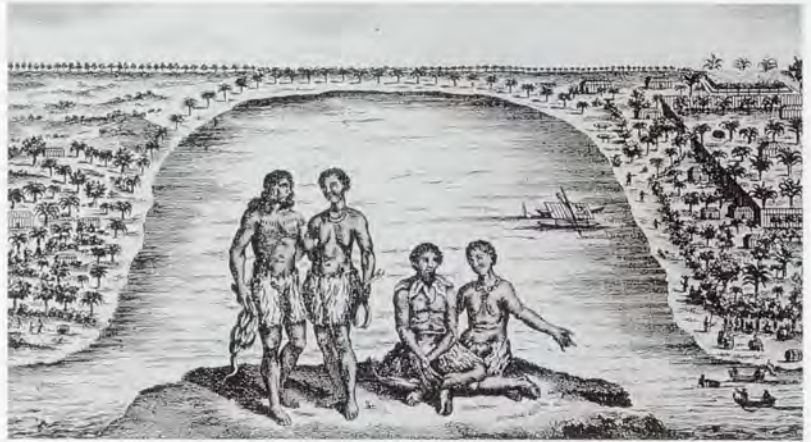
WILD IRISHMAN OR WOULD-BE-ANTHROPOLOGIST?

Our treatment at this isle was such as had induced one of our gunners mates to form a Plan to remain at it, he knew he could not execute it with success while we lay in the Bay, therefore took the opportunity as soon as we were out and all our Sails set

to slip overboard (he being a good swimmer) but he was discov[er]ed before he had got clear of the ship... I kept the Man in confinement till we were clear of the isles then dismissed [him] without any other punishment, for when I considered the situation of the Man in life I did not think him so culpable as it may first appear, he was an Irishman by birth, a good Seaman and had Sailed both in the English and the Dutch service... I never learnt that he had either friends or connection to confine him to any particular part of the world, all Nations were alike to him, where can Such a Man spend his days better than at one of these isles where he can injoy all the necessaries and some of the luxuries of life in ease and Plenty.⁽¹³⁾

THUS WROTE JAMES COOK of John Marra in the official *Resolution* journal entry of 14 May 1774, en route from Tahiti to Huahine. As reflected in their respective writings, there was always a unique relationship between the Englishman and the Irishman: the former admiring the young gunner for his seamanly skills, but despairing of his indifference to authority and society; the latter in awe of his commander's maritime and leadership qualities, but cynical of the earthly powers he represented. Undoubtedly, too, it was this same mutual regard which the following year caused Marra to quickly confess when asked by Cook's emissary whether he was the author of the rumoured journal, and which in turn caused Cook to desist from taking action against him.

Marra's own account of his attempted desertion at Tahiti deserves scrutiny. Consistent with the overall anonymous tone of his published journal, it describes the event from the perspective of a fictitious and unnamed ordinary crewman on the *Resolution*. For good measure it also takes a swipe at the anthropological pretensions of the "gentlemen" on Cook's two voyages:



Engraving after an illustration in Abel Tasman's account of his 1643 visit to Amsterdam Island, or Tongatapu. "Being a View of an Harbour and Plantations in the Island of Rotterdam, with the Manner of the Inhabitants sitting and standing".

[it] proved to be the gunner's mate, endeavouring to escape with a view to being left behind; and pity it was, that he happened to be discovered, as from him a more copious and accurate account of the religion and civil government of these people might have been expected after a few years stay among them, than could possibly be collected from a few short visits, by gentlemen who had the language to learn, and whose first business was to procure necessities, in order to enable them to pursue more important discoveries. But this attempt failing, and the man taken up, he was brought back, and laid in irons to bewail his ill-fortune, having flattered himself, as a man of enterprize, with being made king of the country, or at least prime minister. (14)

But, according to the memoirs of John Elliott, a trainee officer aboard *Resolution*, Marra deserted because he had been "promis'd a House, Land and a Pretty Wife" by the Tahitians. The following marginalia can be found in Cook's original handwritten account of the incident: "I know not if he [Marra] might not have obtained my consent if he had applied for it in proper time." J.C. Beaglehole is suspicious of the way Marra "ingeniously puts forward anthropological research as an advantage to be gained from his desertion". (15) My own position is more generous to Marra: I accept his word simply because his published narrative suggests a genuine ability and interest in writing intelligently, even "anthropologically", about the indigenous peoples encountered in his travels and trysts.

In their dealings with the local inhabitants, many ordinary seamen on Cook's ships, and not a few of their officers and gentlemen, were inclined to "shoot first and ask questions later". So it is interesting to see the genuine humanity – if sometimes tinged with a roguish wit – in Marra's accounts of "Indian" life. He

shows this in the reports of his earliest encounters, with Maori at Dusky Bay and Queen Charlotte Sound in New Zealand, through to his last, with the Patagonians of Tierra del Fuego. Along the way, Marra provided Europe with its first-ever published descriptions of the indigenous peoples of a number of Pacific societies, including Niue, the New Hebrides and New Caledonia; and with its first reports by an English-language observer of several others, especially Easter Island, the Marquesas, Tonga and the Solomon Islands. Similarly, during two separate visits to Tahiti and the Society Islands, he aligned himself through his writing with those who privileged fact over fiction in their descriptions of these overly-Arcadianised locales.

While it would be pointless to attempt to summarise the ethnological material in Marra's text, two examples seem appropriate. The first concerns the southern Tongan islands of Eua and Tongatapu, visited by Tasman in 1643 and named by him "Middleburg" and "Amsterdam" respectively. Marra observed and documented many aspects of their people's customary ways in the course of his October 1773 visit. He mentions trade, ceremonies, entertainment, chiefs, priests, gardening, livestock, fences, houses, sleeping, eating, families, weaving, clothing, bark-cloth, weaponry, tools, coconuts, water, theft, sex, beauty and more. The following quotes show how Marra compared the natural and cultural attributes of these islands with those of the recently-farewelled Society group. In the process, he represented Tongatapu as being as close to a terrestrial paradise as the already-fabled Tahiti:

This island is level, the lawns of a beautiful green, and the woods



Engraving of a scene from a narrative by one of Adventure's crew "Representing the landing of Part of the Adventure's Crew in search of their Companions, who were murdered and eaten by the Savages of New-Zealand." Grass Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound; note tattooed hand of Thomas Hill and dog eating human flesh.

abounding with fruit-bearing trees, so varied in colour that nothing in nature can afford a more enchanting prospect.... [T]he homes and plantations of the inhabitants of the inland part of the country [are] infinitely preferable to any in that part of the world [we have] yet beheld. Their houses are far more commodious than those of the islanders near the line. (16)

On these islands the virtue of chastity has not yet taken place. The women, though less inviting, are not less willing to gratify strangers with all they can desire. But it would seem from their remarkable populousness, that their domestic concerns are under better regulations among themselves than has yet been observed among the islanders [we] lately left. (17)

Their working tools, their proas or canoes... their nets for catching fish, their fish-hooks, and their domestic utensils, their arms, and in short all their mechanical inventions are each so curiously made and polished, that it would require the utmost skill of an European artificer to excell them. (18)

Our second example relates to the Marquesas Islands, visited and so named by Mendana in 1595, and next encountered by Europeans with the arrival of the *Resolution* in April 1774. Again, much diverse information is recorded by Marra, especially regarding the sexual modesty of the women and the beauty of the people's tattooing, its aesthetic and social dimensions, and its comparability to Maori practices:

[They] were in general more elegantly painted than any [we] had met with, even more so than the New Zealanders, having their very lips tattooed; and the figures on their faces and breast so curiously traced and delineated, that no printer in Europe could have sketched the outline of a bird, fish, or animal, with more nicety, or with greater exactness. (19)

The most conspicuous mark of distinction appeared to be tattooing. In this the difference was very discernable. The chiefs were tattooed from their faces to their finger ends, not in volutes or spiral lines like the chiefs in New Zealand; but in figures of various kinds, suited to the different parts of the body, according to the artist's fancy, in which no small ingenuity was displayed. Perhaps the different qualities of those chiefs might have been discovered by observing the characters represented; but time was wanting for such nice observations. (20)

Marra's point – that careful observation of tattooing is necessary in order to understand it – is notable. Five weeks later in Tahiti he tried to desert, claiming as primary motivation a desire to engage in long-term observation of "the religion and civil government of these people". Back in Queen Charlotte Sound in November that same year, no such scholarly intent appears to have been proffered when Marra was again facing a charge of desertion. Indeed, such an excuse would not have been believed, given the circumstances of his actions.

At that time there was great concern on the *Resolution* over the fate of their companion-ship *Adventure*, which twelve months earlier had disappeared during a storm off the New Zealand coast. In reality, while *Resolution* went on to undertake a second circuit of the South Pacific, a cutter-load of ten men from *Adventure* had been massacred and cannibalised at Grass Cove, in Queen Charlotte Sound, after which *Adventure* had immediately left for England. A year later, while *Resolution* was in the same harbour being prepared for its own final departure, Cook – already well aware that cannibalism was a real feature of Maori culture – received garbled reports from local people, which he interpreted



"A View of two Burning Mountains". The volcanic island of Tofua and its near neighbour Kabo, Ha'apai Group, Tonga. Engraving after an illustration by John Marra.

as meaning a European ship had been wrecked and its crew eaten.

Soon after receiving this disturbing news, the Captain was told that Marra had got drunk and hidden himself in a canoe to go ashore in pursuit of "the fairer sex". Furiously declaring that he would have left him there "if he were not well assured the fellow would be killed and eaten before morning", Cook dispatched an armed party ashore to drag the miscreant back to face the inevitable. ⁽²¹⁾ Marra's journal details his view of the event, again as if through the eyes of a fellow crewman:

[S]everal strange Indians came rowing down the Sound, having a variety of articles, the produce of the country, to dispose of... These savages had with them seven or eight young red painted blue-lip'd cannibal ladies, who were by no means unwilling to be introduced to the company of such of the ship's crew as fancied them. The gunner's mate, who had been confined in irons for endeavouring to leave the ship at Otaheite, was here punished with twelve lashes for going ashore without leave in pursuit of one of those beauties. ⁽²²⁾

A few days later *Resolution* upped anchor and sailed eastwards across the Pacific, reaching England in July 1775. Then, six weeks on, an illicit shipboard journal written by a "wild Irish" gunner was delivered to a London bookseller. Several months afterwards it reappeared as the anonymous and somewhat disembodied voice of the first published account of this unparalleled voyage – from a Eurocentred perspective – to the most distant and exotic reaches of the globe. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Dr Tom Ryan is a senior lecturer in anthropology at the University of Waikato, and will soon take up a visiting professorship at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris and Marseilles. He has undertaken ethnographic fieldwork on Niue and in northwest Australia, and published widely on social theory, labour studies, and Pacific history.

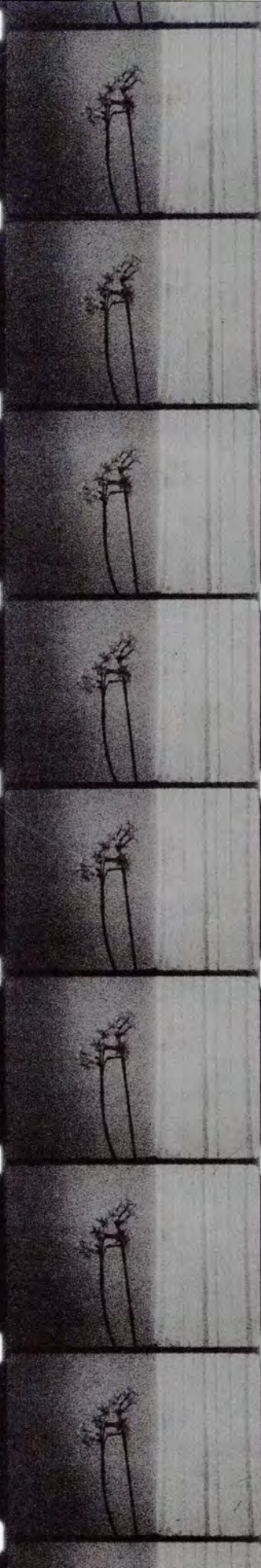
1. Gilbert White (c.1776) cited in Bernard Smith *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768-1850* Oxford University Press, London, 1960. p3. 2. Bernard Smith, op cit. p3. 3. Anon. [John Marra] *Journal of the Resolution's Voyage, in 1772, 1773, 1774, and 1775 on Discovery to the Southern Hemisphere, by which the Non-Existence of an Undiscovered Continent Between the Equator and the 50th Degree of Southern Latitude, is Demonstratively Proved. Also a Journal of the Adventure's Voyage, in the Years 1772, 1773, and 1774. With an Account of the Separation of the Two Ship, and the Most Remarkable Incidents that Befel Each. Interspersed with Historical and Geographical Descriptions of the Islands and Countries Discovered in the Course of their Respective Voyages. Illustrated with a Chart, in which the Tracks of Both Vessels are Accurately Laid Down, and Other Cuts* F. Newbery, London, 1775. 4. *The Voyage of the Resolution and the Adventure 1772-1775* (ed. J.C. Beaglehole) Cambridge University Press, 1961. pp961-2. 5. J.C. Beaglehole *The Life of Captain James Cook* Stanford University Press, 1974. p456. 6. Ibid. p456. 7. Ibid. p263. 8. Marra's disciplinary record as it unfolded over the course of his service on *Resolution* is as follows: April 1772, England, mutiny and desertion, 12 lashes and confinement; July 1772, Madeira, insolence, 12 lashes; August 1773, Tahiti, insolence, 6 lashes; May 1774, Tahiti, attempted desertion, put in irons and confinement; November 1774, New Zealand, desertion and drunkenness, 12 lashes. 9. Marra, op cit. p325. 10. Ibid. p111. 11. Ibid. p125. 12. *Ireland and the French Enlightenment 1700-1800* (eds. G. Gargett and G. Sheridan) Macmillan, London, 1999. 13. James Cook, cited in *The Voyage of the Resolution and the Adventure 1772-1775* op cit. p403-4. 14. Marra, op cit. pp235-6. 15. *The Voyage of the Resolution and the Adventure 1772-1775* op cit. pp403-4. 16. Marra, op cit. p59, 61. 17. Ibid. pp63-4. 18. Ibid. p65. 19. Ibid. pp157-8. 20. Ibid. pp163-4. 21. J.C. Beaglehole *The Life of Captain James Cook* op cit. p422. 22. Marra, op cit. pp304-5.



"A View of two Burning Mountains"

F I L M

T770 7332



C019 0724



Landscape in David Korty, Paul Sietsema and Vincent Ward

GIOVANNI INTRA

96
97

FOLLOWERS OF VINCENT Ward's "artistic" cinema may have buckled over in horror at the release of *What Dreams May Come* (2000), the New Zealander's latest film. Indeed, it has a sense of scandal: the sheer force of its grand budget; its appropriation and computerisation of beloved landscape paintings; Robin Williams. However the film's mainstream bravado and neoconservative psychology is tempered by the fact that it's a truly strange work of landscape. In this, it might be compared with other contemporary landscapes by Los Angeles-based artists David Korty and Paul Sietsema, whose interests are also filtered through the languages of painting, cinema and conceptual art.

With *Dreams* Ward was obliged to balance Hollywood's commercial imperatives with his "artistic vision". In this case, the vision is quite literally a vision, a sequence of hallucinated landscapes. In blinding succession, the actors stroll through forests and lakes which appear and transform, mirroring their states of mind. "Emotions" plod by in a pageant of asinine excess – happy versus sad versus remorseful, etc – but Ward's landscape itself, a post-death netherworld, is extraordinary. Pretty, computerised topographies bend over backwards overcompensating for the decidedly Christian mood swings of the protagonists, for whom guiltless paradise is a field of flowers or a lake (Monet and Friedrich), while hell is a broken-down house populated by rats. When bad vibes set in, the Boschean dead run amok, and the transition between the two polarised spaces (heaven and hell, loosely) depend on the Williams character's negotiation of good and evil, and guilt.

If Hollywood purgatory is reserved for films that "bomb", its paradise is the endless flow of capital magically passing through

Robin Williams' smile. But when a director is directing such a project, what exactly is being directed? *Dreams* is a psychedelic allegory from a time when money, and the science of its anticipation, command cinematic space like an emperor. And yet the capitalist sublime it promotes does not reek of money; it is an emotional landscape in which such worldly considerations are irrelevant – in other words, a delusional fantasy that transcends even its own spectral imagery. As Williams dances through a computer-spawned Monemation, one imagines a future cinema that has no need of actors, a cinema of pure opticality that extends out from Disney's *Fantasia*. *Dreams* is less a vehicle for its star than for special effects, compelling in their liquidity and phosphorescence. The intended audience response is "Wow"; and a good Wow hosts many nuances. Without the Wow there would be no film. The Wow needs a story to hang on, even though the effects' delirious opticality decorates and asphyxiates the story at the story's expense. Specifics are rounded off in the service of sensation.

Dreams' amped-up visuals may be kind of jarring to the university educated aesthete, but there's no point judging Ward on such grounds as the film's look is generated under a regime of consensus and approval. As a work of pure negotiation, the film is a masterpiece that delivers a depressing message to New Zealand's proud but quivering auteur cinema, from which Ward emerged as our preeminent landscape filmmaker. Will Hollywood grant a self-declared "artist" the opportunity to sanctify his political and poetic ambitions in an epic work of his own direction? Probably not. And if it does, only in a very contemporary way, attended by fantastic compromise. Ward's career may seem a unique odyssey



Untitled (*Beautiful Place*) **PAUL SIETSEMA** 1998

from independent film to the abstraction and complication of Hollywood business, but this trajectory complexifies the interpretation of his project as a whole, in particular his consistent interest in the representation of landscape.

What Dreams May Come – an hallucination of capital bleeding out of nature – contrasts with Paul Sietsema's *Untitled (Beautiful Place)* (1998). Sietsema's work is a minuscule epic, the production of one person as opposed to a crew. *Beautiful Place* folds out time. Its eight vignettes each depict artificial flowers and gardens meticulously built by the artist for the purpose of filming. The many months involved in its production, the intense labour and concentration, are in a sense inverted in the final product, which is extremely short by comparison. There is the sense that we are viewing an accelerated, stop-motion sequence of the process of production, strangely flipped into cinematic form, condensed down, and that time itself has been reversed. The piece is the optical version of a dripping tap.

Beautiful Place is not National Geographic-style nature cinema akin to stop-motion images of a flower blooming – the kitsch celebration of "life". Rather the piece has a gently menacing, industrial character. As the frames turn over one by one, their appearance synchronised with the projector's movement, there is a decidedly unnatural occurrence taking place. Sietsema's optical machine of projector and image, like a small factory, manufactures a forboding artificial intensity reminiscent of that of the city in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* or the starkly lit sets of German expressionist films. Physical reality is artificially lit. And ventriloquised through the projector's body, it inherits a multitude of perceptible jumps, shakes, shudders and sounds produced by its



Untitled **DAVID KORTY** 2000

chugging, mechanical operation. These stuttering images are both monumental and delicate.

The technology employed by Sietsema, 16mm colour film, is both relatively and conspicuously old. His practice thus makes a clear break from the ubiquitous video projection format. The project is not polemical as much as it is explicitly directed at what the film media can achieve both ideologically and visually. In addition to this, the work acknowledges a conceptual art tradition involving photographic, spatial and phenomenological concerns, and so can only tentatively be described as a work of cinema, despite appearances. *Beautiful Place* is not designed, like Ward's film, to further exploit an already exhausted language of emotions – the poetics of flowers: funereal, erotic, etc. It is a serene formal exercise that uses the image of artificial botany to reflect on time and representation. A compelling effect of this work, for someone with romantic inclinations, is that within its duration (it's a short film that seems very long) the desperate hope to read the film psychologically crystallises and then mineralises. It hardens into an almost scientific perception of light and surface.

David Korty makes watercolour landscapes of Los Angeles. His readings of the atmosphere, the architecture and the topography of urban space are often taken from the vantage point of the Hollywood hills which crest above the flat gridded street system. Korty began landscape painting in 1998, making almost pointillist studies of generic landmarks such as the Hollywood Home Depot mega-store and the LA Olympic Stadium, but soon moved on to complicated studies of the ether, describing what happens to sky and clouds when they react with land and sun at different times of day, notably dusk. Like Ed Ruscha's recent paintings of aerial



What Dreams May Come VINCENT WARD 1998 Oceania News and Features



Poster for *What Dreams May Come*
Oceania News and Features

views of LA, Korty's watercolours participate in the pictorial myth of Los Angeles, often including glimpses of case-study homes on canyonsides, silhouettes of Griffith Park Observatory, and sometimes even a muted Hollywood sign. But Korty's works eschew Ruscha's ironic, cinematic, linguistic approach, while drawing on his graphic immediacy. His picture's disarming simplicity is disconcerting to some viewers, perhaps because it's such a measured response to the predetermined heaviness of prevalent photo-based conceptual work or the *de rigueur* seriousness of nonrepresentational painting.

The sky in LA is unique, as the sky is everywhere. It hosts tons of particulates, both desert dust lifted by the winds and the diabolical weight of smog. These particulates blend with sunlight, making a mess of perspective and distance, producing amazing, inadvertent atmospheres. The tan fuzziness of airborne dust is often mistaken for smog, but real smog is as bright as paint. Its mineral showers appear on the horizon in green, purple and orange stripes. The industrial equivalent of an aurora borealis, smog corrodes and poisons everything below. When Korty paints these skies and the electric light, hills and traffic jams, it appears to be chromatic exaggeration. And though his palette, like Ward's, is intensifying – with his more photographic renderings of concrete freeways and endless stucco apartments giving way to polychromatic clouds of light and explosions of phosphorescent, electrical excess – his approach is essentially realistic: this is what one sees in LA much of the time. These weird green mists consuming buildings in the distance, or harsh sunlight hammering down on dusty, bleached buildings, are given a surprising representational double. When compared to other recent portraits

of the city, like Mike Davis's apocalyptic prose or other post-riot arcana, it becomes apparent that Korty's interpretation of urban space serves primarily optical and painterly agendas, a perception which corresponds with 19th century "golden light" of California realist painting. But the project is also ideological in that it reminds the Hollywood, violence-saturated city of its Arcadian other, the days when Southern California was a "beautiful place".

Today landscape features in artworks that operate out of diverse conceptual, contextual and technological predicaments, with no common rationale. But what binds Ward, Sietsema and Korty together, perhaps, is that they regard landscape as a crutch of representation. If the image of nature in contemporary art and culture is supposed to offer some kind of momentary relief from an otherwise technological reality, then these works provide that delight, mixed with the experience of absolute complexity.

Giovanni Intra is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles. Recent publications include a monograph on artist Julia Scher.



TRANQUIL SUNSET, COOK ISLANDS



Fantasy Islands: Hollywood's Samoa

CAROLINE VERCOR

100
101

CINEMA HAS BEEN described as a kind of virtual travel, transporting audiences to elsewhere and elsewhere, real and imagined. From the outset, movies supplemented conventional forms of education in helping people imagine other places, times and cultures.⁽¹⁾ The first films shot in the Pacific, at the end of the 19th century, were literally travelogues. These albums of moving photographs initiated the medium's love affair with the Pacific and spawned a whole genre – Paciflicks. Paciflicks are Hollywood movies set in the South Seas, and the genre encompasses the supposedly ethnographic documentary *Moana of the South Seas* (1926) and rollicking romances like *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), *Song of the Islands* (1942) and *South Pacific* (1958).

Paciflicks were crucial in making Polynesia a fantasy space for Westerners. Ironically, many forms of Pacific Islands expression discouraged in real life by missionaries were demanded and exaggerated by Hollywood, often resulting in a masquerade or caricature of Pacific cultural expression. Bing Crosby would serenade Shirley Ross as Miss Pineapple to the tune "Sweet Leilani" in *Waikiki Wedding*; Betty Grable bedecked in lei and lavalava would sing "Down on Ami Ami Oni Oni Isle" in *Song of the Islands*; and Mitzi Gaynor as Nurse Nellie would play out her epic romance with Rossano Brazzi as plantation owner Emile De Becque in *South Pacific*.

Paciflicks established and entrenched many of the stereotypes that Pacific tourism still capitalises on today: the natives were friendly, life easy and romance filled the air. Hollywood, with its Hays Code, may have forbidden nudity, indecent dance movements and miscegenation (sexual relationships between white and black races), but Polynesians could be filmed topless as

it was deemed anthropologically authentic.⁽²⁾ Hollywood publicity took full advantage of this. *Rain* (1932) contained sexually suggestive scenes; while women wearing only lei and lavalava featured prominently in publicity for F.W. Murnau's *Tabu* (1931).⁽³⁾ Until the late 1960s, Paciflicks displayed more flesh than any other genre. But with the liberalisation of the cinema in the 1960s, the genre waned. Aside from remakes of *Hurricane* (1979), starring Mia Farrow and Dayton Ka'Ne, and *The Bounty* (1984), starring Mel Gibson and Anthony Hopkins, few Paciflicks have been made.

Most Paciflicks were shot in Hawaii, though two filmed in Samoa, Robert Flaherty's *Moana of the South Seas* and Mark Robeson's *Return To Paradise* (1953), emerge as compelling examples of Hollywood mythmaking.

You behold here the last remnant of a paradise. Now, take these islanders. They're naturally the happiest, most contented people on Earth. They ask nothing of life except to eat, dance, and sleep. Thinking gives them a headache.

– *Rain* (1932) ⁽⁴⁾

WHEN PARAMOUNT COMMISSIONED *Moana of the South Seas* in 1923, Flaherty's brief was to go to the South Seas and bring back "another Nanook". Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), featuring an Inuk hunter in far northern Quebec, is widely acclaimed as the first feature-length documentary. However *Canadian Movie Guide* claims Flaherty "cheated by persuading his subjects to revive their former methods of hunting – traditions had changed with the arrival of European technology... The bombastic Flaherty created a love-hate relationship with Nanook and his people based both on true warmth and exploitation."⁽⁵⁾



Photographs on the set of *Return to Paradise* 1952, from Moira Walker's personal album.



Nanook's success clearly influenced the framing of *Moana*. "I am not going to make films about what the white man has made of primitive peoples... What I want to show is the former majesty and character of these people while it is still possible – before the white man has destroyed not only their character, but the people as well", said Flaherty.⁽⁶⁾ Accompanied by wife Frances, three daughters, his brother and an Irish nursemaid, Flaherty lived on the island of Savai'i, in Western Samoa, for two years. And yet his idea of an untouched Pacific paradise bore little resemblance to life there, or to Polynesian culture in general in the 1920s. Flaherty demanded significant alterations to the village of Safune, where he shot the film. He had the village chief agree that the cast wear only siapo (bark cloth); the young women would go topless and no sign of their usual missionary inspired dress would be seen. He listed "tall coconuts, chocolate-topped thatched fales (chiefs' houses), seas blue as blue, and the booming grumbling reef without which no South Seas island is complete" as necessary ingredients for his unspoilt paradise.⁽⁷⁾ Frances Flaherty wrote of the difficulty of finding appropriate Polynesians to inhabit their paradise setting: "Of course we felt that we owed the public a pretty Polynesian girl."⁽⁸⁾ Casting took them out of Safune and into neighbouring villages where Frances despaired at the "pot-bellied chiefs" and the lack of "types that will photograph well".⁽⁹⁾ Finally they found their lead, Moana, who "with a wreath of leaves about his head... looked like the young god Pan."⁽¹⁰⁾

Flaherty wanted to represent a Polynesian culture prior to the corrupting influence of the white man, offering laughing, native types within an unspoilt, idyllic setting. Intertitles introduce each sequence: Flaherty shows siapo-making – "the costume of the

country... the lava lava"; gathering and cooking food – "Fa'agase couldn't bear to eat raw oysters, but little silver fishes – um!! wiggle and all"; and traditional dances – "Anointing with perfumed oil, the age-old rite of the siva". These sequences are contrasted with glimpses of ancient heathen ceremonies and pagan dances – "Light your oven witch woman, the tufunga needs more dye"; "Work your charms and spells witch woman and keep the devils out". Finally Moana undergoes the painful Samoan pe'a (tattoo) – "There is an ordeal through which every Polynesian must pass to win the right to call himself a man"; "Through this pattern of the flesh, to you perhaps no more than cruel, useless ornament, the Samoan wins the dignity, the character and fibre which keep his race alive". Flaherty celebrates what he sees as a noble but dying culture operating outside Western influence, but also implies their need for colonial guidance in their inevitable move towards civilisation.

Paciflicks blurred the border between scientific anthropology and Hollywood fancy. Anthropologist Margaret Mead was clearly influenced by the movies. She is said to have based her Samoa diorama in the American Museum of Natural History on a scene from *Moana*. At the instigation of Franz Boas, the 23-year-old spent nine months in a village in the Manu'a group in Eastern Samoa in 1925. She chose Samoa for its primitive nature, as opposed to a "simple peasant community in Europe or an isolated group of mountain whites in the Americas."⁽¹¹⁾ Aiming to make a comprehensive field study of Samoan social life, she reputedly "concentrated upon the girls and women of the community, speaking their language and living in the conditions in which they live."⁽¹²⁾ Actually Mead resided most of the time in the so-called



Sadie Thompson Hotel, named after Somerset Maugham's notorious harlot in *Rain*. Mead's infamous account offered ethnographic evidence that Polynesian cultures were sexually uninhibited and free-loving, lending a veneer of authenticity to subsequent Paciflick stereotypes. It is now widely accepted that many of Mead's informants wilfully mislead her. (13)

*I have wandered through the islands with hibiscus in my hair,
I've surrendered my ambitions for a life that laughs at care,
I have loved an island maiden when the nights were far and fair
When palm trees bowed their heads to hear the hurricane's wild wail,
Then her lips on mine were golden brown and mine on hers were pale.*

— James Mitchener "Song of the Tropical Tramp" (14)

PACIFLICKS DOWNPLAYED THE effects of colonisation, occasionally alluding to it as benign or inevitable, concealing a rich, fraught history of encounter. As far back as 1860 Samoa was a centre for trade and tourism, being situated on the major shipping route between San Francisco and Australia and en route for steamships passing through the Panama Canal. In 1876, an expatriate community of over 200 was based in Apia. By 1878 an American naval base was operating in Pago Pago, the Germans had a base on Upolu, and the British were planning to set one up too. Prior to the war, Germany had imperial power in Samoa, however after World War One it was stripped of its colonies and Britain, America and New Zealand consolidated their hold on the region. World War Two saw major American naval bases operating at Tutuila (Eastern Samoa) and Pearl Harbour (Honolulu), and this fostered an entertainment and hospitality scene with bands, movies and prostitution (legalised in Honolulu during the war). In Samoa the

famous Aggie Grey's Hotel flourished, and numerous new roads and fortifications were built. By 1942 there was a U.S. marine to every six Samoans.

World War Two generated a spate of G.I. genre Paciflicks. From Hawaii to Tahiti to Samoa, films of free-loving exotic maidens happy to fulfil the needs of Uncle Sam abounded. As in *Moana*, aspects of traditional island life were shown, with the villagers' simple philosophy highlighting their innate cultural inferiority. But while the white man was invisible in *Moana*, postwar audiences wanted to see "our boys" in the picture. And yet the damaging effects of colonisation remain hidden or understated. The lavish technicolour Paciflicks of the late 1940s and 1950s imaged the Pacific not as untouched as in *Moana*, but as a playground for enterprising thrill seekers, an exotic but accessible Eden.

Return to Paradise is set in the remote, fictional village of Matareva, where the fun-loving villagers are lorded over by an elderly white missionary, aided by burly, brown wardens. Mr Morgan (Gary Cooper), a stranded drifter, questions missionary authority, builds a house on the Sabbath, incites a riot, and falls for Maeva, a feisty native beauty. She dies bearing him a daughter, as he presents her with her heart's desire – a sewing machine "to sew him beautiful pants". He leaves the island, angry at life and his fate. Years later, he returns and is reconciled with Turia, the spirited daughter he deserted. In a symbolic reversal he stops her running off with an American pilot, Captain Harry.

Paciflicks often cast Islanders as dependent on colonial paternalism. In *Return to Paradise* it is a white man who saves the village of Matareva from both the iron rule of the white missionary and the native wardens' violent attacks. The history books tell



Postcards from the author's collection

another story. After the war, Samoa was in social and political turmoil. There was opposition to the country's partition. Western Samoa came under New Zealand trusteeship until independence in 1962, while Eastern Samoa was and remains "American Samoa". In Western Samoa the Mau movement was advancing its claims for sovereignty, and in 1947 a UNO mission was sent in. No mention is made of such events in *Return to Paradise*. It would seem the only problems facing the villagers of Matareva were those posed by the zealous missionary.

Pacific Islands leads were often played by European and Latin actors, including Deloris Del Rio and Maria Montez. Dorothy Lamour and Jon Hall were crowned Hollywood's first Sarong Girl and Boy. But behind the protagonists Pacific Islanders appear in bit parts and as extras smiling with complicity, offering local colour. On white beaches, with rolling waves, brilliant sunshine and a gentle wind blowing, fine athletic locals in the guise of servile workers or sexualised dancers complete the picture, becoming as benign and ubiquitous as the palm trees. Samoan actress Moira Walker (née McDonald) was one of the first Pacific Islanders to get a major role, starring alongside Gary Cooper in *Return to Paradise*, playing Turia. She fitted Hollywood's recipe for the dusky maiden, being neither too dark nor too light; slim yet voluptuous; and with a blend of Polynesian and European features. Walker recalls her time with "Coops" – then in the late stage of a battle with cancer – and director Mark Robeson with pride. She remembers that the extras from Lefuga village, where the film was shot, arrived on set in their festive Sunday best, draped with flower lei. She says hundreds of Samoans gathered to watch the shooting, laughing and applauding in appreciation. A village chief was called in to



keep them quiet, and scouts were sent out to stop people tooting their horns – cars had no place in *Paradise*. She does not feel at all exploited in her role as Turia, and her anecdotes provide a flip-side counter-narrative to both the one-dimensional stereotypes of Pacific Islanders in Paciflicks and to the accounts of their victimisation. ⁽¹⁵⁾

If Hollywood found the exotic in the Islands, perhaps the Islanders found something equally exotic in their visitors. After *Return to Paradise*, Walker was offered a Hollywood contract but her father stepped in. As the newspaper headline explained, "Papa Said No". ⁽¹⁶⁾ She was not allowed to pursue her dreams of fame and glamour, and she was even forbidden to travel to the U.S. to attend the film's premiere. She remained on the island to pursue an acceptable lifestyle. If Hollywood cast the Pacific Islands as a tropical red light district, her father saw Hollywood as a den of iniquity.

Caroline Vercoe teaches Pacific art history and post-colonial theory in Auckland University's Art History Department.

1. Anne Friedberg *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993.
2. Luis I. Reyes *Made in Paradise: Hollywood's Films of Hawaii and the South Seas* Mutual Publishing, Honolulu, 1995. p200.
3. *Tabu* was to be a collaboration between directors Flaherty and Murnau, mixing Flaherty's documentary naturalism with Murnau's German expressionist style. Flaherty withdrew due to creative differences, selling his interests to Murnau.
4. *Rain* was one of the movies inspired by Somerset Maugham's short story of the same title. Another was *Miss Sadie Thompson* (1953), a musical starring Rita Hayworth.
5. Bruce Kirkland "Nanook of the North" *Canadian Movie Guide*. www.canoe.ca/JamMoviesCanadianN/nanooknorth.html.
6. Quoted in "Nanook of the North" *One World Magazine*. www.oneworldmagazine.org/seek/nanook.



104
105

7. P. Rotha *Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1983. p54. 8. Frances Flaherty *Asia* September 1925. p747. 9. Ibid. 10. Ibid. p796. 11. Margaret Mead *Coming of Age in Samoa* Penguin Books, London, 1973 (1928). p14 12. Ibid. Back cover blurb. 13. Derek Freeman *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* Westview Press, Colorado, 1999. 14. In "Mr Morgan" *Return to Paradise* Random House, Toronto, 1951. p43. 15. These anecdotes were recounted to the author in September 2000. 16. Unsourced newspaper clipping in Moira Walker's scrapbook.



W edged between his soup display and stack of simulated shipping cartons that he painted, Andy Warhol peers around \$350 Brillo box.

Buy a bronze watermelon?
Only \$500 A SLICE



Billy Apple gazes over his \$500 slice of painted bronze watermelon. Apple also painted *A Apple* in background, on sale for \$150.



Odyssey in the Supermarket

GREGORY BURKE

... world picture does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as a picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by a man, who represents and sets forth.

— Martin Heidegger ⁽¹⁾

106
107

ONCE THE PALM tree stood for the faraway and exotic, with the coconut palm in particular signifying a distant tropical island idyll. But today, in an era of air travel, the ubiquitous coconut palm no longer seems very exotic. Given the recent environmental devastation wreaked by nuclear testing and global pollution, and with the ensuing effect of rising sea levels in the islands, palm trees no longer indicate untainted nature either. But the image lingers in advertising as an abstracted motif, where it is linked with products to offer the promise of sun, sand and sexual availability – it sells.

Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers used the coconut palm as a sign for desire. The sepia-toned establishing shot of his film script *Le Séance* (1974) has two palms leaning languidly towards the sea and curling towards the sky. Christopher Williams revisits Broodthaers' image in his photograph *Punta Hicacos Vanadero, Cuba, February 14 2000* (2000). This pleasing colour image is not as dreamlike as Broodthaers', and close inspection reveals Williams' palm to be rather unhealthy – it bears little fruit. More to the point, it stands upright in loose sand; an unnatural position, for the palm prefers the firmer foreshore. The photograph is taken at a Cuban beach resort where the locals are banned, a place where affluent tourists can experience a contrived, reconstituted Cuban idyll without experiencing Cubans. Williams' photograph represents an artificial nature, offering a slippage between the sublime and the ridiculous.

This photograph is part of Williams' ongoing series *For Example: Die Welt ist Schon. Die Welt ist Schon*, the German title of Albert Renger-Patzsch's famous 1928 photographic book, translates as "the world is beautiful". Renger-Patzsch did not approve of the title; he wanted his book of sharp-focus

photographs of objects and scenes called simply *Things*, but the publisher insisted in order to make it more commercially appealing. Indeed, so titled, it became a bestseller. And it was the title which prompted Walter Benjamin to criticise Renger-Patzsch for attempting to idealise the capitalist world of alienated labour and fetishised commodities, arguing that his project was bereft of a truly modernist moral and utopian imperative. Benjamin was suspicious of photography's ability to beautify and glamorise the world at a time of spiritual and political ugliness, in the wake of the Depression and during the Nazi build-up in Europe. While Renger-Patzsch's book may have been intended as an antidote to prevailing bourgeois pictorialism, the pleasure occasioned by the publication of his empiricist photographs of stacked and arrayed subjects paralleled a new moment in the visual commodification of the world.

Visual commodification stepped into a higher gear in postwar America. In 1964 a group of pop artists, including Andy Warhol and Billy Apple, chose the supermarket as its *métier*. Their exhibition, *The American Supermarket*, at New York's Bianchini Gallery, not only celebrated the supermarket's products but also its displays – the stacks, packaging and signage. The supermarket brought together foods from the four corners of the globe, including items previously considered exotic such as herbs and spices, coffee and tropical fruits. If the supermarket brought the world to America, America took the supermarket to the world. The supermarket is now an emblem of globalising culture, the erosion of cultural difference through commodification. Marking capitalism's shift in emphasis from production to consumption, the supermarket epitomises the power of display within a global economy. As *The*



Punta Hicacos Vanadero, Cuba, February 14 2000
CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS 2000
 Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

American Supermarket revealed, the supermarket sells its hyper-real world-picture under the sublime glow of fluorescent light.

Theorists such as Heidegger and Benjamin have argued that visual commodification has dematerialised the world, and this has reached its apotheosis in today's digital screen-based technologies. As a virtual tourist one can now consume a global supermarket of images in the privacy of one's home. Warhol might have rejoiced in this situation and "shopped" for the most potent images, ideas and technology",⁽²⁾ but for many artists today it poses a dilemma. For, as Heidegger suggested, in constructing and framing a world-picture, visual technologies actually conceal the world. Rodney Graham demonstrates this by slowing down technology in his 1996 work *Camera Obscura Mobile*. Graham converts a horse-drawn carriage into a camera obscura and moves it from site to site in a French aboretum, a place where trees native to distinct locations and climates are grown for display and study. Graham uses the carriage as a camera-proper to capture views in the aboretum, as if touring the world. Identified as a U.S. rural mail delivery carriage, *Camera Obscura Mobile* echoes Heidegger's linking of technology with the rise of America. Graham says:

One may sit in the carriage... and contemplate the inverted view provided on a circular screen. Circular picture postcards... will continue to be produced of each sequential view... and these are exhibited and offered for sale in the souvenir shop... where tourists are invited to envision a time in which such postcards will be delivered at the astonishing rate of 24 per second. ⁽³⁾

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS ALSO regards the botanic garden as a form of world-picture. Unlike his postcard-like palm image, *Caricaceae Carica Papaya – Linne Melonenbaum, Papaya, Trop.*



Caricaceae Carica Papaya – Linne Melonenbaum, Papaya, Trop. Amerika
 Botanischer Garten Munich Sept. 13, 1993 **CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS**
 1993, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Amerika Botanischer Garten, Munich Sept. 13, 1993 (1993) – a black and white study of a papaya tree – suggests a pretense of scientific neutrality and truth. If Renger-Patzsch was interested in visual typology, Williams reminds us that this way of picturing stemmed from the scientific urge to collect and catalogue the world. He uses systems of representation to reveal their inherent logic.

Like Williams, Gavin Hipkins is concerned with the histories of representation he quotes as much as his explicit subject matter – he's been called a tourist of photography.⁽⁴⁾ Easily sliding between photographic genres he refuses to fix a stable point of reference in his work. Hipkins revisits familiar signs of place, positioning them as archetypal, primitive images embedded in the collective subconscious. For *Ur-Kiwi (Brown)* (1995/98) he photographed a fake kiwifruit, presenting it with soft-focus edges as the real thing, seemingly ready to release its juices in response to the viewer's desire. The primitive associations conjured by the title are resisted by the cliché, the viewer's knowledge that this fruit, available in supermarkets worldwide, has only recently been branded as an emblem of New Zealand identity. As the kiwifruit used to be known as the Chinese gooseberry, *Ur-Kiwi* reminds us that visual commodification depends on a type of amnesia. Ambivalent, Hipkins indulges himself in photographic fetishism, the power of photography to sentimentalise, beautify and even eroticise the world, while seeking a distance that resists nostalgia and easy consumption by the viewer.

In his looped movie *Vexation Island* (1997), Canadian artist Rodney Graham also draws together amnesia, the exotic and modern technologies of representation. Like Hipkins, Graham works with – and in this case places himself within – existing



Ur-Kiwi (Brown) **GAVIN HIPKINS** 1995/98

pictorial systems, messing with their terms of reference. In courtly period dress, he lies deranged, unconscious, on an island beach beneath a coconut palm, with a gash on his forehead and a parrot for a companion. The parrot squawks, "wake up, please"; and Graham rises, shakes the palm, is hit on his forehead by a falling coconut, then collapses while the coconut rolls down to the sea, at which point the film starts over. While the shipwrecked Robinson Crusoe encountered an uncultured and thereby "wild" exotic landscape, *Vexation Island* draws on clichés of island idylls, from Hollywood to advertising to burlesque. Yet this fantasy paradise bites back. Alexander Alberro has discussed the Freudian undertones in the work, suggesting that the scene invokes:

nothing less than a "wet dream" – cinema as collective wet dream, oneiric fantasy, a medium that is already, by Graham's reckoning, a corpse. ⁽⁵⁾

LIKE PHOTOGRAPHY, THE cinema presents passed moments. In fact it goes further than photography, by reanimating these moments, and repeatedly – something Graham underlines in the looping of his film. *Vexation Island* plays on the fact that retrieval and repetition are common to the language and operations of both the cinema and the unconscious. The falling coconut which renders the buccaneer unconscious is analogous to cinema's effect on its audience, tipping us into a dream state. Or as Graham puts it:

The coconut always and ever after bounces off my head and onto the beach to be swept out to sea and to implant itself on other islands more or less vexed. ⁽⁶⁾

THE IMPLICITLY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL *Vexation Island* recalls an earlier Graham video, the 26 minute long *Halcion Sleep* (1994), in



Vexation Island production still, **RODNEY GRAHAM** 1997
photo Shannon Oksanen

which the drugged, slumbering artist is driven home in the back of a taxi. Protracting time unnaturally on the one hand and folding it back on itself in the other, both films work against our expectation of a developing cinematic narrative. As a hapless, shipwrecked buccaneer the artist in *Vexation Island* is unable to sustain full consciousness, to fulfil his desire, to overcome his frustration. Once considered exotic new territory for the artist-explorer, the island idyll has become a world-picture in which the artist is entombed. Just as advertising imagery generates a dreamworld forgetful of the realities of production, so amnesia is a precondition for the island idyll.

Gregory Burke is director of New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and curator of New Zealand's contribution to the 2001 Venice Biennale.

1. Martin Heidegger "The Age of the World Picture" *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* Harper and Row, New York, 1977, p129. Cited in Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime* Allworth Press, New York, 1999, p24. 2. "One Stop Warhol Shop": www.warhol.org 3. Rodney Graham *Art and Text* 59 November 1997, p54. 4. For example Robert Leonard "The Guide" *Art and Text* 65 May 1999, p40. 5. Alexander Alberro "Loop Dreams: Rodney Graham's *Vexation Island*" *Artforum* February 1998, p108. 6. Graham, *op cit*.



Piano Recital

ANNIE GOLDSON

110
111

THE PIANO (1993) was released at a time when New Zealand's reputation as a film culture was reaching new heights. When the film went on to receive the Palme d'Or at Cannes it generated a swell of national pride. Director Jane Campion could join Sir Edmund Hillary, Jonah Lomu, Kiri Te Kanawa and, for some of us, Len Lye – all Kiwi notables proving that New Zealand might be small but we can compete with the best.

The New Zealand film industry is vulnerable. Its output is small and its future always shaky, especially following the New Zealand economic "revolution" of the mid-1980s which transformed our welfare state into a market economy. However, along with *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), *The Piano* put New Zealand film on the map. The economic and critical success of these films helped shore up an industry that is constantly under threat. In fact *The Piano* functioned well in the economic climate of the 1990s. Bearing the hallmark of an art film – the signature of the auteur-director – it nonetheless delivered the emotional impact of a popular melodrama. Hence, it offered a distinctly contemporary blend, the art film that succeeds at the multiplex.

Yet alongside *The Piano*'s international recognition and undoubted aesthetic, technical and commercial merit lie other questions, about how it intersects with, reflects and shapes interpretations of New Zealand's culture and history. For New Zealanders *The Piano* is a paradox. It is an "historical" film, yet, in its representation of our history, it generates heat around two very contemporary issues – feminism and Maori/Pakeha relations. When the shock and pleasure of *The Piano*'s success had worn off, the rumblings began. Because of its size and its pragmatic, rather

than intellectual, culture, New Zealand offers little in the way of a critical forum for film analysis. So commentaries on *The Piano* were heard in informal settings – at dinner parties, in university lectures, in popular magazines and in Letters to the Editor.

An overarching concern was *The Piano*'s claim on national identity. Miramax, the distributor, had successfully packaged it as a story about New Zealand history and landscape. Campion said, "It's a film made in New Zealand by New Zealanders and it's very obviously a New Zealand film."⁽¹⁾ But not everyone agreed. A number of objections were voiced, regarding the liberties the film took with our landscape, its lack of New Zealand stars, its director's expatriate status, and its questionable representation of Maori. There was also some public awareness that New Zealand's own Film Commission had been developing a film with a very similar scenario. Based on Jane Mander's 1920 novel, *The Story of a New Zealand River*,⁽²⁾ the script supported by the Commission also involved a love triangle, a strong mother-daughter relationship, and a piano; this one ferried up a river rather than deposited on a beach. The production company canned its project after *The Piano* received its funding from a French investor, realising the world market would not bear two films both involving pianos and New Zealand colonial history.

Campion's treatment of the land and landscape also drew comment. The land is central to New Zealand identity, shaping our literary and visual art traditions. Europe might have its Culture but New Zealand has Nature – the bush, the sea, the fiords and the mountains. Behind what some might judge as an essentialist and romantic attachment lie important historical determinants. For Maori, the land is intricately tied up with whakapapa (genealogy)



Karekare Beach 2001

Sight and Sound 1992



and turangawaewae ("a place to stand"). Pakeha, too, have deep emotional ties to place. Our 19th century forebears, many of them lower-middle-class British stock, could never have owned property in the "home country"; the opportunity to own land was a lure for settlers.

That *The Piano* could scramble our landscape, mixing vegetation and even birdsongs with impunity, was frequently remarked upon. While some granted Campion artistic licence, the attitude that privileges "art" over "truth" increasingly fuels a discomfort that many New Zealanders feel as their landscape is packaged and sold as a location. Tourism and particularly "adventure tourism" – bungy-jumping and the like – has become a major source of revenue. In addition, the images of a "clean, green New Zealand" are used to encourage foreign investment and ownership. The massive sell-off of New Zealand assets through the 1980s and early 1990s has made the issue of foreign ownership a highly emotive one.

The New Zealand landscape has been aggressively marketed to the international film industry. Because of its Southern Hemisphere seasons and topological diversity, New Zealand is being used by overseas film companies as a generic location. Currently, the long-running television series *Hercules* and *Xena* are just wrapping up. These American re-workings of "antiquity" were filmed on the West Coast beaches of Auckland, near Karekare, the beach that figured in *The Piano*. The recent blockbuster *Vertical Limit* (2000), an adventure pic set in the mountains of Central Otago, was the first Hollywood film to be principally filmed here. Such activities generate important revenue for regional economies and offer short-term employment and training to our

film industry. Certainly *Xena* made the New Zealander Lucy Lawless an unexpected international star. But these large-scale productions smack of cultural domination and a general disregard for the local, which can leave a lingering sense of resentment.

The Piano generated a lively debate in international film studies journals, much of it carried appropriately enough in *Screen*. Focussed almost exclusively on feminist film theory, the articles drew on but challenged Laura Mulvey's seminal 1975 *Screen* article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema".⁽³⁾ The writers mostly supported the film as a feminist text, interpreting the protagonist Ada McGrath's role – her ability to "gaze"; her choice of costume, man and life – as an assertion of female subjectivity. Indeed, to have a foundation myth "narrated" by a silent woman rebuts the very basis of the frontier or Western genre. The "man alone" and "larrikin" stereotypes that have dominated New Zealand film history have been predicated on the absence or marginalisation of Pakeha women, and have contributed to our myths of national identity. Ada offered a striking contrast; not only is she the central character of *The Piano*, it is her desire that determines the twists of the plot.

A contrary view also found its way into the *Screen* debate. *The Piano*'s traditional narrative structure and realist aesthetics, its depictions of coerced sex, and its emphasis on heterosexual romance and a happy ending, led some to doubt its feminism. For all her subjectivity, Ada remains an object of desire, her beauty a "cultured" one with apparent class appeal. Her stark elegance, coiled hair and, above all, her connection to culture, distinguishes her from both the Maori women and the "lower-class" women that



Xena: Warrior Princess 2000, Oceania News and Features

surround her. They offer a crude naturalised sexuality, while hers is typically romantic, sublimated in her piano playing, smouldering, enigmatic. It seems possible to argue that *The Piano* relies on a reproduction of women's role and image as the source of desire, even as it places Ada as the desiring subject.

If Pakeha women lined up on both sides of the "feminist" debate about Ada, her lover Baines had, for some of us, a particular resonance. With his moko, his hybrid clothing, and his supposedly easy and practical physicality, he is familiar to us all as a precursor of the Kiwi male. He may appear the transgressor in *The Piano*, in counterpoint to the repressed and anxious "British" masculinity of Stewart, but it is precisely this difference that defines him as a New Zealander, a rugged practical bloke, distinct from the wimpish "Brits".

New Zealand historian, Jock Phillips, in his study of images of the Pakeha male, examines how colonial New Zealand was marketed as a country where "men could be men again".⁽⁴⁾ The decline of productive work and the rise of clerical and shop employment for men in Victorian Britain had engendered deep anxiety about sex roles. Emigration to New Zealand provided a chance to face life in the raw. "It is the strong and the bold who go forth to subdue the wilderness and conquer new lands", said an 1840s advertising brochure.⁽⁵⁾ Well and good, but the masculine competition, mateship and isolation that framed the male colonial experience also produced a tradition of boozing, crude language, deep homophobia and misogyny. The Kiwi bloke type continues to dominate the construction of New Zealand masculinity, and despite the gains made by feminism, the negative behaviours associated with blokedom continue. The statistics on drinking,



Coachlines bus, Auckland, 2001

deaths on the road, violence against women and high suicide rates make depressing reading.

Baines however offers the New Zealand audience, particularly the Pakeha female spectator, an earthy character at ease with his body, the Maori community and the natural environment, yet possessing an emotional sensitivity, a kind of monosyllabic ability to communicate. This hybrid of contradictory characteristics is encoded as deeply attractive to New Zealand women – a bloke equipped with communicative skills and a sensitivity that in theory undermine and feminise his masculinity.

Lynda Dyson in her contribution to the debate on *The Piano* in *Screen* also sees Baines as the prototypic Kiwi male.⁽⁶⁾ The developing sexual relationship between Ada and Baines, Dyson argues, enacts a fantasy of colonial reconciliation, permitting the couple to shift from being British migrants to proper New Zealanders. And at the end of *The Piano*, having appropriated sufficient "Maori-ness" to ensure his difference, Baines can be nicely domesticated in the New Zealand suburbs. Meanwhile Ada, having been dragged to the bottom of the sea by her piano, symbol of British bourgeois culture, frees herself and resurfaces.

Dyson argues this shift from migrant to settler is at the cost of Maori, who provide the backdrop for the emotional drama of the film's white principals. The general passivity of the Maori in the film lends them a timeless gravity, as though suspended outside of history. Dyson argues that this characterisation draws on discourses of primitivism which have historically constructed the colonial Other as "noble savage".

The historical articulation of sexuality and colonialism reverberates with contemporary questions of identity. Dyson



Screen 1995



Cinema Papers 1993

suggests that Pakeha have been undergoing a crisis of national identity in recent times. Maori demands for justice and Britain's disinterest in its former colonies have forced Pakeha to reassess their colonial history. An already precarious sense of belonging feels further undone and, as a palliative, Pakeha are increasingly laying claim to a white ethnicity, a new brand of national identity. Neither part of Empire, nor truly indigenous, Pakeha borrow Maoriness to articulate their specificity and their difference. *The Piano*, Dyson argues, in restaging the colonial encounter, addresses the post-colonial anxieties of white New Zealand, the reworking of the nature/culture trope to represent and affirm a newly indigenised national identity.

However, Dyson fails to consider the film's reception in this country. Without essentialising nationalism or being overly optimistic, there has been an shift in New Zealanders' perceptions of Maori/Pakeha relations, and this shaped the country's response to *The Piano*. Introduced as an official policy in the mid-1980s, biculturalism was predicated on the forging of a "special relationship" between Maori and Pakeha. Revitalising the Treaty of Waitangi as a constitutional blueprint, biculturalism has led to some redistribution of land and resources wrongfully confiscated during 150 years of colonisation. For example, the Sealord deal allocated Maori a proportion of the country's valuable commercial fishing industry. The Tainui and Ngai Tahu settlements have involved the return of land and substantial cash reparations. Many more tribal claims are currently before the Waitangi Tribunal.

I believe the uneasiness experienced by *The Piano*'s New Zealand audiences indicates that we refuse to be "conciliated" by the film in the way Dyson suggests. To be sure, a shift in attitude has been forced upon Pakeha by Maori efforts to preserve their

culture and their heritage. Despite some grumbling, however, there has obviously been sufficient political will on the part of Pakeha to accept the Waitangi Tribunal's decisions. And it is precisely this political will – the recognition of the "special relationship" – that made many uncomfortable with the film. It is not that Dyson was wrong. But if *The Piano* was attempting to resolve and re-establish Pakeha identity as she argues, many Pakeha were unwilling to be positioned in such a way by the film. *The Piano*'s apparent marginalisation of Maori does not reflect the climate that has made revisiting the Treaty of Waitangi possible. Whereas the credit for this must lie with Maori persistence and strength, that it has happened at all indicates that Pakeha are now willing to at least consider sharing power.

Annie Goldson is a documentary filmmaker and writer. Her recent feature film *Punitive Damage* addressed a New Zealand woman's search for justice following the murder of her son in East Timor. Goldson is Associate Professor at the Department of Film, TV and Media Studies at the University of Auckland.

This is a revised version of an essay published in *Screen* (Vol.38, No.3, 1997).

1. Jane Campion cited in *New Zealand Film* 50 October 1993. p12.
2. Jane Mander *The Story of a New Zealand River* Whitcombe and Tombs, Christchurch, 1938.
3. *Screen* Vol.16, No.3, 1975. pp6-18.
4. Jock Phillips *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pakeha Male: A History* Penguin Books, Auckland, 1987.
5. Cited in *ibid.* p5.
6. Lynda Dyson "The Return of the Repressed?: Whiteness, Femininity and Colonialism in *The Piano*" *Screen* Vol.36, No.3, 1995. pp267-76.



Karekare Beach 2001



The Wrong Sea: Beach Scenes in New Zealand Cinema

JANE SAYLE

116
117

SWANS

A family plan a day trip to the beach. One of their cats is sick, but they make it comfortable and go anyway. Father is at work so Mother must take command of the outing; she assures the children the cat will be fine. "Mother knew always..." The lies of the adult world, the fallibility of official encodings, will become evident before the day is out, since the day ends with both a portent of death and an actual death.

Getting off at the wrong railway station, the family find themselves on a lonely and unpeopled beach: "Where had the others gone? Why weren't there other people? They had been to other seas, near merry go rounds and swings and slides, among people... What if there is no sea either and no nothing? Where is the place to put our things, the place to undress... Mum, have we come to the wrong sea? Mum looked bewildered, is it the wrong sea? It was the wrong sea."

But they decide to make the best of it. "The sea roared in their ears, it was true sea, look, it was breaking white on the sand and the seagulls crying and swimming..."

As dusk draws in, they walk back to the station across a lagoon: "It was dark black water, secret, and the air was filled with murmurings and rustlings, it was as if they were walking into another world that had been kept secret from everyone and now they had found it. The darkness lay massed across the water... thick as if you could touch it, soon it would swell and fill the earth and they looked across the lagoon and saw the swans, black and shining, as if the visiting dark, tiring of its form had changed to birds, like secret sad ships..."

In a climate of anxiety, in a place of menace, "the wrong sea" becomes "the true sea", but only temporarily, since a darkness

that prefigures death masses over it and the official assurances of the adult world collapse. The wrong sea, in its guise of discursive field or surface, represents alternative histories that linger uncertainly on the margins of familiar meta-narratives. This problem quickly becomes the danger of trusting a parent's bewildering and uncertain knowledge. Can a mother like this, characterising uncertainty, ever be a safe guide when walking into another world?

Janet Frame's story, "Swans", comes from her collection, *The Lagoon*, published in 1951 – the post-colonial, post-war world into which I was born – as Frame waited in the Seaciff Mental Hospital for her scheduled leucotomy.⁽²⁾ There were swans in the Wonderland Gardens in Oamaru where Frame grew up. They were replaced by concrete ones in 1941 when it was thought a swan had caused the death by drowning of a child.

100 CROWDED YEARS

As a 5th former on a school field trip in 1940, Frame went by ferry from Lyttelton to Wellington, to visit the Centennial Exhibition where the film *100 Crowded Years* screened continuously. The film constructed New Zealand's official post-contact history from 1840 to 1940 as part historical re-enactment, part documentary. In a literal imagining of nation as text, a book written in old-style script appears on screen, and the pages of history turn before our eyes.

A sailor calls, "Land Ho!" On board ship everyone is polite, clean and practical. The helpful sailors are mute and obliging. It is a calm sunny day. The new arrivals try not to touch the water. The Maori waiting on shore are barely acknowledged; dishevelled strangers cooking unappetising-looking food. But it is this food that will almost certainly keep the settlers alive in the beginning. The Maori will also act as guides into the bush heartland as we



One Hundred Crowded Years 1993



The Piano 1993 New Zealand Film Archive Stills Collection

move away from the unstable margins of the new land, in a journey that progresses from epic sea voyage towards the pastoral colony.

To remain in the landfall moment would mean to be held in a kind of stasis, from which history's narrative could not proceed. The new arrivals are neither quite traveller nor settler. They bring with them trappings of home: top hat and dark suit, tiny patent leather shoes and clean white stockings. It is an orderly and polite first contact, like a promenade along an English street, in spite of what is at stake. Glances are exchanged between the two races, meeting for the first time. A polite haughtiness characterises the settlers. The women gather their skirts around their knees prettily; after all, they have God and Darwin on their side. A polite curiosity characterises the Maori gaze; they cannot foresee the future. By 1900 only a quarter of their number will still be alive.

Pakeha identity is born from a mixture of dispossession and privilege. The landfall scene in *100 Crowded Years* reasserts a purposeful colonial society whose hierarchy of encounter is revealed as the amateur actors move across the screen, forever enacting an authorised founding narrative of nationhood. Their self-conscious gestures mimic those of any middlebrow family snapshot, and so connect with people like me across time.

THE PIANO

The landfall scene in *The Piano* is noisy, dramatic and rough. The sea is dangerous and the towering surf roars a backdrop to the drama taking place as Ada, the mail-order bride, arrives with her daughter and belongings at an isolated northern beach. The sailors who bear her ashore are vulgar; they swear gruffly, sing sea shanties and piss on the sand. To these rugged barbarians, used to living either on the flood or the coast, the piano (which they call a

coffin) is "too much trouble" – not merely troublesome but also dangerous. As they leave, dusk settles.

As Ada waits for Stewart she creates a kind of open-air parlour on the wet sand using a table, a lamp and a parasol. The crated piano is nearby. Ada's demeanour is emblematic of the British art of composing oneself. It shows a gathering of will, a calm enduring cultural loyalty that will ensure the social shape of the future colony. We recognise everything represented here, but the scene is disquieting and surreal. Where is the home to enclose these things? In the incongruous arrangement of simple domestic props on the beach it is possible to see the colonial process materialising in its new landscape as a language of incongruous symbols.

THE END OF THE GOLDEN WEATHER

A boy is on a summer holiday with his family at a northern beach. The endless sunny days are full of small dramas enacted on a stage of sand. The boy is a serious chronicler of his world; his players are the citizens of the small seaside town where he lives. The people he sees on the sand everyday are transformed in his imagination into mythic figures from another place and time. It is England's own glorious past, in fact, that is imported to fit his narrative requirements. As his bound heroine struggles on the rocks, the tide coming in around her, his solution is to import some characters from England's glamorised medieval history. Knights in glinting armour ride on silk-robed horses, pennants flying, to rescue the damsel in distress on the beach.

The boy-narrator has inscribed himself at the centre of things, as the creator of the story. He is also on the margins, since he must borrow a past and props for his drama from 12,000 miles away and many years ago. This is a play that is also a tradition.



End of the Golden Weather 1991 New Zealand Film Archive Stills Collection



Arriving Tuesday 1995 New Zealand Film Archive Stills Collection

Samuel Butler's hero-traveller in *Erewhon*, for example, discovers a lost civilisation in the 19th century wilds of the South Island which has all the characteristics of a medieval hamlet: "for they seemed to be some five or six hundred years behind Europe."⁽¹⁾ Butler's assumptions rest on the inevitability of English colonisation and English cultural superiority; his concept of New Zealand is as a pre-industrial England. The struggle to free ourselves from this sort of stifling, scripted identity led the poet A.R.D. Fairburn in 1934 to declare: "There is no golden mist in our air, no Merlin in our woods, no soft, warm colours... Hard clear light reveals the bones, the sheer form."⁽²⁾

ARRIVING TUESDAY

"Whaddya think of this one?"

"Oh, it's not quite right somehow."

"Whaddya mean?"

"Oh, I don't know, it's just not how I pictured it."

JUST BACK FROM two years O.E., Monica had thought fondly and often of New Zealand and the beach, seeing herself in her mind's eye with Nick as "Two little specks on a beach somewhere... I kept dreaming about it." Together they go in search of the beach of her dreams but she is dissatisfied and finally resigned as it becomes clear that it is not possible to reconcile her idea with the reality. Nick, in his role as authorising male, tries to overwrite the unstable and uncomfortable script she enacts. The chill and miserable beach mirrors her unhappiness. She says, finally, that it might be okay though "when the wind drops and we get the tent up..."

AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE

Little girls – Janet Frame and her sisters – sit on an empty headland facing out to sea singing an old Scottish song of thwarted courtship. They sing towards England, raising their arms in salutation. The desiring cringe built into the heart of colonial culture is both a salute and a song; it works as an emblem of constant yearning and love for Europe, for romance, for that other place, for home.

THE PROCESS OF COLONIALISM dislocates and distorts the psyche of both the coloniser and the colonised. "Nations are communities created not simply by forging certain bonds but by fracturing or disallowing others; not merely by invoking and remembering certain versions of the past, but making sure that others are forgotten or repressed."⁽³⁾

The colonial experience is alive in the consciousness of New Zealanders, a continuing psychic pattern, and its legacy will have to be dealt with long after the colonial situation formally ends. Rather than deny this, through trading in reassuring outlines, dreams of closure and containment and stabilising hard-edge historical constructs, I am drawn to unsettling narratives. Lydia Wevers says of Frame's work: "the surfaces of existence are always confusing and unstable... it is clear that there are rules and customs, but for those who do not understand them, appearances only temporarily disguise waiting menace."⁽⁴⁾

I argue for the primacy of troubling, lyrical narratives in the ongoing construction of New Zealand identity; and for the significance of what is romantically understood as a marginal site, the beach. A place of arrival, encounter, transformation and revelation, the beach encourages other forms of bewildering knowledge to



An Angel at My Table 1990



Pacific Films end frame

flow or surface; to take shape as flotsam, jetsam, swan or knight, or to remain amorphous but palpable as waiting menace, joy or death. On the beaches of post-colonial history the ground is unstable. Here the “rules and customs” created to supply a secure identity and social landscape are consistently and usefully undermined.

An encounter with the wrong sea releases the murmurings from an “other world”; what has been kept secret begins to be heard. The foundational narrative of colonial history, exemplified by *100 Crowded Years* – landfall, conflict, resolution, progress to nationhood – is eroded as the trauma of colonisation returns. The darkness massed across the water takes the recognisable form of our history, and we remember that the secret sad ships, the dark forms, are our own.

Jane Sayle lectures in critical studies at the College of Design, Fine Arts and Music, Massey University, Wellington. This piece is part of a larger project on the beach in New Zealand visual history.

1. *The Lagoon, and Other Stories* Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1951. pp44-53. And the films discussed are: *100 Crowded Years* (dir. H.H. Bridgman) Government Film Studios, 1940; *The Piano* (dir. Jane Campion) Miramax, 1993; *The End of the Golden Weather* (dir. Ian Mune) South Pacific Pictures, 1991; *Arriving Tuesday* (dir. Richard Riddiford) Cinepro/Walker Films, 1986; *An Angel at my Table* (dir. Jane Campion) Hibiscus Films, 1990. 2. cited in Francis Pound “Nationalist Antitheses: A Compendium” *Antic* 1 1986. p79 3. Ania Loomba *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* Routledge, London, 1998. p202. 4. *History of New Zealand Literature* Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1991. p240.

List of Works and Artists' Biographies

120
121

Works

All measurements are in millimetres, height before width before depth.

ASHLEY BICKERTON

Them 1998
acrylic, pencil and photographs on wood
2440 x 2130
Collection of Frank and Patty Kolodny,
New York

The Five Sages 1998
acrylic, pencil and photographs on wood
1220 x 2440
Courtesy Sonnabend Gallery, New York

MLADEN BIZUMIC

Scape 2 2000
colour photograph on lightbox
1850 x 550 x 180
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

Scape 3 2000
colour photograph on lightbox
1850 x 550 x 180
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

ADAM CHODZKO

Nightvision 1 1998
two channel video projection
13 minutes 20 seconds
installed dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist, London

Flasher: History 1996-2000
Production Stills No. 2, 5, 9, 14 and 20
5 colour photographs
505 x 760 each
Courtesy the artist, London

GREGORY CREWDSON

Untitled (dirt mound) 1992
colour photograph
765 x 1020
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

Untitled (linear formation of beetles) 1992
colour photograph
1020 x 765
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

Untitled (robin with ring of eggs) 1992
colour photograph
765 x 1020
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

Untitled (mound of butterflies) 1994
colour photograph
765 x 1020
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

Untitled (underwater corpse) 1995
colour photograph
765 x 1020
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

Untitled (birds around home) 1997
colour photograph
1020 x 1275
Courtesy Luhring Augustine Gallery, New York

LISA CROWLEY

from Freefall 1999
5 colour photographs
1600 x 1900 each
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

BILL CULBERT

Sunset I 1990
colour photograph
1500 x 1000
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

Sunset II 1992
colour photograph
1500 x 1000
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

Sunset III 1992
colour photograph
1500 x 1000
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

Sunset IV 1992
colour photograph
1000 x 1500
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

Cep/Abat-Jour 1992
colour photograph
1000 x 1500
Courtesy Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland

TONY DE LATOUR

Prize Fighter 1999
oil on found painting
900 x 1315
Collection of Stuart McKenzie and Miranda
Harcourt, Wellington

Fatal Shore 2000
oil on found painting
1000 x 400
Collection of the artist, Christchurch

Stag Party 2000
oil on two found paintings
1140 x 530mm each
Courtesy Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington

Panorama 1999-2000
oil on found painting
425 x 1460
Collection of A. Teh, Wellington

Snake Tree 2000
oil on found painting
483 x 712
Collection of Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tamaki

STAN DOUGLAS

from the series Nootka Sound 1996

Man on Horse Near Matchlee Bay
colour photograph
565 x 465

The Spanish Well at Yuquot
colour photograph
565 x 465

Jewitt Lake
colour photograph
465 x 565

Interior of the Church at Yuquot
colour photograph
465 x 565

Fish Trap at Valdes Bay
colour photograph
465 x 565

Eias, Bajo Point
colour photograph
465 x 565

Log Jam on Suwowa River
colour photograph
465 x 565

New Logging Road near Head Bay
colour photograph
465 x 565

Collapsed Structure at McBride Bay
colour photograph
465 x 565

Nootka Wood Products Mill at McBride Bay
colour photograph
465 x 565

Creek at McBride Bay
colour photograph
465 x 565

Marble Quarry At Hisnit Inlet
colour photograph
465 x 565

*View of Mount Creps and Mills Peaks from Islets
Southwest of Bligh Island*
colour photograph
495 x 965

Deactivated Logging Road at Kleepetee Creek
colour photograph
500 x 965

Gold River Mill
colour photograph
495 x 955

Tahsis Mill
colour photograph
500 x 985

Nootka Cannery Wharf
colour photograph
500 x 1015

*Beachcomber's Float Between King and
Williamson Passages*
colour print
500 x 965

Collection of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York / Gift of The Bohlen Foundation

BILL HAMMOND

Whistlers Mothers 2000
oil on canvas
2300 x 2400
Collection of Adrian Barr, Auckland

Searching for Ashburton 2 2000
oil on canvas
2150 x 1850
Courtesy Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington

KENDAL HEYES

From a Shipwreck I-9 1994
9 colour photographs
630 x 870 each
Courtesy New Zealand National Maritime
Museum, Auckland / On loan from the P.A.
Edmiston Trust

GAVIN HIPKINS

from the 80 image series *The Homely* 1998-2000
30 colour photographs
400 x 600 each
Courtesy Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington

RONI HORN

Pooling - You 1995-7
7 photolithographs
1050 x 1450 each
Courtesy Mathew Marks Gallery, New York

DAVID KORTY

Untitled 2000
20 works
watercolour and acrylic on paper
approximate installed dimensions 3000 x 5000
Courtesy China Art Objects, Los Angeles

JUSTINE KURLAND

Watering Hole 2000
Play Mountain 2000

Clearing 2000
Gibraltar 2000
Explorer 2000
Slumber Party 2000
colour photographs
750 x 1000 each
Courtesy Gorney Bravin and Lee, New York

SASKIA LEEK

Lakeland 2001
cardboard, collage, tape, wood, paintings
installed dimensions 3550 x 7000 x 6200
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

JOHN LYALL

*Towards an Hyper-Feral art Aotearoa: a
Synthetic Field Guide; given both a Sublime
Chorus and an Illuminating Silence* 2000
birdcage, audio recordings and equipment
dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

*The Naming of the Parts (The Auckland War
Memorial Museum): a Natural History* 1987-2000
32 colour photographs
12 are 750 x 580 each; 9 are 500 x 300 each;
6 are 580 x 750 each; 5 are 300 x 500 each
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

Bulldozer Dreaming 1989
6 colour photographs
3 are 300 x 500 each; 3 are 500 x 300

Concrete Dinosaurs 1995
6 colour photographs
4 are 300 x 500, 2 are 500 x 300
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

Future Archeologist 1999
colour photograph
860 x 860
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

IAN MACDONALD

Whale Stranding at Muriwai Beach 1974
24 colour photographs
385 x 385
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

*False Killer Whale Stranding in Manukau
Harbour* 1979
colour photograph
287 x 287
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

JAMES MORRISON

Shipwrecked 2000
oil on canvas
2130 x 2130
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Revolutionary United Front, Long March 2000
oil on canvas
2130 x 2130
Private collection, Brisbane / Courtesy Darren
Knight Gallery, Sydney

PAUL MORRISON

Compound 2001
wall painting
3350 x 11240, 3350 x 10000, 3350 x 11240,
3350 x 10000,
Courtesy the artist, London

MARIELE NEUDECKER

The Sea of Ice 1997
glass, wax, salt, food dye, water, plastic
1600 x 530 x 425
Courtesy the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne

Ship 1998
glass, wax, salt, food dye, water, plastic, fibre-
glass, model boat
1770 x 705 x 645
Courtesy Barbara Thumm Gallery, Berlin

Shipwreck 1997
glass, wax, salt, food dye, water, plastic, enamel
paint, halogen light
1620 x 276 x 325
Courtesy Barbara Thumm Gallery, Berlin

ANI O'NEILL

The Buddy System 2001
crocheted woollen flowers, furniture, video
monitors
approximate installed dimensions 3500 x 8000
x 7000
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

SABINA OTT

particularly for pleasure (she makes hours) 1999
oil and encaustic on panel 1829 x 2134
oil and encaustic on wood, wall painting, video
projection, astroturf and wood; soundtrack
by D.J. Ryan B
Courtesy Marsha Mateyka Gallery,
Washington D.C.

MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI

The Story of a New Zealand River 2001
concert grand piano, paua, carved and
lacquered wood
1015 x 1580 x 2725
Courtesy Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland

The Irish Guards 2001
three colour photographs on lightboxes
2300 x 1200 x 250 each
Courtesy Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland

SÉRAPHINE PICK

Summer Wind 2000
oil on canvas
2000 x 3000
Collection of Lloyd Morrison and Julie
Nevitt, Wellington

Karitane 2000
oil on canvas
1675 x 1400
Courtesy Hamish McKay Gallery,
Wellington

PATRICK POUND

Scrapbook Arcade 1999-2001
scrapbooks, photographs, camera,
drawers, bed
approximate installed dimensions 4200 x
6500 x 6500
Courtesy Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland

HARU SAMESHIMA

Untitled 1990-1998
20 black and white photographs
406 x 406 each
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

ANN SHELTON

Abigail's Party 1999

Golden Girl (Twin Set, view 1)
colour photograph
710 x 900
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Golden Girl (Twin Set, view 2)
colour photograph
710 x 900
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Lightning Girl
colour photograph
710 x 900
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Show Girl
colour photograph
710 x 900
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Calendar Girl
colour photograph
710 x 900
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Modern Girl
colour photograph
710 x 900
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

MICHAEL SHEPHERD

Islands 1996
oil on canvas
245 x 260
Private collection, Auckland

*Motu Paradisia (A N.Z. Dependency
Tax Haven)* 1996
oil on canvas
152 x 270
Private collection, Auckland

Savage Island 1996
oil on canvas
287 x 210
Courtesy the artist, Auckland

*Tracking the Plenipotentiary's Footsteps
Through the Colourful Islands* 1996
oil on canvas
135 x 540
Private collection, Auckland

Invoice 1997
oil on canvas
310 x 230
Private collection, Christchurch

Blue Lagoon 1998
oil on canvas
260 x 400
Private collection, Christchurch

Strip 1998
oil on canvas
150 x 540
Private Collection, Auckland

Watercolour 1998
oil on canvas
260 x 400
Private collection, USA

Watercolour (Sunset) 1998
oil on canvas
260 x 400
Private collection, Auckland

Dawn of a New Era 1999
oil on canvas
453 x 550
Private collection, Auckland

PAUL SIETSEMA

Untitled (Beautiful Place) 1998
16mm silent film, projector
19 minutes
Collection of Dean Valentine and Amy
Adelson, Los Angeles

RONNIE VAN HOUT

Duck Character, Mouse Character 1999
2 fibreglass figures (one watching a video
monitor screening *Obsession* (1998), a video
by Megan Dunn; the other containing a video
camera and monitor)
approximate installed dimensions 2000 x
7000 x 4500
Collection of Hamish McKay, Stuart
McKenzie and Miranda Harcourt; on loan to
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

Abandoned House 1999
painted metal and plastic
80 x 70 x 70
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Chicken Coop 1999
painted metal and plastic
40 x 90 x 90
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Windmill 2000
painted metal and plastic
100 x 60 x 60
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Abandoned House 2000
colour photograph
500 x 750
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Chicken Coop 2000
colour photograph
500 x 750
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Windmill 2000
colour photograph
500 x 750
Courtesy Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

RUTH WATSON

A Map of Paradise (English Version) 2001
engraved capiz (mother of pearl), gold fabric
and map pins
approx 3500 x 5000 installed
Courtesy Jonathan Smart Gallery,
Christchurch

BRENDON WILKINSON

Untitled 2000
425 x 390 x 390
wood, putty, dirt, glue, plastic, found items
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Untitled (Echelon – Waihopai / HO scale)
2001
955 x 1370 x 910
wood, putty, metal, dirt, glue, plastic, flock
and found items
Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

Artists

ASHLEY BICKERTON Born 1959, Barbados. Lives in Bali. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1997 White Cube, London; 1999 Sonnabend Gallery, New York; 2000 NEG (No Limits Events Gallery), Milan. Selected Group Shows: 1996 *Natural Spectacles* David Winton Bell Gallery, Providence, RI; 1997 *Surroundings*: San Jose Museum of Art; 1998 *Pop-Surrealism* Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield; 1999 *Inner Eye* Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase; *Face to Face* Vancouver Art Gallery. **MLADEN BIZUMIC** Born 1977, Sremska Mitrovica (Yugoslavia). Lives in Auckland. Selected Public Performances: 1999 *I Like New Zealand and New Zealand Likes Me* Auckland International Airport; *Sky City*, Sky City Casino, Auckland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *End of Year Exhibition* Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland. **ADAM CHODZKO** Born 1965, London. Lives in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 Galleria Franco Noero, Turin; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; 2000 Accademia Britannica, Rome. Selected Group Shows: 2000 *Dreammachines* Dundee Centre for Contemporary Art; *Art and Facts* Galleria Franco Nero, Turin; *Found Wanting* The Contemporary, Atlanta; *The Poster Show* The Cabinet Gallery, London; *Somewhere Near Vada* Project Art Centre, Dublin; *Artifice* Deste Foundation, Athens. **GREGORY CREWDSON** Born 1962, New York. Lives in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2000 *Twilight* Lühring Augustine Gallery, New York; *Early Work* Partobject Gallery, Carrboro; *Disturbed Nature* Charles H. Scott Gallery, Vancouver. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *Open Ends* Museum of Modern Art, New York; *The Swamp* Harn Museum of Art, Gainesville; *Post-Historical Narrative in Contemporary Photography* Rose Art Museum, Waltham. **LISA CROWLEY** Born 1969, Greymouth. Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 *Blue Movie* Fiat Lux, Auckland; 1999 *The End* Physics Room, Christchurch; *Freefall* Vavasour Godkin Gallery, Auckland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Come* Artspace, Auckland; 2000 *In Glorious Dreams* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. **BILL CULBERT** Born 1935, Port Chalmers. Lives in London and Croagnes (France). Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1997 *Incident in Marlowe's Office* Musée Calvert et Cité Guillaume Apollinaire, Avignon; *Light Works* City Gallery, Wellington; 1999 *Six* Friedrich Gallery, Munich; *Whalebone* (collaboration with Ralph Hotere), Sue Crockford Gallery; 2000 *Half Light* Gitte Weise Gallery, Sydney;

Skyline Millennium Dome, London. **TONY DE LAUTOUR** Born 1965, Melbourne. Lives in Christchurch. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 *Revisionist Paintings* Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington; *New History Paintings* Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch; 2000 *New History Paintings* Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1995 *Hangover* Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton; 1998 *Skywriters and Earthmovers* McDougall Art Annex, Christchurch; 1999 *Wonderlands* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. **STAN DOUGLAS** Born 1960, Vancouver. Lives in Vancouver. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 Vancouver Art Gallery; *Double Vision* (with Douglas Gordon) DIA Center, New York; *Pursuit, Fear, Catastrophe: Ruskin* Fondation Cartier Pour L'art Contemporain, Paris; *Le Detroit*, Art Gallery of Windsor (Canada); Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *Between Cinema and a Hard Place* Tate Modern, London; *Let's Entertain* Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; *Making Time* Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth; *Thinking Space* Art Gallery of Hamilton (Canada); *Insistent Memories* Harn Museum, Gainesville; Foto Biennale Rotterdam; Sydney Biennale; *Gestus* Musée des Beaux Arts, Montreal; *Media City* Seoul. **BILL HAMMOND** Born 1947, Christchurch. Lives in Lyttelton. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 *Blood Bin, Sin Bin* Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland; 1999 *Melting Moments* Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch; *23 Big Pictures* Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Dream Collectors* Te Papa, Wellington; 1999 *Home and Away* Auckland Art Gallery; *Asia Pacific Triennial* Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; 2000 *Sydney Biennale*. **KENDAL HEYES** Born 1952, Auckland. Lives in Sydney. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1997 *Ken Heyes Unplugged* Pendulum, Sydney; 1998 *She Goes Down* Brian Queenin Gallery, Wellington; 2000 *Six Nights in Nelson* Suter Gallery, Nelson. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1994 *Sydney Photographed* Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; *Drawing on Inspiration* Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney; 1999 *Fear and Beauty* Suter Gallery, Nelson. **RONI HORN** Born 1955, New York. Lives in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 *You Are The Weather* De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg; *Pooling - You Jablonka Galerie*, Cologne; 1999 *Pi* Jablonka Galerie, Cologne; *Events of Relation* Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; 2000 *Still Water (The River Thames, for Example)* Castello di Rivoli, Turin.

Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Maverick* Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; *View 2* Mary Boone Gallery, New York; *Travel and Leisure* Paula Cooper Gallery, New York; 2000 *00* Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York. **GAVIN HIPKINS** Born 1968, Auckland. Lives in Vancouver. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 *The Pack* Artspace, Sydney; 2000 *The Shaft* Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington; *The Habitat* Artspace, Auckland; 2001 *The Stall* Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 Sydney Biennale; 2000 *The Crystal Chain Gang* Auckland Art Gallery; *Guarene Arte 2000* Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Per L'Arte, Guarene (Italy); *Flight Patterns* Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. **DAVID KORTY** Born 1971, San Francisco. Lives in Los Angeles. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 *Malibu Sex Party* Purple, Los Angeles; 2000 *China Art Objects*, Los Angeles. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *China Art Objects*, Los Angeles; Sadie Coles HQ, London; *Kool Aid* Greene Naftali Gallery, New York. **JUSTINE KURLAND** Born 1969, Warsaw. Lives in New York. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 Artists Space, New York; 1999 Patrick Gallery, New York; Gorney, Bravin and Lee, New York; 2001 Gorney, Bravin and Lee, New York. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *Snapshot* Contemporary Museum, Baltimore; 2001 *Sonsbeek*, Arnhem; *Game Face* Smithsonian Institute, Washington. **SASKIA LEEK** Born 1970, Christchurch. Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 *Sleepy Hollow* Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North; 2000 *Outcome of Probability* Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland; *Ghost Painting* Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *Inheriting the Netherlands* Lopdell House, Auckland; *Text and Image* Lopdell House, Auckland; *In Glorious Dreams* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. **JOHN LYALL** Born 1951, Sydney. Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1997 *Towards an Hyper-Feral Art...* Auckland Art Gallery; 1999 *Transit of Auckland* Lopdell House, Auckland; 2000 *Towards a Feral Art* Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1997 *Alt.nature* Artspace, Auckland; 1998 *Islands in the Net* Physics Room, Christchurch; 2000 *Darkness and Light* McLellan Gallery, Melbourne. **IAN MCDONALD** Born 1946, Auckland. Lives in Warkworth. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1979 *Images of the New Zealand Forest* Real Pictures, Auckland; 1980 *The Whale Stranding*

at Muriwai Beach Real Pictures, Auckland. **JAMES MORRISON** Born 1959, Goroka (Papua New Guinea). Lives in Melbourne. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney; *Country Comforts* Stop 22 Gallery, Melbourne; 1999 Talk Artists Initiative, Melbourne; 2000 Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1999 *Minim-art* Talk Artists Initiative, Melbourne; Hanover Gallery, Liverpool; 2000 *Longevity* Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne. **PAUL MORRISON** Born 1966, Liverpool. Lives in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 Michael Janssen, Cologne; Inverleith House, Edinburgh; Asprey Jacques, London; 2000 Forum Kunst, Rottweil; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1999 *Trouble Spot. Painting* Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp; *Colour Me Blind* Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart; 2000 *I Believe in Dürer* Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg; *Twisted Urban and Visionary Landscapes* Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; *Wreck of Hope* The Nunnery, London. **MARIELE NEUDECKER** Born 1965, Dusseldorf. Lives in London. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 *Never Eat Shredded Wheat* James Harris Gallery, Seattle; 2000 Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre; 2001 Galerie Barbara Thumm, Berlin. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1999 *As Far as the Eye Can See* Atlanta College of Art Gallery; *Signs of Life* Melbourne Biennale; 2000 *Small World: Dioramas in Contemporary Art* Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; *Blue* New Art Gallery, Walsall. **ANI O'NEILL** Born 1971, Auckland. Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1997 *Cottage Industry* City Gallery, Wellington; 1999 *Monopoly* Mori Gallery, Sydney; *Doggie in the Window* Archhill Gallery, Auckland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Close Quarters* Monash University Gallery and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; 2000 *Te Totara Paa: Te Urewera Hikoi* Archhill Gallery, Auckland; *Biennale of New Caledonia* Tjibou Center for Contemporary Art, Noumea. **SABINA OTT** Born 1954, New York. Lives in St. Louis, Missouri. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 Marsha Mateyka Gallery, Washington; Center for Contemporary Art, Cleveland; Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris. 1999 Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica; Clough-Hanson Gallery, Memphis. Selected Group Shows: 2000 *Overthetopfrenzy* Kingsborough College, New York; *Painted Spaces* Australian Centre for

Contemporary Art, Melbourne; 2001 *Fleurs Du Mal* Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum. **MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI** Born 1968, Porirua. Lives in Auckland. Maori tribal affiliations: Nga-Ariki, Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Rongowhakaata. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 *Ten Guitars* Artspace, Auckland; 2000 *The Beverly Hills Gun Club* Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1996 *Cultural Safety* Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt; *The World Over* Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and City Gallery, Wellington; 1999 *Home and Away* Auckland Art Gallery; *Asia Pacific Triennial* Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; 2000 *Flight Patterns* Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. **SÉRAPHINE PICK** Born 1964, Kawakawa. Lives in Dunedin. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2000 *Private Gardens* Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland; *Earthly Possessions* Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington; *Display* Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1999 *Fear and Beauty* Suter Gallery, Nelson. 2000 *Parihaka* City Art Gallery, Wellington; *Te Ao Tawhito/Te Ao Hou, Old Worlds/New Worlds: Contemporary Art From New Zealand* Art Museum of Missoula, Montana. **PATRICK POUND** Born 1962, Hamilton. Lives in Melbourne. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 Renard Wardell Gallery, Melbourne; 1999 *Systematic Towards a Theory of Everything* Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland; *Towards a Theory of Everything* Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; 2000 Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998; *Patterns of Intention* Artspace, Auckland; 1999 *Who Do I Think I Am* Artspace, Auckland; *Home and Away* Auckland Art Gallery; 2000 *Art and Land* Chaing Mai Contemporary Art Gallery. **HARU SAMESHIMA** Born 1958, Shizouka (Japan). Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1993 *No Frills* Claybrook Gallery, Auckland; 1995 *Souvenir* Claybrook Gallery, Auckland; 1998 *Wet Dreams* Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Media(tion)/Photographies* BWX, Wellington; 1999 *Urban Projection* Lopdell House, Auckland; *Wonderland* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. **ANN SHELTON** Born 1967, Timaru. Lives in Vancouver. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1997 *Redeye* The Arches, Glasgow; 2000 *Abigail's Party* Adam Art Gallery, Wellington; *The Strip* Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Folklore:*

The New Zealanders Artspace, Auckland; 2000 *Drive* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; *A Girl in Every Port* Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland; *In Glorious Dreams* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. **MICHAEL SHEPHERD** Born 1950, Hamilton. Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2000 *Still lies* Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch; 1997 University of Canterbury, Christchurch. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Dream Collectors* Te Papa, Wellington; 2000 *Parihaka* City Gallery, Wellington; *The Waikato Landscape from Mercer to Waitomo* Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton. **PAUL SIETSEMA** Born 1968, Los Angeles. Lives in Los Angeles. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 Brent Petersen Gallery, Los Angeles; 2001 Regen Projects, Los Angeles. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York; *L.A.*, Monika Spruth and Philomene Magers, Cologne; *Mise en Scene* New Los Angeles Sculpture; 2001 *Sonsbeek 9* Arnhem. **RONNIE VAN HOUT** Born 1962, Christchurch. Lives in Melbourne. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1998 *Island of Complaint* Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland; 1999 *Am I Talking to Me?* International Studio Programme, New York; *I Need a Doctor* Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney. Selected Group Exhibitions: 2000 *Wonderlands* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; *Inheriting the Netherlands* Lopdell House, Auckland; *Sphagetti Dharma* Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington. **RUTH WATSON** Born 1962, West Melton. Lives in Sydney. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 1999 *The World Interrupted* Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch; 2000 *Place on Earth* Canberra Contemporary Artspace; Selected Group Exhibitions: 1996 *The World Over* Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and City Gallery, Wellington; 1997 *Cartographers* Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; 1999 *Two Worlds* Gallery 4A, Sydney; 2000 *The Crystal Chain Gang* Auckland Art Gallery. **BRENDON WILKINSON** Born 1974, Masterton. Lives in Auckland. Selected Solo Exhibitions: 2000 *Nooks and Crannys*, Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland; *Cabin Fever* Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington. Selected Group Exhibitions: 1998 *Malcontents and Memory* Ivan Anthony, Auckland; 1999 *Only the Lonely* Artspace, Auckland; *Wonderlands* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery; 2000 *Darkness and Light* McLelland Gallery, Melbourne.



Bright Paradise The 1ST AUCKL



PARSONS AUCKLAND

09 303 1557

\$44.95