



the
● walters
prize 2010

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the
● walters
prize 2010

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
NEW GALLERY
24 JULY – 31 OCTOBER 2010



___Finalists



Dan Arps

Born 1976 Christchurch
Lives in Auckland

Explaining Things 2008
mixed media

Courtesy of the artist, Gambia
Castle, Michael Lett, Neon Parc
and private lenders

First exhibited at Gambia Castle,
Auckland, 2008



Fiona Connor

Born 1981 Auckland
Lives in Los Angeles

Something Transparent
(*please go round the back*) 2009
glass, timber, metal and plastic
fittings, acrylic, vinyl transfer

Courtesy of the artist, Michael Lett
and Gambia Castle

First exhibited at Michael Lett,
Auckland, 2009



Saskia Leek

Born 1970 Christchurch
Lives in Auckland

Yellow is the Putty of the World 2009
oil on board

Courtesy of the artist, Ivan Anthony
and private lenders

First exhibited at Ivan Anthony,
Auckland, 2009

Alex Monteith

Born 1977 Belfast, Northern Ireland
Lives in Auckland

*Passing Manoeuvre with two
motorcycles and 584 vehicles for
two-channel video* 2008
Dual-channel video installation,
13 minutes 38 seconds, stereo sound

Courtesy of the artist

First exhibited at S^T PAUL St,
AUT University, Auckland, 2009

—Director's Foreword

The Walters Prize now plays a major and enduring role within New Zealand's contemporary scene. It reviews exhibitions presented since the previous biannual selection, and it considers projects nominated for making an outstanding contribution to New Zealand art. From the outset, the Walters aimed to honour the work of the contemporary artist and to build a public conversation about contemporary art and artists.

The selection of four projects is made by a nationally representative jury, the composition and location of which changes with successive Prizes. Membership of the jury is confidential, allowing jurors' the freedom to act without constraint. When the four jurors eventually meet, it is their first opportunity to combine shortlists and to narrow down nominations. The discussion is never an easy one, no less so this year.

A cornerstone of the Prize is that the Gallery plays no part in this decision-making. Jurors review and nominate, while we work with artists to reconstitute, re-situate and represent the works that gained their attention. Sometimes this task is easy and sometimes not. In 2010, Michael Stevenson's *Persepolis* project was nominated but, due to accommodation and budgetary constraints, it was sadly not possible to include it in the exhibition.

The preparation of this exhibition could not be achieved without the support of the artists, their gallerists, and the owners we call on to lend work. This year's finalists — Dan Arps, Fiona Connor, Saskia Leek and Alex Monteith — have all greatly assisted us in their projects' realisation. I congratulate

Dan, Fiona, Alex and Saskia on their inclusion in this Prize and thank them for what they have done to enable its presentation. I also acknowledge Ivan Anthony, Michael Lett, Gambia Castle and Neon Parc for their wholehearted support.

I am delighted the distinguished curator and writer Vicente Todolí is the international judge of the 2010 Prize. As former director of Tate Modern, he is superbly well qualified for the task. For the fifth Prize, I acknowledge the role played by its founding benefactors and principal donors, Erika and Robin Congreve and Dame Jenny Gibbs. They, together with major donor Dayle Mace, make the Walters possible, year after year.

I acknowledge too founding principal sponsor Ernst & Young, through Rob McLeod, and founding sponsor Saatchi & Saatchi, through Kevin Roberts. They have also been with us from the beginning — making a remarkable commitment to New Zealand contemporary art.

Finally, and most importantly, thanks go to the artists. They, and you, the audience, are the reason we do this.

Chris Saines

Director
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

— Donor's Foreword

Looking back eight years, and at four previous awards of the Walters Prize, we are delighted it has achieved our goal of promoting New Zealand's contemporary art. It has also demonstrated the value of our partnership with the Auckland Art Gallery. The high regard in which the Prize is held both here and overseas reflects the achievement of contemporary artists in New Zealand and the seriousness with which they are regarded internationally. The professional manner in which the Gallery organises the Prize and the associated public events is a key factor in its success and has allowed us — against all our natural instincts — to adopt a scrupulous hands-off approach.

It is our hope that the Walters Prize brings many benefits, to the winner, the finalists and to the whole scene. We hope that New Zealand art and artists gain from the interest and exposure the Prize brings. We would also like to acknowledge Dayle Mace, whose generous Finalists Awards means that all the nominated artists benefit from the Prize. We are particularly delighted to note that although all this year's finalists have a solid track record, they are the youngest group of finalists selected so far.

A key feature of the Walters Prize is that it brings to Auckland a distinguished judge with an international perspective. We have set our sights high: the first judge was Harold Szeemann (2002), followed by Robert Storr (2004), Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (2006) and Catherine David (2008). This year's judge is Vicente Todolí, the distinguished recent director of Tate Modern (2002–2010).

Erika and Robin Congreve
Dame Jenny Gibbs



Peter Robinson winner of the
Walters Prize 2008



Catherine David judge of the
Walters Prize 2008
Photograph by Bob Goedewaagen

— Jury Statement

Jon Bywater is Lecturer in Fine Arts at The University of Auckland. **Rhana Devenport** is Director of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. **Leonhard Emmerling** was Director of St PAUL St at AUT University and is now Visual Arts Adviser at the Goethe Institut in Munich, Germany. **Kate Montgomery** is Director of the Physics Room, Christchurch.

The four works or bodies of work we have selected for the Walters Prize 2010 are considered the most outstanding contributions to contemporary New Zealand art shown since the last Prize was shortlisted. They offer notably different kinds of pleasures and puzzles, and have

been created through contrasting artistic approaches, highlighting a key challenge of what has been our task; to remain alert to what impacts — in a valuable way — on the practice and reception of New Zealand art, whether it be immediate or subtle, cerebral or visceral, or any combination of these things. Mediated by debate, our collective sense of what constitutes artistic excellence agreed on the diverse successes of an installation staged as an abandoned private space, a situation-responsive feat of trompe-l'oeil sculpture, a show of quietly rigorous and disarmingly beautiful paintings, and a straightforwardly constructed, yet precariously captured, video view of two motorcycles moving through traffic.

Dan Arps

Dan Arps' *Explaining Things* jams together the expressive and the deadpan. Mass cultural detritus — YouTube clips, furniture, ornaments and posters — are reworked into what sometimes appear to be illegibly personal artifacts. The title hints that all manner of things sampled in this precise jumble of images and objects might relate to our desires for things to have an explanation, including art.

Fiona Connor

Echoing and initially installed within the window space of the Michael Lett gallery on Karangahape Road, Fiona Connor's *Something Transparent* (*please go round the back*) makes the most of the unsettling potential of the double-take. Physically displacing her audience from the interior with multiple reproductions of the façade, she continues an investigation into the multivalent site of the art gallery.

Saskia Leek

Saskia Leek's exhibition *Yellow is the Putty of the World* aligns such over-determined starting points for the act of painting as a bowl of fruit with the now equally familiar idea of abstraction. Demonstrating the fascination that remains in them, these are paintings about painting, but also just as much paintings about the world, that painting, after all, is a part of.

Alex Monteith

Alex Monteith's piece shows us two motorbikes threading their way between lanes of slow-moving traffic from two perspectives at once, as one camera looks forward and another looks back, from one bike to another. Recent technology abstracts a formal composition from the relative motion of the vehicles that subtly confounds our usual grasp of speed, space and time.

— Judge: Vicente Todolí



Photograph by Manuel Vason (2003)

Vicente Todolí's career in the visual arts spans more than 20 years. He was Director, Tate Modern from 2002–2010, Chief Curator 1986–88 and then Artistic Director of Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno 1988–96 and founding Director of Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal from 1996.

His advisory roles include 1995 Carnegie International, *Future, Past, Present* at the 1997 Venice Biennale, the International Foundation Manifesta 2002–07 and currently, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA) in Spain, the Museu Serralves in Porto, and Merz Foundation in Torino.

He has curated exhibitions of work by John Baldessari, James Rosenquist, Per Kirkeby, Tony Cragg, Juan Muñoz, Julião Sarmento, Cildo Meireles and Pedro Cabrita

Reis, James Lee Byars, Franz West, Lothar Baumgarten, Fischli and Weiss, Roni Horn, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Richard Hamilton/Dieter Roth and Francis Bacon. He was co-curator of the Portuguese pavilion for the 2003 Venice Biennale.

At Tate Modern he has curated exhibitions of Sigmar Polke, Robert Frank, Fischli & Weiss, and also co-curated *Cildo Meireles, Rodchenko & Popova: Defining Constructivism* and recently *Van Doesburg and the International Avant-Garde*.

Born in Valencia, Spain in 1958, he studied art history as a Fulbright Scholar at Yale University and City University of New York and was an ISP Fellow at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1984–85.



Left

Wisdom Archetype from
Explaining Things 2008
Courtesy of a private collection,
Brisbane;
Courtesy Neon Parc, Melbourne
Photograph by Paul Philipson

Over

Reconstructed installation view
from *Explaining Things* 2008
Courtesy of the artist and
Gambia Castle

Gambia Castle is an Auckland gallery that regularly presents projects in Karangahape Road. Dan Arps' *Explaining Things* at Gambia organized found objects and included a selection of YouTube videos where people simply tried to "explain" something. The installation presented domestic objects previously discarded as unwanted. Everything that once had a specific function was transformed. Simple and everyday material, like posters, a BBQ table and chairs, lamps, a handwritten note and plinths were all reused as art material.

Explaining Things explores the relationship between knowledge, intuition and fabrication, prompting us to question our own experiences and subjective positions. Dan creates a space that transforms knowledge, focusing our attention on what is happening in the present moment.

Such understated alterations to the authenticity of found objects never appear stylised. There is no sensation of decorative add-on. Frequently, an object's post-trash reality remains along with its patina and aging. The fact that objects were now surplus to someone else binds them together not as refuse, but as fresh ingredients of Dan's process of production.

By using playful oppositions between objects, he creates sculpture that transform everyday items into humorous fetishes. A found handwritten note in the context of this installation becomes disquieting evidence of a man's paranoia. A YouTube confession proposes that we directly gain information from aliens simply by concentrating our attention.

Wisdom Archetype is a plasma lamp in the shape of an owl, further fitted with a modified coat hanger that acts as an antenna, receiving signals from the ether. The wire affects the behaviour of the plasma ball's visible energy flows, tempting people to touch it. As with every work in *Explaining Things*, the sculpture is constructed through surface oppositions and a surprising variety of media. All titles slide about like image boards in constant flux. *Ecce Annon*, for example, is a fragmentary text collaged from real time discussions at *4chan.net* which had rapidly surfaced and then subsequently disappeared.

4chan.net has been described as something akin to the dank dungeon of the internet but also as the birthplace of internet memes. The writer Richard Semon commented that memes present "memory-feelings in relation to original feelings." Memes work by replication, modification, transmission and imitation. Every object in *Explaining Things* evokes the mobility and flexibility of memes by representing subjective experience through diverse media and technique. Dan questions how we experience objects by focussing on ideas about metamorphosis. In this installation he is explaining how things can re-exist.

Ron Brownson



CONCRETE
JUNGLE

San Francisco

EGG
SYTH
RAGE





Left

Interior view from
Something Transparent
(*please go round the back*) 2009
Courtesy of the artist,
Michael Lett and Gambia Castle
Photograph by Kallan MacLeod

Over

Exterior view from
Something Transparent
(*please go round the back*) 2009
Courtesy of the artist,
Michael Lett and Gambia Castle
Photograph by Alex North

Fiona Connor's *Something Transparent* (*please go round the back*) was a site-specific installation at Michael Lett's gallery space on the corner of Karangahape Road and Edinburgh Street, for one month in 2009.

The gallery's façade was replicated using 14 internal frames, each frame precisely reproducing the street frontage in both appearance and scale. From the street, a sight line saw straight to the rear office through a sequence of identical façades. The interior's lighting remained switched on and gave the sculptural intervention a 24-hour presence. At night, the gallery space became a luminous beacon for those who walked or motored by. The phrase *please go round the back* of *Something Transparent* tells visitors to also view the work, during opening hours, from a reverse sight line. This entailed a short walk to the back of the gallery to enter the space from the rear.

Fiona's sculpture demonstrates her idea that a room can be "drawn within itself". The street frontage is repeated within the interior, depriving physical access, while representing the façade. She took the gallery and filled it with its own architecture. In fact, Michael Lett's space became the art's subject. His invitation to the artist was unequivocal "If you could do something with this space what would you do?" Fiona challenged the dealer by proposing that his space be closed to the public. The gallery's interior would, essentially, remain closed to the public.

One can only experience site-specific sculpture at the place for which it is intended. Such a sculpture cannot be either

moved or relocated but its essential idea may be extended in a parallel project. At Auckland Art Gallery, Fiona revisits her concept – to investigate a gallery by engaging with its physical architecture. By concentrating on a specific space within the New Gallery, she draws from this new site's nature and structure.

Fiona's site-specific concepts are simple and self-reflexive. Fiona comments: "When I make an exhibition I approach it as a one-off project. I work with systems that shape our reality to draw attention to them and demonstrate potential for transformation."

Ron Brownson







Saskia Leek's recent paintings prove that recycling imagery has a formidable potential. They look at mass circulation photographs while also recalling idiosyncratic op-shop pictures. Her work reiterates insights gained from the tradition of 'found' or 'homemade' paintings which have been created by amateur artists. The imagery frequently revisits proverbial subject matter, such as a sailing ship on a billowing ocean or a preened and pert cat. Saskia's pictures knowingly reflect content which is recognised as belonging to the everyday, the vernacular, even what people call the quotidian. Her paintings convey an intensely retrospective insight, a looking back, as if her paintings are echoing pictures that we somehow know and are already familiar with.

While Saskia's paintings deliberately replicate and transform pre-existing imagery, they also question the nature of visual authenticity and the reproducibility of replicas. Her process is one that continuously recycles her previous paintings, as well as images which have been made by others. She comments that her paintings "begin with existing images that have neutrality being relatively empty of particularities so that each work is able to take on a new life." Generic images are carefully undone and reassembled, painted and re-painted, until they cease looking like anything other than themselves.

Each painting's small scale should not be confused with notions about what is physically 'miniature'. All the works in *Yellow is the Putty of the World* reveal that diminutive images can be utterly

Left

Untitled from Yellow is the Putty of the World 2009
Courtesy of a private collection

Over

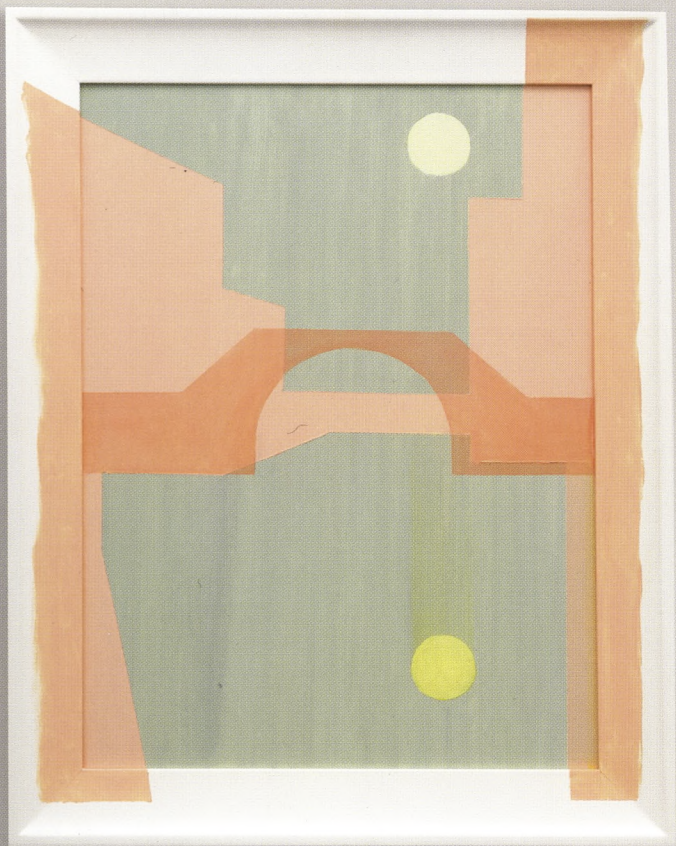
Untitled from Yellow is the Putty of the World 2009
Courtesy of a private collection

Untitled from Yellow is the Putty of the World 2009
Courtesy of the artist and Ivan Anthony

demonstrative – when they are encountered either close up or from a distance. The deliberate intensification resulting from their scale sets them apart from much contemporary painting. With this smaller format, her work subtly echoes local examples from the 1930s to the 1950s. Much like the local modernists such as John Weeks or Rita Angus, Saskia's paintings actually test how scale has the facility to impart a potent sight line. Her paintings initially appear to be settled but their visual tension soon reveals a design in turmoil. Saskia's expressive paintings totally resist all notions of passivity or contentment.

Ron Brownson







Left

Passing Manoeuvre with two motorcycles and 584 vehicles for two-channel video installation 2008
Installation documentation, S' PAUL St, AUT University, Auckland, 2008
Courtesy of the artist

Left

Passing Manoeuvre with two motorcycles and 584 vehicles for two-channel video installation 2008, dual channel video still from time code 00.04.03.20
Courtesy of the artist

Alex Monteith's *Passing Manoeuvre* upends conventions about what a continuous motorcycle dash feels like by its choreographed presentation as a video-installation. On a local motorway a pair of motorbikes interweave between commuting vehicles. Riding precision is essential to such lane splitting, as the manoeuvre requires accurate reflexes due to both riders' close proximity. Their skill at rapid motor pursuit parallels their action's physical danger. Alex counterpoises each biker's engagement with two screens within a blacked-out space. We are thrilled and scarred by their accelerating engines and each motorbike's physical scale.

The artist's website describes her work as a "Motorcycle performance documentation for a two-bike lanesplit of Auckland's Northern Motorway during morning rush hour traffic." She adds that this "semi-illegal continuous passing manoeuvre was from the Greville Road onramp, over the Auckland Harbour Bridge to the city exit." By acknowledging that an actual motorway, not some film set, was the site for her motorcycle performance Alex explores what her performance for video means in real time. *Passing Manoeuvre* is shot in one continuous 13 minute 38 second take. Here, competitive drive time is presented in an unfractured twin-screen panorama.

Lev Kuleshov, the innovative Russian film director, discovered the montage procedure known as the 'Kuleshov effect'. He proved that the opposition of sequential pictures is never as significant as the combination of two separate images. Kuleshov's technical breakthrough is affirmed in *Passing*

Manoeuvre where Alex pairs adjacent screens of the same size. The left screen with its approaching *Ducati 996s* motorbike continually opposes the *Suzuki GSXR 600* following on the right screen.

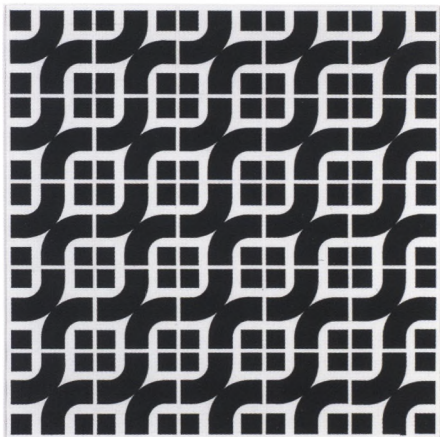
Each biker's action attempts to synchronize each rider's speed. They race to remain equidistant while endeavouring to travel in an identical rhythm. The notion of one rider mirroring the other's constant proximity and velocity illustrates that *Passing Manoeuvre* uses the Kuleshov effect not between video shots but across the twin-screen projection.

The semi-legal lane splitting by solitary motorcyclists occurs often on our roads yet we infrequently encounter two riders performing 'filtering' actions in tandem. For those outside motorcycle culture filtering is when a rider weaves between rows of vehicles to reach the head of congested traffic or to decrease their overall ride-time. The rear rider is one of New Zealand's national level racers and rides with a reduced field of view ahead. This reveals not only the video-action's in-built danger but also the installation's astonishing intensity. These motorcyclists are performers where leader and follower are inter-reliant. Neither rider can ever be a winner as each rider races not alone but as a pair.

Ron Brownson







Untitled 1970

ink on paper

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

purchased 1983

1983/51

Gordon Walters was born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1919 and trained at Wellington Technical College during the 1930s. He travelled to Australia in 1946 and again in 1947, living in Sydney until 1949. In 1950, Walters left for London and Europe to study at first-hand the abstract art he admired, returning to New Zealand in 1953. Throughout a career spanning six decades, he resolutely pursued geometric abstraction at a time when landscape was a predominant subject in New Zealand painting. Gordon Walters died in 1995.

Front cover (from left)

Alex Monteith

Passing Manoeuvre with two motorcycles and 584 vehicles for two-channel video installation 2008, dual channel video still from time code 00.04.03.20

Fiona Connor

Interior view from Something Transparent (please go round the back) 2009
Photograph by Kallan MacLeod

Saskia Leek

Untitled from Yellow is the Putty of the World 2009

Dan Arps

Reconstructed installation view from Explaining Things 2008

Back cover (from left)

Dan Arps

Reconstructed installation view from Explaining Things 2008

Saskia Leek

Untitled from Yellow is the Putty of the World 2009

Fiona Connor

Exterior view from Something Transparent (please go round the back) 2009
Photograph by Alex North

Alex Monteith

Passing Manoeuvre with two motorcycles and 584 vehicles for two-channel video installation 2008, dual channel video still from time code 00.04.03.20

Artist portraits by Jennifer French and Geoffrey Heath, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.
Dan Arps reconstructed installation and Saskia Leek paintings photographed by Jennifer French, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Walters Prize 2008

WINNER

Peter Robinson

FINALISTS

Edith Amituanai
Lisa Reihana
John Reynolds
Peter Robinson

JUDGE

Catherine David

JURY

Jon Bywater
Elizabeth Caldwell
Andrew Clifford
Rhana Devenport

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Toi o Tāmaki

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