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Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū

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B.

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Cover: Artist unknown, after Cornelius Janssen
van Ceulen *Portrait of the poet Edmund Waller,
Esq.* (detail) 17th century. Oil on canvas. Collection
of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū,
purchased 1978

Left: Studio of Peter Lely *Portrait of Frances Teresa
Stuart, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox* (detail)
c. 1670. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch
Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1977

An aerial photograph of Canterbury, New Zealand, taken at sunset. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, pink, and blue clouds. The city below is illuminated by the warm light of the setting sun, with some buildings and streets visible. In the foreground, there is a large green area, possibly a park or golf course, with several trees. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

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Director's Foreword

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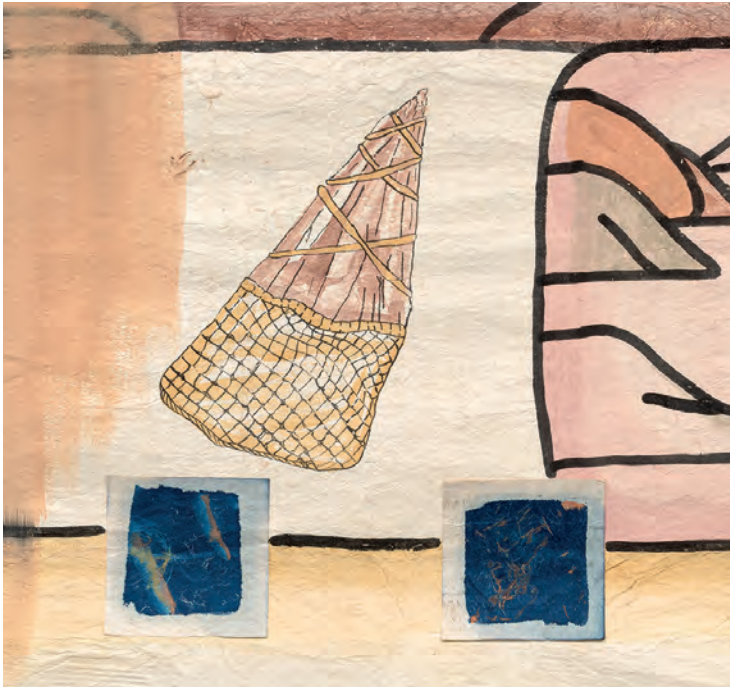
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Heidi Brickell *Wai Ata Āta Whāia* 2023. Rimurapa, shellac, cotton twine, rākau warped by Tangaroa, wire, kōhatu, plywood, cyanoacrylate, baking soda, PVA, denim, masking tape, paper, acrylic, pigment, gesso, modified C hooks. Courtesy of the artist

Director's Foreword

BLAIR JACKSON

February 2024

It feels a bit strange to be writing the foreword for the autumn edition of *Bulletin* on one of Ōtautahi Christchurch's hottest days. However, here I am, welcoming in a new year and enjoying an amazing summer, while signalling a change in seasons and a range of new exhibitions and programmes here at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. It has been a fantastic, bustling summer for the Gallery so far, and we have welcomed over 60,000 visitors between 1 December 2023 and 31 January 2024.

There is much to look forward to during the year ahead, including the arrival of a new acquisition—Francis Upritchard's *Eeling in the Ōtākaro*. First seen in its original balata rubber state as part of Francis's 2022 exhibition *Paper, Creature, Stone*, the final version of this work has recently returned from an Italian foundry where it was cast in bronze. Our thanks to the Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation, who supported the exhibition and Francis's residency at Sutton House, and the estate of Ngarita Johnstone, which generously supported the acquisition of the work for the collection. I'm hoping that we'll be in a position to exhibit *Eeling in the Ōtākaro* later in the year.

In this issue of *Bulletin*, we hear from Simon Gennard, assistant curator of contemporary art and collections at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth. We invited Simon to respond to some of the works in the *Spring Time is Heart-break* exhibition, and he has selected works by Wendelien Bakker, Madison Kelly (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Pākehā) and Lucy Meyle. These three works all explore relationships—from the agency we give to non-human forces when we try to control the rain or blame animals for acting as their nature dictates, to the way we might support wild creatures as they fight for survival in a changing world. Isaac Te Awa (Ngāpuhi, Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha) is curator mātauranga Māori at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand and provides an introduction to *Encountering Aotearoa* by Cora-Allan (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Tumutumu, Niue—Liku, Alofi), which opens in Ōtautahi later this quarter. The exhibition, which comes to us from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, is at its heart the story of our relationship to whenua. Cora-Allan explores the ways we encounter place, offering the chance to experience the land through an Indigenous lens.

Homing in on one element of his *Out of Time* exhibition, which is currently on display on the first floor, Ken Hall looks at a selection of European portraits that can all be traced back to the collecting of former Robert McDougall Art Gallery director Brian Muir in the 1970s. Ken uncovers elements of the stories behind them, asking why a once-treasured portrait of an ancestor might end up seemingly abandoned on the other side of the world.

Our My Favourite comes from librarian and poet Mike Moroney (Taranaki Tūturu, Te Atiawa), who picks a drawing by Toss Woollaston that takes him rudely back to his formative years in the shearing sheds of the Wairarapa. Our first Pagework for the year is provided by Joy Auckram (Ngāti Maniapoto), who reflects on what it is to be takata tiriti in Aotearoa.



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Encountering Aotearoa Whenua, Place and Practice

Isaac Te Awa

I stand staring at a painting of Motupōhue Bluff Hill. Being from the far south myself, its shape is instantly recognisable, its silhouette painted in vibrant colours that mirror the way light reflects on the real Motupōhue. The paint used to create this familiar scene is made from whenua, and includes pukepoto, the rich blue pigment that comes from the land near the hill: my whenua. There's a resonance between the work and its materials that makes it special, layered with connections that reflect my own identity and experiences, reaffirming memories and a sense of belonging.

“It is through pepeha that we identify our links to waka, mauka, moana and whenua”



Encountering Aotearoa is the outcome of a two-week journey by ship made by artist Cora-Allan (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Tumutumu, Niue—Liku, Alofi), during which the landscapes and coastlines of Aotearoa New Zealand were viewed, researched and painted from the moana. Cora-Allan was joined on this voyage by her pāpā, and by focusing on sites visited by Cook and the *Endeavour* in 1769, their experience draws parallels with that of the voyage's Tahitian navigator Tupaia and his nephew Taiata. Deeper than this, there is a resonance with the way in which our tūpuna, both Māori and of the wider Pacific, once experienced and viewed Aotearoa from waka. For Māori, these experiences still echo today, and make up the foundations of our pepeha. It is through pepeha that we identify our links to waka, mauka, moana and whenua, and these four themes are reflected in *Encountering Aotearoa*.

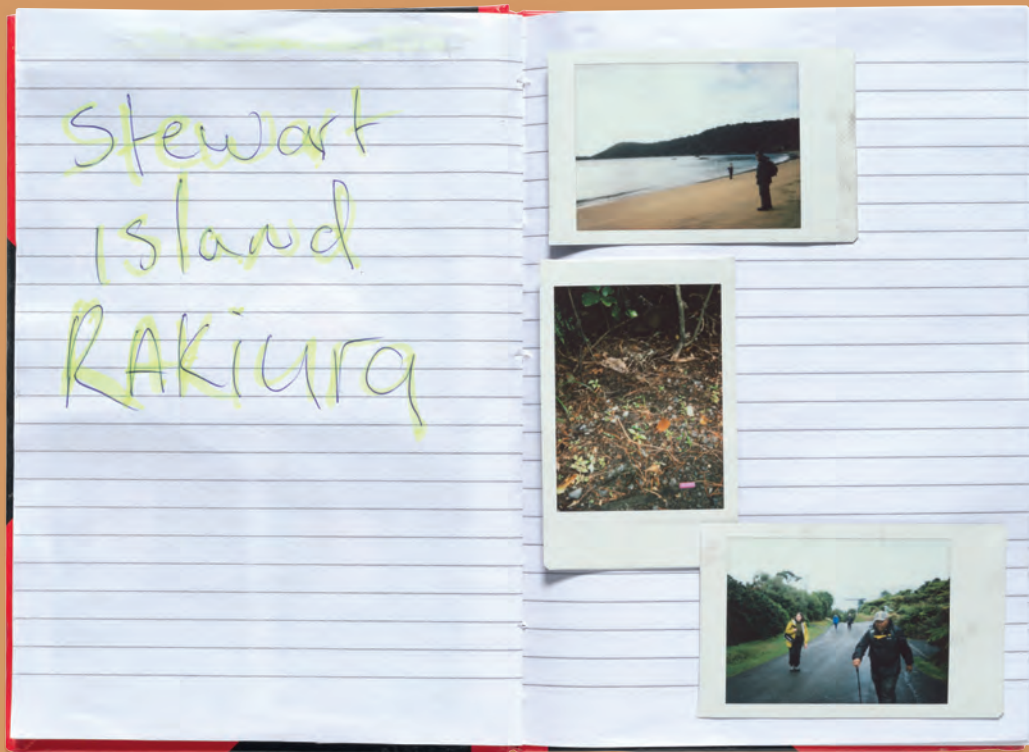
Throughout the exhibition there is the sense that the processes, exploration and documentation leading to the creation of the work were shared experiences. The familial relationship between father and daughter is palpable, and demonstrated in diary entries that combine with colourful notes and stickers, detailed yet fun sketches, and archives of carefully documented and creatively named pigments. This is all contextualised by video footage that gives us insight into their relationship and shared journey. The artworks themselves range from the small and intimate—windows onto coastal whenua—to large multi-layered pieces that utilise surprisingly vibrant colours obtained from the earth. These give a sense of depth and scale, conveying a feeling of light and warmth. We see cool clouds with swirling winds and wild landscapes painted from the perspective of the ocean, which few of us have the privilege to witness.

While there is a focus on land and coastlines, it is important to recognise that *Encountering Aotearoa* is more than a gallery of painted landscapes; it is the product of a series of cultural intersections that form the many faces of contemporary Aotearoa. Our unique blend of Pacific, Māori and Pākēha cultures and the combination of our joint experiences enables the creation of work like this. *Encountering Aotearoa* is reflective of Cora-Allan's own

whakapapa living in Aotearoa as a Pacific person of Niue and Māori descent.

Cora-Allan is very much a multidisciplinary artist, but she is best known for her hiapo practice. As the first practitioner to revitalise this artform in at least two generations this recognition is well earned. Hiapo is proudly featured throughout the exhibition, and to the casual observer it will likely be seen as a blank cloth or canvas for the creation of her works. But it is important to recognise that hiapo is not a canvas. Grown, prepared and beaten from the bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), this beautiful and unique cloth requires years of careful cultivation, practice and skill to create. These cloths are complete artworks within themselves that carry stories of use and history specific to Niue and its people. Through her creative process, Cora-Allan has carefully ensured her adornment of these hiapo enhances the overall mana of the cloth, adding to its beauty and richness of story. Hiapo brings its own presence to the work along with a strong sense of the Pacific. When combined with a focus on Māori place names it guides us to view Aotearoa, and the exhibition, with a wider regional perspective.

Just as hiapo is not a canvas, whenua is not simply a source of paint. The use of earth pigments was once widespread among Māori and historically they were used to adorn the body, taoka and artworks, as well as for skincare and medicine. The colours and textures of these pigments varied greatly from place to place—so much so that every region or iwi had its own unique palette and individual shades were given specific names. They were obtained directly from the local environment, and their colours formed a fingerprint of the location; their use a direct representation of the maker and their living relationship with the land. Today the use of whenua as pigment is undergoing a revival, and a wide range of colours, textures and techniques is present throughout the exhibition. Cora-Allan's gathering and preparation of these pigments is her own way of encountering Aotearoa—an expression of her Māori heritage in which her identity as takata whenua is articulated through the tangible exploration of the whenua.



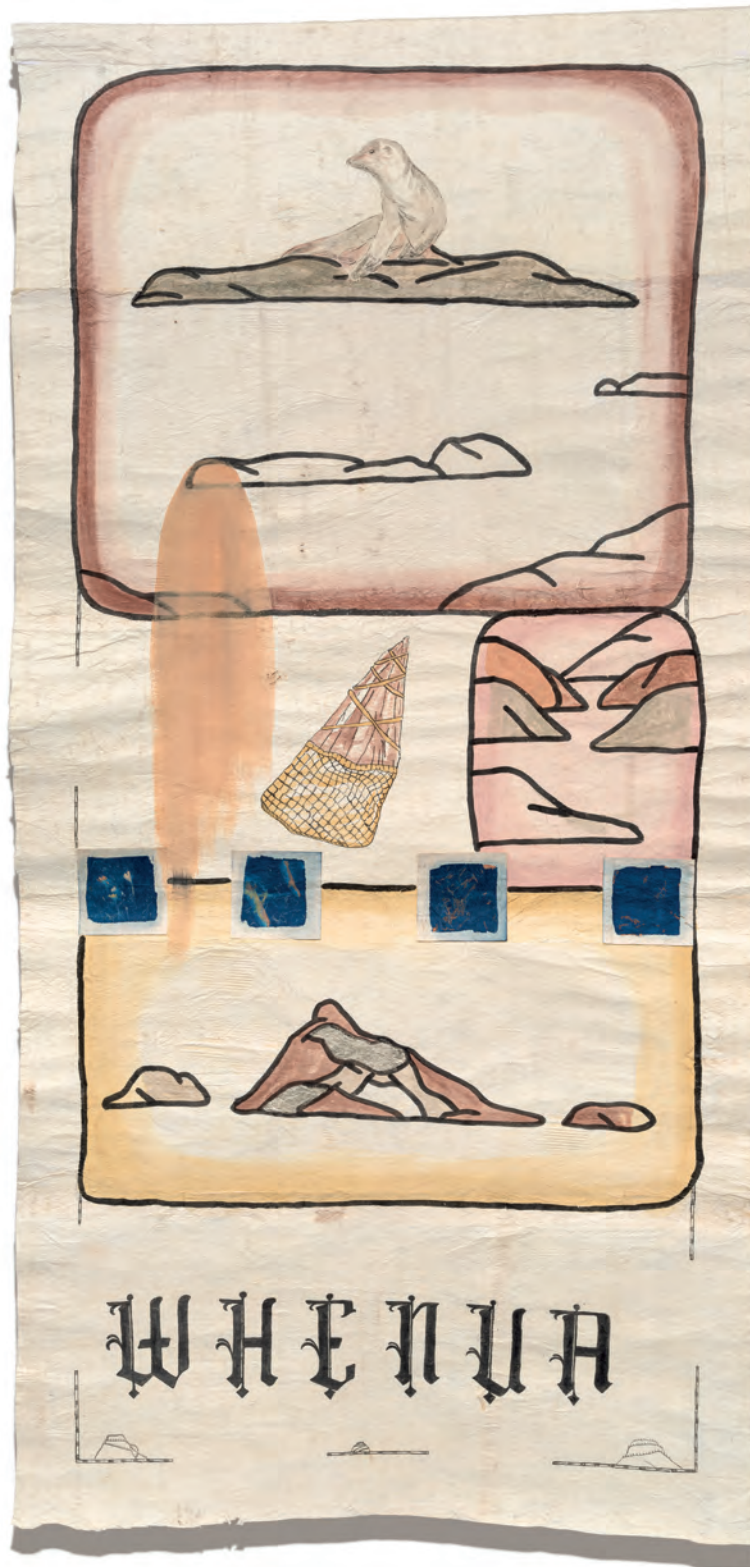
Cora-Allan Encountering Aotearoa 2023. Installation detail, pāpā's travel journal



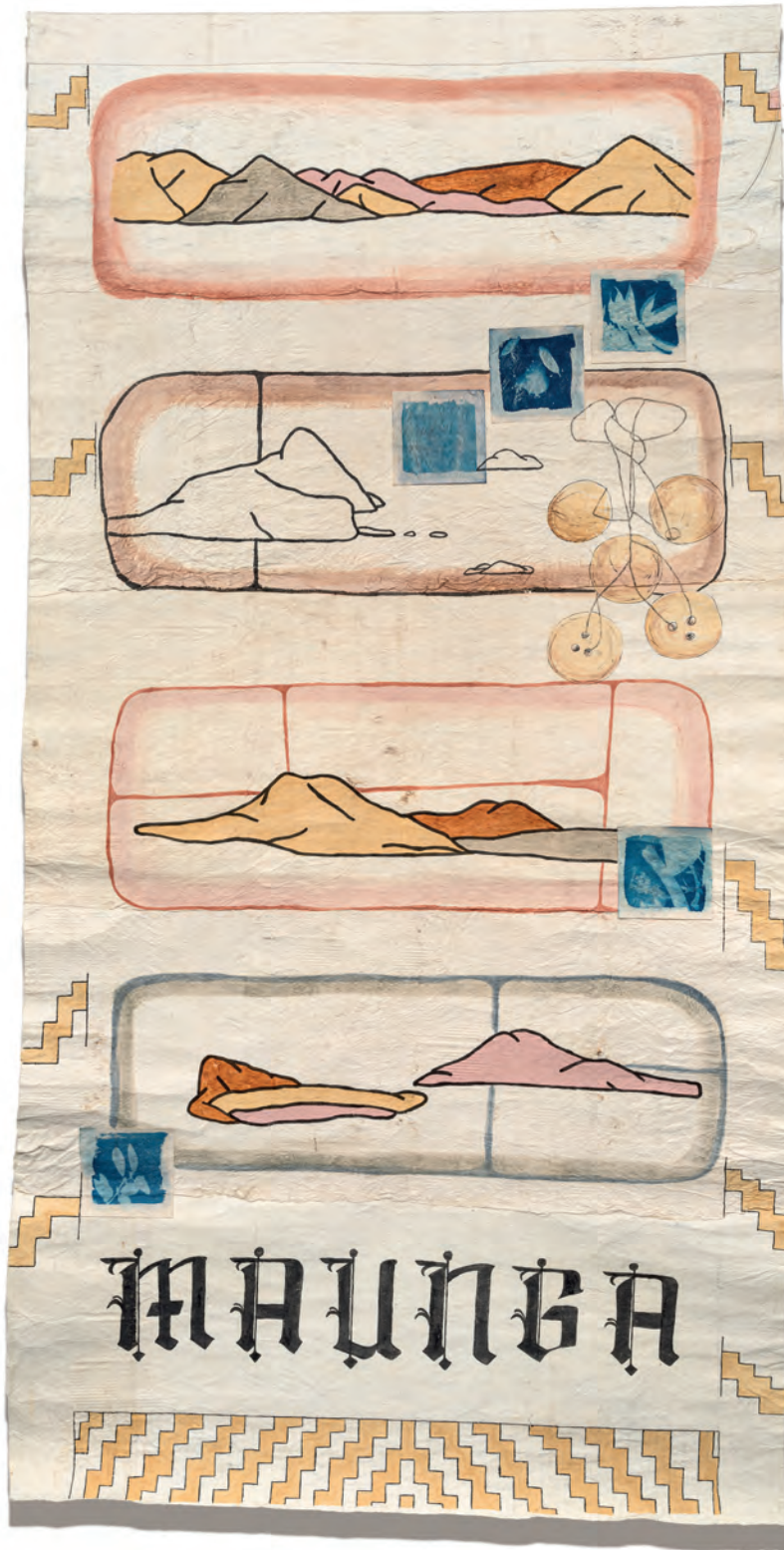
Cora-Allan Sketchbook 2023

Aotearoa





Cora-Allan Manaaki *whenua, manaaki tangata, haere whakamua* 2023. Whenua, kāpia ink and cyanotype on hiapo. Colour palette: Te Ngaere gold, Te Ngaere burn, Karangahape blush, Te Aroha kiwikiwi, kōkōwai, waikura, Paihia parauri, waiporoporo, parauri mā. Courtesy of the artist



Cora-Allan Whāia e koe te iti Kahurangi; ki te tuohu koe me he maunga teitei 2023.
 Whenua, kāpia ink and cyanotype on hiapo. Colour palette: Te Ngaere gold, Te Ngaere
 burn, Karangahape blush, Rangipo, Te Aroha kiwikiwi. Courtesy of the artist



Where introduced practices also feature, they add depth to *Encountering Aotearoa*, most notably the inclusion of Prussian blue cyanotypes that cleverly capture imprints of flora on hiapo. The memory of a wider environmental experience is shared through the outlines of these native plants, giving a sense of exploration reminiscent of the collecting of botanical specimens prevalent among early European explorers. However, unlike early botanists such as Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, Cora-Allan did not take physical specimens or remove plants from their place of origin. This leaves the art culturally balanced, and her cyanotypes capture the mauri of local flora but do not feel exploitative.

Within the artworks there are other symbols that connect to Cora-Allan's previous practice and research. Depictions of taoka from museum collections have been included, such as a rat trap and a kiore, reflecting environmental changes and a previous way of life. The inclusion of painted Cuisenaire rods, commonly used in the classroom, hints at the learning and reclamation of te reo Māori. A painted poutama pattern suggests the contemplation of whakapapa and the pursuit of knowledge. Together these act as a series of storyboards, giving the viewer insight into the artist's journey while providing a sense of connection to the past.

At its heart, *Encountering Aotearoa* is a story about our relationship to whenua. For some people this exhibition will generate thoughts of the *Endeavour* and the experiences of those on board as they saw the coastlines of Aotearoa for the first time. For others it is the opportunity to see home through an Indigenous lens, using hiapo and whenua. While there are many ways to encounter place, Cora-Allan's Māori and Niue heritage contextualises Aotearoa and reaffirms our place in the wider Pacific. Through cultural practice and contemporary art she shares her journey and invites us to contemplate how we all encounter Aotearoa.

Isaac Te Awa (*Ngāpuhi, Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Waitaha*) is curator mātauranga Māori at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand. He is an active practitioner and researcher of Māori weaving and carving, with a special interest in the revival and documentation of traditional knowledges, techniques, and their practice.

Encountering Aotearoa is on display from 13 April until 25 August 2024

*“At its heart,
Encountering
Aotearoa
is a story about
our relationship
to whenua.”*

Hiapo—bark cloth from Niue

Kiore—Polynesian rat

Mauka—mountain

Mauri—life-force

Moana—ocean

Pepeha—tribal saying

Poutama—stepped pattern symbolising genealogies and also the various levels of learning

Taoka—treasure

Takata whenua—Indigenous people, literally meaning people of the land

Tūpuna—ancestors

Waka—canoe

Whakapapa—genealogy

Whenua—land, ground, earth

Chanr

In this issue of *Bulletin* we invited writer and curator Simon Gennard to respond to the exhibition *Spring Time is Heart-break*. Simon delves into works by artists Wendelien Bakker, Madison Kelly (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Pākehā) and Lucy Meyle, which each examine complex entanglements across species and human/non-human relationships. Looking to the dynamic thinking of writer Ursula Le Guin, Simon offers another way of looking at these artistic practices, as a process of making kin within our contemporary world.

Simon Gennard

neilino

In trying to find a way into Wendelien Bakker’s *Catching a Grid of Rain* (2023), I have been thinking of follies. In architecture, a ‘folly’ refers to a category of building, popular among the landed classes of eighteenth-century Europe, whose primary purpose was to decorate sprawling country estates. The structures often reproduce ruins, temples or grand historical architecture in miniature. Many are out of step with their spatial and temporal surroundings—the lasting outcome of human endeavours to manipulate and impose intention, order or logic upon the world. What distinguishes the folly, however, is the honesty of its designation. The folly suspends any pretence of social utility beyond pleasure or light entertainment—for the individuals who commissioned these buildings, or those granted licence to access them. Architect Chris Perry writes that the “folly has been absolved of any and all normative architectural functionality.”¹

I was thinking of the folly as a way to consider relationships between social utility, aesthetic value and architecture. Bakker’s work intervenes into an architectural given, less as ornament than provisional infrastructure. For *Catching a Grid of Rain*, she applied a network of steel channels to the roof and exterior walls of the concrete structure on the Gallery’s forecourt that covers an elevator shaft to the underground car park. The work functions as guttering, providing a pathway for rain that may fall within its boundaries, albeit more meandering than the direct line guttering usually provides. But as infrastructure, its use is limited, and the work’s title only tells half the story; once caught, the guttering releases the water at the base of the structure, and ushers it back into the earth.

The structure Bakker has adorned is half-affectionately known as ‘the bunker’ by the Gallery. As an architectural form, a bunker, like a folly, cares little for the complexity of the world it is situated within. Unlike the folly, however, the bunker has no use for aesthetic pleasure—whether in the service of military campaigns, or post-apocalyptic survival, its purpose is pure utility. Artists have previously been commissioned to produce murals for the Gallery’s bunker, tasked with beautifying a structure described at various times, as “unfortunate”² and “unsightly.”³ Bakker, however, was more interested in responding honestly to the building’s form, choosing to have plywood cladding stripped away and reveal the blocks of concrete aggregate that line it.

Within a built environment, water tends to appear either as a resource—for drinking or cleansing or a pleasant feature to walk beside—or as an imposition. The ongoing

Wendelien Bakker *Catching a Grid of Rain* 2023. Steel.
Courtesy of the artist





“Bakker’s work intervenes into an architectural given, less as ornament than provisional infrastructure.”

Wendelien Bakker *Catching a Grid of Rain* 2023. Steel.
Courtesy of the artist



maintenance of a dwelling, or a city, relies on the effective distribution of wet and dry through a half-hidden network of gutters, drains, pipes, treatment plants and outlets; channelling water where it should go, and preventing its leakage into areas it shouldn't. It amounts to the behavioural engineering of a substance necessary for the sustenance of life, and more creative than we could possibly know.

In conversation with the artist, Bakker mentioned she is interested in the agency of water.⁴ She is in the slow process of building a home on Banks Peninsula, and making the building watertight provides occasion for renewed attention to the creativity of water's movement—travelling up between crevices, sideways and outwards along surfaces that should be flat. In *Catching a Grid of Rain* Bakker follows this attentiveness by intervening, ever so briefly, into a cycle of resource and usefulness, enabling a small amount of water to meander, to travel a path without purpose or to adhere to a slightly altered rhythm, before entering the city's storm-water system.

Later in our conversation, Bakker expressed a brief concern that, having produced a path for rain to follow,

the rain may not come.⁵ With the rhythms of weather more prone to extremity, to acting out of sync, to exceeding human predictions and best-laid plans, the possibility seems real. Which might serve to remind us that in granting a non-human substance agency to act as a participant in an artwork, we must be prepared for the possibility that it may not behave as we want it to.

The word folly is tangled up in associations with foolishness, stupidity, even wickedness, but as an architectural term, it may have made its way into English in the thirteenth century from the French *folie*, meaning 'delight'.⁶ Delight might also describe the quality of Bakker's attention to the creative movements of water. And it's a word that tellingly appears in Ursula Le Guin's essay 'Deep in Admiration', in which she argues for the capacity of poetry to 'subjectify' the universe and all the creatures and forces within it, thereby wrenching us from a relationship that considers these things as resources to be extracted, used up, disposed of. "Skill in living", Le Guin writes, requires an "awareness of belonging to the world, delight in being part of the world," and "tends to involve knowing our kinship as animals with animals."⁷



In her installation, *Every Green Herb for Meat* (2023) Lucy Meyle lingers on several historic examples of humans struggling to reconcile with the agency of the non-human world and, specifically, animals. Enlarged and printed on newsprint are excerpts from E. P. Evans's book *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, first published in 1904. In the book, Evans documents a number of legal and ecclesiastical trials of individual animals and entire species that took place in Europe during the Middle Ages. Cases range from a swine executed for infanticide, a cock burned at the stake for the unnatural crime of laying an egg, and the summoning of the caterpillars of the forests within the Italian province of Sondrio to appear before a court "charged with trespassing upon the fields, gardens and orchards and doing great damage therein."⁸

Meyle's newspaper covers a low platform, upon which sit several pieces of furniture. Each one is an approximation of an item found within historic depictions of Saint Jerome, patron saint of translators and librarians. A timber footstool from Lorenzo Monaco's 1420 painting *Saint Jerome in*

his Study; a pale yellow lectern reproduced from an icon (c. 1400–50) held in the British Museum's collection; a book house from the psalter of Saint Jerome in a book of hours held by the British Library. These depictions of the saint and excerpts of defences of the creatures of the earth also appear on printed matter, which is scattered and assembled into neat stacks throughout the installation. It is as if we're happening upon a private study belonging to someone caught mid-thought.

Meyle mentioned to me she was interested in thinking about how people find themselves stuck in postures.⁹ We can read this literally within the work. Across European art history, Jerome finds himself pictured with a stiff neck, head turned down, or else looking pensive. It's the posture, more often than not, that identifies him. It sticks out. But there's a posturing, too, in the trials Meyle summons. Within legal channels that are dependent on binary opposition, the accuser must adopt the position of having been wounded in some way by the accused; they must be steadfast that the accused has transgressed a spatial or behavioural boundary.

Left and right: Lucy Meyle
Every Green Herb for Meat
 2023. Various materials.
 Courtesy of the artist



The conceit of these legal proceedings relies upon a shared understanding between accuser and the court that these creatures belong to an order of being in which humans, on behalf of God himself, hold dominion over the earth and all within it.

But every so often, in the trials Evans records, there's a break in the armour of this fiction. Without the linguistic means to defend themselves, accused animals were sometimes appointed humans to act as counsel on their behalf. One of the sections Meyle excerpts features an unnamed lawyer offering an impassioned, and legally complex, defence of locusts. The lawyer argues that the trial is void as the locusts have no capacity to reason, or to act in malice. The lawyer goes on to say, that these locusts were "only exercising an innate right conferred upon them at their creation, when God expressly gave them 'every green herb for meat,' a right which cannot be curtailed or abrogated, simply because it may be offensive to man."¹⁰

It's posturing, perhaps—a performance enacted for legal theatre—but could following this unnamed lawyer's

example make room for a less antagonistic relationship with the earthly creatures around us? It might allow us to see ourselves amongst things that have no concept of property boundaries, or the market value of crops and livestock. Or perhaps, following Le Guin once more, to see ourselves as appearing as "particularly lively, intense, aware nodes of relation in an infinite network of connections, simple or complicated, direct or hidden, strong or delicate, temporary or very long-lasting. A web of connections, infinite but locally fragile, with and among everything—all beings—including what we generally class as things."¹¹

Scattered throughout Meyle's installation are pewter casts made from bread and a wedge of cheese that she left outside to be pecked by birds. These holey foodstuffs offer a different way of viewing what we see, excerpts of material chosen without regard to courtroom dramas and human rhythms of toil, rest and play. If we are to read the imagined space as a study, the birds have breached its sanctity, and brought with them a way of seeing, and being, in the world differently.



In Defence of

*Rather more than
overburdened
pedantry, is the
the insects:
"Gentlemen"*

*The court
argument, of
may suffice as a
irrationality and consequent
irresponsibility*

*praises to defend their cause
are they able to present memorials
starting grounds of their justification.*

*cannot be affected by
involves the loss of
that these*



Above: Madison Kelly Tohu
Karaka! Braid! 2023. Glass,
fishing mesh, sound. Courtesy
of the artist

Left: Lucy Meyle Every Green
Herb for Meat (detail) 2023.
Various materials. Courtesy of
the artist



Which leads me to ask: if we were to ask the birds, what might they say? *Tohu! Karaka! Braid!* (2023) by Madison Kelly (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Pākehā) offers not so much answers, as a way to think and feel with birds. Kelly's practice considers sonic relations between species. The protagonists here are kakī, a taoka species endemic to Aotearoa, who make their homes in the braided rivers and wetlands of Te Manahuna Mackenzie Basin. These manu have been severely endangered for generations—in large part due to the loss of their wetland habitats and predation by introduced mammals.¹² For several years, Kelly has engaged with the Kakī Recovery Programme, based near Twizel and run by the Department of Conservation, which rears kakī in captivity for the first three to nine months of their lives. Raised without exposure to predators, the young birds must learn to identify danger through artificial means, so they are played recordings of distress calls to accustom them to the sounds of warning before they reach the wild.

Upon release, the calls of the young kakī are met with the joyous replies of older birds—those raised and released in previous years—attuned to those voices through the same means. For the younger birds, these sounds are familiar, yet made anew. A call heard in real-time for the first time in

“In Kelly’s work, the manu set the pace, laying down parameters for a response, and it’s up to us to find a way to play along.”

their young lives. Kelly describes this call and response as a karaka, which establishes relationships, points of connection within an ever-expanding network, and sets forth a path upon which to proceed.¹³

In the Gallery, *Tohu! Karaka! Braid!*, also acts as a kind of karaka. Positioned near the entrance of the exhibition, the call of the kakī—here summoned within a soundscape composed by the artist—spills out into the surrounding architecture and ushers us in. Beneath the speakers from which the call emerges sits a percussive instrument composed of glass vessels of water. As audience members, we’re invited to accompany the manu in their song. Accompaniment requires attentiveness, micro-adjustments to rhythm, tone and volume, so as to keep pace, avoid drowning out, or straying too far from what’s offered. In Kelly’s work, the manu set the pace, laying down parameters for a response, and it’s up to us to find a way to play along.

Simon Gennard is a writer and curator based in Ngāmotu New Plymouth, where he is assistant curator contemporary art and collections at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

Spring Time is Heart-break is on display until 19 May 2024.

Kakī—black stilt

Karaka—ceremonial welcome call

Manu—bird

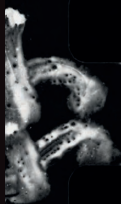
Taoka—treasure

- 1 Chris Perry, ‘A Folly for the Anthropocene’, *ARPA Journal* 3, 4 July 2015. <https://arpajournal.net/a-folly-for-the-anthropocene/>
- 2 Jenny Harper, ‘Christchurch Art Gallery is Ten: highs and lows’, *Bulletin* 172, May 2013. <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/bulletin/172/christchurch-art-gallery-is-ten-highs-and-lows>
- 3 Felicity Milburn, ‘Sparks that fly upwards’, *Bulletin* 182, December 2015. <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/bulletin/182/sparks-that-fly-upwards>
- 4 Wendelien Bakker, conversation with the author, 13 December 2023.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 ‘Folly (n)’, *Etymology Online*. https://www.etymonline.com/word/folly#etymonline_v_11744, accessed 20 December 2023
- 7 Ursula Le Guin, ‘Deep in Admiration’, in Anna Tsing, et al. (eds.), *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017, p. M15.
- 8 E. P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Punishment of Animals*, London: William Heinemann, 1904, p. 122.
- 9 Lucy Meyle, conversation with the author, 15 December 2023.
- 10 Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Punishment of Animals*, p. 43.
- 11 Le Guin, ‘Deep in Admiration’, p. M15.
- 12 ‘Black stilt/kakī’, *Department of Conservation*. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds/birds-a-z/black-stilt-kaki/>, accessed 29 December 2023
- 13 ‘Madison Kelly’s call and response with the kakī’, *RNZ*, 26 November 2023. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/culture-101/audio/2018916607/madison-kelly-s-call-and-response-with-the-kaki>

Madison Kelly Tohu *Karaka! Braid!*
(detail) 2023. Glass, fishing mesh,
sound. Courtesy of the artist



4



KODAK TRI-X PAN

Abandoned Ancestors

Ken Hall

Photographer unknown *Portrait in Antique Shop* 1971. Digital file from original negative. Christchurch City Libraries archives collection, Christchurch Star archive. © Christchurch Star

Between 1971 and 1978, a selection of twelve early oil portraits came into the collection—a finely painted lineup of mostly British sitters, some named and some unidentified, whose arrival can be seen in a number of different ways. A safe enough reading would be to recognise this as a desire to catch up with more established and comprehensive Aotearoa New Zealand public art collections in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Ōtepoti Dunedin and Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, which all had good examples of historical portraiture, peppered with famous names. Ōtautahi Christchurch didn't. A more iconoclastic view might see them as a way of extending ancestral European visibility and eminence, gathered relics from an imperial past, the rolling echoes of colonisation. They could represent (at least for those of British settler origin) a residual longing for a cultural centre that was utterly distant but still highly regarded. With that, they might be read as a way of increasing Old-World visual presence and providing context for New Zealand portraiture. A more generously experiential view might consider them an engaging company of well-captured exiles and castoffs, requiring no obvious elevating reason for landing here. It seems reasonable to allow all these options.

First to arrive in the collection, an unpromising icebreaker in 1971, was Laurent Joseph Olivier's somewhat unlovely *Portrait of Madame Justine Delcour*, painted in Belgium in 1840. Among the few portraits to retain any thread of family connection, it joined her New Zealand descendants here in 1961, only to gather new indignities on top of old. Already bearing evidence of use as target practice by German soldiers occupying a Belgian chateau during World War I, the lace-bedded Madame Delcour was jettisoned by her Christchurch kin as forbidding and unattractive.¹ The picture was consigned to Carlton Dealers in Victoria Street, where it was declaimed by a passing journalist as “just junk”, only of value for its frame.² This was enough, however, to alert Brian Muir,

the youthful new Robert McDougall Art Gallery director, to inspect and disagree, purchasing it as “A fine piece of academic portrait painting [and] technically ... superb”.³

Muir (1943–1989) started at the director's helm in 1969 aged just twenty-five.⁴ A third-generation New Zealander from mainly Scottish settler stock—farmers in the Papatoetoe, Pukekohe and Waiuku districts of Auckland region—he is also known to have valued his Ngāti Pou (Waikato Tainui) ancestry.⁵ Muir was equipped to lead the Gallery and its collection in new, eclectic directions, with a B. A. in History and Fine Arts from Auckland University as well as teaching, broadcasting and gallery and museum experience. In 1966, at just twenty-three, he had been appointed director of the new Waiuku Museum, which was opened in a disused fire station in 1967 with much of his own extensive collection of memorabilia and Māori artefacts forming the basis of the museum.⁶ While there, he took in-service training with the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand, including postings at Canterbury and Auckland Museums and Auckland Art Gallery.⁷ From 1968, he held a brief tenure as director of the Palmerston North Art Gallery (now Te Manawa), until taking up the Robert McDougall Art Gallery director role in the following year.

The McDougall collection had developed slowly and along restricted lines under William Baverstock, part-time curator from 1949 and its first paid director from 1960 to 1969. Holding almost sole responsibility for the gallery's operations through all those years, and with limited city council support or resources, Baverstock also had little taste for the contemporary. He was seventy-five, fifty years older than Muir, when he resigned in 1968. Early in 1969, encouraged by the council's cultural committee, city mayor Ron Guthrey sought guidance from Eric Westbrook, a former Auckland Art Gallery director who was then director of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Westbrook was

“The picture was consigned to Carlton Dealers in Victoria Street, where it was declaimed by a passing journalist as ‘just junk’, only of value for its frame.”

brought across to advise on the Gallery’s future direction, including around collection development, public engagement, funding models and frameworks required, as well as to screen applicants for the role of director.⁸ Muir spent three weeks in October near the start of his tenure, being coached by Westbrook at the newly opened NGV in Melbourne, before taking up his duties in Christchurch proper.

Alarmed on his arrival by the Gallery’s almost complete lack of contemporary art, Muir was also discouraged by persistent fade marks showing up on the walls when works were removed for renewal of displays.⁹ Despite new purchases initially requiring signoff from the council cultural committee, he made steady progress, acquiring a broad range of modern works, mainly by New Zealand artists. International buying began with a series of contemporary Australian prints seen in Melbourne. Soon after his return he bought the majestic *Black Painting* (1969) by Ralph Hotere (Te Aupōuri, Muriwhenua) from the 1969 Group show.

Works by many leading contemporary New Zealand artists were collected in this period, and with a degree of gender balance that would not necessarily be expected of the time. This included painting, printmaking and ceramics, and—in the latter category—also pieces by well-known Japanese master potters. Recent prints by leading British artists were also secured alongside historical European and British prints, colonial New Zealand watercolours and early twentieth-century New Zealand artists. In his keenness to expand access and opportunities for public connection, he entered a new collecting field in classical antiquities between 1972 and 1975, largely in response to requirements of the New Zealand secondary schools’ art history curriculum. His source was Charles Ede, a newly established Mayfair, London antiquities dealer, whose slim catalogues facilitated the Antipodean flow of nine ancient world pieces originating from Egypt, Greece and the Roman empire. Muir also made gains from having

his recent directorial assistant Jonathan Mane-Wheoki (Ngāpuhi, Te Aupōuri, Ngāti Kurī, English) stationed for art history studies in London, resulting in the addition of works by artists including Edgar Degas, Max Beckmann, Paul Cézanne, Bridget Riley and Andy Warhol between 1973 and 1975.

In 1976, Muir begin acquiring early British portraits through locally available works. The first (and among the best) was acquired for \$1,700 from R. G. Bell Auctions in Kaiapoi, adding to the collection a portrait of an aristocratic young woman adorned in fine silk, satin and muslin, with ribbons, lace and heavy gold, and joined by a large black Newfoundland dog. Thomas Musgrove Joy's *Mrs T. Fraser Grove with a Favourite Dog* had been shown at the Royal Academy in London in the summer of 1849, when it was described in *The Illustrated London News* as "clever". Two years earlier, Katherine Grace O'Grady of Castle Garde, County Limerick, had married Captain T. Fraser Grove of the Inniskilling Dragoons, then stationed in Ireland. When her portrait was shown in London, she was twenty and had one daughter, was expecting a second, and had recently been presented before Queen Victoria at St James's Palace. Census records from across the decades show her and her husband living at Seagry House in Chippenham, near Bath, with a small army of servants: coachmen, butlers, footmen, cooks, housekeepers, kitchen maids, nurses, lady's maids, laundry maids, dancing mistresses and Swiss governesses all keeping the operation running. How her portrait came to be separated from her descendants is unknown.

Different histories emerge from the next portrait purchase of 1976, sourced from John Dixon Antiques in Remuera, who were known to procure stock from England. Presenting a stern official from the 1650s English Civil War era with a wooden staff and vigilant eye, *Portrait of a Courtier* arrived without provenance. In 2016, it was attributed to Robert Walker, an artist long associated with Oliver Cromwell and recorded by a near-contemporary as responsible for "the portraits of that usurper, and almost all his officers, both by sea and land".¹⁰ Painted near the beginning of Cromwell's turbulent five-year rule as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland, the subject of the portrait is still unidentified.



Robert Walker *Portrait of a Courtier* c. 1653. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1976



Thomas Musgrove *Joy Mrs T. Fraser Grove with a Favourite Dog* 1849. Oil on canvas.
Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1976

Seven more British portraits reached Christchurch from the bottom of the South Island in 1976 and 1977, all purchased from long-established Waihōpai Invercargill watchmaker and jeweller N. J. M. Rein Ltd., who had sourced them from a specialist dealer gallery in the tiny village of Iden in East Sussex, England.¹¹ The first group comprised Sir William Beechey's undated portrait of *Mrs Idle*; Sir Henry Raeburn's *Mr Drake* and *Mrs Drake* (1795); and a portrait of *Vice Admiral Robert Duff* (1764), riskily attributed to Sir Joshua Reynolds. All retained some provenance, most including names of sitters' descendants.

Three more Invercargill castaways arrived in 1977, starting with a plainly titled *Duchess of Richmond*, attributed to the 'Studio of' Sir Peter Lely. Lely was a German-born Dutch artist who settled in England in 1643, became the leading portraitist to the royal court, and ran a large studio filled with assistants. *Portrait of Frances Teresa Stuart, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox* pictures the Paris-born courtier who became maid-of-honour to the exiled Henrietta Maria, widow of Charles I. Frances Stuart arrived in London in 1663 after the Restoration and was appointed lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine of Braganza, whose notorious dallying husband Charles II became obsessed by "La Belle Stuart", as she was widely known. Frances is known to have upset the king by rejecting his advances and intentions to divorce and make her his queen, instead marrying Charles Stewart, Duke of Richmond and Lennox. Though famous for this refusal, other accounts claim that she bore the king's child. She is known to have modelled for the figure of Britannia on a 1667 commemorative peace medal—an image thereafter repeated on British coinage. Somewhat less grandly, her portrait when it reached the Gallery had a pencilled note on the back reading "Book room over fireplace".

The remaining Invercargill portraits captured a bewigged gentleman in a blue velvet coat and a young woman cradling a lamb. When cleaned, the former disclosed a faint signature and date, 'J. Highmore pinx: 1735'. The haughty gentleman's identity was discovered in 2010 through contact with Alison S. Lewis, an American scholar who completed her PhD on Joseph Highmore in 1975. This enabled his identification as Thomas Budgen, an Oxford-educated London factory owner, and later MP for Surrey, and the second portrait as

“Frances is known to have upset the king by rejecting his advances and intentions to divorce and make her his queen.”



his wife Penelope Smith, now attributed to Maria Verelst. In 1727, a newspaper marriage notice described them as “a Sugar-Baker in Goodman’s Fields” and “a Gentlewoman of a very great Fortune”. Both had gained capital through family and business investments, largely linked to slavery and sugar plantation ownership on Nevis in the West Indies. Dr Lewis’s notes recorded that in 1955, the portraits had been in private, family hands in Edinburgh, presumably with the brutal origins of the Budgen’s wealth long forgotten.

The last portraits bought before the end of Brian Muir’s tenure in 1979 were *Portrait of the Poet Edmund Waller, Esq.*, after Cornelius Janssen van Ceulen; and *Elizabeth, Lady Oxenden, Daughter of Edmund Dunch* (c. 1721), by Charles Jervas. Both were purchased from another visit to the Remuera antique shop in 1978—the first was titled *Portrait of an Unknown Man* until 2009, when a British visitor recognised here a copy of the original 1629 portrait still in family hands in England. Edmund Waller was a British politician and poet, elected to Parliament in his late teens; twenty-three when the original was painted, he was one of the wealthiest men in England. Though still recognised for his poetry, he is also recalled as an adept political operator, changing allegiances according to shifts in power through stormy times. Virtually hidden is that he was a founding member in London in 1661 of the Council for Plantations, directing colonial affairs in America and the West Indies, again including slavery and sugar production. This sits awkwardly alongside his marriage in 1644 to Mary Bracey, “said to have been a coloured Barbadoes [sic] girl, dau. of Mr Bracey / Breaux / Bresse of Thame”, with whom he had thirteen children.¹²

Further enigmas arise through the history of Elizabeth Oxenden, whose portrait with her son Henry is inscribed “Elisabeth, Lady Oxenden, Daughter of Edmd Dunch”. Elizabeth was the eldest daughter of Elizabeth Godfrey, maid of honour to Queen Anne, and Edmund Dunch, master of the royal household, who died in 1719. Deemed a wealthy heiress, she married George Oxenden, a sitting MP and future Lord of the Admiralty, the following year aged seventeen. In 1721, the leading London painter Charles Jervas was commissioned to paint her, evidently celebrating the birth of an heir. Her husband, however, became a notorious



Artist unknown, after Cornelius Janssen van Ceulen *Portrait of the Poet Edmund Waller, Esq.* 17th century. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1978



Charles Jervas *Elizabeth, Lady Oxenden, Daughter of Edmund Dunch*
c. 1721. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū, purchased 1978

squanderer and profligate, entering ruin and bankruptcy as well as fathering children to other women, one to the Prime Minister's daughter-in-law and two to Elizabeth's sister, who was married to his closest friend and died in childbirth. Much is written about George, to whom—despite betrayal and undoubted heartbreak—Elizabeth evidently remained faithful to the end. Her last will and testament, recently found and dated 1779, concludes with her desire “to be buried by my dear and beloved husband Sir George Oxenden.”¹³

Remaining part of the broader development of the collection under Brian Muir after a long period of stasis, all these portraits belong to a specific moment in the Gallery's history. Nearly fifty years later there remains a place for them and their stories, even if these need to be coaxed, prised and extracted rather than tumbling out unsolicited. Appearing at first perhaps as haphazard arrivals and presences, collected from varying sources and through obscure circumstances, all offer illuminating threads to worlds left behind. As ancestral portraits that once held honour but instead came to be castoffs, far distant from places of origin, they yet retain a sense of memory and connection to these worlds. While speaking to the strangeness of culture, ambitions and lives transplanted, they also carry their own tales—personal and broadly historical—shadowing, echoing, reverberating with the past, long after paint-loaded brushes have flown across taut canvas.

Ken Hall
Curator

Out of Time is on display until 28 April 2024.

- 1 *Bulletin* 72, 1991, pp. 1–2.
- 2 Bruce Scott, 'Antiques, curios... and just plain junk', *Christchurch Star*, 4 September 1971, p. 7.
- 3 Bruce Scott, 'Mystery solved—and portrait finds home', *Christchurch Star*, 11 September 1971, p. 8.
- 4 Brian Donald Muir was born in Waiuku on 4 November 1943.
- 5 Anna Crichton, *English, Colonial, Modern and Maori*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. 123; correspondence from Valerie Muir, 13 January 2024.
- 6 *AGMANZ News*, vol. 2, no. 11, November 1971, pp. 2–3. Dame Ngāneko Minhinnick, also on the museum's founding committee, was instrumental in establishing good working relationships with Ngāti Te Ata. Email from Richard Garvey, Waiuku Museum, 1 December 2023.
- 7 *Press*, 20 May 1969, p. 1.
- 8 'Mayor's Proposals For Art Gallery', *Press*, 13 March 1969, p. 14; 'Lecture On Art Galleries', *Press*, 29 April 1969, p. 8; 'Art Authority To Advise Council', *Press*, 1 May 1969, p. 16; 'Art Galleries Told To Join Forces', *Press*, 2 May 1969, p. 12; 'Young Man Chosen As Art Director', *Press*, 20 May 1969, p. 1.
- 9 'Gallery Director's Tasks', *Press*, 12 September 1969, p. 14.
- 10 Angus Haldane, 'The Face of Civil War: Robert Walker (1599–1658): his life and portraits', *The British Art Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, autumn 2016, pp. 20–29.
- 11 Old Hall Gallery, Iden, near Rye. The Drake portraits were bought from Mrs Tyrwitt-Drake, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, evidently a descendant.
- 12 'Waller of Hall Barn, Farmington and Kirby Fleetham, family chart 1560–1954', R. de Salis, *Quadrennial di Fano Salicorum*, vol. 1, London, 2003 (c/- commons.wikimedia.org)
- 13 England and Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384–1858 for Dame Elizabeth Oxenden. PROB 11: Will Registers 1777–1780. Piece 1051: Warburton, Quire Numbers 95–142 (1779).



There are only a few weeks left to catch the entirety of our major summer season exhibition

Spring Time is Heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa

Our Sutton and Ravenscar galleries will close on 24 March 2024, so get in quick to experience works by Anoushka Akel, Angel C. Fitzgerald, Madison Kelly, Etanah Lalau-Talapā, Lucy Meyle and Sorawit Songsataya.

You can still see works by eighteen contemporary artists in *Spring Time is Heart-break* until 19 May 2024. Discover stories about personal and collective histories, communication, distance and relationship to our environment and don't miss these great *Spring Time is Heart-break* inspired events:

Ursula Bethell Panel Discussion

Saturday 23 March 2024 / 1pm

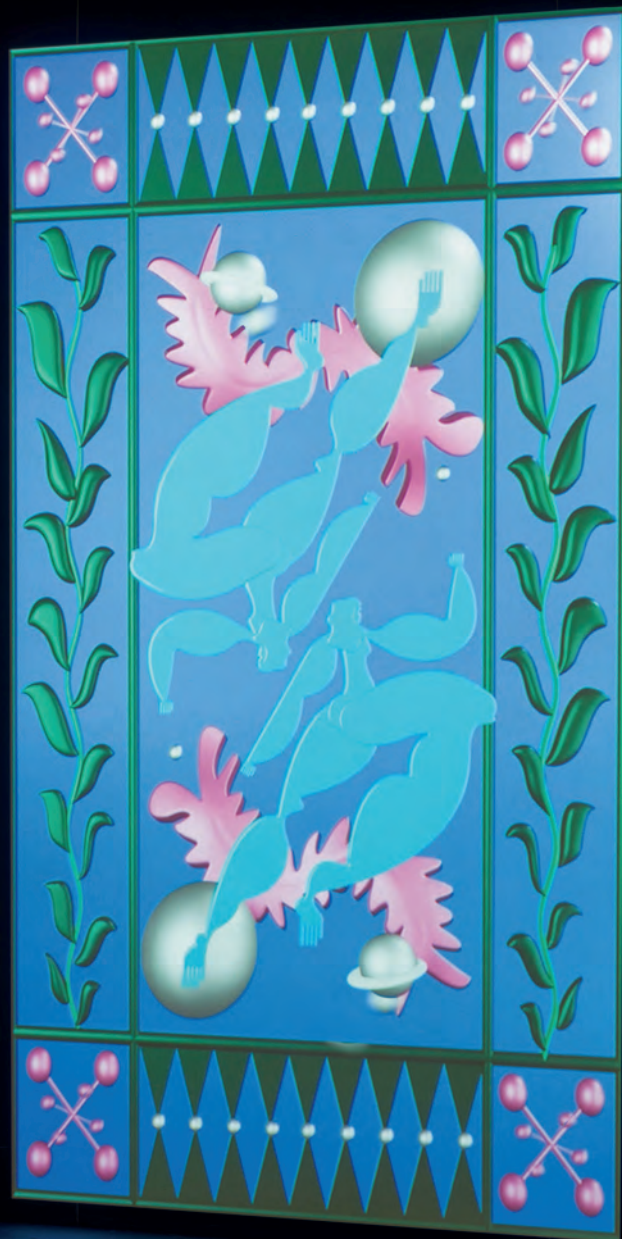
Artist Film Pick: *Stromboli, Land of God*

Wednesday 24 April 2024 / 6pm

Artist Film Pick: *My Winnipeg*

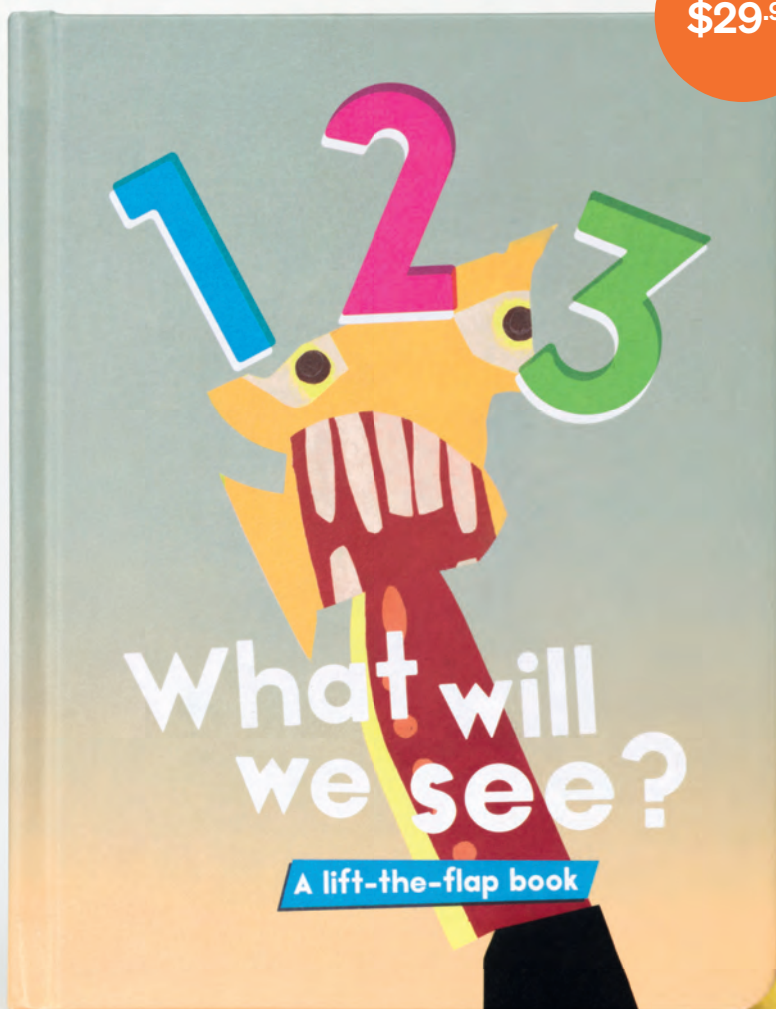
Wednesday 8 May 2024 / 6pm

See the Gallery website for more details.

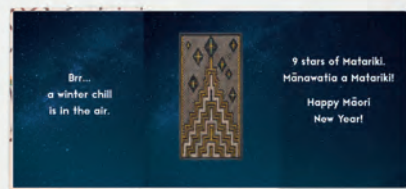


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My Favourite

Toss Woollaston *Untitled [Quentin (Kin) Woollaston Shearing]* 1962. Ink on paper. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, gift of the family of Geoffrey Moorhouse, 2011

The Unlikely Librarian, Mike Moroney (Taranaki Tūturu, Te Atiawa) spent his formative years listening to heavy metal and traversing the stacks of Pahiatua Library. He now calls Ōhinehou Lyttelton home.

“Teddy you fucking mongrel! Stay in your place, so help me you fuzzy prick!” my four-year-old self shouted at my hapless toy bear during Christmas lunch in 1981.

While my very devout, very proper Irish Catholic Nana on Dad’s side had conniptions, the rest of my not very devout nor very proper family tried not to lose it. They failed gloriously as Grandad on Mum’s side fatally uttered, “Well, he’s been spending a fair bit of time with those uncouth bastards in the woolshed.”

My Irish grandparents never visited Mum on the family farm again.

Spending time in woolsheds was a big part of my early life—as an eloquent toddler acquiring a passion for rarified language, as a rousey during my late primary school years, and finally on the press (sometimes the handpiece) during high school and uni holidays.

Going shed to shed down the Wairarapa’s dusty gravel backroads, feeling boards underfoot polished velvet smooth by years of lanolin and moccasins, the heft of a press crank, the distinctive CLICK as the stand starts up and the handpiece buzzes furiously into life, the redolence of woolsheds and farms, the taste of strong tea, smoko break kai and cold beer—they all compacted themselves into my DNA like a properly packed wool bale.

I’d left all this behind me, moved onto life in a portside town, not really thinking about it all that often.

I thought I’d been profoundly moved by art before. But that was until I came across Toss Woollaston’s *Untitled [Quentin (Kin) Woollaston Shearing]* during a random lunchtime visit to the Gallery. This hastily drawn sketch captures the brutal physicality, controlled elegance and hard-earned grace of a shearer in action. For me, it conjured a form of alchemy that coaxed time to rewind unexpectedly, reliving all those sensations, everything hurtling back in an instant, hallucinatory, visceral jolt to the senses, twenty or so years after I was last in a woolshed.

That, for me, was what it felt like to be profoundly moved by art.





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Alice Alva Mother Beddock, 4805 (detail)
2023. Stranded embroidery thread on
linen in custom frame. Courtesy of the
artist and Masterworks Gallery

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Friends AGM

The 42nd AGM of the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū will be held in the Philip Carter Family Auditorium on Sunday 17 March 2024 at 2pm. All are welcome to attend. If you would like to nominate a Friend for the Executive Committee, we would love to hear from you. Please contact friends@christchurchartgallery.org.nz for a nomination form.
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Friends
CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY
TE PUNA O WAIWHETŪ

Pagework no.61

Joy Auckram Aotearoatanga 2024.
Acrylic and colour pencil on reused
plywood. Courtesy of the artist

Each quarter the Gallery commissions an artist to create a new work of art especially for Bulletin. It's about actively supporting the generation of new work.

Joy Auckram (Ngāti Maniapoto) is an emerging artist based in Ōtautahi Christchurch. She recently graduated from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa with a certificate in Māori and Indigenous Art, and practices as a weaver, printmaker, painter and tinkerer.

Joy is committed to reusing what already exists, not wanting her art practice to have a negative impact on the whenua. Instead, she is a magpie, collecting, trading and repurposing materials found in the garage, in op shops or in nature.

In this work we see Joy grappling with her responsibilities as takata whenua living away from her ancestral land, in someone else's takiwā. At a time when Aotearoa New Zealand is increasingly divided, Joy poses two questions—Ko wai au? Ko wai koe? She asks us, and herself, to reflect on what it is to be takata tiriti in Aotearoa as takata whenua, mana whenua, wāhine, Pākehā or tauiwi.

Chloe Cull

Pouarataki Curator Māori

Ko wai au?—who am I?

Ko wai koe?—who are you?

Mana whenua—territorial rights, those with authority over land

Pākehā—New Zealander of European descent

Takata whenua—people of the land, indigenous people

Takata tiriti—people of the treaty, those who live on this land by right of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Takiwā—district, territory

Tauiwi—non-Māori

Wāhine—women





Opening

Cora-Allan: Encountering Aotearoa

13 April – 25 August 2024

A two-week journey by sea around Aotearoa led to this major body of new work documenting the whenua from the vantage point of the moana.

From Here on the Ground

18 May – 17 November 2024

Populated places and cityscapes join backyards, factories and remote railway stops in this fascinating survey of twentieth-century Aotearoa New Zealand artists exploring urban, suburban and industrial landscapes.

Edith Amituanai and Sione Tuivailala Monū: New Work

8 June – 13 October 2024

New video works trace migratory threads across Te Moananui-a-Kiwa as the artists return to their ancestral homeland.

Marilynn Webb: Folded in the Hills

8 June – 13 October 2024

A major survey exhibition of Ngāpuhi, Te Roroa and Ngāti Kahu artist Marilynn Webb (NZOM).

Closing

Out of Time

Until 28 April 2024

The storytelling power of historical art uncovered.

Spring Time is Heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa

Until 19 May 2024

A major exhibition of contemporary art from around Aotearoa New Zealand.

Maureen Lander: Aho Marama Strings of Light

Until 14 July 2024

A magical UV light installation bringing together different art forms and histories.

Perilous: Unheard Stories from the Collection

Until 21 July 2024

Making room for fresh voices, untold narratives and disruptive ideas.

Exhibit

Also on display

Mataaho Collective: Tikawe

An ambitious installation that descends from the skylights to zing across the foyer.

Lonnie Hutchinson: Hoa Kōhine (Girlfriend)

An intricately cut-out billboard celebrating supportive friendships between women.

Martin Creed: Everything is Going to be Alright

A completely unequivocal, but also pretty darn ambiguous, work for Christchurch.

Reuben Paterson: The End

A sparkling elevator installation providing an unexpected space for contemplation and connection.

S raphine Pick: Untitled (Bathers)

Pick's lush watercolour offers a utopian vision in the carpark elevator.

Tomorrow Still Comes: Natalia Saegusa

A fragmented, poetic temporary wall painting by Natalia Saegusa.

Kelcy Taratoa: Te T h  o ng  Maunga T matakahuki

A vast painting about how we are bound together.

See the Gallery website and What's On guide for our events listings.

itions

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*Te Ao o Nga Atua or Te Waka o Aoraki, 1988.
Pictured left.*



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Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation

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

We have exciting plans in play as we embark on a new strategic direction: Collect, Share and Inspire. Come on board with us as a TOGETHER partner and be part of an exceptional group of supporters who are making Ōtautahi Christchurch a vibrant, creative city where the arts thrive. Join us, and TOGETHER we'll keep making great things happen in our city. Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū is a truly special place. We know that good art really does matter, and so do the people who support it. TOGETHER, the legacy continues.

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

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