

The Wellington Sculpture Trust

The Wellington Sculpture Trust was established in 1983 to enrich Wellington through sculpture and public art. The Trust commissions quality, contemporary public sculptures, supports the creative arts in New Zealand and gives artists the opportunity to make large scale public works. It makes contemporary sculptures accessible to as large an audience as possible, to increase knowledge of New Zealand contemporary artists working in this art form.

To this end the Trust has commissioned 28 permanent sculptures around the City and the Botanic Gardens over the past 37 years.

The Trust is an independent voluntary organisation, with an established expertise in commissioning public art. It works in partnership with the Wellington City Council and other parties and raises funds from trusts, Wellington businesses, and individuals through donations and sponsorship arrangements.

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The 4 Plinths Sculpture Award

The Wellington Sculpture Trust, with the 4 Plinths Award, has made a departure from permanent to temporary public art, and showcases New Zealand sculptural practice with biennial sculpture installations. The aim of the project is to foster art, artists and audience interactions, and to provide an opportunity for established and emerging artists to work in the area of large-scale public sculpture.

The Trust acknowledges with warm appreciation its major sponsors, Wellington City Council and the Public Art Fund, as well as the support of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Seresin Wines.

The Artist: Yolunda Hickman

Yolunda Hickman comes from a painting background and her work takes an interest in the contemporary nature of images—how we're surrounded by them and how we try to deduce meaning. Yolunda has exhibited extensively throughout New Zealand, is a Doctoral candidate at The University of Auckland and a lecturer at Whitecliffe.

The Work: *Signal Forest*

Signal Forest is a thicket of entangled images on each plinth. Based on stencil motifs, the simplified shapes depict a range of animals, plants, transportation, technology, and cultural items. These shapes are then applied with a pattern or image drawn from the collection and archives of Te Papa Tongarewa, further entangling forms and the boundaries of classification and meaning.

Signal Forest: Yolunda Hickman's 4 Plinths

Dolphin, aeroplane, dress.

In 1993 Microsoft launched "Encarta," a digital multimedia encyclopedia. I think I first encountered it around 1996. It had to be loaded up from a whirring CD-Rom.¹ When the icon was clicked it had the most amazing audio introduction, there were sounds like the fairy-godmother's wand, African choirs, jazzy trumpets and famous American orators. It felt like the world was unravelling before my eyes. Previously I had used hallowed sets of Encyclopædia Britannica or else the Bateman New Zealand Encyclopædia for researching school projects. Encarta meant that I could find information on a computer. There were articles on any topic I could think of as well as images and other media; maps, audio-tracks, animations and short videos. My brothers and I would scroll through it for hours with glee. There was even a sort-of fun trivia game called MindMaze. Encarta was discontinued in 2009, it was no match for the power of Wikipedia or Google image searches, though the online dictionary held on until 2011.

Crescent-moon, camel, satellite, bird.

Yolunda Hickman's colourful sculptures remind me of such things. Stencilled shapes, ruling margins, homework projects, protractors and lettering books. Carefully-drawn headings in bubble-letters on posters. Pencil then pen, coloured pencils and felts. Tiled and tessellated desktops for early versions of Windows. A kind of innocent and earnest search for knowledge. Thanks to the internet I can now search the museum collection of Te Papa online whenever I please. Mostly I use it to search for images of artworks but often I get distracted by sepia-toned colonial photographs, weathered old flags, taonga in pounamu, art deco fabrics or pressed and flattened botanical specimens. The colourful vinyl on Hickman's plywood forms has been covered with images taken from Te Papa's collection. A rainbow-iridescent beetle shell, kaleidoscopic tivaevae, 1950s kitchen wallpaper, the speckly surface of an Auckland Island Snipe egg.



Penguin, pterodactyl, seal, ship.

A signal is a kind of sign. In the imaginary city of Tamara, sign-boards jut out from the walls. As described by Marco Polo to the Emperor Kublai Khan, each wooden sign is hand-painted with images that mean other things: pincers announce the house of the man who pulls out teeth, a picture of a tankard hangs outside the tavern, scales mark the grocer's.² Other signals indicate what is allowed, such as watering zebras, playing bowls or the burning of corpses. In this case an image, sign or thing is a sign of another thing. Each of Hickman's shapes bear the images of something else. An aeroplane is patterned with tentacles from a colossal squid. A seahorse is covered in German embroidery. An image is the sign of another image. From a distance, Hickman's jumbled shapes are impossible to read, like scribbly dark outlines. Closer up they are a cacophony of colours, patterns and designs yet they are also see-through, you can see the sea or the city behind them. They are entangled and intertwined like a thicket of thorny vines or the criss-crossing branches of a forest.

Pony, helicopter, tulip, truck.

A forest thick with images, so intricately entangled that it is difficult to see. It seems as though such a forest should be humming with vibrations, whispers and barely audible sounds. Quite a contrast to the fairy-tale forest of Sleeping Beauty. Science-fiction novelist Ursula Le Guin remembered a pop-up version of the book in which a thorny paper rose hedge leapt up around the little paper castle.³ Of course this rose hedge is actually the gardens of the castle which have grown wild with no one to tend them. All the gardeners, servants, cooks and courtiers sleep in sympathy with the enchanted princess. This "birdsong wilderness" of unkempt vegetation grows and grows, even the cats and mice sleep while birds fly over the forest singing and passing on. Yet there is something about the density of this tangled, thorny, over-grown, hedge-like forest that reminds me of Hickman's sculptures. They also contain multitudes within them. Captured, suspended or almost frozen upon them are a whole host of stories, species and artefacts. Each has been reduced to a skin; on slender frames they are so narrow that one can only catch a colourful hint of them.

Butterfly, panther, giraffe, daffodil, dog.

These playful forms inter-lock higgledy-piggledy like a barrel of plastic toy monkeys. Their cookie-cutter forms are simultaneously full and hollow. There is too much information, it is difficult to make out exactly what all the different shapes are and where exactly all their densely-patterned surfaces have come from. There is a layering and collapse of content that mirrors the sheer glut of images in the world around us. How many images have you seen today? The background on your phone, the painting on the wall, the puzzle on a cereal box, the cow on the milk bottle. The smile on a billboard, the superhero on the back of a bus, the poster on a noticeboard, your own face on an ID card.

Flask, fish, parasaurolophus, scallop-shell.

Hickman's sculptures belong to a time when it is possible to put any image on almost anything. A fern on an aeroplane, a car that looks like a block of cheese, a cell phone that resembles a carton of French-fries. Deep-fake technology means that videos can be created with the face of one person superimposed upon another that is almost seamless. Perhaps this is one reason why there is still something suspicious about images, just as French theorist Roland Barthes indicated in the 1970s. Some people are very cruel about Barthes, considering his ideas old-fashioned. How can anyone trust someone who spent his whole life studying signs and then ended up being run over by a laundry van? I still think he was onto something, pondering the meaning of lurid crayfish and preserved cherries in magazine recipes, the glazed surface of a chicken, the sheen of ices and jellies. Barthes, like Hickman was interested in the many messages each image can contain, some literal and some symbolic. These four sculptures on their plinths are one response to the contemporary clash, instability and surfeit of images we face every day, whether in our immediate surroundings, the museums we visit, the media we read or the devices we carry.

Victoria Wynne-Jones

1. "Encarta." Wikipedia, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encarta>
2. Italo Calvino. "Cities & Signs 1." *Invisible Cities*. Vintage Classics, 1997, 11.
3. Ursula Le Guin. "The Wilderness Within: The Sleeping Beauty and "The Poacher." *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination*, Shambhala 2004, 109.
4. Roland Barthes. "Ornamental Cookery." *Mythologies*. The Noonday Press, 1972, 78.

Signal Forest Yolunda Hickman 4 Plinths Sculpture Award


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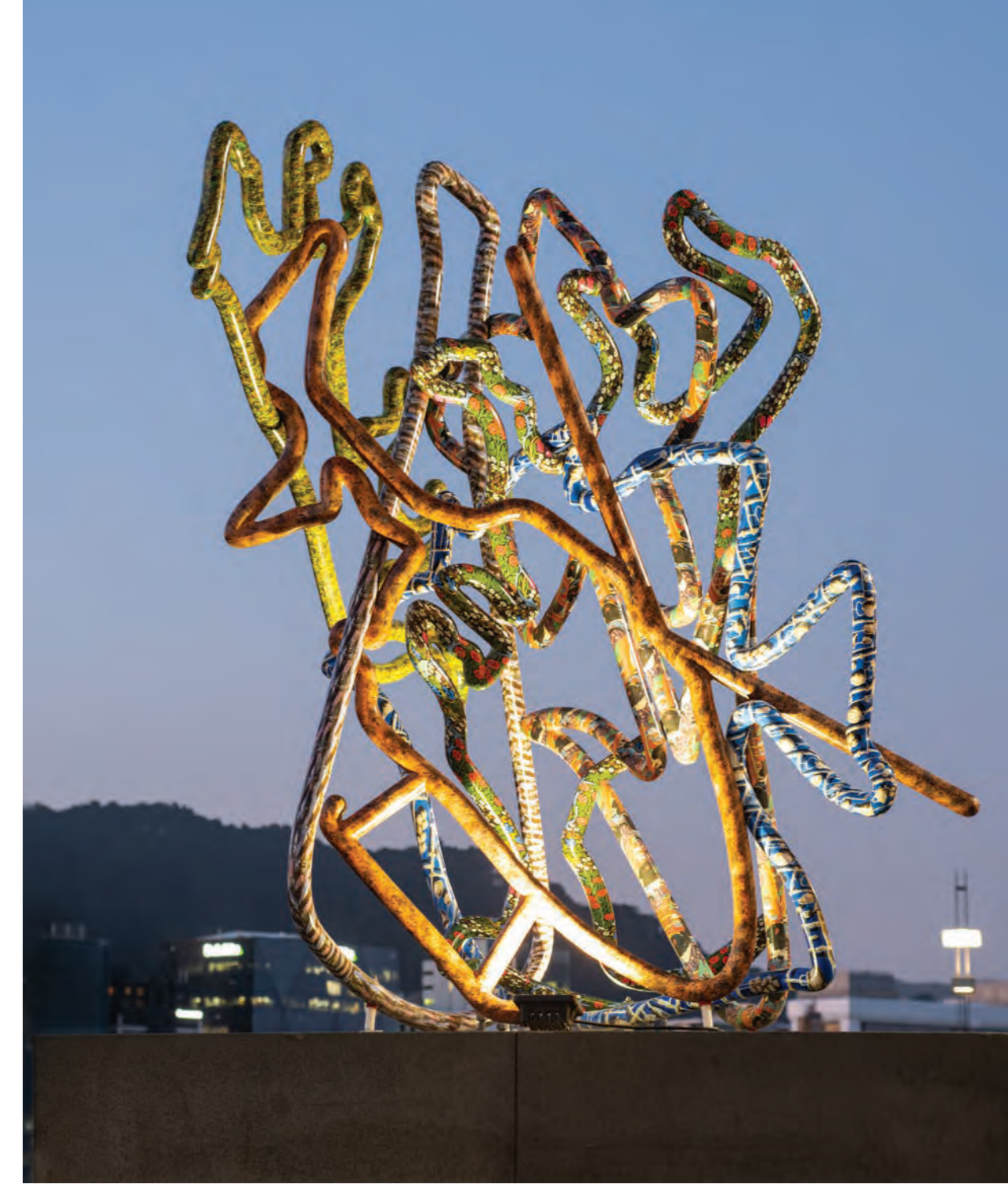
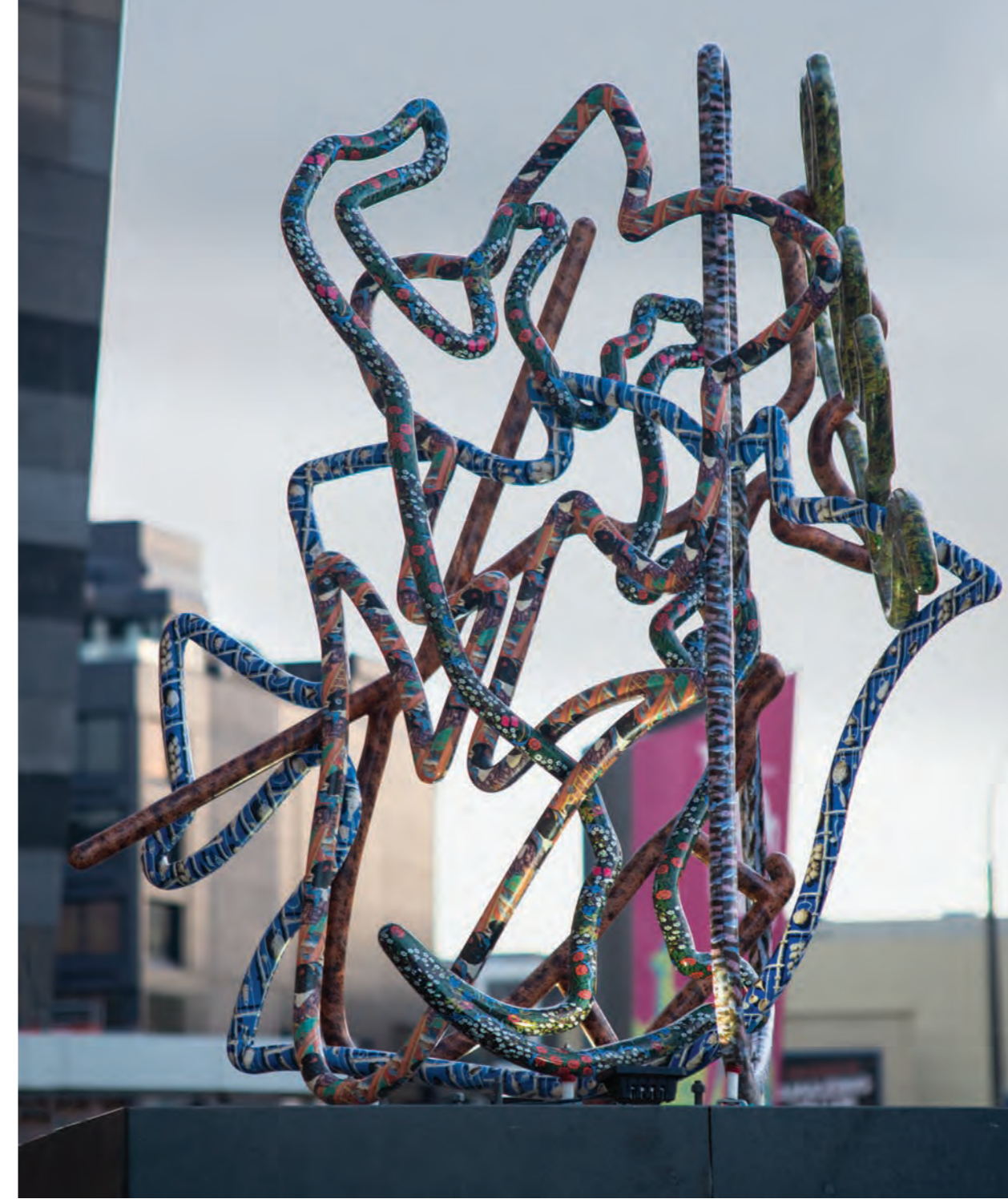

wellington sculpture trust
for a city of sculpture

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The artist thanks the Museum of
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images of its collection items.



Exhibition Title: *Passed , repeating last :*

Exhibition Dates: August 30th - September 18th

Opening: Wednesday, August 30th 6-9pm

Communication is play. Like playing a fish on a line, we reel it towards us and play it out in a tug-o'-war of understanding. Like a game, we play at communicating, observing rules and noticing when the rules are broken. We play a role when we communicate, taking on positions and personas. As with a machine, communication has a degree of play or give or slack in the spaces that mechanisms of understanding move through or operate in. And communication is flickering and fleeting, sometimes entirely ungraspable, like the play of light.

Ruby Joy Eade's work explores connections between empathy and communication, inter-personal relationships, and the vernacular languages of public and private spaces. Eade's work sets up a two-part query: In a time when data and content grows exponentially around you, how does one make sense of it all? And where is a place that simultaneously offers anonymity alongside the promise of a response in times of desperation? When everything seems too much, there is a comfort in the online forums: scrolling through the stories like yours as well as posting your own cries for help. Eade categorises, organises and distills the chaos of these online worlds. The sculptural text works *He said she said* and *Collected works* gathers and massages text from Internet relationship and advice forums. Intimate stories anonymously shared online are met with a calculated system where Eade pulls apart the components of narrative into different groupings based on word/phrase type and function. The resulting lists, absurdly long, tumble to the floor and collide back together, returning to emotive chaos.

In *Intimacy and the presence tense: iteration 9*, through the performance and resulting trace objects installed in the gallery Gabrielle Amodeo embodies the role of storyteller. Seemingly unrelated objects are woven together through language and anecdotes shared by the artist. *Intimacy and the presence tense: iteration 9*, builds each time the work is shared, following in folkloric traditions with each retelling changing the story itself; as a reflection of communication as a malleable and imperfect form that can define meaning as much as convey meaning. Amodeo acts as travel guide through words and experience: she conjugates the verb 'to love' to explore the phrase as a collation of concepts, translated and explored through essaying, stacked booked spines, shared messages, shared experiences and a story of thievery connecting an ink drawing of a fish to Hirst's formaldehyde tank, printed three times, annotated once. Through communicative repetition and repositioning, revolving non-lineal narratives address the same things said in different ways slightly shifts the meaning of the story each time.

Cutwork is an on-going series of watercolour and gouache paintings by Yolunda Hickman. Constructed by layering children's stencils, the images are obliterated through stacking of space and filled with clashing form and colour: dinosaurs disappear into Nouveau-style roses, Chinoiserie motifs in teal and red throw out spaceships, blushing tie-die designs frame a tiger form. Pattern is used as a compositional device to imply continuing forms which are then disrupted by content, in turn upsetting the pictorial space. En masse, Hickman's paintings push and pull between different states, resisting being pinned down: their frieze-like configuration acknowledges the decorative, and they are beautiful but also too reckless in their colliding patterns and colours to be simply decorative; their pictorial spaces are flattened but somehow three-dimensional; they are elegant despite the child-like motifs. The paintings play form against content to subvert semiotic expectations of image construction, and how a viewer discerns meaning in images: the signal from the noise.

Passed , repeating last : is a group exhibition at Gallery 2 (Five Walls), addressing the boundaries of communication. Ruby Joy Eade, Yolunda Hickman and Gabrielle Amodeo have practices rooted in the operations of communication, and each reworks found elements—whether they be language or object. Using systems, formulas, tasks and performance, the artists revel in the play found in the human necessity to communicate with one another.

Works list

Ruby Joy Eade, *Collected Works*, (2017), Digital print on copy paper installed, 1000 x 2200mm.

Gabrielle Amodeo, *Intimacy in the present tense, iteration 9*, (2017), Found objects installed, performance and audio, dimensions variable.

Ruby Joy Eade, *He said she said*, (2017), Digital print on tracing paper installed. 210mm x 3000mm.

Yolunda Hickman, *Cutwork 1 – 14*, (2016-2017), Watercolour and gouache on paper. 450 x 370 mm each.

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David McCracken / Edwards + Johann / *Walters Prize 2014* / Mark Wooller

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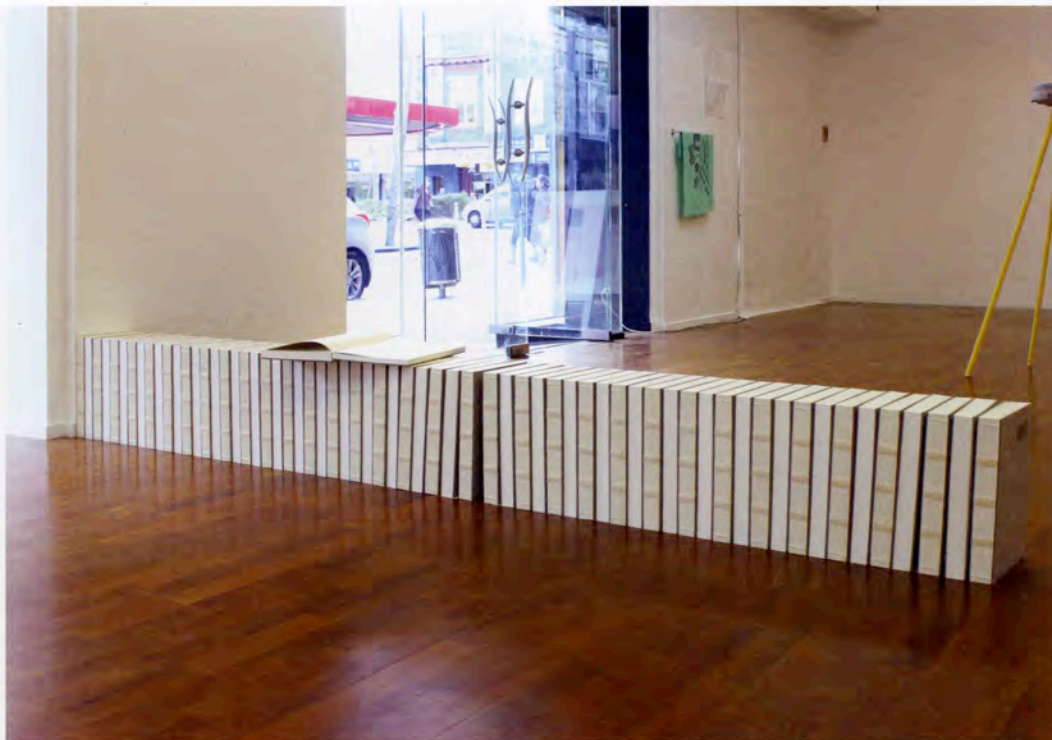
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But How Does It Mean?

Aesthetic Experience in the Work of Three Conceptualists

EDWARD HANFLING

'Aesthetic experience' is historically considered to be a primarily visual experience. Conceptual art of the late 1960s and early 1970s switched the emphasis from aesthetics to ideas. It may seem perverse, then, to stress the 'look' and 'feel' of the contemporary conceptual art of Gabrielle Amodeo, Dorota Broda and Yolunda Hickman. In truth, though, *all* art is conceptual—there is no purely optical, brainless experience—and *all* artists, in some sense, gather up stuff from the everyday world and turn it into 'art'. But conceptual artists use specific and distinctive aesthetic strategies to perform this act—strategies that often go unnoticed and unrecognised as 'aesthetic' precisely because they are intended to appear anti-aesthetic, or because they undermine the traditional specialness of the aesthetic by finding beauty in the mundane. The interesting thing about conceptual art—as with any other kind of art—is not what it means but how it means.

Amodeo's 2012 work, *A Million Dots (The Small Movements That Make Up Grand Gestures)*, is a grid of pencil marks that enact, or express, the artist's attraction to the internal logic of the square metre, which can be divided into 1,000,000 square millimetres. She does not want to apply this logic to anything else or pursue it in further mathematical equations. Rather, it is something beautiful in and of itself; the neat-and-tidiness appeals to her. The image we see first is the square metre as the

sum of its parts. With time, we might also see the way in which the image was made. The dots are a succession of moments and actions, regular but in each instance minutely different, the traces of a process that was painstaking and perhaps painful. How long did it take? How did she line them up so perfectly? Was it boring or interesting? Did she find pleasure in the repetition and rhythm of the manual activity, or satisfaction in the progress and eventual accomplishment? In other words, we might start to imagine Amodeo's state of mind, and empathise with her endeavour.

The use of logical, regulatory systems, detached from their social function but obsessively implemented and followed, is a long-standing convention of conceptual art. Originally, this was a rebellion against the then dominant medium of painting, with its arbitrary, solipsistic values based on individual style and expression. Amodeo's *Even a long human life adds up to only about 650,000 hours* (2014), a long sequence of books recording every lived and projected hour of the artist's life, could be a tribute to Japanese-American artist On Kawara, whose day-by-day date paintings finally ceased, along with the life of the artist, in June this year. The works involve a quiet, single-minded, ritualistic, fatalistic and avowedly pointless process. There is a sense in which the system becomes personal, belying its anti-expressive basis, by way of a cathartic process and an austere effect to which the artists are clearly attached. Amodeo has said: 'I am drawn to things I find pleasing, they stick

(opposite)
 GABRIELLE AMODEO
Even a long human life adds up to only about 650,000 hours 2014
 65 hand-made A4 books, installed dimensions vary

(right)
 GABRIELLE AMODEO
 PODOCARPACEAE / *Dacrycarpus* – PANDANACEAE / *Freycinetia* 2009-2013
 Botanical books (Audrey Eagle, *Eagle's Complete Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand*, Te Papa Press, Wellington 2005) with artist intervention, installed cuttings, dimensions vary

(below) YOLUNDA HICKMAN
Acre 2011
 64 books with total paper surface area equal to an acre



in my head, and they will start to form into works . . . I find lists aesthetically pleasing where other people will find them stressful and neurotic or just plain dull.¹ Her hand-made books, though intended and presented as art, are a natural outgrowth of her everyday life, in which she works at a book bindery.

In a recent re-reading of aspects of early conceptual art, the American Eve Meltzer argues that despite Sol Le Witt's intention to purge aesthetics and expression from his art by using highly ordered systems such as grids, these rogue elements somehow slip through the cracks anyway:

Le Witt's information cannot help but accede to the tactile and temporal registers of meaning that inhere in his process and materials . . . in short, the phenomenal and corporeal realms, and the realm of affect, all of which structuralism would rather have us forget. The haptic has found its way into Le Witt's anti-optic, even as he has worked so hard to secure it and close it down.²

The failure of early conceptual artists to purge their work of the 'non-conceptual' becomes a concept that itself informs Amodeo's recent work, *Keeping Secrets and Stealing Things* (2013-14) at Mezzanine, Artspace. In this exposé of youthful misdemeanours and embarrassments in a series of weekly 'chapters', the documentary impulse is taken to a more overtly expressive level. Amodeo's affection for books, and for methodically classifying and cataloguing things, is also revealed in *PODOCARPACEAE/Dacrycarpus—PANDANACEAE/Freycinetia* (2009-13), where she was in thrall to both the aesthetic power and the botanical function of Audrey Eagle's exquisite illustrations for *Eagle's Complete Trees and Shrubs of New Zealand*.

Yolunda Hickman likes books, too. *Acre* (2011) is a stack of books, the pages of which equate to a square acre. Some of Hickman's books cover still vaster spaces and places with charts and reconfigured maps (the system by which the world is divided up

into nations), often carrying the baggage of the age of colonisation. In *Pair* (2012) she sets up a relationship between the two sides of a newspaper clipping, one a quiz that asks the reader to match the new and old names of particular countries, the other a story about the 'the starting point of the modern Australian nation'. Between and around these items, Hickman opens up a space for *thought*, but she does so by way of simple, elegant juxtapositions of found items. The consistency of her conceptual strategy amounts to, perhaps not a 'style' as such, but a distinctive 'look' and feeling.

Of course, individual expression is a dodgy concept these days, and Dorota Broda's installations tend to





suggest that what we think of as individual expression is produced by the systems of capitalist society—the language of advertising and branding, for example. *We are loyal*, a 2012 installation at Gloria Knight, called to mind New Zealand's America's Cup yachting campaigns, in which sentiments are drummed up by nationalistic jingoism allied to corporate sponsorship. *Power to you*, for the 2013 Auckland Art Gallery

(left) DOROTA BRODA *part time artist full time friend* 2013
Hand-printed banners and posters (screen-printing ink, synthetic banner material), found furniture, framed artworks & accessories, dimensions variable

(below) DOROTA BRODA *power to you* 2013
Hand-printed banner (screen-printing ink, synthetic banner material), trolley and accessories, dimensions variable

(opposite above) YOLUNDA HICKMAN
In Harmony (Wolves howling at the moon) 2012
Counted cross stitch, 330 x 235 mm.

(opposite below) GABRIELLE AMODEO *A Million Dots (The Small Movements That Make Up Grand Gestures)*—detail 2012
Pencil on paper, 1200 x 1200 mm.

exhibition *Freedom Farmers*, explored the relationship between the artist, the art institution and corporate brands:

This is what I am doing in the gallery space, undermining myself as an artist and producer of independent thought and 'original' work. Corporate slogans and found objects within the installation are selected for their personal meaning and relevance. I am not so much engaging in the tautology of an institutional critique or revealing invisible structures of late-capitalism as attempting to locate within art spaces a subjective voice, and failing to do so amongst the corporate-ridden environs.³

Yet in this statement, and in her work, Broda permits personal feelings to get amongst seemingly impersonal items, such as commercial slogans and utilitarian furniture. In *part time artist full time friend* (2013) at Gloria Knight, the chairs and tables recall an art school environment, mainly because they are interspersed with artworks by, and photographs of, Elam students.⁴ There is almost a nostalgia here for the relationships between people that developed as they were all finding their own way but also all in the same boat. Ambitions and desires, both individual and



shared, are performed through the environment and systems of a corporate entity, the academic institution.

Conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s introduced a range of strategies designed to escape both the commodification of art and the increasingly sophisticated aesthetics of the commodity in the form of marketing and advertising. These strategies included: the ostensibly *anti*-aesthetic and anti-expressive use of form; found objects rather than artistic creativity; prominence given to language (especially written text) and other social systems. However, as both Susan Best and Eve Meltzer have argued in recent publications, conceptual art, in its very renunciation of the aesthetic, positioned itself in *relation* to the aesthetic, thereby re-affirming the pre-eminence of aesthetic experience as a function of art. Best, channelling French philosopher Jacques Derrida's insights into the interdependence of seemingly polarised positions, has written:

Aesthetics is precisely one of the structures of thought that art history inhabits, one that in recent times has been not only neglected and misunderstood, but also positively maligned . . . the vehement rejection of aesthetics foregrounded by the very term 'anti-aesthetic', should alert us to the ongoing pertinence of this domain of knowledge.⁵

Amodeo, Broda and Hickman all reprise the historical conventions of conceptual art in a way that acknowledges that they are aesthetic strategies. Just as Amodeo turns an impersonal, functional system into something personal, poetic and pointless, Broda injects an element of visual poetry into her subversive appropriation of the language of consumerism and corporate culture. Broda's own 'trademark' or 'logo' is the use of a diluted red ink that fades over time. Found slogans and signs that, in their original context, would hit you in the face and grab you by the scruff of the neck, become instead lyrical, captivating, gradually unfolding effects. In other words, they are absorbed into art, rendered useless and absurd, objects of contemplation and thought.

Perhaps this uselessness is, obliquely, part of the concept behind *part time artist full time friend*. The slogan 'massive reductions', in tandem with the art school reference, reads as a comment on recent funding cuts in the arts, particularly in tertiary education. Qualifications in the arts do not lead to useful employment or a contribution to the economy, according to the populist right-wing rhetoric. (How dare someone do something other than bolster the wealth of their employer?) Academics have responded to these attacks on their existence by saying that the arts *are* useful—they open up people's minds and foster critical thinking and all that. But as Stanley Fish has pointed out, they are playing into the hands of their critics by justifying the arts in terms of the instrumental values of capitalism.⁶

Broda's art, on the other hand, is more knowingly useless as political critique, parading the self-perpetuating aesthetic strategies and conventions of conceptual art and thereby neutralising its engagement with the world outside of art. In dealing with corporate sponsorship, Broda invokes the



hard-hitting works of Hans Haacke from the 1970s. Appropriated slogans call to mind Jenny Holzer as well as Peter Robinson's work of the mid-late 1990s, while the rudimentary furnishings have a touch of et al. about them. 'Found' materials, insofar as they have been 'found' before, by other artists, have become the property of art, recognisable as aesthetic strategies, rather than (as in Marcel Duchamp's original conception of the ready-made) providing direct access to non-art levels of meaning. Broda signals her awareness of this in her statement: 'I cannot not make conceptual art, at least until I learn ways to undo the embodied knowledge resulting from art school teaching.'⁷

The systematic strategies of conceptual art are now so venerable that they can seem beautiful, or at least aesthetically pleasing, on their own terms. Hickman has remarked of her cross-stitch works, such as *In Harmony (Wolves howling at the moon)* (2012), in which the colours of pretty embroidered pictures are analysed and reformulated diagrammatically, that 'Aesthetics are determined through systems and parameters rather than judgements of beauty.'⁸ Yet the resulting image, paradoxically, calls to mind the aesthetic 'purity' of modernist abstraction. Aesthetic experience, though, is never 'pure' in the sense of 'art for art's sake' or 'formalist' criticism in the mid-twentieth century, where one was expected to block out extraneous thoughts pertaining to the everyday world to ensure an experience of art *as art*. Rather, as British theorists Dave Beech and John Roberts have explained, it is possible to consider art's autonomy in terms of 'what could be counted as legitimately intrinsic to art despite being external to it'.⁹ It is in this sense that I employ the term 'aesthetic' in relation to the work of Amodeo, Broda and Hickman—that is, acknowledging and embracing the fact that their distinctively austere visual elements open up a raft of non-visual sensations.





(left) YOLUNDA HICKMAN *Size* 2014
Digitally printed carpet, site specific installation at Te Tuhi, Auckland, 7100 x 4950 mm.
(Photograph: Andrew Kennedy)

(below) YOLUNDA HICKMAN *Of the World (Stars)* 2014
Brass, site specific installation at Old South British Building lobby, Auckland, 7200 x 3300 mm.
(Photograph: Kallan Macleod)

(opposite) GABRIELLE AMODEO *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: The Contest, Scene 41* 2007
Three-channel video projection, dimensions vary
(Photographed at Auckland Film Archive, 2012)

I am drawn to the work of these three artists because it is, in the same way as certain abstract paintings, reserved, quiet, rigorous and open. Other artists have taken conceptual art in a different direction, towards complexity rather than succinctness; they make bloated installations that seem to be trying to convince the viewer that they are full of ideas, but instead degenerate into overwhelming, over-stimulating visual spectacle. The lean, tough materiality of the works under discussion here, is more resistant, withheld, conceptually complex by dint of its aesthetic simplicity. As Kirk Varnedoe said of modernist abstraction, 'When modern artists narrow the variety of forms they use,

and cut back towards simplicity, they can wind up increasing, rather than delimiting, the volatility of possible meanings and associations that can attach to such a vocabulary.'¹⁰

The aesthetic impact of Hickman's work can certainly be dramatic and alluring, as in her translation of the 'A' paper size chart into a carpet for Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts in *Size* (2014), or the *Of the World (Stars)* (2014) installation, a 'galaxy' of stars in the foyer of the Old South British Building in Shortland Street, Auckland. In the latter, the brass stars, derived from the various forms and configurations of stars on national flags, projected several centimetres from the white wall so that they have a floating, sparkling feeling. With the black marble floor and reflections in a mirror wall, the whole effect is seductive and magical. The accompanying wall text (though written in rather gushing prose) makes the perceptive observation that the work 'walks the line between conceptual investigation and aesthetic wonder.' 'Wonder' is the key word, because the expansive, empty white space in the work is a space of contemplation, a



void into which artist and viewer alike can project, not just ideas, but non-verbal levels of feeling and sensation. Broda's installations may similarly have an affective dimension that resides, the artist believes, 'in a sensation that . . . come[s] from the absence, from what is not there in each install—something unrealised, stopped half-way.' She continues: 'I am hoping for non-uttered, non-verbal communication (kinaesthetic or gestural) via the matter itself, one that might happen without an expert explanation.'¹¹ Emptiness and whiteness are characteristic of an art that is pared back to an elegant idea.

Amodeo, for her part, finds 'negative space' appealing 'because it is a physical form (for all of its 'absence' and 'negative') that I can imagine a lot of different types of ideas into.'¹² Her moving-image installation, *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: The Contest, Scene 41* (2007), physically places the viewer in the space between the dangerous combatants of a standoff, filling in the gaps in the scene and narrative. A wealth of experience, feeling and indeed time is also literally bound up in the sensuous and simple whiteness, the ascetic aesthetic of her hand-made books: 'books are almost like worm holes in how they can collapse and concertina out time and space: whether it be narrative time, or the time of the author to write or the reader to read each page, whether it be the space of the subject the book contains or the physical space of the pages. Books are on the surface so diminutive, so every-day, but their sheer capacity of containment is pretty spectacular!'¹³

Amodeo's books have been instrumental in helping me to think about the aesthetic dimension of conceptual art. I remain obsessed with the work

Series Drawn she showed at Rm Gallery last year in an exhibition I reviewed for this magazine. Perhaps it is a matter of chance: I happen to love the game of cricket, and the work draws out some things about test cricket in particular that inspire this love, such as the languorous pace and length of time it occupies, the rituals of scoring and describing the game, and the physical and mental discipline involved in playing it. But an unmistakable symptom of experiencing art that is very, very good is that it all you can do is earnestly repeat that it is very, very good. I also find myself feeling a bit 'hyper'. I have had this experience with the work of Patrick Lundberg and now with Gabrielle Amodeo. It is an aesthetic experience in which feeling, and all sorts of stuff from the everyday world (cricket, politics, whatever), is happily accommodated.

1. Gabrielle Amodeo, email to the author, 5 October 2014.
2. Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 2013, p. 69.
3. Dorota Broda, email to the author, 9 October 2014.
4. Rebecca Boswell, 'Dorota Broda Exhibition', *EyeContact*, 30 September 2013, <http://eyecontactsite.com/2013/09/dorota-broda-exhibition>, accessed 9 October 2014.
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6. Stanley Fish, *Save the World On Your Own Time*, Oxford University Press, New York 2008.
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10 things I like about *Terrace Setting* by Yolunda Hickman and Amy Unkovich

1. **The RM table-spread** of papaya, dried fruits, shrimp chips and buja mix is probably the most eclectic catering in the city.
2. **Friends making art together** eases the usual dissatisfactions of exhibiting. Sure there is a bit of cronyism imbedded in this practice, but art is a social game and good relationships are the basis of most successful projects.
3. **The cover of Art New Zealand featuring Yolunda** was possibly the highlight of my week. I love the covers of Art New Zealand, and the August-September issue was a classic. These *en-plain-air* re-enactments of studio photography are reliably cringeworthy. They seem to ironically reprise the dignity of a by-gone era of studio artists.
4. **Samoa House** near RM's entrance is absolutely gorgeous. The Fale hidden at the entrance to RM looks like something Buckminster Fuller made while on holiday in the Pacific.
5. **French braces** are a secret passion of mine. I made a couple while at Art School and threw them out in a fit and have regretted it since. A total sucker for stage-craft, and there is nothing like a weak facade.
6. **Flourescent vivid** is very old school. Yolunda's patterning remind me of the doodles that used to decorate the margins of my school books. It's a kind of illustrative ambling.
7. **Picket fences** are bead and butter to any Kiwi suburbanite. I'm less invested in the Victorian variety though, i prefer the crued checkered arrangements. I wonder if Amy would consider site specific commissions? I could do with some custom pastel tone fencing, more decorative than defensive.
8. **Works on paper** seem rarer and rarer these days. I think its pretty classy. Robbie Fraser and I were trying to speculate on the GSM of Yolunda's works. My best guess; Munken (cream coat) 250gsm.
9. **\$2.50 Beers** at RM openings is good policy. Puts the breaks on a dominant culture of opportunism in the arts. There is no such thing as free catering, someones footing the bill.
10. **Casting paintings** is a really interesting strategy. I've always enjoyed Amy's plaster reliefs. The surfaces remind me of Rudolph Gopas' paintings that are currently displayed on the ground floor of Auckland Art Gallery. But unlike Gopas' celestial swirls, Unkovich's seem pulled straight off the walls of an art-deco villa.

Emil Dryburgh

Window
Onsite
Yolunda Hickman
Legends
Preview: Wednesday 11 March

How does meaning get into the image? Where does it end? And if it ends, what is there beyond?

- Roland Barthes 'Rhetoric of the Image' (1977)

Window Onsite is delighted to present *Legends*, a new body of work by Yolunda Hickman.

Legends is a collage dispersed across the glass surface of the window. Illustrations are taken from a range of pictorial maps that have been stripped of landscape features and descriptive labels, then stacked and tiled to form a larger pattern. The images previously represented different places, but have now lost their informational capacity and float in empty pictorial space. Perhaps when an image loses its original communicative context, it might gain a new narrative opportunity.

Hickman reflects: 'To un-tether symbol and meaning undermines the communicative function they were designed to serve.'

In his 1977 essay 'Rhetoric of the Image,' French semiotician Roland Barthes (1915-1980) warned that the linguistic nature of the image is somewhat *suspicious*. Ever the structuralist, Barthes stated his desire to submit each image to 'a spectral analysis of the messages it may contain.' Importantly the linguistic message of an image is two-fold; a literal image is *denoted* and the symbolic image is *connoted*.

Hickman's *Legends* presents this 'pictographic' state of the image, in agreement with Barthes demonstrating that all images have multiple modalities of meaning, they are 'polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a 'floating chain' of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others.'

Legends presents a floating chain of images, creating a series and submitting them to a sort of spectral analysis via commercial materials, recalling the didacticism of museum displays yet remaining open and ambiguous.

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Yolunda Hickman (b. 1988) an Auckland-based artist, graduated with an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, the University of Auckland in 2012. Hickman's practice is concerned with the slippage between abstraction and meaning through the limitations of communication and representation. A recent body of work alters examples of information design, separating the communicative function from visualisations. By doing this, Hickman aims to disassociate the sources from their original purpose in order to test the possibility of image, composition and form and ascribe new associations via spatial experience. This can be seen to consider the nature of communication and when communication collapses into pictorial priorities.

Window
5 Alfred Street
General Library Foyer
The University of Auckland
window.auckland.ac.nz

Window
Online
Yolunda Hickman
Letters
Preview: Wednesday 11 March

Window Onsite is delighted to present *Letters*, a new body of work by Yolunda Hickman.

In *Letters*, images from children educational posters are removed from their context. Text labels would usually sit underneath each different animal, flower or vegetable to teach children the names and spelling of things in the world.

Letters is a series of GIF animations that uses these images as a written language replacement strategy. Each frame in the animation represents a different letter of the alphabet. Images appear in the frames corresponding to the label's individual letters. By this logic, each image behaves as an alternative language symbol beyond pictorial content.

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Yolunda Hickman (b. 1988) an Auckland-based artist, graduated with an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, the University of Auckland in 2012. Hickman's practice is concerned with the slippage between abstraction and meaning through the limitations of communication and representation. A recent body of work alters examples of information design, separating the communicative function from visualisations. By doing this, Hickman aims to disassociate the sources from their original purpose in order to test the possibility of image, composition and form and ascribe new associations via spatial experience. This can be seen to consider the nature of communication and when communication collapses into pictorial priorities.

Window
5 Alfred Street
General Library Foyer
The University of Auckland
window.auckland.ac.nz



(left) Visesio Siasau with his award and *Tongan Tapa Cloth* (2014), Tongan customary pigments and dye on bark cloth, 4040 x 18060 mm.

Auckland

24th Annual Wallace Art Awards

Pah Homestead, TSB Bank Wallace Arts Centre, 8 September–8 November
EDWARD HANFLING

Art awards are funny. They provoke questions with no satisfactory answers. What criteria should be used by the judges? How can wildly different styles and media be compared? To what extent should innovation or currency be rewarded and how can it be measured? Why turn art into a competition at all? You could write a million densely theoretical books and end up a million times further away from validating the Wallace Art Awards. Or you could just be happy about it.

Artists are not always rolling in money, so there is something to be said for dishing out 'approximately \$195,000' in the form of cash prizes and international residencies. Also, judges generally have no ulterior motives; they rank the artworks they are given, and to do that they have to be brutally honest. They will inevitably fool themselves to some extent (we all

get seduced or beholden to transient influences) but will nonetheless conscientiously try to 'get it right'—even though there is no 'right' because there are no answers to the kinds of questions identified above. And when a mission is set to level 'impossible', as it is for the judges of art competitions, the results can exceed what would arise from a merely achievable task. The judges may wind up drawing attention to artworks many might not even otherwise see, rewarding artists who are themselves striving to do something good (rather than fashionable or 'contemporary'). Honesty pays.

Judges Joyce Campbell, Andrew Clifford, Ian Jervis, Andrew McLeod and Philip Trusttun picked Visesio Siasau for the 2015 Paramount Award. Siasau has previously used a range of materials to make sculptures that refer to traditional Tongan divinity figures as well as to the influence of Christianity since the nineteenth century. In 2013 he incorporated some of these figures into his first *ngatu*, or *tapa cloth*, and he has extended his commitment to this

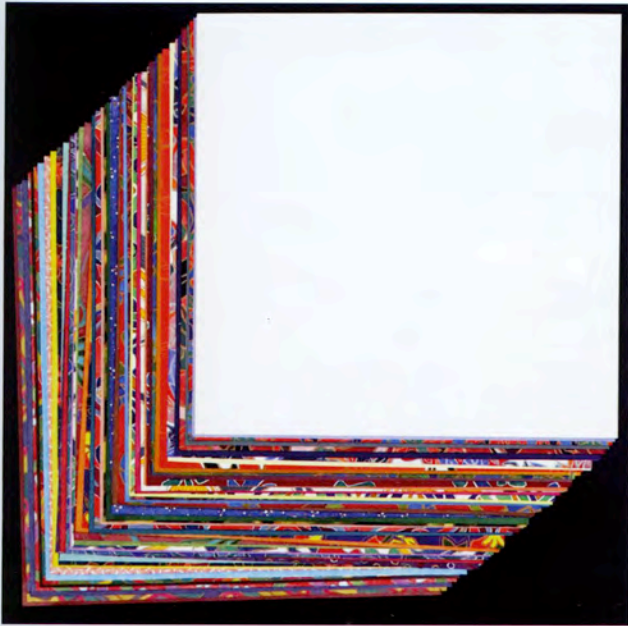
discipline with the gigantic winning entry in the Wallace Awards (only partially unrolled in the gallery at the Pah Homestead). The scale alone puts all the other entries in the shade. Of course, it is also impossible to make comparisons.

Take Yolunda Hickman's small gouache on paper *Square Field* (2015), hung behind a door as if to make it even less noticeable. Both Hickman and Siasau use time-consuming, time-honoured techniques to make things that count as 'contemporary art'. But one is exquisite and sharp, the other impressive and profound; utterly different things. The judges may have plumped for Siasau's work because its cultural value overrides other values, particularly in the Auckland context. And to say, in effect, that this cultural value is an *artistic* value is a strong and worthy statement (though there was evidently no intention to make such a statement because the judges do not discuss their individual decisions with each other).

The judges' choices also establish a particular 'look' to the exhibition. This year there are strengths in abstraction and photography. In contrast to previous years, the main finalists' exhibition seems tight—less fluffy, arty-kitschy stuff—while the historically much-loved and lauded Salon des Refusés is, to a large extent, simply refuse.

The award-winning photographs of Russ Flatt (Wallace Arts Trust Vermont residency) and Virginia Were (second runner-up), and Andrea du Chatenier's sculptural figure (riveting in its technique alone), which gained the (sadly non-monetary) Jury Award, each exemplified the ability of many of the finalists to rivet attention by creating a singular, indescribable mood. Phil Dadson was also a fitting recipient of the Fulbright-Wallace Arts Trust residency (courtesy of a different judging panel: Bronwynne Cornish, Mark Fitz-Gerald, Richard Maloy and Steve Rood).

Another fun thing about art awards is we get to measure our own judgements against those of the judges. There is a formal process for this, the People's Choice Award, but it happens regardless. For me, the 'winners' were three artists who did not look like they were trying to please anybody, perhaps not even themselves. The first was Natalie Guy with her *Something in the Air* (2015), a



set of six brass vents inserted into the skirting boards of one room in the Pah Homestead, presumably appropriated from some other building. I like it when it is a struggle to see the art, or when you are not sure if something is art or not.

Number two: Rebecca Wallis' *Armswipe* (2015)—a square stretcher covered with light, almost transparent linen, with an indigo 'swipe' of paint and medium located towards the upper right corner and congealing along the top edge of the canvas.



(above left) YOLUNDA HICKMAN *Square Field* 2015
Watercolour & gouache on paper,
420 x 420 mm.

(above right) REBECCA WALLIS *Armswipe*
2015

Acrylic & acrylic medium on gac 100
washed, unprimed linen

(below left) ANDREA DU CHATENIER
Lucky Man—detail 2015

Clay, steel & pinstripe suiting, 2100 x 700
x 500 mm.

(below right) TOBY RAINE *Robert Plant with
White Dove and Cigarette* 2015
Oil on linen, 1030 x 760 mm.

This picture is uncompromising, not tarted up at all. Finally: Toby Raine's *Robert Plant with White Dove and Cigarette* (2015). Raine has an affection for the 'heroes' of rock 'n' roll and their antics, partly, I think, for the absurdity. He is similarly attracted to a way of painting (it could loosely be called 'expressionist') that he enacts and ritualises with the contented knowledge that it is out of kilter with 'contemporary art'. The artist's wilfulness engineers its contemporaneity.



Expanded Map

Phil Dadson
Amelia Harris
Yolunda Hickman
Thomas Hinton
Paul Janman +
Scott Hamilton
Gigi Scaria
James Wylie

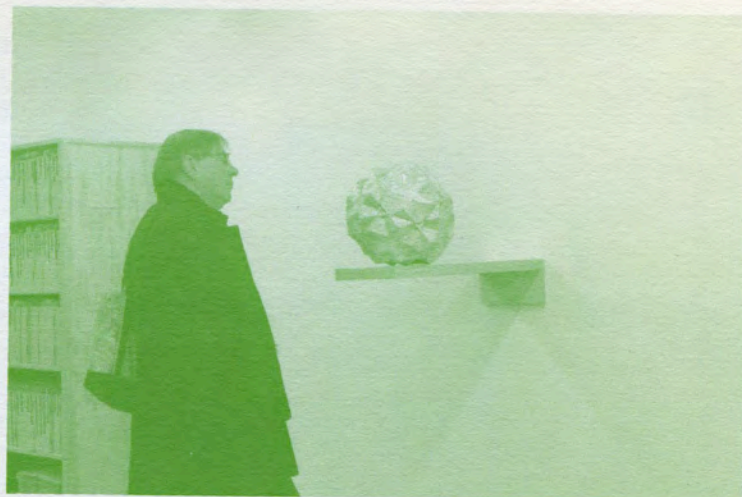
Jeremy Leatinu'u
Lize Mogel
Clare Noonan
Balamohan Shingade
Bob van der Wal
Ruth Watson

Yolunda Hickman
Globe
2011
Printed Paper, Glue

Is Hickman's Globe really a globe? What of relational distance and relative proportion—where places sit in relation to each other? In reality, we only know this from other sources, not any given globe. So our everyday orbs are really just objects that encapsulate pre-existing propositions, ones we have decided are true and useful. What if we find that it's helpful to look at a star-shaped pattern and find that Egypt is quite close to parts of Nebraska, or Lake Ontario flows into Uttar Pradesh? If you are Canadian of Indian heritage, that might be important in your daily life. Looking at the world in star formation could present more of these possibilities. Even if some wish the world could be a fixed, unchanging place, there could still be room for other sets of useful propositions.

<http://yolundahickman.com/>





Expanded Map (1 of 2)

16th May—1st June 2013
<http://rm103.org/?p=663>
Phil Dadson
Amelia Harris
Yolunda Hickman
Thomas Hinton
Paul Janman + Scott Hamilton
Gigi Scaria
James Wylie

Expanded Map (2 of 2)

9th August—24th August 2013
<http://rm103.org/?p=732>
Jeremy Leatinu'u
Lize Mogel
Clare Noonan
Balamohan Shingade
Bob van der Wal
Ruth Watson

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Image of the Boo Boo Fault and surrounding
seafloor, Campbell Bank area NE South Island,
is derived from multibeam bathymetric data
and used in the artist's own interpretation,
with permission from NIWA.

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