

19 October – 9 February 2020

SYMPOSIUM RESPONSE ARTISTIC

THE EIGHTH SUTER CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECT

SHANNON NOVAK

RUSS FLATT

EMILY HARTLEY-SKUDDER

RUTH THOMAS-EDMOND

ANA ITI

KIRSTY LILLICO

MONIEK SHRIJER

WARWICK FREEMAN

PROJECT 21

Sympathetic Resonance is the eighth in a series of contemporary art projects at The Suter Art Gallery, beginning in 1999. This series of exhibitions takes a theme and uses it to examine emerging trends in contemporary New Zealand art.

Sympathetic Resonance is an exhibition that deconstructs the hierarchies which tether art to people, material, place and time. The artists in the exhibition – Russ Flatt, Warwick Freeman, Emily Hartley-Skudder, Ana Iti, Kirsty Lillico, Shannon Novak, Moniek Schrijer, Ruth Thomas-Edmond, and a collective of Nelson artists (Katie Pascoe, Kay van Dyk and Joel Fitzwell) – look at the ways in which contemporary artists reject limitations placed on their practices. They eschew the labels of ‘painter’ or ‘sculptor’, the confines of time and space, and the restrictions of materials. *Sympathetic Resonance* is also a reflection of the contemporary rejection of binaries that have been imposed by Western culture – everyday vs art, painting vs sculpture, past vs future, individual vs community, control vs freedom, form vs function, real vs fake, inclusive vs exclusive, image vs text, precious vs worthless.

The title *Sympathetic Resonance* refers to the relationships that connect people, objects, places and times. The most well-known example of this phenomenon is two tuning forks being placed close to each other, when one is struck and then muted, the second unstruck fork will begin vibrating. These two objects are attuned to each other and the manipulation of one affects the other without physical intervention. Their connection is unseen but visceral. The same can be said for the artists and artworks in this exhibition – they exist as discrete works and by individual artists, but in being shown together their meanings become entwined as they influence each other through their physical proximity within the gallery.

In art and exhibition making emphasis has traditionally been placed on the unique and singular nature of artworks and exhibitions. But the plasticity of art is revealed in the endless contexts in which those who construct exhibitions place artworks – imbuing them with countless meanings.

Sympathetic Resonance looks at the ways artists have created work that comes from and responds to the complicated and interconnected world in which we live. Binaries are gone, we do not live in a singular world but one in which the entire spectrum of life is experienced.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator

THE SUTER ART GALLERY TE ARATOI O WHAKATŪ

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ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

Emily Hartley-Skudder (b. 1988, Tāmaki Makaurau) is a visual artist currently living and working in Pōneke. Fascinated with the 'artificial ordinary', the artist's practice involves obsessive searching and collecting of commonly found objects; miniatures, plastics and more recently - hand basins. These are then assembled and photographed as still lifes before being translated into oil paintings. The paintings and assemblages are often integrated into immersive, faux-domestic installations. Hartley-Skudder graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (First Class Honours) from Ilam School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury in 2012. She has exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout Aotearoa and internationally, including at a number of Ōtautahi and Pōneke galleries, Hastings City Art Gallery, Gus Fisher Gallery, a solo booth at the Auckland Art Fair 2016 and a solo project with Christchurch Art Gallery's Outer Spaces in 2013. Hartley-Skudder has participated in shows in Sendai, Japan; Mandurah and Melbourne, Australia; Austin, Texas, and multiple exhibitions in New York City, USA. In 2018 she was the Wellington Asia Residency Exchange (WARE) recipient, which took her to Xiamen, China for three months.

EMILY HARTLEY- SKUDDER

*Truth is ever to be found in simplicity,
and not in the multiplicity and
confusion of things.*

ISAAC NEWTON

*The truth is rarely pure and never
simple.*

OSCAR WILDE

We seek out authentic experiences – food, places, people, sites that are real and therefore better. In art this means travelling to Europe to see the Old Master's, looking for the artists' hand and unique perspective imbedded within their work. We feel connected and in awe of the maker standing in front of the object they created and slaved over.

But is this the truth? Reality and truth are not synonymous. Emily Hartley-Skudder's *Fancy Goods* reject both truth and reality. The question they pose is: does an authentic artwork exist?

During her 2018 residency in Xiamen China, Hartley-Skudder took a cue from Heather Straka's *The Asian* (2010) and approached a Chinese oil painting company to commission their 'painter-workers' to paint images from eight photographs she constructed of discarded objects. Leaving much of the execution in the hands of these painters, Hartley-Skudder is calling out the industry that underpins the art world.

We fetishize the making of art, ignoring that it is a form of labour. Artists are seen as magicians, and while making can be rewarding, for some artists it is a means to an end, a physical process that can become almost mechanical. Particularly in painting with the rigorous preparation, priming, the patience required as you literally watch paint dry.

Conscious of the ethics of commissioning Chinese artists to paint the work, Hartley-Skudder researched the remuneration given to these painter-workers. In the world of art 'factories', she heard anecdotally that artists are paid approximately 50% of the commission, surprisingly on a par with the rates achieved by New Zealand artists when selling through art dealers.

Intention is key to how we understand and value artworks. Should we



Fancy Goods (detail), 2019, mixed media

value these paintings any less because they weren't made with the artist's own hand? When did the artwork exist, was it the readymade sculpture she made in the studio, the photograph she took and edited, or in the paintings or exhibiting of the group? What we are made to realise through *Fancy Goods* is that these are unanswerable questions and perhaps even too simplistic and born from a false understanding of how art making happens. Many of history's greatest works of art have been made collaboratively. Renaissance masters had workshops of artists assisting in the production of their work – famously Verrocchio's *The Baptism of Christ* (1472–1475) was created with the help of his apprentice Leonardo da Vinci. The cult of the artist and our obsession with their individuality is not new, but it has always hidden the reality of the world of art.

A culture in which items are discarded so carelessly and created with planned obsolescence, *Fancy Goods* reminds us that things do not always disappear when we are finished with them. The objects clutter drawers, shops and beaches. A result of the commodification of contemporary life is this waste.

Hartley-Skudder presents oil painting multiples, each coming from one 'original' photograph. The paintings do not exist without their preceding source-photographs. This begs the question – why is it that we often view paintings as more desirably 'authentic' than photographs? What is the obsession with 'genuine', hand-painted artworks?

There are also huge demands on artist to produce – keep making more, sell, show, never stop. Painting sales make up the majority of the art market, with other mediums left in their wake. In using other people's hands Hartley-Skudder is not only releasing herself from the prison of making but critiquing the expectations put on artists to produce work to meet audience, and market, demands. The artist muses – is becoming a painter-worker in one of these factories the only way to live as a full-time artist?

The market underlines the entire body of work. Hartley-Skudder's goods may be fancy, but they are still goods. Art exists as a commodity and capitalism ensures that there is no part of contemporary life that can't be monetised. Presented in individual plastic packages, with hooks found in any shop in the world and even with glossy screens from which to 'order', the 64 paintings are ready to be sold to the next customer.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator



Sister



Aaron



Sonny

RUSS FLATT

Russ Flatt's carefully staged photographs utilise a range of modes and points of view in order to recover and reconstruct memories and past events. His work addresses notions of identity and looks towards a re-imagined past in order to recognise the present. Flatt graduated with a Post Graduate Diploma in 2013 from Auckland University's Elam School of Fine Arts. His work is held in collections including Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, James Wallace Arts Trust, Auckland Council and the University of Auckland and he is represented by Tim Melville, Auckland.

The hands on the clock spin but our past stays with us. It forms our present and shapes our future.

Remembering Forward is nostalgic, hopeful, enigmatic and anxious. As art historian Linda Tyler notes, the 'photographs are mysterious and poetic, locating a fine line between naturalism and stylisation, truth and fiction, memory and invention'.¹

Russ Flatt's subjects are wild things – untamed and primal. They are not hedonistic or frivolous but acting out important rituals and rites of passage. Intricate power dynamics play out in image such as *Vigilant*, *Pact* and *Communion*. Bare chested and barefoot teens commune with each other and the landscape. The viewer is an outsider, the secret language of these not-quite-adults is one lost to us.

The portraits, posed heroically, show the subjects as pensive, pained and determined. Positioned against the setting sun we see youth on the cusp. These young people are caught in the moment just before adulthood.

Kia whakatomuri te haere whakamua.

I walk backwards into the future
with my eyes fixed on the past.



Epiphany



Sonny



Communion

They are at once confident and lost and the images are reminders of the longing and confusion of youth.

When where they youths? The photographs may have been created in 2018 but the subjects are not anchored to a year. They could equally be youths of the 1950s as they are of the 2010s. In confusing timelines and untethering his subjects from a discernible history Flatt is defying the hold time and memory has on our concept of reality. Teens themselves exist in a unique timeline, they aren't children or adults, they are expected to make decisions that will impact the rest of their lives but their brains are still forming. They are caught in an in-between state and, ironically, will only be released through the passage of time.

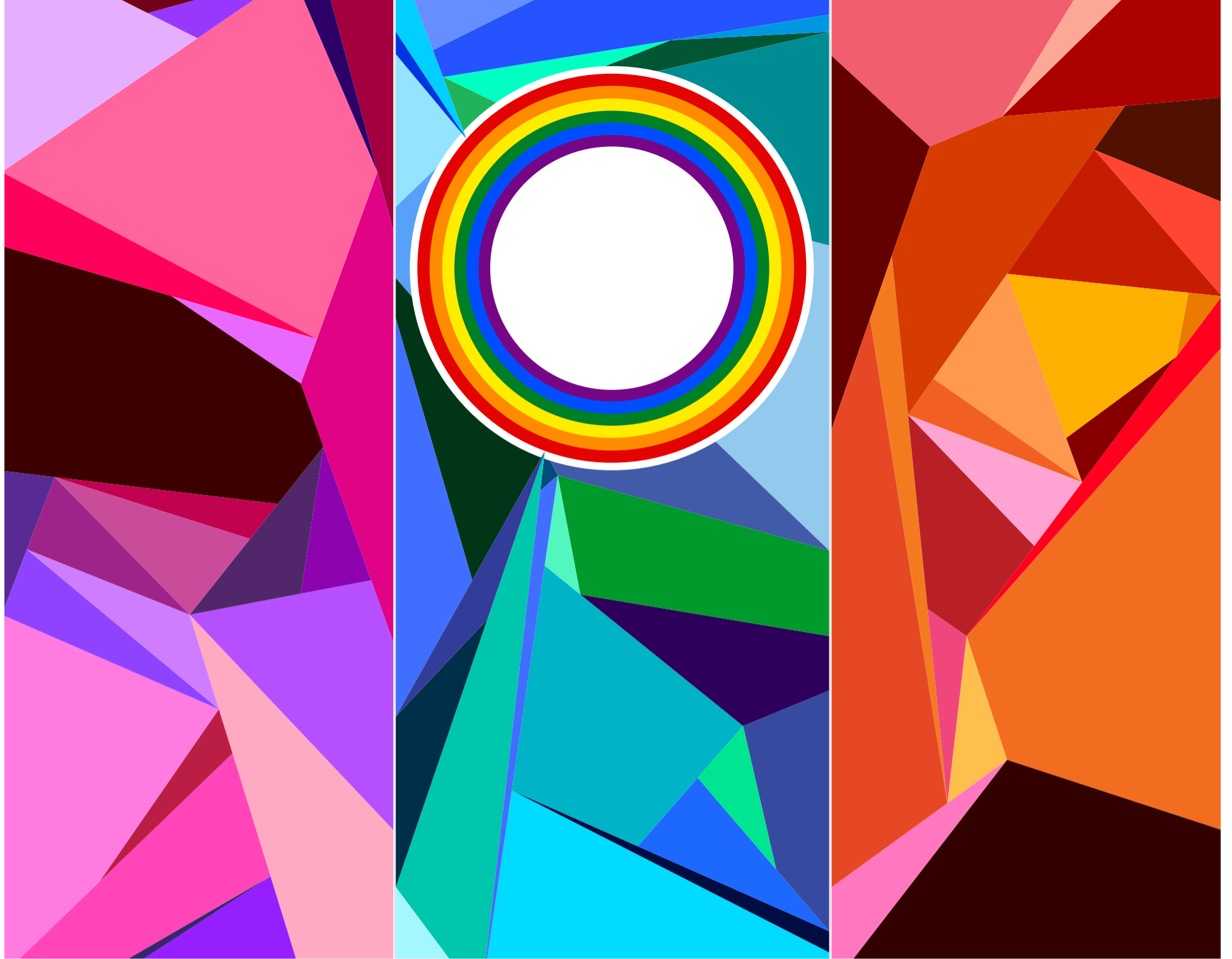
We associate photography so closely with the real – the lens captures the truth, but in *Remembering Forward* we perceive that what we see isn't the entire story. Since its invention in 1840 photography has been positioned in opposition to painting. Where painting is art, photography is science; painting is ideal, photography is reality; painting is human, photography is mechanical. Our understanding of the two mediums has become more nuanced, but there remains an assumption that photography is something anyone can do, not art. This hierarchy is disrupted by an artist such as Flatt, whose masterful images embrace the power of photography to simultaneously capture a real moment in time while also existing outside of time and reality.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator

1. Linda Tyler, Teen Spirit, written on the occasion of Russ Flatt's exhibition *Remembering Forward* at Tim Melville, Auckland, 1 May - 2 June 2018 <http://www.timmelville.com/exhibition/remembering-forward/>



Levi



Safe Space

SHANNON NOVAK

in conversation with Emil McAvoy

Rainbow Podium

Can you speak to the origins and inspiration for *Litmus: Nelson 2019* at The Suter Art Gallery?

This project is part of a wider long-term project that looks at what it's like being part of the LGBTQI+ community in New Zealand. It began in New Plymouth this year at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery with *Sub Rosa*, a project that could have been titled *Litmus: New Plymouth 2019*. The body of work explored what it's like to be part of the LGBTQI+ community in New Plymouth, the vast majority (92%) of those I surveyed not feeling safe or accepted in this region. This is a problem, and a problem not isolated to New Plymouth.

New Zealand is seen as progressive in terms of LGBTQI+ rights internationally, which it is, but there is still work to be done. Conversion therapy, for example, is still legal in New Zealand. Conversion therapy is the practice of changing an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

In the *Youth '12* survey (2012) published by the University of Auckland, same or both-sex attracted young people were four times more likely to experience significant depressive symptoms and at least four times more likely to have attempted suicide in the last twelve months. In the recently published *Counting Ourselves* report (2019), 5 out of every 7 trans and non-binary participants aged 15 and older (71%) reported high or very high psychological distress, compared with only 8% of the general population in New Zealand.

We also need to consider how young LGBTQI+ rights are in New Zealand and the impact that has on the LGBTQI+ community. For example, same sex marriage has been legal since 2013 which is relatively recent. So many have lived a life without marriage only to get it too late, and that has to have some sort of negative impact mentally. With this in mind, I believe it's important we take a closer look at what's going on within the LGBTQI+ community in New Zealand and share stories from this community with the public in the hope greater public awareness will lead to a more supportive climate. It is this belief that formed the basis of what I'm doing in Nelson.

Christian religious iconography provides some of the raw material for the visual language you are employing in this show. In particular, the inspiration provided by the rainbow coloured podium which features in a local stained-glass church window is interesting to me. Here a 'rainbow podium' becomes something different altogether – a new place from which to speak. This project also features a number of diverse yet intersecting components. Can you discuss these and how they complement each other?

The project consists of four interventions inside the gallery and satellite works outside the gallery.

The first intervention is titled *Safe Space*. This work signals the gallery as a safe space for the local LGBTQI+ community. The circular rainbow, like a beacon (with reference to the halo), is, for me, a symbol of struggle and hope. Struggle with regard to the seemingly never-ending battle (locally and globally) for rights (the circle as an infinite loop) and hope in regard to the circle acting as a barrier of protection to external elements – keeping the centre (LGBTQI+ community) safe.

The work was inspired by a stained-glass window at the Nelson Cathedral entitled *The River of Life* which speaks about water as a source of fertility. Similarly, I see the local LGBTQI+ community as a source of fertility driving positive growth in Nelson.

The second intervention is titled *A Measure of Health*. This work reflects the general health of the LGBTQI+ community in Nelson: healthy in some ways and unhealthy in others. The mirror balls represent healthy local support structures such as the LGBTQI+ support group Q-Youth. They are well organised, close knit, and shine light into dark corners. The walls represent the environment within which these structures operate (wider Nelson) which isn't completely healthy and needs some work. Eroded geometric forms line these walls, representing the mental and physical erosion local LGBTQI+ individuals/bodies experience. The work also links



Odic Time Piece, 2011, transparent vinyl

to the general health of the wider LGBTQI+ community in New Zealand as it relates to LGBTQI+ rights.

The third intervention is *Dear Nelson*. This is a community driven work: a response to a set of questions, including “What would you like people to know about your life in Nelson being part of the LGBTQI+ community?” The work takes the form of a wall with the words “Dear Nelson” in the centre, surrounded by artistic contributions from the LGBTQI+ community such as writing, painting, sculpture, and video.

The fourth and final work is titled *The Absence of Voice*. This work acknowledges those in the local community who are struggling, whether this be through discrimination, denial of rights, bullying, and/or family rejection. It is an abstract portrait of an unknown individual who suffers in silence, and whom represents the wider group. It is a painting on board – the geometric forms representing the energy of the individual that has been worn away by societal pressures.

What motivated the shift in your practice towards foregrounding a more direct address of LGBTQI+ experience?

My practice has always dealt with contemporary LGBTQI+ issues, but only recently dealt with these more directly as you say. My practice was in the closet. The trigger was a recent spike in depression and suicide associated with some of my close LGBTQI+ friends. Everything seemed to be okay, then suddenly it wasn't – and after finding out why, I decided to bring these issues to the fore in the hope of making a positive change.

How do you see this new body of work connecting with earlier work? Investigating synaesthesia and audio-visual relationships, for example?

Earlier work explored LGBTQI+ issues, but not openly. For example, *Odic Time Piece* (2011) involved covering the New Plymouth Clock Tower with bright colours and geometric forms. On the outside, the work celebrated those who had progressed the arts in Taranaki – past and present – and those who would take it into the future. What I didn't disclose at that time was how I also wanted the work to act as a beacon of hope and safety for the local LGBTQI+ community, because I knew at that time, many in that community who were going through a rough time. I marked the Clock Tower as a “safe space” which links directly to this idea explored in the window work at The Suter Art Gallery.

Whilst my practice was in the closet, I dealt openly with sound. This began with music theory, where I explored different dimensions of a musical note – such as pitch and duration – through abstract painting. I translated sound into shape and colour through synaesthesia: or the mixing of the senses. I then began translating objects, locations, and people into shapes, colours, and sounds – again through synaesthesia. The translations would manifest as painting, sculpture, installation or new media such as augmented reality.

This hasn't changed as contemporary LGBTQI+ issues come to the fore in my work. I still translate the subject at hand into geometric forms, colour and sound. The works in *Litmus: Nelson 2019* demonstrate this. *The Absence of Voice*, for example, translates the unknown individual who suffers in silence into colours and shapes.

You are increasingly interested in collaboration and community participation. It will be interesting to see what creative submissions you receive for *Dear Nelson* from LGBTQI+ residents in your open call. What is the framework for this? What are these communities being asked to address, reflect and comment on? How will this manifest?

The call asked for contributions in response to the following questions: What would you like people to know about your life in Nelson being part of the LGBTQI+ community? What are the challenges you face as part of this community? What good things does Nelson bring to the LGBTQI+ community?

I worked with Q-Youth, a local LGBTQI+ support group, on the finer details of the call – particularly where things got complex. For example, what can one say or not say? What is inappropriate in this context? We wanted people to be open and honest with their work, but not to the point of causing others harm. So, we had to apply limits such as “To ensure the safety of artists and the audience we ask that there be no hate speech or discrimination in the submissions”.

Contributions could take almost any form, including painting, sculpture, installation, video, poetry and performance. Whatever the individual felt best communicated what they wanted to share with the public. The wall hosting the contributions features the words “Dear Nelson” in large letters in the centre. This frames the work as an open letter from the local LGBTQI+ community to the public.

There is a push and pull at play in your recent projects, as you place positive and negative experiences – both personal and collective – in counterpoint. What have your research and your conversations with LGBTQI+ yielded?

That there is a growing need to research and address contemporary LGBTQI+ issues in New Zealand. The research currently available is minimal, and the issues I and others have been shedding light on are alarming. It is clear that although we have done a lot of good work in New Zealand in terms of trying to improve things for the LGBTQI+ community, we still have work to do.

Where to from here?

I will continue to extend the *Litmus* series to other locations in New Zealand to help gain a deeper perspective on what it's like to live in New Zealand as part of the LGBTQI+ community, and to start identifying trends or commonalities between locations. In doing so, it is hoped key challenges will be identified and therefore negated, along with providing platforms for further creative collaborations and initiatives. I will also introduce and develop the *Litmus* series overseas with a view to establishing additional support networks.

Shannon Novak and Emil McAvoy would like to acknowledge the support of The Suter Art Gallery and the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery/Len Lye Centre towards realising this publication. Shannon Novak would also like to thank the Nelson LGBTQI+ community.



SUB ROSA (intro)
2019, toilet, mixed media



Cameron S. Curd
2019, acrylic and ink on board



PROJECT 21

Sierra. Echo. Victor. Echo. November. Over. 21.

Developed in the early twentieth century and adopted by countless international institutions and government agencies the phonetic alphabet is used to ensure clear communication. Battling the crackles and hisses of radios and telephones, and the tonal similarities of English letters such as *m* and *n*, meant that a system for clarifying codes and words was required to ensure dangerous mistakes weren't made in situations such as war, air travel and ocean voyages. In this system S becomes sierra, E echo and V victor.

21 is a collaboration between three Nelson jewellers: Katie Pascoe, Kay van Dyk and Joel Fitzwell. Over seven months in 2019 the three have given up control of materials to each other and worked to tight deadlines to exhibit seven bodies of work. Each month one, or another maker of their choosing, selects the material and each is required to create a new work within the next four weeks before the next meeting. The resulting work has been shown in venues across Nelson – shop windows, bookstores and galleries under the titles *Sierra, Echo, Victor, Echo, November, Over, 21*. The final exhibition brings all of the pieces together at The Suter as part of *Sympathetic Resonance*.

Communication has been key to their process. They have had the ability to meet in person, swapping materials and reflecting on the month, but there is still distance that needs covering and ways of thinking, speaking, experience and expectations that need communicating and bridging. But they do share a very specific language – jewellery.

Katie Pascoe is a contemporary jeweller wanting to know what sound light makes when it hits jewellery. Bling?

Kay van Dyk is a jewellery and finder of findings; finding the finds.

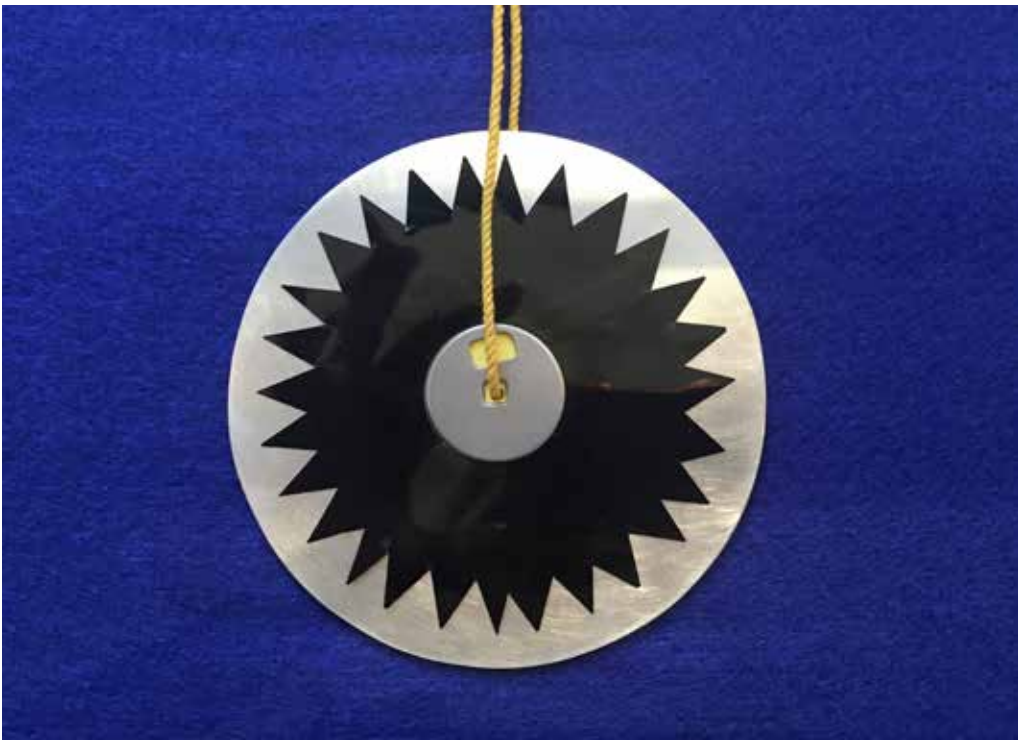
Joel Fitzwell is a jeweller and a loop, at the end of that loop there is another loop.

In working as a group they have ceded control to each other and have allowed themselves to be extremely vulnerable through this process. By giving up control of materials and racing against the clock, each artist has had to be nimble and accept the possibility of failure.

In this instance the opposite of control is not powerlessness, it is freedom – freedom from the expectation of perfection. The prospect of failure is undoubtedly scary. In giving power to each other they have challenged themselves to go beyond the boundaries they have set form themselves as singular artists.

Working together and showing over an extended period of time complicates two of our central concepts of art and exhibition making. We understand an artist as being singular and an exhibition existing in one place at one time. We also see the artists acting as curators in controlling how and where their work is shown. Presented in its entirety, but removed from the original exhibition context, what do the pieces mean and how do they function as a complete body of work? Are they collaborative, or do we assign authorship to each individual object? The final exhibition at The Suter is the culmination of the project, but without seeing each exhibition can anyone say they have really experienced *21*?

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator





Untitled, 2018 –19, tissue paper collage

KIRSTY LILICO

Meaning is literally and figuratively imbedded within carpets. Secrets are swept under them, fictional magical journeys are taken upon them, red ones are rolled out for special events and decades of domestic grim patina their fibres.

There is nothing luxurious about Lillico's carpet. In most instances the highest compliment given to the carpets that furnishes homes, workplaces, and even galleries, is that it is forgettable. Gone are the days of shag and Axminster, instead muted greys, creams and blues dominate homes of offices around the world.

No longer architectural her carpets are gestural. Removed from the floor, draped and riveted together, they have become modernist paintings. Collaged together, and reminiscent of Don Driver's textile assemblages or Eva Hesse's soft sculptures, the carpets fold in on themselves and each other. Bound to the wall and dropping onto the floor the painterly quality of the piece is paired with the history of the readymade. Created with found materials, Lillico allows the materials to make decisions for themselves – forms are created in collaboration between the artist and the carpets. Lillico can control the carpet up to a point – but as offcuts of functional objects they will always be the echoes of their original form.

The carpets have met their fate through the fickle nature of fashion. The aesthetics of contemporary culture have deemed the carpets ugly or passé. We are reminded that tastes shift and what is deemed acceptable or beautiful now will be rejected tomorrow. The same is true of art. What is misunderstood today will enter the canon of art history tomorrow.

The work also blurs the firm lines established between craft and art. Textiles have long been associated with craft, linked with homes and hobbies



Untitled, 2018 –19, tissue paper collage



Doomsday DÉCOR, 2019, wool carpet, sisal rope, twine, dye

rather than fine art. The process of ‘raising’ materials to be shown in art galleries has been happening for decades, but the process is problematic. It relies on hierarchies that position the art gallery as sacred and craft as domestic.

Removed from its function, rather than lifeless the carpet becomes questioning. Lillico is not using the language of richly decorated Persian rugs – hers are the monochromatic wool carpets removed from homes and offices. How many venture capitalists, homemakers, bankers or administrators have paced across these surfaces? Literally ripped from their contexts, made debris through reconstruction or demolition, the carpets have now found themselves re-contextualised as art. But it is in their remaining connection to place and history that they find meaning within this new environment. Here Lillico’s carpets function as abstract paintings, textile collage and readymade sculptures.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator

Kirsty Lillico is based in Wellington. She holds a Master of Fine Art from RMIT University, Melbourne. She has exhibited widely throughout New Zealand and in Australia. In 2017 she was awarded the Parkin Drawing Prize for her work State Block.



Doomsday DÉCOR (details)



MONIEK SCHRIJER

Surface Studies

Dallol, Ethiopia. A simmering hydrothermal landscape of acid, sulphur and salt formed by the high-pressure meeting point of three tectonic plates. Laying low in the desert, 130 metres below sea level, the mercury moves steadily tracing a spectrum of daily fluctuations between 30 and 49°C. In this semi-liquid landscape, surrounded by desert terrain, the lava lakes and sulphurous pools of Dallol fuel a superabundance of primordial chemical accretions that are equally extreme. Terraced aquamarine pools, supersaturated in acids and minerals, spool out in an earth-jewel encrusted landscape of crystalline spheres and salt pillars.

Floating on a backlit computer screen, the clipped quadrants of a Google image search splice the otherwise gaseous landscape of Dallol into discreet digital pools of pattern and tone; xanthic yellow, acidic citrines, emerald, vermilion and umber. Primeval crucible becomes contained fluorescent grid.

In her series of work, *Surface Studies*, jeweller Moniek Schrijer departs from this asymmetry, sketching an ideational constellation between Dallol and four equally atmospheric sites; Mare Tranquillitatis (The Sea of Tranquility), Te Otukapuarangi-The Fountain of the Clouded Sky (The Pink and White Terraces), Wetland Oasis, Chaos Terrain; places which, by way of their remoteness, exist primarily in our imagination. The complex, small-scale works included in *Surface Studies* thus denote isolated environments shaped by immense geological forces, that in accordance with their historical, geographical or interstellar distance, evade physical proximity. A humorous conceptual move perhaps, given the association of jewellery as an artistic medium that brings minerals and metals into close relation with the human body.

Surface Studies, however, is not simply index and thought play. Rather, continues a tendency of Schrijer's practice to perform capricious manoeuvres in the generative terrain between ideas and things, thoughts and practices, information and abstraction. In *Surface Studies*, forces of geological transformation, the clashing of liquids, solid states, temperature and gas, are transfigured as minute shifts in material intensity played out between gems, metals, textiles and clay. Pendants become pseudo-portraits, frames within frames, punctured with gemstone constellations and painterly skins. Textural soft furnishings flesh out hand-formed frames, teasing out strange synaesthesia in tactile phase-shifts. No peaks are depicted, no rivers crossed, yet somewhere between image, sculpture, idea and adornment, *Surface Studies* blurs portrait into landscape and vice versa.

It is this kind of object driven code-switching that defines Schrijer's practice. Intelligent and skilled, Schrijer attends to forms and materials as genres of information from which to fabricate new ideas. Never far from physicality, the body is linked via jewellery to an ever-expansive material cosmos. The far-distant and the familiar, the scrappy and the profound are reconfigured as imaginative pressure-points in the confluence of human corporeity and non-human worlds.

Elle Loui August

Moniek Schrijer is a Contemporary Jewellery Artist from Wellington Te Whanganui-a-Tara who holds a Bachelor of Applied Arts and a Post-Graduate Diploma from Whitireia NZ Facility of Art. Moniek was awarded a Herbert Hofmann Preis during Schmuck in München (2016) and recently exhibited in Non-Stick Nostalgia at the Museum of Art and Design, New York (2019) her work is held in significant private and museum collections nationally and internationally. Moniek is represented by The National - Christchurch and Millers O'Brien - Wellington.



Mare Tranquillitatis - Sea of Tranquillity



Chaos Terrain



Wetland Oasis



Plinth, 2019, basalt & tin

WARWICK FREEMAN

Warwick Freeman began making jewellery in 1972 in Nelson. As a prominent member of Auckland Jewellery Co-operative, Fingers, he was at the forefront of a rethinking of New Zealand contemporary jewellery practice that began in the 1980s. He has exhibited internationally since that time. In 2002 he was made a Laureate by the Françoise van den Bosch Foundation based at the Stedelijk Museum. In the same year Freeman received a laureate award from the Arts Foundation of New Zealand. Freeman has increasingly been involved in governance and curatorial activities: in 2004 he became the inaugural Chair of Objectspace a public gallery dedicated to the exhibition of Craft, design and architecture. Also in 2014, he co-curated the exhibition Wunderrūma, with jeweller, Karl Fritsch. Wunderrūma was presented at Galerie Handwerk in Munich, and on return its return to New Zealand in Auckland Art Gallery. His works are held in public and private collections in New Zealand and internationally including the National Museum of New Zealand -Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, the V&A, London, the Pinokothek der Moderne, Munich, LACMA, Los Angeles, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

How do we see art?

We have been led to expect that we experience objects and artworks in neutral contexts – surrounded by white walls, sympathetic lighting and plain plinths. The idea being that the object must be allowed space to stand on its own and the meaning to be isolated within itself. But no space is neutral. Meanings are revealed and concealed through the contexts, juxtapositions and environments in which a piece is shown. The very fact of showing something in a museum or art gallery lends it the weight of truth and history. It is legitimised in the mind of the viewer through the credibility of the institution in which it is shown. It is also affected by the objects around it, the room it is in, the time of the day, the temperature of the room, and the people that view it.

Warwick Freeman's Plinth refuses to be a neutral support. The function of a plinth is to support an artefact or artwork – but how? Should it be a white box that blends into the walls or carefully designed table that reflects the style of the piece? Do you choose metal or wood? What about a Perspex or glass cover? The only constant is that it must safely protect the object it has the responsibility to hold. A geological construction, Freeman's Plinth tumbles, tips and seems both solid and fragile. What are these seemingly ancient rocks supposed to hold up?

The politics inherent in the display of art plays out perfectly in Freeman's work. Plinth is part of an ongoing thread in Freeman's practice that examines the ways in which objects are collected, categorised and presented. A plinth is a utilitarian object, and as such Freeman is interested in what he refers to as 'the obligation of objects' and the value we place on them being linked to their ability to function as things that 'work' for us. In Plinth we see the war between form and function, the beautiful and the mundane made manifest.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator



Soft Thrum, 2019, mixed media



Soft Thrum, 2019, mixed media

RUTH THOMAS- EDMOND

Wellington based, Ruth Thomas-Edmond has a Master of Fine Arts from the Elam School of Fine Arts. Recent public exhibitions include Solo 2014 at the Dowse Art and How to Fall in 2013 and The Obstinate Object in 2012 at City Gallery Wellington. She is represented by Melanie Roger Gallery, Auckland and Bartley + Company Art, Wellington.

We are taught to think of museums and galleries as places in which art is in a state of suspended animation. Carefully controlled light, temperature and humidity levels that will keep the object safe for generations. But nothing lasts forever. How long should we expect institutions to retain items - 50, 500, 5,000, 5,000,000 years? Tension exists within Western culture in the desire for permanence and the realisation that our obsession with it, manifested through material objects, is environmentally and ethically problematic. Artefacts of past cultures and civilisations that survive time teach us, but the cost of the poisonous materials the 20th and 21st centuries have produced is certainly high. So many of the things we create exist for much longer than they should – product packaging, straws and take away coffee cups being amongst some of the worst offenders.

Ruth Thomas-Edmond creates works embrace uncertainty. Her vinyl wall paintings, created in situ at The Suter, will, at the end of the exhibition, no

*Nothing lasts forever.
Life is beautiful because
it is ephemeral.*

longer exist. Created to exist only for the length of the exhibition they are made with the knowledge that they will disappear when the doors to the exhibition close on the last day.

The bases of her sculptures are everyday objects – cardboard boxes found in pantries and homes across the country. Over these readymade structures she has oozed glue to create unrecognisable artworks. By relying on found objects Thomas-Edmond is both using artefacts of contemporary culture, but also revealing their toxicity. Caught between liquid and solid their chemical state is unstable. As is our ability to understand how we should feel about them. They are undeniable uncomfortable but they are equally seductive. The tensions between beautiful and repulsive play out in the contrast between the gloss of the yellow and the chalky white, they are organic and unnatural and the slime-like sculptures look as if they could move and grow at any moment.

The paintings and sculptures, under the singular title *Soft Thrum*, do not function independent of each other, connected through colour, layering they are reflections of one another. They also trap the viewer inside of a still life painting. The history of the genre is tied to transience – capturing lush flowers and ripe fruit the moment before it rots – they are a reflection of our own mortality. Her paintings are designed to disappear, her sculptures could melt away at any moment, and in experiencing them we are reminded that everything fades.

In the tradition of Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) Thomas-Edmond's melting objects and temporary paintings reveal the 'softness' of concepts we have previously considered 'hard'. She paints with plastic and sculpts with liquid and in doing so collapses our understanding of materiality as a constant truth.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator

WHAT WILL REMAIN

SKELETONS DISINTERGRATING

LATTICES

EMPTY

A FIELD OF HANDPRINTS

ANA ITI

Ana Ihi (Te Rarawa) is an artist based in Te-Whanganui-a-Tara. Often employing sculpture, video and text, her recent work explores the practice of history making through shared and personal narratives. Ihi recently completed a Master of Fine Art at Toi Rauwharangi Massey University Wellington. Recent exhibitions include *The earth looks upon us /Ko Papatūānuku te matua o te tangata*, Adam Art Gallery, Wellington (2018); *Time is now measured in damage*, Window Gallery, online (2018); *(Un)conditional I*, The Physics Room, Christchurch (2018). In 2020 she will undertake the McCahon Residency.

In the Renaissance the value of an artwork was directly related to the value of the materials – aquamarine blue from the stone lapis lazuli being more precious than gold and immediately signalling the skill of the painter and wealth of the patron. For Ana Ihi language is an essential material in her artistic practice. Language has no monetary cost, but its value is limitless. Its cultural memory grants us access to knowledge, connects us to each other, our past and present. But it is also not static. Language changes as we evolve and must be understood as alive.

From the perspective of Western art history the exploration of text and semiotics in art is well established – famously with René Magritte’s *The Treachery of Images* (1929) and Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs* (1965). In New Zealand the most well-known exponent is Colin McCahon and his text rich paintings. These artists expose the ways in which language and our world are understood – and misunderstood. Language is an entry point for culture – we understand the history and culture of English speakers through the evolution of the language. Its cannibalism of other languages exposes a history of colonisation and migration.

The history of language in Aotearoa is also a history of loss. With colonialism came the systematic process of isolating tangata whenua from Te Reo Maori. The result is generations of Maori feeling that their language, and therefore a significant part of their culture, has been lost to them. The last few decades however have seen efforts to preserve the language and increasing numbers of people are choosing to learn it themselves as access has improved.

We make ourselves vulnerable when learning a new language or reclaiming one we have lost. Mistakes are made, confusion happens, as we become like children once more – desperate to make ourselves understood but lacking the ability to communicate.

Ana Ihi’s work reminds us of the frustration, beauty, vulnerability and possibilities of language.

Sarah McClintock
Suter Curator