

B.

207



Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū

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B.

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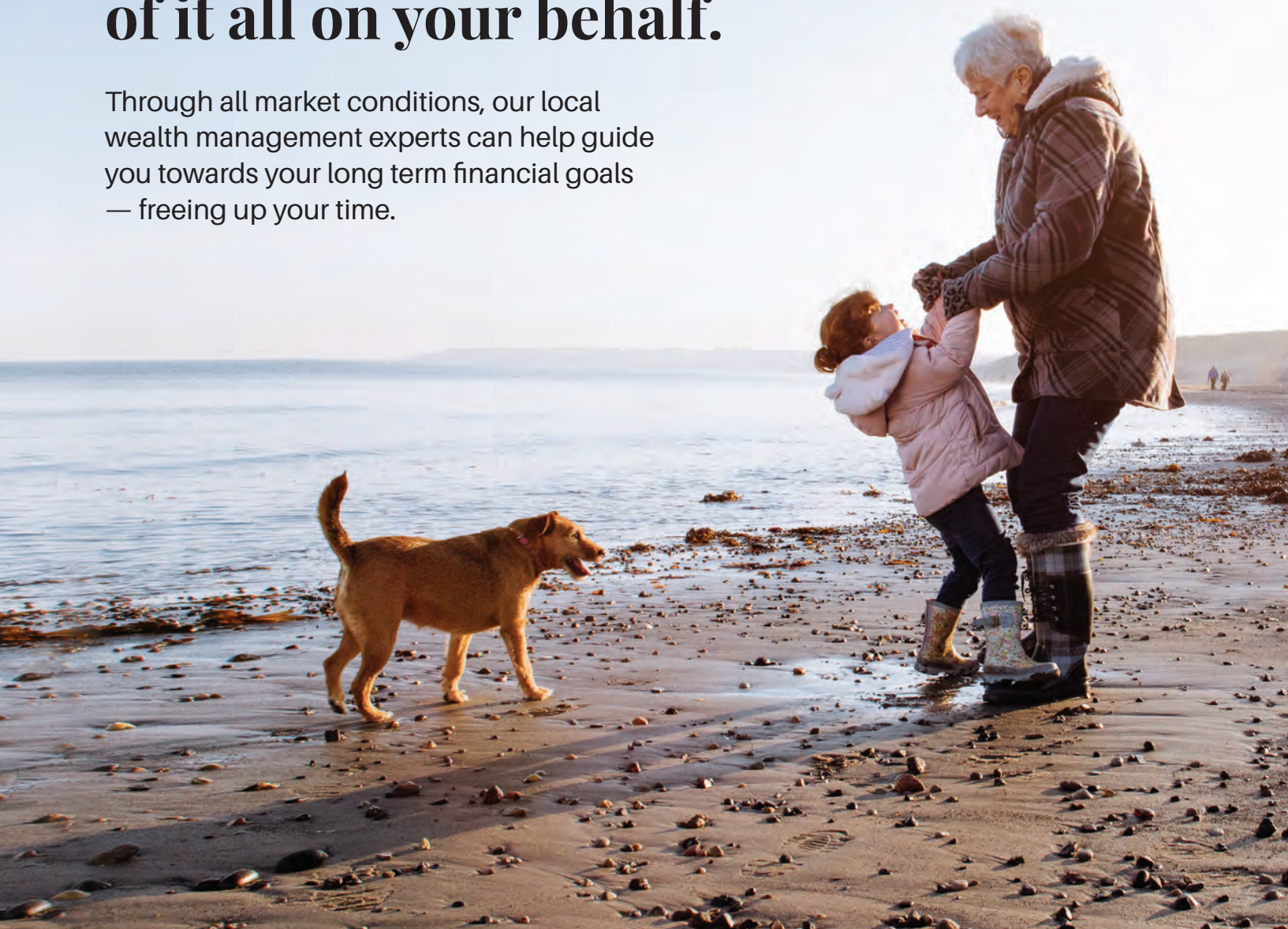
Front cover: Francis Upritchard *Enjoying Work* 2021.
Watercolour on paper

Back cover: Francis Upritchard *Awkward Spot* 2021.
Watercolour on paper

Left: Francis Upritchard *Earth, Extinction, Monitoring,
Adaptations (detail)* 2021. Steel and foil armature,
paint, modelling material, fabric, metal, hair

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Te Puna o Waiwhetu



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Exhibitions

What's on at the Gallery
this quarter.

Director's *Foreword*

BLAIR JACKSON

February 2022

Welcome to *B.207*, the autumn edition of *Bulletin*. Like the rest of the country, the Gallery has been operating under the Government's Red traffic light setting since late January. It has to be said that art galleries are, in general, pretty good places in which to practice social distancing. However, while we remain open and welcoming visitors, the recent surge in the Omicron variant of Covid-19 is affecting our ability to schedule our programme. Our team are working hard to continue bringing you a range of exhibitions, events and activities, but as we are all finding throughout so many areas of our lives right now, planning (in the short, medium and even long term) remains tricky. It's an evolving situation and, reflecting this uncertainty, I encourage you to keep an eye on our social media channels and website for updates.

Tātou tātou, nau mai rā is a new project we recently commissioned with Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington-based Kāi Tahu artist Turumeke Harrington—it will be a playful, interactive sculpture that invites us to think about whakapapa, connections and choices. Using specially designed stanchions to create an ever-changing network of pathways, visitors will navigate their way between a series of small 'islands' shaped as pātiki (flounder). We were expecting to be in a position to display this exciting new work at the Gallery from April until May of this year. However, as this issue of *Bulletin* was going to press we regretfully made the decision to postpone the exhibition until late 2022 or early 2023. We are very much looking forward to sharing it with you when we can. Here, Turumeke talks with Kommi Tamati-Elliffe (Kāi Tahu / Te-Āti-Awa / Taranaki) and Kirsty Dunn (Te Aupōuri / Te Rarawa / Ngāpuhi) about her practice, collaborative relationships, Kāi Tahu stories and kaupapa.

Opening in the Gallery in early April, *Francis Upritchard: Paper, Creature, Stone* is a substantial new exhibition from Christchurch-born, London-based artist Francis Upritchard. This exhibition is the result of the time Francis spent recently as the inaugural artist in residence at Sutton House, and we're excited to be able to display the results of her stay. It's a project that we've been working with Francis on for some time now, and I'd like to thank Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation and the many supporters who have assisted us in making this happen. For *Bulletin* we invited writer and editor Gwynneth Porter to respond to the new work. Gwyn and Francis are friends and regular collaborators, and the resulting feature is strange, poetic and unsettling, much like the exhibition itself.

Curator Melanie Oliver looks at Alicia Frankovich's ambitious *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* project, which asks us to consider new and sometimes uncomfortable ways of relating and assigning value to the other objects and beings we share our world with. Alicia highlights the patriarchal, colonial and monocultural lens we have used to assign hierarchies and order upon our world, and opens up the potential for a new order. And expanding upon our *The Moon and the Manor House* exhibition, University of Canterbury senior lecturer in Art History and Theory Rosie Ibbotson examines the ideals and motivations of the Arts and Crafts movement in New Zealand. She asks how its makers might feel about seeing the objects they created for practical use on display in galleries today, their values integrated into the capitalist system that they opposed.

Vorticism was a short-lived radical English art movement that embraced the machine age the Art and Crafts Movement had been rebelling against. Published in 1915, *BLAST!* was a magazine that acted

as its manifesto, 'blasting' and then 'blessing' aspects of society. A second, and final, issue followed after the outbreak of World War I. The Gallery was delighted to be given copies of both, which are now housed in our rare books collection; here, curator Peter Vangioni looks at the books and the radical nature of their design and typography.

Our My Favourite comes from Christchurch-based designer and Flying Nun alumni Lesley Maclean, who selects a work by Robert Herdman-Smith from the collection of our sister institution, Akaroa Museum. And our Pagework is supplied by Nina Oberg Humphries, who has recently been featured in a new display in our refreshed collection exhibition *Te Wheke*.

At the end of February we said goodbye to our Foundation Partner, ANZ Private, who have been with us for the last six years. We thoroughly enjoyed working alongside Stu Roberts, André Hofenk and their team, and we are grateful for their outstanding support of the Gallery and the arts in Ōtautahi over the years. We wish them all the best. The role of Foundation Partner is enormously important to us, and as one door closes another opens: I'm thrilled to welcome Jarden, New Zealand's leading investment and advisory firm, on board as our new Foundation Partner. We look forward to exploring common ground together, and creating new opportunities for the Gallery and for our city.

And on the subject of goodbyes and new beginnings, it was with much sadness and a huge amount of pride that we recently said goodbye to our colleague and friend Nathan Pōhio. Nathan is taking up the role of senior curator Māori at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. We wish him the very best and know he will make great things happen.

Bury the Lede

Gwynneth Porter

From the side of a hill the woman and child—ectomorphic—hunting for cockles, look like wading birds. Siblings climb on top of each other and hold handstands like circus-adjacent cheerleaders in tie-dyed active-wear. Two write code and scale limestone boulders, competing with each other almost good-naturedly without mats. Weeds and things scrounged—pipi, lemons, parsley, small mushrooms, seaweed and bracken fronds—are eaten with brown rice. Later there are bruised peaches, grapefruit and hard pears with a whiff of quince kept in a bowl for the colours and smells—green, orange, gold, purple, brown, grey, black.

Francis Uprichard A Peach 2021. Steel and foil armature, paint, modelling material, fabric, metal, straw, rhinestones, leather gloves



Francis Upritchard *Stick Workers* 2021.
Rubber and wood





Underneath or beyond or behind or inside thought (consciousness in the intellectual sense, being up in the head, head chatter), there is much more to be aware of. In its shapes and volumes there are oceans of sense, experience and coloured information, in which vast marine animals live—prehistoric, post-historic, a-historic. They indicate new realities, purposes, directions, tasks and work. These are the other realms that are opened up by our imaginations and become new realities. But what happens when they come into contact with the transforming, glowing realities of others? The powerful agencies of colours, materials, people—of entities that are animal, vegetable and mineral—are hard to follow, let alone trace or index.

In Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (1993), girls research and make plans to survive the inevitable breakdown of their home community. In this poverty dystopia, all neighbourhoods are poor and fortified from those who might rob them, use their water, or drag them below the breadline where all that is left is madness and violence. They are a people divided on the question of whether or not to abandon their world for another in space. There is a germinal religion within the fiction called Earthseed by which all life, all agencies, are conceived of as porous, melding, mutable and self regulating—and nothing is subject to hierarchies or one-way governance, theistic or otherwise. One of the girls tries to fathom its doctrine that everything we touch we change, and that, in turn, everything we change changes us. This reality, *change*, constitutes God in this schema, and within it the universe exists to shape God, and vice versa.¹

The fictions that emerge out of Francis Upritchard’s practice are seemingly marked with such a way of knowing. Similarly ambivalent, the figures’ surfaces are patchwork-skinned, coloured with spectrum-split light and fabric patterns, dressed as if absorbing conglomerates, bowerbirds of the store-bought and hand-made. They are like retina images of things stared at (colours, shapes, colour-ways), cartooned rememberings of slices of aesthetics, or of fashion digested by an alien. There is an atmosphere of



Francis Upritchard *Olympus (Vase)* 2021.
Wood-fired ceramic, thrown by Nicholas Brandon

commune-inflected yoga-mats parsed through a cosplay Friday office-share work situation. What I am driving at is that Upritchard’s work—with its non-specific new life forms, corruptions, evolutions, strange composites, aggregations—can well be understood as science fiction. It resembles collectives of entities anticipating the degradations of distinctions that are the result of being co-opted into generating novelty to support economic growth. The effect they have on each other, as matter affecting matter, produces assemblages, appearing as projections of a future implied by the events and beings of the present.

The objects have the weird feel of un-commissioned monuments in the sense that they “confide to the ear of the future”, as science fiction of the past reads when it is set close to the time in which one lives—Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, for example, is set in 2024. In a memorial the residue of fused materials speaks of an

earlier time of turmoil that has been ploughed into the earth and overgrown with other disturbances, grist for the mill. Victories and losses become the bonds that produce what comes next, and all that remains of the earlier struggle are “persistent sensations” that move faster and more freely than we do.²

Registering new life forms, this work has a certain detachment, the figures seeming apart from our strange but more familiar present. Such characters and entities can haunt a culture (or an existence) as it grows older through time, offering different qualities of absurdity or strangeness, even wrongness. More of a comedy—a *commedia dell’arte* flight of fancy, perhaps—their aerial roots dip back into the saltwater, like a mangrove noticing the sea has the same salinity as tears. Sisyphus is an apt image in this body of work, this parallel reality field, as an ambiguous figure of endurance, effort, perpetuity and supposed doom.

Albert Camus wrote *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) to explore his perception that the need for conventional truth in an unreasonable world gives rise to crushing absurdity. By insisting on searching for the absolute in the vague, the simple in the complex, the constant in the shifting, there comes the pain of failing to come to grips with something that is better marvelled at than mastered. Camus was disturbed greatly by suicide as a form of violence, and frames it as a destructive reaction to absurdity that precipitates suddenly out of a hellishly bland wage-labour moment.

He urges the exploration of paths that can be taken as alternatives to unendurable torment. Absurdity, he offers, can be a tragedy or a freedom, but to live peacefully requires breaking the habit of spiky dissonance and accepting that all life is constant effort. By dissolving any unmet desire for truth with the love of unfolding strangeness, weight evaporates to polystyrene rock.

Francis Upritchard *Purple Sisyphus Rests (Lidded Pot)* 2021. Wood-fired ceramic, thrown by Nicholas Brandon



In an emotional economy, gravity may only be a fear or hatred of strangeness, or a failure of ideals. Camus seems determined to not self-harm, or for others to be impervious to the evaporating violence of others.

Subject to the disturbance of experience, the limber self changes as it moves through time, space, materials and proximate others. The marks are on bodies, and images are fixed to surfaces—are these creatures specimens or effigies? Representations of specimens, I think, for when things are tried out *in effigie* (as they are in therapy or the museum) the stakes are not actual death. Pretend death it is, then—rather than “supposing that every philosophy was in its inception a long tragedy.”³ The writer is clear, hoping to find a way to live through this: “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”⁴

Emaciated from work—bending, lifting, pushing, reaching, crouching (and constant footnoting)—the figures and creatures peacefully, weightlessly, melt in the laughing knowledge that “The Absurd is not in [wo]man... nor in the world, but in their presence together.”⁵ The fact that that absurdity only happens when two things are put together that cannot ever be apart is colossally and bleakly funny in any uphill lifestyle. There is certainly a recovery from absurdity in the life-giving manipulation of materials, and the transformative (rather than merely transactional) exchanges between people and materials, as if, like casting cards, there is the possibility of rewriting the present.

It is hard to stop mudlarking, crouching down looking for treasures revealed in the tidal silt. Getting garnets and nails out of the mud is easy enough where they used to do shipbuilding, and the hope is for an emerald, coins or a long china pipe. Playing hunched crone, hermit, fool, and Robert Wyatt songs with Neil Young hair, pockets are weighed down by musket balls, medicine bottles and opalescent glass lumps. Nothing is said when the other is clearly thinking (or maybe not thinking, free of thought), hands still, raised limply, as if there are invisible handbags. Hats and gloves are for going out in the world not for wearing indoors, and shield the too-tired-for-spelling wearer from elements and intrusive eye rays.

There is the buried logic of life imagined as a goodwill store, or a local version of Balzac’s curiosity shop. Where the novel became a series of described details, a procession of facts as they occur, unshackled from cause and effect. The accumulated, random, settler-vernacular materials speak of how things were, in a time when things were made (by hand and machine) more carefully. A stranger who has been away returns periodically to find a place (of childhood and adolescence and art school) changed by the rumbling of the earth, gentrification and the advance of industries, of which property is now the colony’s largest. They miss the poet who had so many dogs and sold or gave away his work outside the Arts Centre.

There are traces of the hands of assistants with the strength of extreme youth, agents of institutions, trusted friends, artist colleagues-in-making, veteran craftspeople with formidable skill-ranges, siblings, parents and skilled associates of fellow artists.⁶ Others, who squirrel away and digest found materials, work in parallel; rooted in the trees in readiness for a further but as yet undetermined meeting time.⁷ Houses have agency too—temporary residences, squats, whatever. Bill Sutton’s house, alone in Templar Street, flowered while occupied by workers and strangers, drinking in the energy of new life. The fig tree was registered, its strange pruning morphing together with beloved stick insects from sub-sub-tropical places.

Bearded men wander through the frame, carrying things, hunched, curved by their work and their determination. There are hobby potter ‘pebble’ necklaces from the 1970s, examples from a vast accumulation housed elsewhere on the peninsula by a maker of watercolour paints, and black-belt assessor of second-hand goods. The felt from the stoned-logic hat came from the leftovers of an alternative high school’s printmaking department. Works were made in the Coromandel bush-studio of a potter who vacated his earthly body some years ago, with a group of artists determined to improvise in clay and consume each other’s visual ideas next to a mini railway.⁸

Francis Upritchard *Wall Paper
Gloves* 2021. Kid leather, paint,
rings made by Karl Fritsch in
silver with cubic zirconia gems





Francis Upritchard *Printer* 2021.
Steel and foil armature, paint, modelling material,
fabric, metal, felt, kangaroo hide, hair

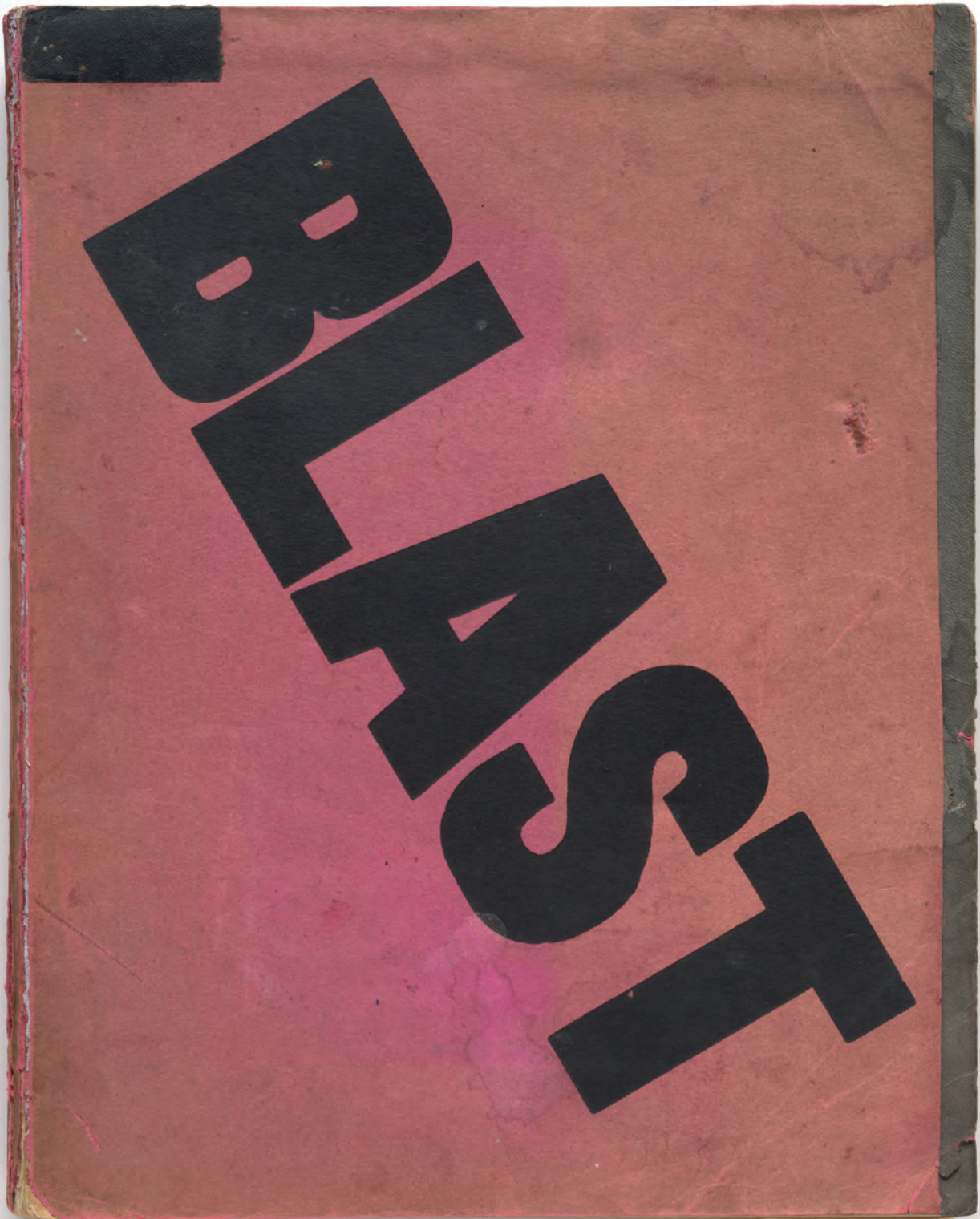
A lifetime of collected materials—handmade textiles, utensils, books, clothes, things made from cloth, mats, household items, brutally sharp tools—are sorted through and mostly given away by daughters clearing a house. A large elongated houseplant is given an honourable burial, and here comes a tall man with a bag (and hands) full of rocks. They are pushing a stone up a mountain, a car down the road, lifting a rock off a lorry and over a wall into a garden. Smelly balata rubber from Brazil needs to be soaked every month and then worked with in pairs because of its gloopiness and the logistics of modelling attenuated figures. Figures made from absorbed exertion stretch their sinews and lose condition, thin like yogis but without the obvious wisdom.

Mum rings to quote a passage to me from an Australian novel about eucalypts where paragraphs are likened to paddocks, “supposed to fence off wandering thoughts”, and trees flower “in a mass of gaudy asterisks”.⁹ The figures stay, still and pondering, on the verge of sleep or waking; are there such things as animal ghosts? Surely the spirit world is not anthropomorphic. Later, they were showing children how to make a small outrigger sailboat out of flax stems, with an always-sharp pocketknife. With violently good eyes for textiles, and happy to shorten a golf-club by half if it means a smaller person can join in, they draw a bath outside in a white plastic baby tub under the tree so the children can take turns washing the sand off their bodies. Having perfect, fleeting peace, these watchers, witnesses, projections, bringers, admixtures and vectors are in repose, only aware of the present and the eels swimming in the creek between the rocks they are standing on. Contra-individualistic, their molecules spread into the air like the volatiles off smelly rubber or a tarry perfume extract. They bear a politics of mutual transformation—their surfaces porous, reactive, receiving and impregnating, sticky, diffuse. Like the smell coming from a book mingling with the mucus lining of the nose to make a new awareness that warms us up for the words of the story.

Notes are written, insults, dyslexic-seeming formulae, on the white backs of rangiora leaves. Aphasic scribbles with diagrams, flying words. Another member comes back from herding sheep, running up hill and down dale tirelessly in shorts and expensive socks and base-layers. An old man milks goats outside his hut in the bush keenly waiting while the kiln makes the clay’s molecules move closer together and bond. An old painter uses a tea trolley for balance as he goes from meat grinding for a shepherd’s pie to watering his orchids (from orchis, the Greek for testicle) for the first time after winter during which they must not be watered. What will we do with all of aunty’s looms? Will someone please go and see if uncle is still sleeping?

Gwynneth Porter is a writer and editor living peaceably in Ōtautahi Christchurch.
Francis Upritchard: Paper, Creature, Stone is on display from 2 April until 24 July 2022.

- 1 See Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993.
- 2 “A monument does not commemorate or celebrate something that happened but confides to the ear of the future the persistent sensations that embody the event: the constantly renewed suffering of men and women, their re-created protestations, their constantly resumed struggle.” (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pp. 176-77).
- 3 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Man Alone with Himself*, London: Penguin, 2008, p.52.
- 4 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, London: Penguin, 2005, p.119.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p.29.
- 6 Nicholas Brandon, Karl Fritsch, Steven Junil Park, Chris Pole, Brenda Nightingale, Laurie Steer, Paul Maseyk, Martino Gamper, Kirstin Leek, Janeen Page, Ali Nightingale, Min Her, Sam Towse, Robert Upritchard, Jochem Holz and Sean Duxfield.
- 7 “Nicholas Brandon—old family friend—when I saw him last year he asked where I had been and when I was going to glaze all the pots he had prepared for me.” Francis Upritchard, correspondence with the author, 2021.
- 8 “These works were made at Driving Creek. Making with Martino, Jaime Jenkins, Lisa Walker, Séraphine Pick, Karl, Simon Cuming, Laurie, and Rob Cherry and Josh Taylor.” Francis Upritchard, correspondence with the author, 20219
- 9 Murray Bail, *Eucalyptus*, Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1998, pp. 34 and 65.



BLAST the POST OFFICE / BLESS the HAIRDRESSER

Peter Vangioni

One of the lesser-known aspects of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū's collecting activities is the artist book, rare book and fine-printing collection held in the Gallery's Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives. Established over the past decade or so, the collection sits between the artworks in the Gallery and the reference books in the Gallery library. The objects it contains have been acquired to complement the historic and contemporary art collection; beautifully printed and illustrated books by the likes of Eileen Mayo, John Buckland Wright and Max Gimblett sit alongside unique artist books by et al., Jane Zusters and more. The collection also features a range of hand-printed books by New Zealand letterpress studios including Tara McLeod's Pear Tree Press and Brendan O'Brien's Fernbank Studio. Where possible these have been purchased through the library's budget, but many others have been donated, including the Leo Bensemann, Peter Dunbar and Professor John Simpson collections and, most recently, the complete collection of books printed by one of New Zealand and Australia's most talented letterpress printers, Alan Loney.

Among the highlights of the recent donations are the two volumes of *BLAST: Review of the Great English Vortex* (1914–15) edited by Wyndham Lewis. These two iconic books, published by the English Vorticist movement, were acquired by Christopher Marshall in the UK during the 1970s and have been kindly donated by Christopher and his family. They are rare here in New Zealand, but it is interesting to note that two of the copies held in the National Library of New Zealand were originally owned by twentieth-century Christchurch collector Joseph Kinsey. Another copy of *BLAST No. 2, War Number*, held in the same library's collection, bears a stamp identifying it as once belonging to the collection of the Canterbury College School of Art, leaving one wondering what the young art students attending the conservative art school here in Christchurch in the mid-1910s would have made of it.

him Edouard Detaille, whose "Défense de Champigny" is one of the greatest battle-pictures of any country or any age.

A NEW VERESTCHAGIN?

The campaign of last year and this! What masterpieces must be born!"

It is useful to quote this article because, in its tone, it reproduces the attitude of the Public to War-Art. It also gives an eloquent list of names.

No critic of let us say a leading Daily Paper would pretend that the "Messonnier himself" of this article, or "Yvon whose speciality was Zouaves," were very good painters; any more than to-day they would insist on the importance of Mr. Leader or Mr. Waterhouse. Edouard Detaille, whose "Défense de Champigny" is one of the greatest battle-pictures of any country or any age" is, in circles who discuss these matters with pleasantness and sympathy, considered, I believe, not so good as "Messonnier himself."

Shall we conclude from this that War-painting is in a category by itself, and distinctly inferior to several other kinds of painting? That is a vulgar modern absurdity: painting is divided up into categories, Portrait, Landscape, Genre, etc. Portrait being "more difficult" than Landscape, and

"Battle Pictures" coming in a little warlike class of their own, and admittedly not such Very High Art as representations of Nude Ladies.

Soldiers and War are as good as anything else. The Japanese did not discriminate very much between a Warrior and a Buttercup. The flowering and distending of an angry face and the beauty of the soldier's arms and clothes, was a similar spur to creation to the grimace of a flower. Uccello in his picture at the National Gallery formalized the spears and aggressive prancing of the fighting men of his time till every drop of reality is frozen out of them. It is the politest possible encounter. Velasquez painted the formality of a great treaty in a canvas full of soldiers. And so on.

There is no reason why very fine representative paintings of the present War should not be done. Van Gogh would have done one, had he been there. But Derain, the finest painter to my knowledge at the front, will not paint one. Severini, on the other hand, if his lungs are better, and if Expressionism has not too far denaturalized his earlier Futurist work, should do a fine picture of a battle.

Gaudier-Brzeska, the sculptor, whose Vortex from the trenches makes his sentiments on the subject of War and Art quite clear, is fighting for France, but probably will not do statues afterwards of either Bosche or Piou-Piou; to judge from his treatment of the Prussian rifle-butt.

MARINETTI'S OCCUPATION.

The War will take Marinetti's occupation of platform boomer away.

The War has exhausted interest for the moment in booming and banging. I am not indulging in a sensational prophecy of the disappearance of Marinetti. He is one of the most irrepresible figures of our time, he would take a great deal to discourage. Only he will have to abandon War-noise more or less definitely, and I feel this will be a great chagrin for him. If a human being was ever quite happy and in his element it was Marinetti imitating the guns of Adrianople at the Doré with occasional answering bangs on a big drum manipulated by his faithful English disciple, Mr. Nevinson,

behind the curtain in the passage. He will still be here with us. Only there will be a little something not quite the same about him. Those golden booming days between Lule Burgas and the Aisne will be over for ever. There is a Passéist Pathos about this thought. It has always been plain that as artists two or three of the Futurist Painters were of more importance than their poet-impresario. Balla and Severini would, under any circumstances, be two of the most amusing painters of our time. And regular military War was not their theme, as it was Marinetti's, but rather very intense and vertiginous Peace. The great Poets and flashing cities will still be there as before the War. But in a couple of years the War will be behind us.



The Engine.

Dismorr.

1

BLAST First (from politeness) **ENGLAND**

CURSE ITS CLIMATE FOR ITS SINS AND INFECTIONS

DISMAL SYMBOL, SET round our bodies,
of effeminate lout within.

VICTORIAN VAMPIRE, the **LONDON** cloud sucks
the **TOWN'S** heart.

A 1000 MILE LONG, 2 KILOMETER Deep

BODY OF WATER even, is pushed against us
from the Floridas, **TO MAKE US MILD.**

OFFICIOUS MOUNTAINS keep back **DRASTIC WINDS**

SO MUCH VAST MACHINERY TO PRODUCE

THE CURATE of "Eltham"

BRITANNIC ÆSTHETE

WILD NATURE CRANK

DOMESTICATED

POLICEMAN

LONDON COLISEUM

SOCIALIST-PLAYWRIGHT

DALY'S MUSICAL COMEDY

GAIETY CHORUS GIRL

TONKS

Even today, over a hundred years since it was published, *BLAST* seems a brutal publication, both in the uncompromising call to arms of its content, and its design and production values. It was published by a group of avant-garde English artists and writers who named themselves the Vorticists—they were art provocateurs, the punk rockers of their day, out to smash what they viewed as the stale traditional English art establishment. The Vorticists formed in Britain in 1914 with a shared interest in “cubism, futurism, imagisme and all vital forms of modern art”.¹ *BLAST* was a means for them to express their aims and share their art and writing with the wider public. The first issue was published at the start of July 1914, and by the end of that month the Western world was plunged into war. Many members of the Vorticist group served in the armed forces; one, French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, died on the Western Front in June 1915 just before the second issue of *BLAST* was published.

The first volume of *BLAST* was a Vorticist manifesto of sorts, and took aim at a wide range of targets. It ‘blasted’ targets as varied as singular artists (including one of the most successful Edwardian artists of the time, poor old Frank Brangwyn), the Post Office, the English weather, art pimps, cod-liver oil and Edward Elgar, whose music is so evocative of Britain’s Victorian and Edwardian periods. The manifesto then ‘blesses’ much, including England for its ships and its seafarers, the vast planetary abstraction of the ocean as well as James Joyce, the Pope, castor oil, and hairdressers for taming and trimming the wildness of hair on a daily basis.

BLAST was also revolutionary in its ground-breaking typographical layout. The statement of intent is right there on the cover. A thick, slab-like sans-serif wooden poster typeface is printed in black and runs diagonally across a gaudy pink cover. It is loud, brash, in your face and attention grabbing. Inside, the first few pages introduce the Vorticists with ‘Long Live the Vortex’—a sort of prelude to the next thirty or so pages which form the Vorticist’s manifesto itself. Love or loathe the content, this section remains a remarkable piece of typographical design, especially when held up against the unadventurous designs that dominated letterpress printing at the time. The manifesto inventively incorporates the use of a sans-serif face in a range of font sizes that jump about the page, with words in a mix of both full upper and lower case. Blank areas are created where text has been isolated and contained through the use of thick brass printer’s rules, which run vertically down the page to form columns. These pages have been aptly described as word pictures by several art historians. The typographical freedom in the book was noted by the famous Russian designer El Lissitzky, who said in 1927 that block lettering of *BLAST* had “today ... become the feature of all modern printed matter.”²

BLAST No.1: *Review of the Great English Vortex*, London / New York, 1914. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, gift of Michael, Jilly and Christopher Marshall, 2021

The paintings included in the first volume were reproduced by photomechanical processes but by the second volume, *The War Number*, printer's blocks were used to reproduce actual relief prints by artists such as Edward Wadsworth, Wyndham Lewis, Jessica Dismorr, William Roberts and Dorothy Shakespear. The use of these woodcuts created a much closer connection with the artists' original intentions that embodied "the Vorticist's ideals of severity and geometrical clarity".³

BLAST contains some of the most influential typography of the twentieth century, but what truly appeals to me with these volumes is that they were printed by a humble jobbing printing firm, Leveridge and Co, in St Thomas Road, Harlesden, London. The firm's speciality was everyday printing jobs like the Harlesden Public Library's annual report.⁴ Fine printing, as pursued by the great English private presses from the period such as Kelmscott Press, Ashendene Press and Doves Press, was certainly not a priority here. And nor was the elevation of type design and layout as sought by Wyndham Lewis's contemporaries Eric Gill, Stanley Morrison or Edward Johnston. The printing on *BLAST* was done on a fully automated printing press and the paper used is coarse machine-made stock that has become very delicate over the years, as has the binding. William Morris, who rejected the industrial mechanisation of the nineteenth century and encouraged the arts and crafts, would certainly have turned in his grave at the production values and content, and this is exactly what the Vorticists would have wanted. Both issues of *BLAST* now sit in a rare-book case in the Gallery's library, next to the beautifully printed, bound and designed Kelmscott Press copy of *Syr Ysambrace*; two rare and important examples of English book production from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that couldn't be further apart from each other in terms of content or production values.

Peter Vangioni

Curator

The Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives are open to the public by appointment, and we love having visitors. Call 03 941 7394 or email library@christchurchartgallery.org.nz to book a time for a visit.

1 Advertisement for *BLAST* in *The Egoist: An Individualist Review*, April 1914.

2 Michael E. Leveridge, 'The Printing of *BLAST*', *Wyndham Lewis Annual*, vol. 7, 2000, p.27.

3 Karin Orchard, 'A Laugh Like a Bomb', *The History and the Ideas of the Vorticists in BLAST: Vorticism 1914-1915*, Paul Edwards (ed.), Aldershot, 2000, p.20.

4 Leveridge, p.22.



Wyndham Lewis's cover design for *BLAST* No.2: *War Number*, London / New York, 1915.
Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, the Robert and Barbara
Stewart Library and Archives, gift of Michael, Jilly and Christopher Marshall, 2021

Hard and Slippery— HAHAHA (Wait, is that the title?)

On naming things,
collaboration as
whanaukataka,
and holding the
door open for others¹

Turumeke Harrington (Kāi Tahu), Kommi Tamati-Elliffe (Kāi Tahu / Te-Āti-Awa / Taranaki)
and Kirsty Dunn (Te Aupōuri / Te Rarawa / Ngāpuhi)

Kommi: This is a courteous introductory message to the two of ya'll and regarding the collab comms between Turumeke and I, and the editing of it by Kirsty, along with additional notes/commentary as like a third voice freaky irirangi concept (but in written/electronic messaging/note adding stuff form),* all towards the art concept workings and discussions in conversations leading to the finished arts 'n' stuff resulting in a publication of our ponderings and explorations within te ao buzzy buzzy art stuff that we gonna do. I hope my whakamārama there was nice 'n' clear. Tui/Turumeke this is Kirsty. Kirsty, this is Tui/Turumeke.

Turumeke: Kia ora! Great articulation Kom!

Kirsty: Wait? Have we started? Was that a test? Hahaha

Kommi: I do not know.

* Kirsty's commentary will appear in black text throughout.

Installation view of *Turumeke Harrington* at Sumer Gallery, Tauranga, 2019. Image courtesy of Sumer Gallery



A list of hard and slippery things: meaning-making, naming, interpretation, translation, creation, reclamation, collaboration.

Tuna.

Talking about art.

Sometimes you think you've finally got something (an idea, a name, a concept, a kupu) only for it to slide out from your grip, or out from under yourself entirely (shame). I feel like something of a slippery thing myself as I dip in and out of various *kōrero* between Turumeke and Kommi and other collaborators in my attempts to describe the artist's forthcoming work *Tātou tātou, nau mai rā* set to be exhibited at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. I slink between narratives that have inspired the piece(s) as well as those that are fertilising it—feeding it into existence (it being about *manaakitanga* amongst other things). This is not the first time I have asked myself: how did I get here? And what exactly am I supposed to be doing?

“It’s a vibe, man.”²

When I read these discussions, descriptions, conversations, and explanations pertaining to the wider body of Turumeke's work and creative practice, and when I look at the works themselves, I start to think that those questions also sit underneath the *mahi*; so too, do notions of both hardness and slipperiness. Hardness, in terms of the difficulties and challenges that exist in, well, existing, as well as the *feel* of the material object. Slipperiness—between wor(l)ds, between English and *te reo Māori*, between seriousness and playfulness, between the private and public, between aesthetic and household object, between domestic and gallery spaces, between art and design, between the idea itself and the practicalities of bringing it into the world and having people experience it (amongst other things). But aren't hardness and slipperiness also the necessary conditions for creation? (And did Rangī and Papa kinda flip the script

on that?) Isn't it the unknown in-between space where hardness and slipperiness, ah, come together, that is the most stimulating—the most generative?³

“Fuck me—talking about something that doesn't exist is hard and especially when it isn't just about you.”⁴

The task I've been given is to listen in on discussions about this upcoming work and to edit, cut and paste so others get to eavesdrop too—a curated conversation of sorts. But how do we discuss an idea that's just beginning to germinate? (Cue the hardness and slipperiness again.) What do we even call this bit? Aha. This is where we start (and end, you'll see): in the *kōrero* around the naming of things and in the way in which Turumeke and Kommi's collaborative naming process is generative in and of itself; but first we have to go back, before we can go forward:

“An insight to our collaborative efforts speaks to what I think is valuable in/ from ‘The Arts’ generally—an ability to communicate stories, to be open to ‘magic’ (wassup te kore), to make fun and play and nonsense of things that are hard to comprehend or painful or boring and banal (like just regular being alive) and mainly a kind of whanaukataka—that in talking through ideas and names and kupu with you [Kommi] I get to practice one of the best parts of making shit, doing it and giving it and sharing it with others.”⁵

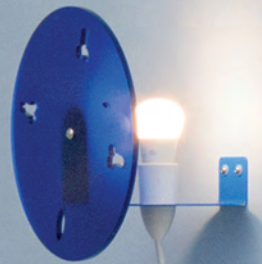


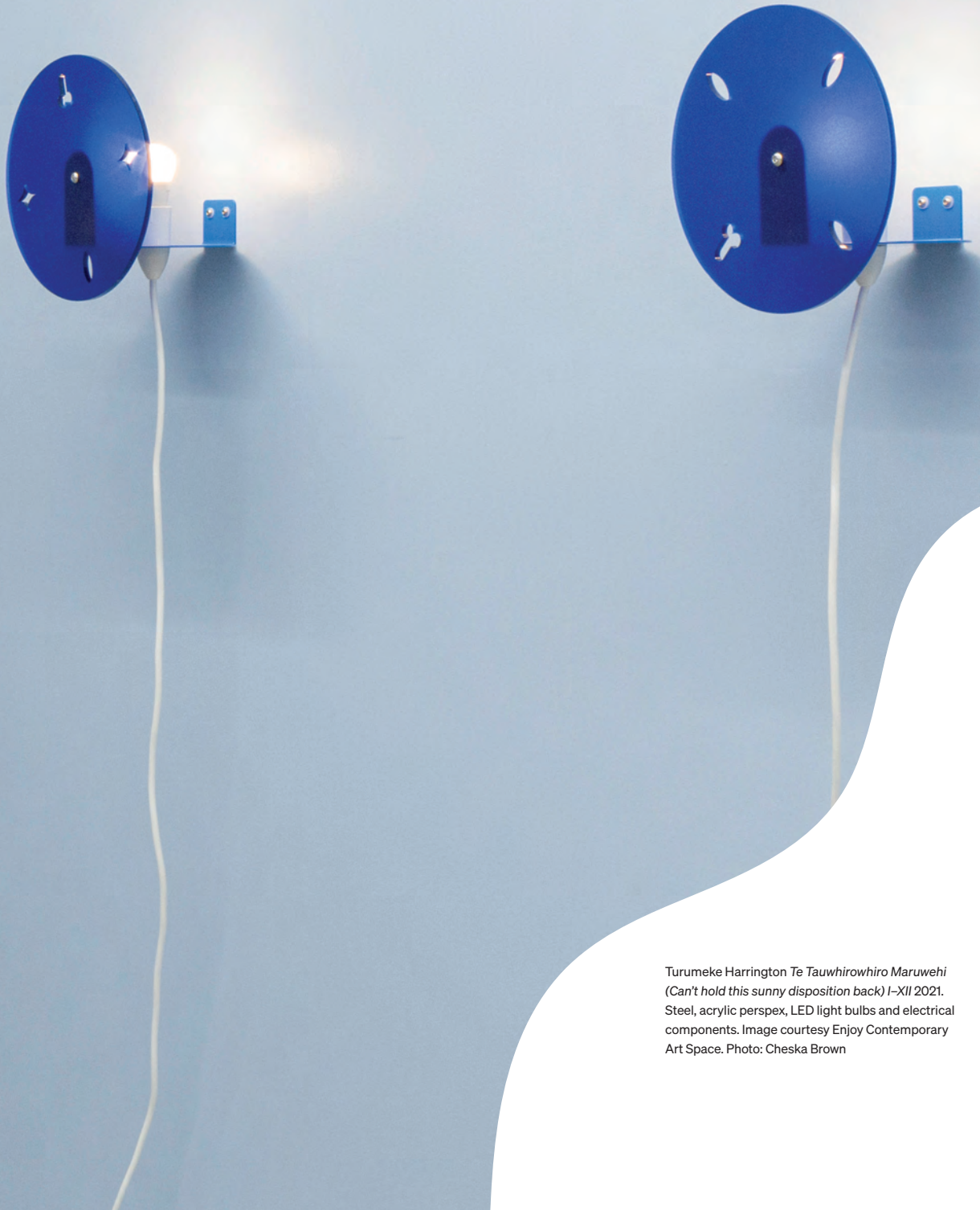
Turumeke Harrington *You [I] Can't Be (All Things To All Men) Chillout Sessions Vol. I–XIII* 2021.
Nylon, steel. Image courtesy Enjoy Contemporary Art Space. Photo: Cheska Brown

Turumeke: *I thought we could start, Kommi, where all our conversations begin: with me trying to come up with a name for these new works. There are twelve lights, they're going to be installed as part of Tauraka Toi at Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Rabbits, tuna, scallops, stars, tī kōuka. The idea that these lights are like fireplaces? Set up your house/ landing place; lights to make the place, delicious food resources, and a little dig at the old English: look at that saucy hare. Yum. 'DINNER PLATES', 'HOT ROCKS'. Perhaps some idea that suggests resourcefulness, fuck you, or ... we could just get really sxxc and talk to the slippery nature of the tuna and the skinned hare and imagine them in the cosmos of stars [...] This is an interesting word 'whakamārohirohi' to harden, condition, tone up / fit, strong, resilient. What about 'Whakamārohirohi (with hands like dinner plates)'; I wonder if I could find something that alluded to this: skinned / slippery /... and also jerking off / trying to get a 'good keen southern man' reference in. Now that I'm running through all the words too I wouldn't mind having a dig at 'resilience'—some phrasing about peeling / cooking / slippery skin + resilience [...]*

Kommi: *He pātaka mana hea (hea = hare lol) also play on pātaka as a food storehouse mana of the hare lol [...] Maybe those twelve lights are not fires but twelve hearth stones to one fire. A word for hearth stones is pārua—which is also a brim, rim, bowl or depression in the ground for placing caught eels, or taro, etc... pā-rua to touch twice lol. Flick yer bean. Any more than two shakes and you're playing with it [...] HOT ROCKS—Kā kōhatu whakarekareka! Taken from 'Kā kōhatu whakarekareka a Tamatea-pōkai whenua' the hot sexy rocks or glowing rocks of Tamatea the traveller—the name for the Port Hills [...] As you said 'Whakamārohirohi' yes! That's it! Meaning to harden, condition, tone up and also to be resilient, fit and strong. In regards to peeling skin and teaming that up with the concept of resilience—Tui, I have no idea what you're getting at. Artists these daaaaays. Oh wait Kirituna: that means to be hard-skinned*

Turumeke: *Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaae.
Here he's come. Juicy maaayn.*





Turumeke Harrington *Te Tauwhirowhiro Maruwehi*
(*Can't hold this sunny disposition back*) I–XII 2021.
Steel, acrylic perspex, LED light bulbs and electrical
components. Image courtesy Enjoy Contemporary
Art Space. Photo: Cheska Brown

Āe, tino juicy this collaborative naming. And a process that brings forth new roots (and routes) reaching out and into and through the soil and muck connecting to the other things, both growing and dormant, out there, sustaining us, and holding us up. (Kia ora, Papatūānuku...)

The slippages and difficulties that permeate what we talk about and how we talk about it also underpin much of Turumeke's work and the kōrero that continues to grow around the work too. What's cool is that the 'c' word responsible for a lot of those slippages and difficulties isn't the centre of things. It lingers, of course, but it isn't jumping up and down at us, trying to get our attention. Rather it waits, arms folded, in the corner. (Time out for you. Stand there and think about what you've done.)

What is centred (the pito of the work?) is a commitment to figuring out the how and the why of us, and leaving something to help our babies have maybe (hopefully) an easier time of figuring that stuff out too: cross-generational manaakitanga in action. That whakapapa is everything—all the bits of us that come from all the places and the beauty and complexity and vibrancy and strangeness and humour within those bits—also underlies so much of the work. (I mean—of course it does with all its layers and foundations, metaphorical and otherwise.)

“I find the whole process of contextualising practice quite difficult because practice is—everything, all at once. It is whakapapa, blood lines and whatever. It's also all of the work that I'm influenced by. [...] And simultaneously, all this work is about what it is to be a good person or what it is to respect and acknowledge the way, and how you got here...”⁶

Whakapapa too, and the pūrākau that accompany whakapapa, also branch ever outwards, like the process of naming; these too, Turumeke draws upon in both the practice and thinking through of potential

projects, possible names—the seeds of things. But the work also gestures to—and is demonstrative of—those narratives and stories that we are yet to write ourselves and the names that we are yet to give each other; those that we will, some time in the future, create, sing, display and play with; these narratives that will then outlive us (ehara i te tī indeed).⁷ If we only live once, Turumeke's mahi seems to say, why not try and make something cool with this life, strange little thing that it is? And why not make that something with and for others? Why not invite people in, hold the door open for others in the process?

It's this making with and for—this collaboration not just in terms of the making of the thing before it gets to where it's going, but the collaboration that occurs between artist(s) and those that experience the work—where both whanaungatanga and manaakitanga live. These are but two facets to Turumeke's practice that are both subtle and overt; hidden and in plain sight (or site even). Furthermore, the representation and realisation of these values in the work are achieved by playful and serious means simultaneously. (Yes *everything, all at once.*)

“Because we are trying to learn together, what we talk about most is manaakitaka. In exhibition making, you can practice it”⁸

As I linger on the sidelines of the kōrero about the next work in progress, I see this door-holding—this gesture towards welcoming—being drawn upon in a different way; there is a playfulness going on here too and yes, once more, a slipperiness in terms of manaakitanga and the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. Again, the collaborative naming process has its own offshoots that look out in every direction⁹—it has its own whakapapa, within which various whakaaro are reignited and revisited:

Turumeke: The name... ‘Tātou tātou, nau mai rā’ ... actually that feels like a place to start, or end, or ... I think this name is weird in the context of all the names we have come up with. Usually they’re a reo-English pairing. Not translations. I’ve been looking back over our collabs [...] I feel like this happens a lot though, where you think you have had a radically new idea for yourself, or you feel like your work or thinking has moved greatly but really you keep coming back to the same ideas [...] I think maybe the precedent setter for the naming of work and shows is ‘Mahoranuiatea: Looking Out in Every Direction’. Which is where Matiaha Tiramōrehu is first directly referenced too. Maybe it’s interesting that the name for this project is ‘Tātou tātou, nau mai rā’ that it doesn’t recall from that same whakapapa or have the English companion to it. And that it could be interpreted very simply ‘we are all welcome’ When I imagine saying it though, I like to think there’s a sarcastic emphasis on the all. Coz we’re not.

Kommi: Okay, so yeah ‘Tātou, tātou, nau mai rā’—it’s a real standard term, but not really. It comes across as like a generic greeting—but what it really is saying is like: ‘What’s yours is mine, g’, ‘what’s mine is yours’, ‘fuckin heeeellp yourself my baaraau’ and ‘welcome welcome fellow weirdo’ [...] I think there’s nothing wrong with revisiting the same idea if it keeps on piquing your interest, if you are still exploring it, or even just obsessing over it, that’s good. It’s become part of who you are and what you do. Why deny yourself that?

Turumeke: Absolutely. It feels like each time around adding something more, learning and contributing, instead of doing or exploring an idea and that being that. Orbital! A little off centre! Interesting to imagine that when you’re as far away from one idea as you can be you’re on your way back there [...]

Back there indeed and once more asking myself, how did I get here? And what am I doing exactly?

“If you knew exactly what would happen at the end of everything, there would be very little fun in starting it at all.”¹⁰

Except now I’m seeing the questions from a slightly different perspective. The how did I get here is less about the being in the room itself and listening in on collaborative kōrero, but more about all those that came before me, that got me to this place (kia ora, e hoa). And less the what am I doing here, trying to make sense of art, and more in the sense of, now that I am here, now that I’ve been invited in, what am I going to do with this opportunity? Am I holding the door for someone else? (Kia ora, anō.)

“I’m working hard to welcome people in. Like Whakamaharataka Hāwaniwani—literally welcoming people into the wall. Maybe described like te kore... into that liminal zone... be Māui and move through the tunnel / the tunnel is Māui / the tunnel is the birth canal...”¹¹

Through the hard via the slippery, nē rā?

Turumeke Harrington: Tātou tātou, nau mai rā was scheduled for exhibition in April 2022 but has been postponed until late 2022 / early 2023 due to Covid-19.

- 1 Or just, like, bypassing the door altogether and making a slippery hole in the wall between worlds instead; see Harrington’s *Whakamaharataka Hāwaniwani SLIPPERY MONUMENT* Pātaka Art + Museum, 2021.
- 2 Turumeke Harrington, ‘Playing with Others Nicely’, Unpublished MA thesis, Massey University, Wellington 2001.
- 3 See Ioana Gordon-Smith (ed.), ‘Gentle Ribbing’ *Turumeke Harrington in conversation with Kommi Tamati-Elliffe*, Toi Pōneke Gallery, 2020.
- 4 Turumeke Harrington, personal communication, 2021.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 ‘Playing with Others Nicely’, 2001.
- 7 See Turumeke Harrington with Kommi Tamati-Elliffe, Marlon Williams and Lewis Gardiner *SPECIAL TIME (Ehara i te tū)*, Blue Oyster Project Space, 2021.
- 8 ‘Playing with Others Nicely’, 2001.
- 9 I borrow this phrase from Harrington’s 2020 work, *Mahoranuiātea: Looking Out in Every Direction*; a large-scale woven net and light installation which “describes the infinite expansion of the universe, functioning as an analogy for whakapapa as it extends out beyond us in all directions”. <https://www.objectspace.org.nz/exhibitions/mahoranuiatea-looking-out-in-every-direction>
- 10 ‘Playing with Others Nicely’, 2001.
- 11 Turumeke Harrington, personal communication, 2021.

Turumeke Harrington *Whakamaharataka Hāwaniwani SLIPPERY MONUMENT* 2021. Installation view at Pātaka Art + Museum. Photo: Ioana Gordon-Smith



The Arts and Crafts Movement at the End of the World

Rosie Ibbotson





Alice Beatrice (Biddy) Waymouth Silver teapot c. 1908. Silver-plated copper, rosewood.
Private collection, Christchurch

It is interesting to ponder how makers involved in the Arts and Crafts Movement might respond if they were able to see their works on display in galleries today. While exhibitions on a range of scales were central to the Arts and Crafts, and played a key role in how its ideas and objects reached new audiences and took root across the world, today's retrospective explorations of the Movement are to some extent testament to the fact that it never revolutionised art and life to the extent that its protagonists had initially hoped. Upon visiting recent displays of their work then, would they celebrate the close looking that exhibitions enable, and the way in which this might encourage respect for handcraft? Would they welcome seeing craft presented as being on a par with—or perhaps even inseparable from—'art'? Or, might they mourn the missed potential for their objects—and for the Arts and Crafts Movement more generally—to have been woven throughout the fabric of everyday life, to have been in use as part of an ethically and aesthetically harmonious domestic environment? How might they feel to see their works off-limits to touching hands, given the centrality of haptic understanding and materials within the Movement? Would they read into museums' and galleries' collecting of Arts and Crafts objects yet further confirmation of how deeply the capitalistic compartmentalisations and hierarchies they rejected have permeated today's world, or would they be encouraged by the care and interest with which institutions and viewers today treat their movement and its objects?

For a movement as pluralistic and sprawling as the Arts and Crafts, all of these responses are conceivable. The Movement spread internationally, lasted for around a hundred years (spanning most of the second half of the nineteenth century and, in Australasia at least, reaching the second half of the twentieth),¹ and encompassed such a wide variety of craft skills, people and ideas that boiling it down to unifying tenets is difficult. However, musing on how Arts and

Crafts makers would react to exhibitions today, or the contemporary world more generally, sheds light on what they were originally trying to achieve—and also exposes the potential for misunderstandings when looking back on the Movement from the perspective of the now. While many recent commentators have described the aims of the Arts and Crafts Movement as naïve, owing in part to its desire for thoughtfully-crafted (and preferably hand-made) homewares to be available to all, this dismissal overlooks the fact that it was the capitalist system that made these objectives incompatible. Indeed, exactly as Arts and Crafts thinkers feared might happen, so completely has capitalism lodged itself within the way society is imagined today that many have 'naturalised' it, losing the ability to see through or past it. However, while today it might be "easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism", to borrow an oft-quoted idea from Fredric Jameson,² for nineteenth-century adherents of the Arts and Crafts Movement, capitalism was a much newer and less entrenched system. It was therefore more straightforward to imagine it ending—not necessarily as an apocalyptic scenario, but as a return to something healthy and wholesome after a period of temporary hysteria. While the Arts and Crafts Movement had many failings, its refusal to shape its ideals to align with capitalism is not one of them, as this was the very system it was initially seeking to challenge.

In confronting capitalism, material objects were recognised by the Arts and Crafts Movement as playing a key role. While the Arts and Crafts was described by the British book designer and activist Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson as "a movement in the main of ideas and not of *objets d'art*",³ in reality the theory and practice were not so neatly separable. Instead, objects were seen as carriers of ideas, and as a means by which both makers and users could be morally uplifted. The Arts and Crafts therefore believed in the capacity

of art to change society, rather than merely to reflect it—though perhaps paradoxically, some practitioners also thought that until capitalism was over, crafted objects could never really reach their full potential.

A key way in which art—a term that the Movement hoped would become interchangeable with ‘craft’—could embody ideals was by containing evidence of the methods and conditions of production. For example, visible hammer marks on the surfaces of metalwork might bear witness to the hand of the maker, and it was believed they indicated that the maker’s working conditions had been sufficiently liberated to enable the choice to work slowly and in traditional ways. Unnecessary striving in processes of making was also to be rejected: imperfections were celebrated, and the forms of objects were to be guided by the properties of the materials used. By extension, media were to be selected carefully in order to facilitate the craft practices involved in the realising of designs. Furthermore, the Arts and Crafts Movement’s emphasis on local materials and motifs was also intended to resist the structures of capitalist supply chains, and to help create objects that were sensitive to their environments.

These ideals, however, left room for contradictions, and were seldom all followed exactly. Even within a single object then, conflicting ideas could be expressed. Charles Kidson’s peacock plate, for example, reflects Arts and Crafts principles in the choice of the materials used, with the pāua shell deriving from Aotearoa’s coastline, and copper being a malleable metal that was conducive to repoussé techniques. However, the peacock motif is incongruous, since peacocks were neither particularly relevant to the function of a plate, nor endemic to Aotearoa. Indeed, in New Zealand’s Arts and Crafts Movement it was not uncommon to see introduced species featured in designs, despite the fact that their use as motifs ran counter to the Movement’s stated emphasis on drawing

from ‘locally appropriate’ examples and ‘nature’ for design inspiration. Arguably, this reflects the cognitive dissonance among British settlers as to where exactly ‘Home’ referred to (the term was frequently used in newspapers of the day to refer to Britain), as well as the extent to which the nineteenth century saw significant accelerations in the importation and exchange of species of flora and fauna. This was especially apparent in colonial contexts. The Arts and Crafts edict to reference ‘nature’ was therefore complicated by the emergence of increasingly hybrid environments.

Colonial contexts also highlighted assumptions at the core of the Arts and Crafts, and shaped how the Movement took root in these places. A key Arts and Crafts directive—linked with the emphasis on local materials—was looking to nearby vernacular forms and buildings for inspiration for designs. In Aotearoa, the Movement’s response to Māori art was mixed and problematic: while some, including Samuel Hurst Seager, myopically dismissed Māori architecture as “scarcely suitable as standards on which to found our national taste”,⁴ others were fascinated by indigenous art, and saw *toi Māori* as a rich visual tradition from which to draw. However, the way in which Māori work was referenced in the Arts and Crafts objects of Pākehā designers was appropriative and frequently inaccurate, and often lacked the cultural understanding that was central to these artforms and their contexts. The desire of the Arts and Crafts to draw on local vernaculars therefore meant that the Movement could be colonising and destructive, and in Aotearoa as elsewhere this sometimes had the effect of distorting understandings of traditional art.

It is perhaps ironic then that imperial anxiety back in Britain—alongside fears for the environment, mounting evidence of the dangers of extractivism and poorly-regulated mechanised production, and concern for people marginalised by inequitable systems—was part of the context from which the Arts

Charles Kidson *Peacock Plate*
1903–04. Copper and pāua shell.
Collection of Christchurch Art
Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū,
gift of R. J. Eltoft, 2003



and Crafts originally arose. The homely focus and utopian romanticism of the Movement might indeed be traced to the fact that it was born at the coalface of industrialisation—almost literally, given the role that wealth amassed from mining and other forms of ‘resource’ extraction played in funding so many Arts and Crafts commissions, and the careers of a number of its major protagonists. These included William Morris, recognised by his contemporaries and still today as the Movement’s leading light. However, finding themselves with a front row seat to extractivist capitalism’s worst excesses, Morris and others did not accept this as the status quo, but leveraged their insights to launch the experimental critiques and forms of artisanal resistance that gave rise to the Arts and Crafts Movement. While scholars often mention the Arts and Crafts’ desire to remake a sort of prelapsarian world, before the mechanisation and industrialisation that the Movement saw as having eroded standards of art and production, perhaps the most crucial aspect of this was that it envisioned a world without capitalism. It is then yet another irony of the Arts and Crafts Movement that the beauty and enduring appeal of its designs, combined with its failure to fully transform society in the way it had hoped, has resulted in its objects becoming commodified, and separated by walls and display cases from tactile and everyday interactions with people within their domestic lives.

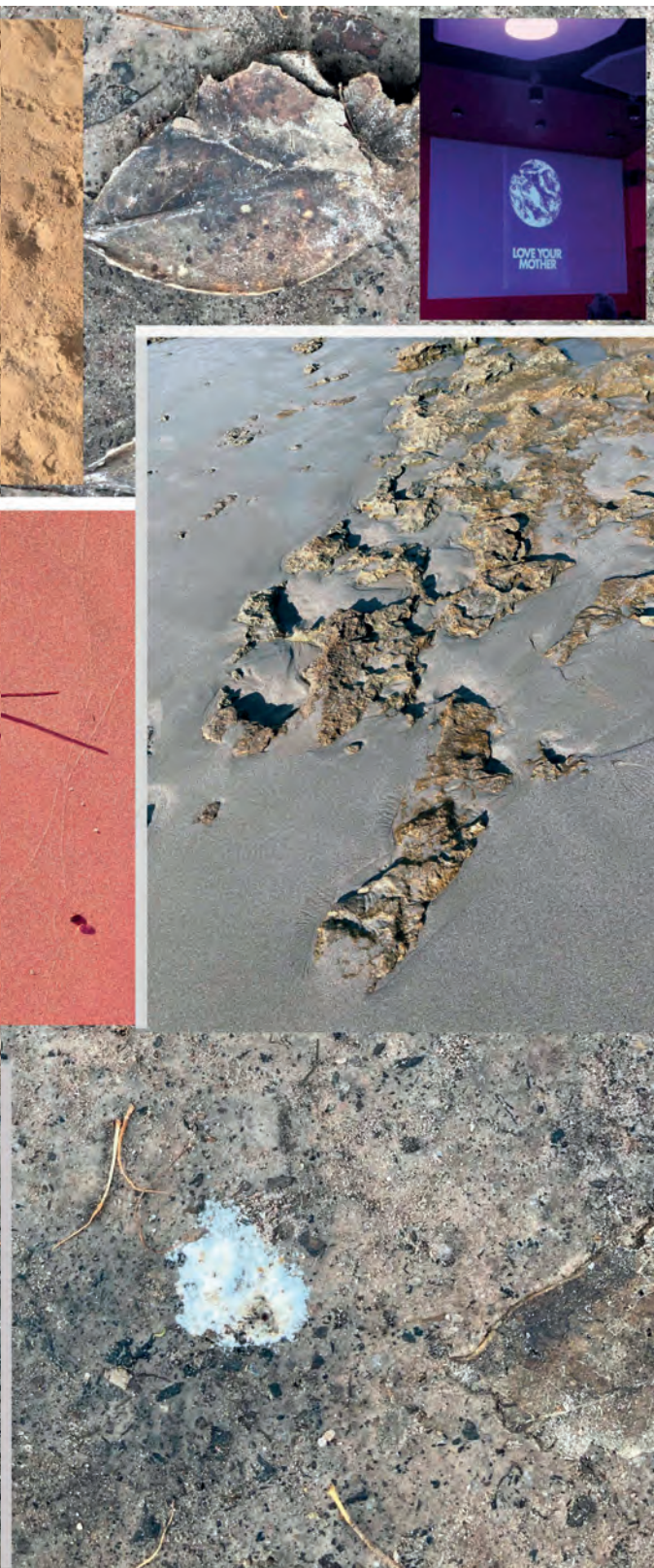
Rosie Ibbotson is senior lecturer in Art History and Theory at the University of Canterbury. *The Moon and the Manor House* is on display until 18 September 2022.

- 1 It should be noted that the beginning and end dates of the Arts and Crafts Movement are extensively contested in the literature. However, the end dates suggested by many sources fail to take account of Arts and Crafts developments in Aotearoa, Australia and elsewhere, which were happening into the second half of the twentieth century. In general, the estimates cited in this essay take an expansive view of the Arts and Crafts, and seek to recognise the organic way in which the Movement coalesced, as well as the continuing difficulties of precisely defining it.
- 2 Fredric Jameson, ‘Future city’ in *New Left Review* 21, May – June 2003, p.76. Jameson’s striking observation juxtaposing capitalism and the end of the world had previously appeared in a slightly different form in his 1994 book *The Seeds of Time*.
- 3 Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, Hammersmith: Hammersmith Publishing Society, 1905, p.29.
- 4 Samuel Hurst Seager, ‘Architectural Art in New Zealand’ in *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, vol.7 no.3, November 1899 – October 1900, p.490.



Illustration by Edward Burne-Jones in William Morris *A Dream of John Ball* 1892. Kelmscott Press.
Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury collection





ANIMAL, MINERAL, VEGETABLE?

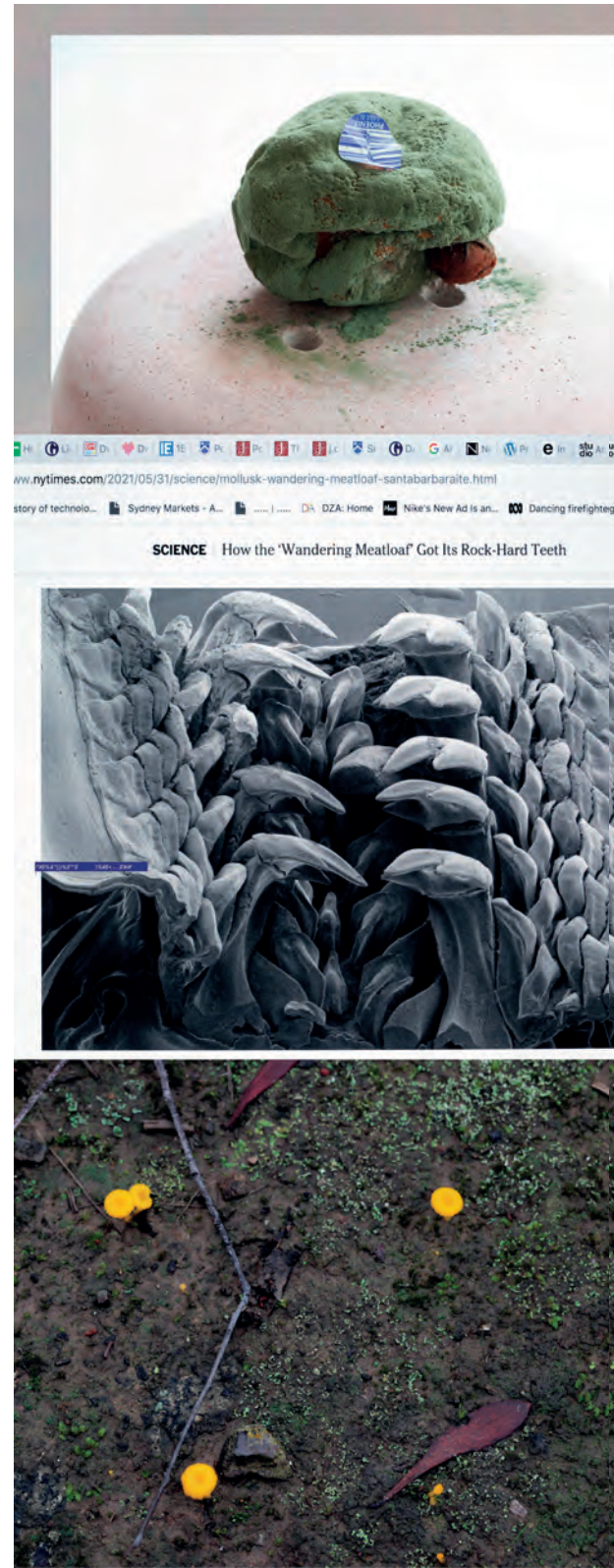
Alicia Frankovich's Atlas
of Anti-Taxonomies

Melanie Oliver

Alicia Frankovich *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* (detail) 2019–22.
Courtesy of the artist, Starkwhite Auckland and 1301SW Melbourne

Orange peel, ant's eye, hibiscus flower, rhubarb, bacteria, a space blob, a virus, an x-ray of a human skull—human, non-human, inhuman, entangled and disordered. In the *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies*, artist Alicia Frankovich groups these things by difference rather than sameness, showing them to have dynamic relationships and visual rhythms. Consisting of over 100 images that the artist has gathered, constructed and found, Frankovich's carefully selected and arranged collections of phenomena, beings and objects glow from lightboxes hung throughout the gallery space. Their collated, overlapping and montaged images are wild and vibrant. Their placement on the large screens feels momentary, as though this is just one iteration of many possible permutations, disrupting any typical or static taxonomical order. In making this work, Frankovich has drawn on the extensive body of research around posthuman ecologies, decolonising nature and queer theory, underscoring this beautiful exhibition with complex ideas of domination and control.

Taxonomy is the game of naming, defining and classifying things—of inventing structures and of saying how these parts connect and those ones don't. While organic things have familial connections to each other, often the descriptions and lineages imposed on species are hierarchical and subjective. These categories and links are decided and maintained by patriarchal, colonial, heteronormative, wealthy, humanist authorities. Not so with Frankovich's *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies*. The title itself suggests multiple taxonomies and many ways of knowing, and this implies that there are alternative systems through which to describe and understand the world and its inhabitants. For example, these systems could involve queer, Indigenous or embodied perspectives and experiences that enrich and complicate the breadth and depth of our collective knowledge.



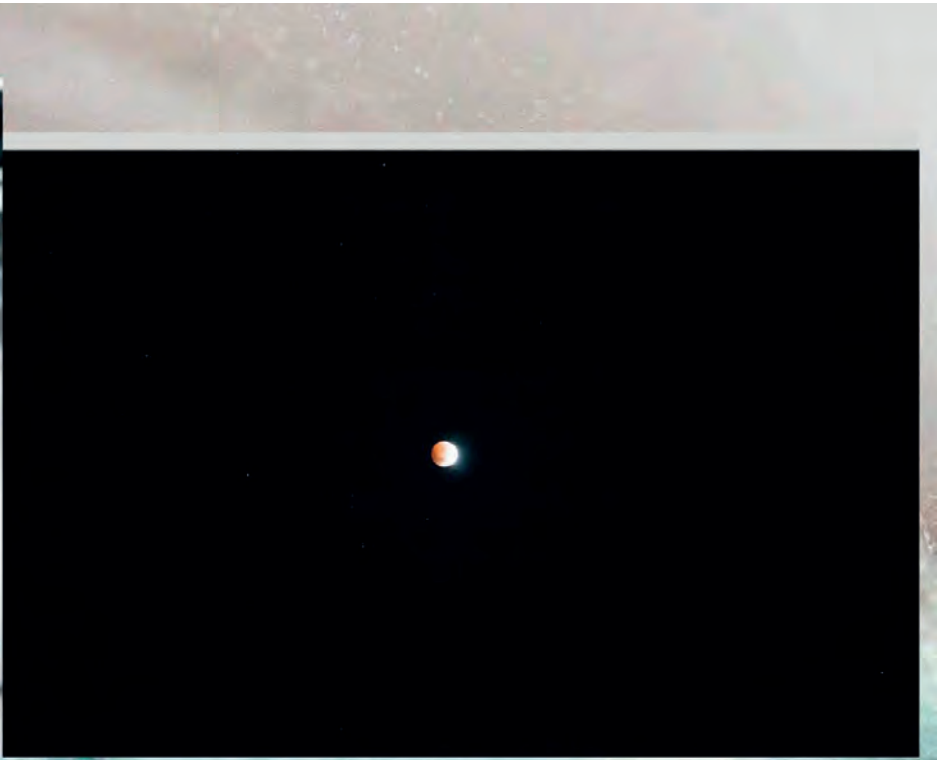
Alicia Frankovich *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* (detail) 2019–22.
Courtesy of the artist, Starkwhite Auckland and 1301SW Melbourne



ESTIMATED UP TO 6.4°C WARMER BY THE END OF THIS CENTURY



Alicia Frankovich *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* (detail) 2019–22.
Courtesy of the artist, Starkwhite Auckland and 1301SW Melbourne



Incorporating a wide variety of images, the scale and context of their origin is extraordinarily diverse, from macro to micro, the inside of beings to distant views. Frankovich breaks down the barriers between things while enhancing the commonalities between entities. That which is human is no longer more important than an insect or a piece of grass.

In her book *Staying with the Trouble*, feminist theorist Donna Haraway proposes that, in order to survive the dramatic effects of the looming climate crisis, we must rethink our relationships with other species and the earth and build towards a more liveable future. This means learning how things exist in complex ecological systems and acknowledging the at times surprising impact of alterations within a network. For instance, we might not know what effects a change in environment or loss of species could have on other things in a neighbourhood, since we are all intricately linked and entangled with each other. She claims:

*Coral, along with lichens, are also the earliest instances of symbiosis recognized by biologists; these are the critters that taught biologists to understand the parochialism of their own ideas of individuals and collectives. These critters taught people like me that we are all lichens, all coral.*¹

Rather than using the term Anthropocene—which carries with it an assumed human mastery and dominates the climate change debate with humanist rhetoric, as well as erasing responsibilities of imperialism, capitalism and racism—Haraway creates the term Chthulucene (from the Greek *chthonos*, of the

earth), as a way to look towards a future in harmony with our fellow beings. To be ‘inhuman’ means both non-human and also cruel, lacking in the supposed human qualities of compassion and mercy, and this etymology reflects a philosophy that places humans over and above all else—a structuring principle that Frankovich overturns. Instead, she suggests that we exist in dynamic and complex relations to non-humans, whether that be akin to plants, organisms or creatures. There is a wildness to Frankovich’s project that speaks of disorder and desire in ways similar to theorist Jack Halberstam in the book *Wild Things*; articulating the wild of queerness, bodies, post-human knowledge and the interconnectedness of beings, human and non-human. Unlike nature, wildness is unrestrained and unpredictable. Halberstam writes:

*Wildness remains vital in its stubborn persistence, queerly vital. Can we use this queer vitality to navigate contemporary terrains of contradiction, confrontation and complicity? ... the spaces of contradiction that fascinate us now within the economic, the cultural and the social are studded with the shards of the colonial order that has been smashed but that lives on as small pieces of discourse embedded in the choices we make, the ways we relate or cannot, and the way we encounter otherness, success, and failure.*²

By unsettling fixed categories and engaging this wild vitality, Frankovich disrupts our binary thinking of human and non-human species, as well as many other divisions we draw up around gender, class and race. When we consider the simple case of a bacteria that lives in the human gut, it is easy to comprehend how the limits of the body are not definitive, that we are

HER LUSH IMAGES LURE US INTO COMPLEX TERRAIN AND UNCOMFORTABLE WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH FELLOW INHABITANTS

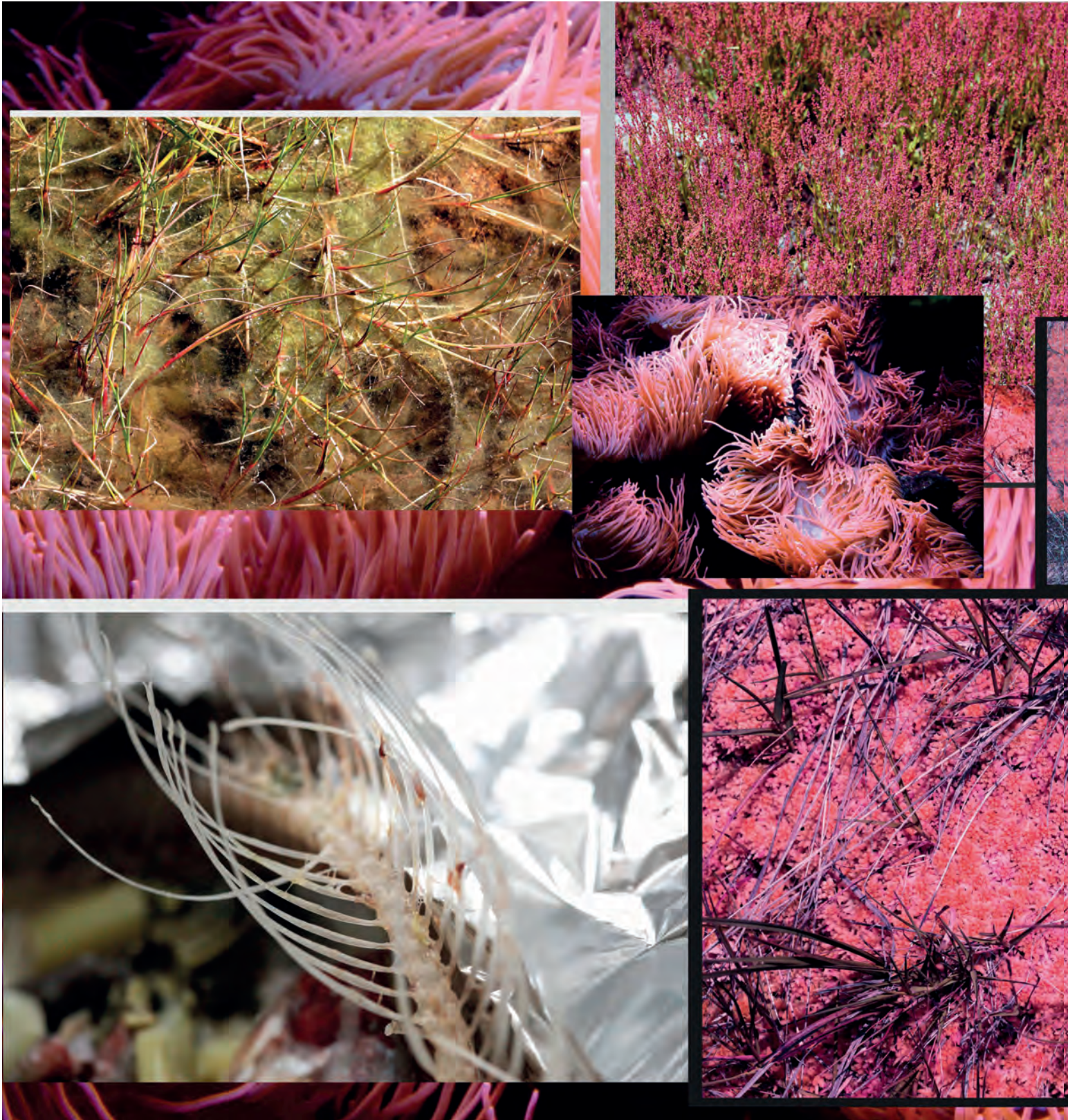
porous and constantly intermingle with other species. This notion could be expanded to assist our ways of thinking about living in communities of beings and environments from which it is not possible to classify or segment discrete bodies, rather there is fluidity and interconnection between even the most unlikely critters. Frankovich claims: “There is an undoing of the question of whole earth and whole subject.”³ The array of images clustered on the eight double-sided lightboxes for *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* looks a bit like a Google image search, the endless scroll of images that appear when we search for something on the internet. There are also hints at other online platforms, like Instagram. It’s a reminder of the fraught nature of the digital circulation of images. Artist Hito Steyerl has described this rampant proliferation of .jpg, .tiff and .mov files and more, and how they both deteriorate in quality, becoming ‘poor’, and yet gain currency through wide distribution.⁴ Of the internet, Steyerl writes:

*... images are not objective or subjective renditions of a preexisting condition, or merely treacherous appearances. They are rather nodes of energy and matter that migrate across different supports, shaping and affecting people, landscapes, politics, and social systems.*⁵

What we might not always consider when making an online search is the infrastructure that supports this function, in terms of the digital technologies and corporations that own them. The metadata and algorithms that power a search are designed by companies with strategic financial targets, and they form an integral part of our capitalist system. There are two key aspects to this: our personal data as a tradeable commodity, and political or economic factors driving the

creation of publically accessible information. By working with images from diverse sources and producing her own image database, Frankovich subverts and highlights the controls of the internet algorithm that usually decides what will surface, who will be featured first and what will remain buried.

Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies also visually references an analogue version of non-hierarchical image grouping, the monumental but unfinished *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924–29) from German art historian, Aby Warburg (1866–1929). Mnemosyne was the Greek goddess of memory, and Warburg was amassing photographs of artworks, cosmography, maps, people, places and things, which he intended to form a more expansive version of art history based on his theory of collective memory. He arranged nearly 1,000 idiosyncratic images across sixty-three panels (there would eventually have been many more had his project been completed) in an attempt to map the “afterlife of antiquity”. He wanted to show how themes, patterns or motifs repeat across different times and places. Warburg challenged the elitism of art history, and the preferential treatment of certain disciplines or cultures, through his use of anachronistic and wide-ranging images—from painting or sculpture to contemporary culture—in an interplay of imagery across different periods and cultural contexts. Captions were to accompany these groupings, but Warburg was also concerned with *Zwischenräume*, the spaces in between, and *Denkraum*, room for thought. We can see this approach of allowing the images to speak for themselves in Frankovich’s work too, though in new and surprising configurations, with some captions that indicate concerns around global warming or viral spread, yet offer plenty of room for the in-between, ambiguity and vacillating meaning.





Frankovich's *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* is ambitious in scale, and asks us to consider all these reference points and more. Her lush images lure us into complex terrain, and uncomfortable ways of thinking about ourselves and our relationships with fellow inhabitants of the world, without declaring a new fixed taxonomy. We are asked to sit with elements of the unknown, of indeterminacy and shifting ground, to stay with the trouble. In these uncertain times, with the Covid-19 pandemic disrupting daily life and the impacts of the climate crisis increasingly felt by coastal communities in particular across Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, Frankovich suggests there are many ways of connecting, seeing and describing things. In doing so, she opens up the potential for new orders, systems and ideas that are not only more appropriate for our contemporary and future worlds, but maybe even hopeful.

Melanie Oliver

Curator

Alicia Frankovich: *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* is on display until 22 May 2022.

- 1 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016, p.72.
- 2 Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020, p.46.
- 3 Alicia Frankovich, *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies*, 2019–2022.
- 4 Hito Steyerl, 'In defense of the poor image', *e-flux Journal*, Issue 10, November 2009. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>
- 5 Hito Steyerl, 'Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?', in Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood and Anton Vidokle (eds.), *The Internet Does Not Exist*, Berlin: Sternberg Press/*e-flux Journal*, 2015, p.11.

Alicia Frankovich *Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies* (detail) 2019–22.
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Robert Herdman-Smith Framed presentation to Hugh Duncanson Buchanan 1908.
 Ink and watercolour in oak frame. Collection of Akaroa Museum

My Favourite

Lesley Maclean lives in Christchurch and writes, makes books, grows vegetables, and gathers warm data.

I'm often drawn to art that's attached to a specific time and place, and so it was that I came across Robert Herdman-Smith's beautiful piece—commissioned in honour of the departure from Little River of a wealthy landowner (Hugh Duncanson Buchanan) in 1908. Behind the intricately carved wooden frame, the tiny perfect lettering embellished with paintings and art nouveau-ish decorations, is a story that I'd like to know more about.

Who was this man? We read that he was involved in many aspects of Little River life, like farming, politics and sport. He was said to be kind and sympathetic to “those in difficulties”. But why did his leaving prompt such a gift? And why is it that “no section of the community will feel [his] absence more than the Native race”? The explanatory notes provide some clues but don't exactly answer the questions that occur to me. I find myself wondering whether this man was truly the beloved community leader the words seem to suggest, or whether all this painstaking effort is just one of the rewards for being a powerful person.

Putting my critical hat aside for a minute, I find my eyes drawn to the frame. It's beautifully carved and intricate and maybe even a little visually overwhelming sitting next to all that busy writing and decoration inside. When I read that the carved plants are natives,

I start wondering about their significance. They may be, or have been, common plants around Little River, or perhaps had some personal significance for Buchanan and his family. Or were they just pleasing visual forms that lent themselves well to being carved? The style of carving itself got me thinking about the differences between the ways that plant forms are depicted in this style compared to Māori carving.

The other thing that immediately grabbed my attention when looking at the picture was how tidy and small the writing was. The list of people is truly microscopic! I have used handwriting in my own design work plenty of times, but mine is messy and imperfect. So I'm very curious about the process of designing and writing out this tribute; clearly a very patient and meticulous person wrote those words. Did he ever make a mistake and start again?



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Pagework no.52

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.

Ōtautahi born and raised, Nina Oberg Humphries is a second-generation Aotearoa New Zealand-born Cook Islander. She is one of a new wave of artists developing meaningful conversations between museums and galleries and the indigenous cultures whose treasures they house.

Informed by a complex whakapapa, Oberg Humphries asks how we create connections to our past with limited information, and how does a Pasifika culture exist within Aotearoa. What do identity and custom look like through lived experiences that are related to, but also separate from, customary island life? To manage these challenging questions, Oberg Humphries measures and tempers her practice in accordance with the customs and integrity of her people, looking to her tūpuna for insight.

Using material of vibrant fiery red and feathers with solid black patterning, colours associated to atua that snap the eye to attention, Oberg Humphries takes us to an ancient and customary spiritual realm.

There is an intended sense of the body in the object, a personification, at the top a clearly definable face. Being the first of thirty 'feather sticks' and one of few with such characteristics, *Avaiki Feather Stick* (2021) is the rangatira of the roopu.

Avaiki is one of many Polynesian names used to refer to ancestral or spiritual homelands, the place of ancestors and gods. Feather Sticks are a pre Christian custom of Cook Island life; the making, handling and use of these objects was for personal and private use.

"I think about the item as something you would talk to and talk with, it is staff-like but not, it's indigenous, but it's not, its singular but it's also part of a group."¹

To unpack this statement we need to consider further the make-up of this atua, which was inspired by spiritual objects from the Cook Islands, Feather Gods and God Staffs, experienced by the artist visiting the Oldman Collection under her 2020 Creative New Zealand / University of Canterbury Macmillan brown Centre for Pacific Studies Artist Residency. Her visit included invited members of Canterbury's Pacific community, recalling stories of their experiences of living, or growing up, in Aotearoa.

This formative community action deepens Oberg Humphries's already considerable Cook Islands cultural knowledge base to create objects of a complex nature. The indigenous exterior is strapped to a machine-made balustrade of colonial-period design, a literal and semiotic interior. Her challenge is to figure how to consider such contrasting and at times conflicting political identities, and her work focuses our attention on the effect of colonialism and Christianity on Pacific Island life, land and culture.

Including these facts and regardless of them, the work is also part of a group, reflecting life in the Cook Islands being community based. Oberg Humphries wants us to grapple with these things combined as she does herself. There is no easy way to discuss the inherited qualities of colonial and Christian impact on indigenous life. Oberg Humphries faces these challenges by remaining part of a community, and her self-determination as an artist is reflective of, and supported by, the time spent in their company. This affirmative and constructive action upholds thousands years of Cook Islands life, invested here for the purpose of art making.

Nathan Pōhio
Curator

¹ Nina Oberg Humphries, in conversation with the author, 2021.





Nina Oberg Humphries *Avaiki Feather Stick* 2021.
Courtesy of the artist



Exhibitions

Opening this Quarter

Francis Upritchard:

Paper, Creature, Stone

2 April – 24 July 2022

A major new installation fired by collaboration and connection.

Xoë Hall: Kuīni of the Worlds

From March 2022

A wild new mural from Kāi Tahu artist Xoë Hall celebrating atua wāhine.

Closing this Quarter

Joanna Margaret Paul: Imagined in the context of a room

Until 13 March 2022

A major retrospective celebrating the career and legacy of Joanna Margaret Paul.

Te Puna Waiora: The Distinguished Weavers of Te Kāhui Whiritoi

Until 3 April 2022

Celebrating the great mana of the senior Māori weavers of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Alicia Frankovich:

Atlas of Anti-Taxonomies

Until 22 May 2022

An installation de-categorising the world to reveal the wild disorder in nature.

Ongoing

Leaving for Work

Exploring the exceptional art of everyday working life.

The Moon and the Manor House

Aestheticism, Arts and Crafts, and the avid pursuit of beauty.

Te Wheke: Pathways Across Oceania

See, experience and rethink Aotearoa's art history from a Pacific perspective.

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.

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Artwork: 'Shelter' by Harriet Collins, MCP, 2021
Photo: Andrea Goodman



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1,093 generous donations from Christchurch and beyond, along with proceeds from the first annual gala dinner.

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Purchased with assistance from Gabrielle Tasman and proceeds from the second annual gala dinner.

Martin Creed *Work No. 2314*

[Everything is going to be alright] 2015

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Bridget Riley *Cosmos* 2017

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Ron Mueck *chicken / man* 2019

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