

The Obstinate Object: SCULPTURE

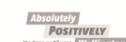


Image credit: Paul Cullen, *Models, Methods and Assumptions* (detail), undated. Courtesy of the artist.

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Curriculum links

Visual Art: understanding the arts in context, developing practical knowledge, developing ideas, communicating and interpreting

Art History: discuss artworks, examine subjects and themes in art, examine the context of an art movement

About the exhibition

Sculpture has re-established itself as one of the most vital art forms for today. *The Obstinate Object: Contemporary New Zealand Sculpture* brings together recent work by some of New Zealand's most compelling sculptors who rework conventional sculptural modes and materials, insisting that sculpture is something to be made and physically encountered by its audience in real space and real time. Questioning the increasingly blurred line between sculpture, installation and performance, this exhibition empowers the sculptural object at a time when the value of objects is under constant scrutiny.

Artists included in the exhibition are: Bekah Carran, Eddie Clemens, David Cross, Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere, Paul Cullen, Don Driver, Scott Eady, Alicia Frankovich, Trenton Garratt and Clinton Watkins, Regan Gentry, Brett Graham, Sam Harrison, Glen Hayward, Bronwyn Holloway-Smith, Maddie Leach, Alex Mackinnon, Shane McGrath, Raewyn Martyn, Paul Maseyk, Ben Pearce, Yuk-King Tan, Ruth Thomas-Edmond, Sian Torrington, Francis Uprichard, Lisa Walker, Rohan Wealleans, Wayne Youle and Seung Yul Oh.

Focus work: Paul Cullen's *Models, Methods and Assumptions*

Born in Te Awamutu in 1949 Paul Cullen is a senior lecturer at AUT University in Auckland. Trained as a botanist as well as an artist, his work resembles the scientific process of modelling, testing and trialling an idea in order to investigate it better¹. *Models, Method and Assumptions* is a series of wall-mounted books, bearing titles like: *There's no profit in it* and *Teach Yourself Sculpture*. The books seem to offer a wealth of relevant knowledge between their covers however they are literally punctured with a barrage of bullet-like lead pencils, rendered useless physically but appreciated as objects. Cullen's sculpture relies on our willingness to undergo a perceptual gear-shift and to accept a logic on unfamiliar terms.

Selected artists

Regan Gentry (b.1976) remakes and gives liquid sculptural form to one of New Zealand's most iconic painterly images – Colin McCahon's waterfall. Rather than framed and hung on a wall inside the Gallery, Gentry's waterfall bursts forth through a Gallery window some 10 metres to a pool below. Gentry's sculpture, titled *McCahon Incarnation* is an intervention, into a static architecture and under-utilised space, interrupting the view from the Wellington Public Library as well as the regular functioning of the Gallery itself. It is a salute to a well-loved painting, and the playful response of one medium to another.

Lisa Walker (b.1967) is a Wellington based jeweller. Walker's *BROOCH* is a site-specific jewellery work that adorns the Gallery building. A giant handcrafted safety chain and brooch clip hangs from the ceiling of the foyer, transforming the building into an item of jewellery. Walker's jewellery pushes boundaries between art and jewellery, exploring concepts of wearability and sculptural concerns, aware of the relationship to the body's scale and form, to the surrounding architecture, and to what the encounter between a body, the space and an object means. Her works *occupy space*, their solidity and scale often defies the body as much as they 'adorn' it in the conventional sense expected of jewellery.

Pre and post-visit activities

Not all of the sculptures in *The Obstinate Object* are located inside the Gallery. Before or after your visit, make sure to stop by Shane McGrath's sculpture in Glover Park (off Cuba Street) from March 17, Scott Eady's work on the lawn outside City Gallery, and Regan Gentry's waterfall work in between City Gallery and Wellington City Library.

Maddie Leach presents the smallest but most powerful object in this exhibition, a rare-earth magnet. It conducts a highly charged force field around itself, exuding an invisible power. Investigate the properties of rare-earth magnets. What are they normally used for, what makes them so precious but also potentially hazardous and why do you think the artist had a pedestal custom-built for this work?

Regan Gentry's outdoor sculpture *McCahon Incarnation* takes its inspiration from McCahon's many paintings of waterfalls.

View these paintings at: www.mccahon.co.nz. Look at another series of paintings by McCahon i.e. comets, clouds, the Murawai cliffs and create a sculptural response.

Don Driver's, *Ritual* was one of the first sculptural installations commissioned by a public gallery in New Zealand.

The sculpture is an assemblage consisting of ten 44-gallon drums on which doll figures with goat-skull heads sit on top of a cart with hay on the ground. Search www.moma.org for a detailed description of assemblage art, a primary mode of art-making that influenced Driver's sculptural practice.

Key terms

Assemblage involves attaching three-dimensional (usually found) materials together, or to a backing, to produce a relief or a free-standing sculpture².

Found materials are objects found in the environment and used as tools or media in making art works³.

Site-specific artwork refers to an artist's intervention in a specific place, creating a work that is integrated with its surroundings and explores its relationship to its environment.

Glen Hayward (b.1974) carves and hand paints wooden sculptures that replicate everyday objects like packing boxes, tools and sports equipment. Referencing Marcel Duchamp's readymade, an everyday object presented as art, Hayward inserts these replica objects back into the world where they are more puzzling than any readymade could now dare to be. Included in the exhibition are multiple sculptures by Hayward; carved pieces of scrunched up paper recalling an art school lesson with artist, Julian Dashper, an assortment of objects in a small room used for cleaning supplies and a set of security cameras.

Wayne Youle's (b.1974) elegantly draped chain is made from the most inelegant of raw materials—beef bone. The making of this sculpture involved boiling the meat off the bone, cleaning and then carving the remains. Measuring at 22 yards, the bone chain gives form to the immaterial—the Queen's Chain, that invisible 22 yards of land on the edges of lakes, rivers and oceans owned by and accessible to all New Zealanders. Known as a cultural prankster, Youle exposes the Queen's Chain for what it has become—an archaic concept with little contemporary relevance. It measures 22 yards of failed authority.

¹ W. Brown, *Another 100 New Zealand artists*, Godwit Publishing: Auckland, 1996, p.22

² W. Brown, *Seen this century*, Godwit: Auckland, 2009, p. 417

³ MOE, 'The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum', Learning Media, Wellington, p. 83