

The Artists

Biographies and statements

The Sacred Way

22 WELLINGTON ARTISTS
explore the spiritual dimension

16 May – 26 July 1992

WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY
WELLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

JUTTA CHISHOLM

Jutta was born in Augsburg, West Germany in 1963 and completed an International Baccalaureate in Vienna in 1982. She studied design at Wellington Polytechnic in 1983, has a BFA from Elam School of Fine Arts and has exhibited in Wellington since 1987. She has been awarded the 1985 Rosemary Grice Memorial Prize, the 1990 Ivy Copeland Prize for Portrait Painting, and a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grant for Portraiture in 1991.

'... Man's presence in these three paintings is noted only by the decay he has left behind. . . . We stand on the edge of each beckoning path preparing ourselves for the journey into the new age of natural spiritual awakening.'

MARGARET ELLIOT

Margaret was born in Wanganui in 1952, gained a BSc at Canterbury University, then completed a Diploma of Fine Arts at Ilam School of Fine Arts in 1976. She has lived in Wellington since 1977, teaching life-drawing and painting, photography, leather-work and landscape drawing and painting. She has exhibited frequently in solo and group shows since 1984. Since 1982 she has won awards and grants from Expo Porirua, Tokoroa Art Award, King Country Visual Arts Trust, and Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

'To the painter Friedrich the ship in sail symbolized life's journey towards the certainty of redemption and eternal life through faith, a confrontation between transience and the eternal. Now in the age of relativity, transience is everything. The ship lies on the beach at the mercy of the elements, going nowhere, yet it is not all hopeless. The illusion of space extends beyond the wreck, suggesting other possibilities, space symbolising hope rather than desolation.'

OLIVIA FOGG

Olivia was born in 1962 and studied photography at the Queensland Centre of Photography in 1987 and at Wellington Polytechnic in 1988. She has been a freelance photographer in Wellington since then and tutors in photography for the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts. Being a mother is also an important part of her life, and she is currently photographing, interviewing for and editing a book titled *Birth Mark* on the transitions through pregnancy, giving birth and motherhood.

'My head provides me with shelter from the storm but it is my heart which connects me to life itself.'

ROBERT FRANKEN

Born in 1946, a sixth generation artist in the Hague, Robert studied at the Royal Academy of Arts and the Free Academy of Arts before arriving in New Zealand in 1967. He won the 1990 BP Art Award, and Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Awards in 1977, 1982, 1984, 1986 and 1989. He made the short film *A grasp of wind* with Russell Campbell in 1982, and has exhibited widely in New Zealand, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Tokyo. In 1992 he was commissioned by the Wellington City Council to create *The serpent's way* for the new Civic Square.

'People use symbols as measures, or a form of stepping stone, from that which isn't known within us to bring it back to this dimension. . . . To me the process of painting is a journey and the actual painting, when finished, holds the key to the next one.'

TERRENCE HANDSCOMB

Terrence was born in 1948 and gained a Diploma in Graphic Design from Wellington Polytechnic in 1970. After his studies he travelled widely and spent some time in a Buddhist Monastery in Thailand in 1973. On his return to New Zealand he completed a BA in religion, mathematics and philosophy at Victoria University. He has worked as a book, typographic and graphic designer since 1975, and a full-time artist since 1990. In 1991 he conducted cultural research in Germany assisted by a Goethe Institut scholarship, and received Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants in 1975, 1980, 1986, 1991 and 1992.

'She licked her lips. The need to spend the night in the warm cocoon of his passion was warring with the fear of waking up in the morning once the narcotic of her own desire had worn off. She could only give herself to him so many times before there would be no turning back. And she wasn't ready for that yet.'

Margie McDonnell. Conflict of Interest. *Loveswept* No 258. 1988.

SUSAN HILLERY

Susan was born in 1969 and completed a BFA at Ilam School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, with a Double Major in sociology, in 1990. She is currently manager of Hunters and Collectors in Wellington, a practising sculptor, and is an art-writer for *Stamp* magazine. 'My sculptural work questions the contradictions of gender within the Christian religion by employing recognised matriarchal and patriarchal signifiers. The constructional variation of 'crosses', combined with artificial lighting and the transparencies of glass, deliberately confront the enshrined Christian symbolism of light and dark.'

ROBYN KAHUKIWA

Ngati Poru

Robyn was born in Australia in 1941 to New Zealand parents, coming to New Zealand in 1959 and Wellington in 1970. She trained as a commercial artist with the *Adelaide News*, and taught art at Mana College in Porirua for ten years. She received grants from the Maori and South Pacific Arts Council in 1980, 1982 and 1985; a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grant in 1986; and has been a full-time artist since 1983. She is a member of Nga Punawaihanga (Maori Artists and Writers) and Haeta Maori Women's Collective. She has exhibited widely in New Zealand since 1971, and in Australia, America and Hawaii; and produced award-winning illustrations for children's picture books in 1981, 1982 and 1987.

'For me, painting is a statement of identity as much as anything. . . . My identity in things Maori is made possible

Robyn Kahukiwa
E Hine, Ko Koe Te Whare Tangata,
1992



because of my ancestors. It exists because of whakapapa, tribal culture, and tradition. My links with the past are as important to me as the fact of my being, my future, and the future of my children. The artistic and cultural traditions of my ancestors are vital in the maintenance of the threads of the chain of our people — past, present and future.' Interview by Keri Kaa, *Seven Maori Artists*.

TONY LANE

Tony was born in Katikati in 1949 and gained a Diploma of Fine Arts from Elam School of Fine Arts in 1970. Since 1975 he has exhibited widely around New Zealand, with solo exhibitions yearly since 1978. He has travelled periodically to Europe — Italy, Spain and Germany in particular. In 1991 he exhibited in *Il sud del mondo*, Sicily, and is included in *Distance looks our way*, Expo '92, Seville.

'One of the paramount roles of painting, it seems to me, is to portray those zones of the miraculous in which gravity no longer holds sway; in which the infinite and subjective are reconciled with those visual aspects and objects comprising everyday reality. In these paintings of jewellery, as in previous works featuring rocks and stones, I've tried to suggest a connection between the most inert and solid objects and the incorporeity of space.'

GERDA LEENARDS

Gerda was born in Nymegen, Holland in 1946, emigrating with her family to New Zealand when she was ten. She has worked as a draughtsperson, a graphic designer and in the Art Department of the New Zealand Correspondence School. She gained a Diploma from the Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch in 1970, where she was strongly influenced by Rudolph Gopas, and has exhibited widely since then. In 1990 she was commissioned to travel to and paint the sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands.

'My stay on Auckland Islands has influenced my interest in islands. Not only was the physical contact important but what they represented. Islands in the West were said to signify regeneration. So, for much folklore, islands have a spiritual significance — "a dreaming of something better than".'

LEANNA LEI'ATAUA

Leanna was born in Wellington in 1969; her cultural heritage is Samoan and Celtic. In 1989 she gained a

National Craft Design Certificate from Whitireia Polytechnic and is currently studying for a BA in art history and women's studies at Victoria University. She has exhibited solo at Deluxe Cafe in 1991 and in group shows at 33 1/3 Gallery and the Crafts Council Gallery, Wellington.

'I am exploring the markings of identity, and gain strength through knowing my cultural past, expressed through symbols and images derived from Siapo and Pe'a designs. Through my work I want to show a tradition of strength, knowledge of self and a movement of past through me to future.'

LAUREN LETHAL

Lauren has worked as a social worker/art therapist and art teacher/facilitator within various Wellington communities, including Richmond Fellowship, Arohata Women's Prison, Vincent's Art Centre, and Porirua Hospital. She has also worked in feminist, trade union and community contexts, doing illustrative work, cartooning and murals. She has been a full-time artist since 1985, working with fabric, furniture and mixed media. She has exhibited in group shows since 1987, with solo shows in Wellington and Auckland in 1990/1991.

'I am a feminist artist and a Nag-Gnostic. That is, I believe in the reality of transcendental knowledge and at the same time never cease to Nag my Self and Others with recurrent awareness of questions and uncertainties (with thanks to Mary Daly). I am angered by the total repression of women by the Church and believe it is still engaged in metaphorical witch-burning. My work includes a reclamation of archetypes of strong women.'

VIVIAN LYNN

Vivian was born in Wellington in 1931 and completed a Diploma of Fine Arts in 1951 and a Diploma in Teaching from Auckland Teachers' College in 1954. She has received numerous awards including Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants in 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983. She has shown in over seventy exhibitions throughout New Zealand and in Australia, Japan, Malaysia, America and Germany. Since 1964 she has made wide ranging studies of cultural histories and visual codes during research trips to Europe, Africa and America. In 1983-84 she was Co-ordinator of the Women's Art Archive at the National Art Gallery. She has a new position as Lecturer in Basic Design at Wellington Polytechnic School of Design.

'I question the structure of patriarchal societies' representations. [The work] attempts to destruct old orders of representation and reinscribe them with codes which embody reversal and posit spiritual freedom.'

'I question the structure of patriarchal societies' representations. [The work] attempts to destruct old orders of representation and reinscribe them with codes which embody reversal and posit spiritual freedom.'

DARCY NICHOLAS

Te Atiawa, Ngaitearangi, Taranaki, Ngati Ruanui
Darcy was born in Taranaki in 1945, the twelfth of thirteen children. He drew regularly from the age of three and by thirteen was painting seriously. Darcy

opened his own gallery in Lower Hutt and painted full-time from 1974 to 1981. He then directed the Wellington Arts Centre for five years. In 1984 he won a Fulbright Award to study American and African American art, and community arts in various countries, and in 1986 became Director of the Central Regional Arts Council. From 1989 to 1992 he was an Assistant General Manager of the Iwi Transition Agency until it was disbanded, when he resumed painting full-time. He has shown in several major exhibitions of Maori art in America, Africa and Australia, plus solo exhibitions in Paris, London and New Zealand.

'Humanity's ultimate destination is to stand on the 'edge' and view the past, the present and the future, not only of this world but the other billions of worlds that exist outside of our universe. To conceive the possibility for just a brief moment, and to relate myself to this totality, is my spirituality.'

JANE POUNTNEY

Jane was born in Rotorua in 1949 and gained a Diploma of Education from Hamilton Teachers' College and Waikato University in 1968. She began drawing while teaching in Australia, and did her first landscape paintings back in New Zealand in 1972. Since 1973 she has taught art and art history in the Wellington region and is currently Head of the Art Department at the New Zealand Correspondence School in Wellington. She has had numerous solo exhibitions since 1983 and was awarded a special prize by the New Zealand 1990 Commission at the Tokoroa Art Award.

'I see landscape as a metaphor for change. I refer back through the New Zealand tradition of landscape art to the ideal studio landscapes of the eighteenth century and sublime painting of the nineteenth century. I am concerned with deferring any one fixed reading or meaning, to reveal a fluid, constantly changing interaction that exposes a history of cultural construction. I see links between the international tradition of idealising place or untouched nature, and colonial notions in a New Zealand context.'

ERENORA PUKETAPU-HETET

Te Atiawa

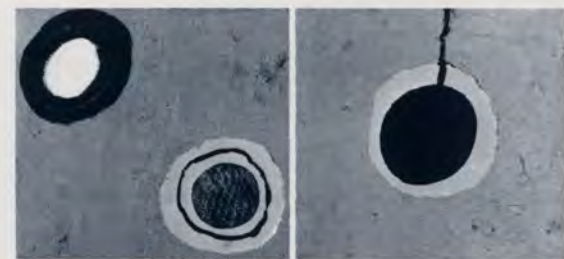
Erenora was born in 1941 and grew up on her family marae at Waiwhetu. She received tuition from tribal tutors at an early age. She was taught weaving by her husband's grandmother, Rangimaria Te Kanawa, who is a master weaver of Ngati Maniapoto. She has also studied pottery, sculpture, painting, drawing and design in various courses. She has tutored weaving widely on New Zealand marae, in communities and institutions, and at international workshops, and has written *Maori Weaving*, 1990. She is Chairperson of the Central Regional Arts Council and a Member of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. She has exhibited widely in New Zealand and overseas, including America, Australia, Japan, Africa and Spain.

'In relation to my weaving, I interpret 'Sacred' as meaning respect. Respect for the natural world and its wonderful

resources, respect for the source of whatever knowledge I may have, and above all respect for the supreme being.'

CLARE RYAN

Clare was born in 1969 and is of Pakeha/Irish descent. She completed a BA hons in English from Victoria University in 1988, while developing as an artist. She exhibited in cafes and at her studio, then travelled through America, Ireland and Europe between 1989 and 1991. She studied at the New York Studio School of Painting, Drawing and Sculpture in 1989, and was awarded a Certificate of Excellence at the Art Horizons International Art Competition in New York. She exhibited solo at the New Moon Gallery, Wellington, in 1990/1991.



'The series of paintings called Evolution was concerned with 'process', expressing development and growth over time in abstract terms. The process of creating the work involved emotional and spiritual dimensions beyond the literal level of creating an object. The artwork can be seen as a selected moment of this creative process and is really without beginning or end.'

BEVERLEY SHORE BENNETT

Beverley was born in Wellington in 1928, a fourth generation New Zealander. A designer, embroiderer and painter, she was installed as the first woman lay Canon of Wellington Cathedral in 1978 in recognition of her work in church design, and is now its Canon for the Arts. She was made an MBE in 1980, holds a number of art awards, and is a Fellow of the British Society of Master Glass-Painters. She has designed stained glass windows and embroidered vestments and furnishings for churches throughout New Zealand, many of them in Wellington.

'As time passes I am becoming more and more aware of God's influence — of the way He has shaped my life to His purpose — He empowers me, if you like — in everyday situations and the work I do. . . . By my faith I am committed to do my work and through my work I express my faith. I could never separate the two.'

WI TAEPÄ

Te Arawa, Te Atiawa

Wi was born at Waiwhetu, Lower Hutt in 1946 and grew up in Otaki and Wanganui. His father was Minister of Rangiatea Church at Otaki. Wi was in Vietnam with the New Zealand Army in the late 1960s, and has worked for the Justice Dept; the Prisons

Clare Ryan, *From the evolution series*, 1991

Dept; and for Social Welfare as a social worker. He has been carving in wood for thirty years. He was involved with carving the Orongomai Marae in Upper Hutt in 1975. He began working with clay in 1989, taught by Rosalie Blake at the Levin Pottery Club. He is currently studying and tutoring at Whitireia Polytechnic.

'I am looking at balance — balance of the elements and mankind. All of these coming together, to give us harmony.'

SANJAY THEODORE

Sanjay was born in 1967 in Ludianna, India. His family moved to London and Adelaide before arriving in Wellington in 1974. He went to Ilam School of Fine Arts in 1986, and in 1988 was awarded a scholarship by West Texas State University. He studied for a year at the New York Studio School of Painting, Drawing and Sculpture in 1989. He has been exhibiting since 1985 in New Zealand and America, with solo shows at 33 1/3 Gallery, Wellington, in 1990/1991.

'The many paradoxes of race, sex and culture all influence my work. My life as an Indian New Zealander constantly challenges me with 'subject matter'. I build contemplative objects based on many histories. I don't believe in any one culture or any one solution to any problem. The result is allegory.'

ELIZABETH THOMSON

Elizabeth was born in Auckland in 1955 and gained a BFA in 1986 and a Master of Fine Arts with First Class Honours from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland in 1988. She has tutored in printmaking at Elam and the Auckland Society of Arts, and has lectured in drawing at Carrington Polytechnic. She was awarded the Elam Scholarship in 1985 and the Joe Raynes Scholarship in 1986 by the University of Auckland; and Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants in 1987 and 1989. She has exhibited solo yearly since 1986 in Wellington and Auckland and in numerous group exhibitions, including *Distance looks our way*, Expo '92, Seville.

'I enjoy producing works which at various moments can be seen to be transient, iconographic, immortal, utopian and an experience of opposite sensations. What I try to create is an image/idea which is alive and breathing and a situation which could be mistaken for real. Emphasis is on atmosphere and the feeling of a presence.'

MICHEL TUFFERY

Michel was born in Wellington in 1966, the eldest of five boys, to a Samoan mother and European father. In 1988 he completed a Dip. FA Hons at Otago Polytechnic School of Art. He won the Croda Award for Printmaking, a Study Grant from Te Waka Toi, and 2nd Prize in the YWCA Youth Exhibition in 1987. In 1988 he was awarded the David Con Hutton Award Scholarship and Otago University Student Exhibition Prize, and a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Project Grant in 1991. He has worked as a freelance graphic artist, an illustrator

for the New Zealand Correspondence School and tutored printmaking workshops in Auckland, Wellington, Porirua, Western Samoa and the Cook Islands since 1987. He is currently tutoring at Whitireia Polytechnic.

'Vaka, the Vatea, is based on a Mangaia, a legend which is about the island of creation. A man called Vatea who is half man/half fish, was responsible for creation. Everything that is created is created from below, where in Western terms basing on Mary or Jesus — the Church, everything is descended from above. Within our family, when the Chief dies, his body is placed inside the vaka, for his next journey to return to Havaki-nui. This is where I base most of my work.'

RUTH WATSON

Ruth was born in Canterbury in 1962 and gained a BFA in painting from Ilam School of Fine Arts in 1984. She moved to Wellington in 1985 and has exhibited regularly since then. She was awarded the Satwell-Turner Prize in Painting in 1981, Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants in 1986, 1987 and 1988, and in 1992 became the Olivia Spencer Bower Foundation Fellow. She is currently exhibited in *Headlands: thinking through New Zealand art* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

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from *The Children's Hour with Uncle Arthur* book 3, p11.
Signs Publishing, c. 1955

Public Programmes for *The Sacred Way* feature a Wednesday Night series of Wellington artist's talks; film screenings by Richard Dale, Annie Goldson and Merylyn Tweedie; Wellington poets reading; and a lecture by John Carsons of The Artangel Trust, London. The Gallery also offers a School's Programme; workshops/visits with numerous artists; an audio-visual programme; a lunchtime Young People's Festival of Music, July 14-17; and free guided tours on Thursdays at 12.30pm and Saturdays at 1.30pm. For further information please phone 473-2625.

The Sacred Way represents a statement of the commitment of the City Art Gallery to exhibit the work of Wellington artists. The selection of artists by Wellington City Art Gallery Curator Deborah Lawler-Dorner is by no means definitive, but it does represent a cross-section of emergent and established artists.

It continues a tradition of group exhibitions to represent and survey aspects of contemporary artistic activity in the Wellington region.

The special series of Wellington artists' lectures and workshops organised by Mary-Louise Browne, Public Programmes Manager, and Janet Bayly, Education Curator, encourages a public dialogue with the Wellington art community and continues the Gallery's emphasis on education.

We express our appreciation to the Wellington City Council for their continuing commitment to the Gallery and its projects.

The Gallery gratefully acknowledges the individual and corporate collectors who were prepared to lend their work for this exhibition.

Finally we would like to thank all Wellington artists for continuing to inspire the community with their work, especially those who are participating in this exhibition.

Paula Savage
DIRECTOR

THE SACRED WAY

"Now we go to Eleusis along the Sacred Way, to penetrate the meaning of the Mysteries"

G Mitchell *Come Away Death*¹

This exhibition reflects the breadth of the art which is currently being produced in the greater Wellington region. In examining a wide variety of work I discovered that many of the artists in this exhibition at some time or other addressed notions of spirituality. *The Sacred Way* presents a group of individuals of differing race, age and gender with differing beliefs and styles, in a format which problematizes a contemporary approach to what could today be thought of as spiritual.

Traditionally a *sacred way* was a route used by religious processions and pilgrims. This exhibition is a profusion of sacred ways. The path of putting it together has not been an easy one, largely due to the diversity of work and the unknown terrain of disparate 'spiritualities'.

"You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you travelled by every path in order to do so; such is the depth of its meaning."²

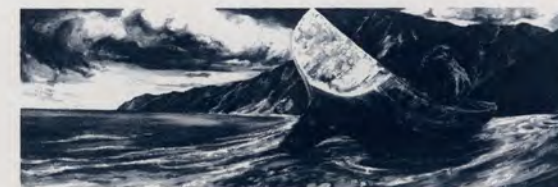
Heraclitus

Such is the paradoxical nature of spirituality; the shifts in perception, in distance, in understanding. In the final decade of the twentieth century what is generally conceived as being sacred is no longer clear. Today many peoples are brought up without the support of a religious tradition. Most people do not think about spirituality except in times of strain and upset. The nineties appears to be a time of individual paths towards spirituality, and this is reflected in the make-up of this exhibition. Most of the artists here have worked independently of any religious tradition, in contrast to past ages where art served religion in a drive to communicate its mysteries. The exceptions to this are artists such as Shore Bennett, Kahukiwa and Puketapu-Hetet, who have worked within specific spiritual traditions.

The critical debate that *The Sacred Way* engenders exists well beyond the parameters that this essay or exhibition can hope to resolve. The debate can be framed by the following dilemmas. In this time of artistic plurality, can contemporary art communicate spiritual concerns through the experience with its form? Or, is that communication more effectual if one has learnt the constructs of the particular religious practice by which it is informed? In some respects, some of these works are to a degree closed. The spiritual codes engaged in the work, whether Maori, christian or other, operate in a system of closure, for the key to entering is initiation into its set of beliefs. Contemporary art has a range of concerns which frustrate the effectual communication of spiritual concerns. Its imperatives rest on such issues as representation, the analysis of structures, of codes; a concern for its value as a commodity; a concern for sensuality, surface and technique. If art does come to the service of religion, is its function transformed to such a degree that it operates more in the manner of a

ritualistic object? This is problematized further when the work becomes intrinsic to the ritual of religious culture, such as Shore Bennett's stained glass church windows or Taepa's lintel. Can these works exist successfully in the context of a contemporary art exhibition in a public gallery?

Each artist is introduced here with brief notations which draw their work into this debate. It must be stressed that these artists are very different from one another, and the individual viewer is faced with a demanding task. Nevertheless in their difference some works share a common genre or cultural background.



The genre of landscape painting is seen in the work of a group of artists represented here. They each reference this tradition differently and, being women, participate in what was once a predominantly 'male tradition'. Their art practice comments on either the Romantic artistic tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which attempted to communicate spiritual values, or the christian tradition of the sublime landscape which emphasised atmosphere and the effects of light. Landscape, in the service of christianity, has been used to show God's presence in his many aspects – as awe-inspiring, as mysterious, as frightening.

Gerda Leenard's paintings are informed by the cultural and therefore spiritual history of the land of Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her paintings emit the hard light of metallic paint, explicitly in discordance with the soft glowing 'spiritualised' light of landscape painters such as J.M.W. Turner. In contrast, Jutta Chisholm's landscapes are bathed in a transcendental light which promises spiritual awakening. Nature is glorified and contains the promise of hope and 'resurrection'.

In Margaret Elliot's paintings, a shipwreck features in a landscape/seascape stretching into the far distance. In christian symbolism the ship historically represents the church 'in which the faithful found safety and were borne to salvation'.³ Yet placed in this context, Elliot hints of other options for spiritual expression. In Elizabeth Thomson's prints universal figures appear in vast landscapes which are concurrently beautiful and frightening. The people contained within are simultaneously 'vulnerable, filled with purpose and at one with the universe'.⁴

Jane Pountney's paintings re-present the landscape genre, recalling its history from pagan times through christianity to today. These paintings cultivate a mysterious atmosphere marked with floating signifiers,

such as trees, which have meaning attached to them by a particular viewer's background.



Another grouping in *The Sacred Way* is formed by Maori artists – Erenora Puketapu-Hetet, Darcy Nicholas, Wi Taepa and Robyn Kahukiwa. Each has been intimately connected with the spiritual life on the marae, learning from elders and contributing to a rich cultural history which has imbued its art practice with spiritual values. Each artist acknowledges their *whakapapa* (genealogy) through *karakia* (prayer), directly addressing specifically Maori (and other) contemporary cultural experiences. Their works are sacred objects forming a continuance between past and future generations of Maori people.

Nicholas's work examines the land and its history, his ancestry, and relates his spiritual experience in a universal sense. Taepa's work utilises traditional forms and seeks to create a sense of balance and peace. *Mariner's Lament* reveals his holistic and environmental concerns.

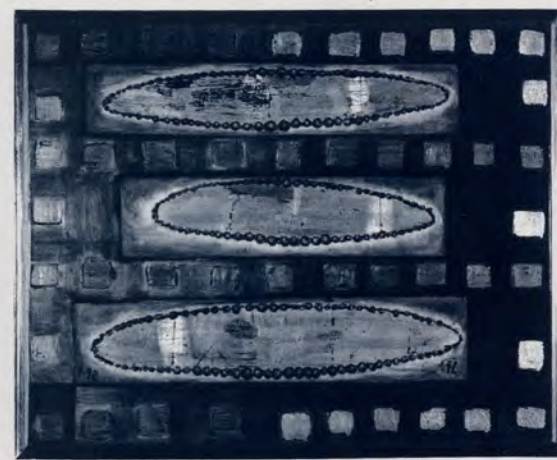


Kahukiwa's painting *E Hine, Ko Koe Te Whare Tangata*, celebrates young Maori women, encouraging them to be strong for they carry the seed for future generations of Maori people. Puketapu-Hetet weaves with a reverence for the sacredness of the act of weaving. From *Papatuanuku*, (Earth Mother), ultimately, comes all materials which are then used with respect for the *mauri* (life force).

Leanna Lei'ataua and Michel Tuffery are of mixed cultural background – Palagi and Samoan. They have both researched their Samoan heritage, reclaiming traditional siapo and tattoo patterns and incorporating them into their work. In particular Tuffery comments on the impact the missionaries had in the Pacific, and reinstates traditional Samoan culture.

Sanjay Theodore and Clare Ryan primarily work with abstraction and have attended the New York Studio School of Painting, Drawing and Sculpture. Their paintings are contemplative, seeking silence in the tradition of Wassily Kandinsky and Arthur Dove. The experience of this silence is equated with the experience of spirituality. Theodore's work is also bound up with issues of race and cultural history, yet seeks to create an experience that transcends that of race, sex and culture.

Traces of the christian art tradition are evident in many of the artist's work, but particularly in that of Lane and Shore Bennett. Tony Lane's work draws upon the tradition of medieval icon painting, and thirteenth and fourteenth century artists who generated a language of religious symbols. He uses these historical images but develops their meaning away from the dogmatic religious meaning to a wider archetypal interpretation. In their paradoxical placement they operate as mysteries.



Beverley Shore Bennett's work operates in the ecclesiastical tradition of stained glass windows, embroidered vestments and hangings for churches. Because these objects are actively used in church ceremonies, we are unable to present them on the gallery walls. Her works are therefore represented by the watercolour designs for stained glass windows installed

in the Mary Potter Hospice, and a photograph of the Cathedral Dossal during a church ceremony. She has stated that through her glass she preaches God's gifts.

We all have intensely personal spiritual experiences. The profoundly personal path is advocated by Robert Franken and Olivia Fogg. Franken has a highly individualistic approach which calls upon the tradition of mysticism. Traditional symbols are incorporated in a unique way which speak of his own journeys as an artist, and of his personal experience of the universal. Fogg's photographs also explore the terrain of personal experience. For her, spirituality is found when ordinary experience is suddenly transcended by an experience beyond understanding.



Much of the last fifteen years of art practice in Aotearoa, New Zealand has demonstrated a deep suspicion of the processes and codes of language and visual art production, and of gender construction. This has resulted in a stream of work utilising postmodern strategies — working with the tools of appropriation and re-presentation. This work openly confronts and questions our cultural histories, and specifically in this exhibition, our religious histories. This approach is manipulated in a variety of ways by artists such as Pountney, Lynn, Hillery, Watson, Lethal and Handscomb. In the resultant freeing up of signifiers, codes and symbols, these artists create a space of freedom — a space in which a range of possible experiences can be had, amongst which spirituality is just one.

Vivian Lynn's work over the last thirty years has been an analysis of symbolism, language and gender construction. It has at times specifically criticised christianity and sought connection with matriarchal religions. Lynn's work reflects both order and chaos existing due to the deconstruction of boundaries and visual codes. Her work does not have a single unified meaning. Within the experience of this state of flux and stillness, the viewer senses spirituality as they strive to relate to universal 'truths'.

Ruth Watson presents two board games for consideration; one of which, *Snakes and Ladders*, is a game which most of us played as children. It is re-presented as an offering for people to examine the bourgeois need to further christian morals. With its top layer of gold the work becomes elevated and invested with commercial and art value, operating in a new sense as a cultural commodity.

Lauren Lethal's constructions are informed by her feminist sensibility. They show her anger regarding the treatment of women by the church, and reclaim archetypes of strong women. Similarly, Susan Hillery has responded to the text of the Bible with anger at the representation of women. Her sculptures play with christian symbolism of light and dark and the text 'Thou Shalt Not'. In doing so, these elements undergo reversal, liberating their meanings.

Terrence Handscomb's paintings search for self-identity and relish in the exposure of the dysfunctional personality. This search is closely linked with the post-industrial languages of mathematics, computers, machines etc, which, arguably, have more influence over the personality than the old language of christianity. He privileges experiencing the darkness, chaos, the repressed as the means for discovering God — a god in Handscomb's eyes who is not an external force but to be discovered within the subject.



"The challenge facing public galleries, is to bridge that gap by reaching out to the community, to show that art, whether questioning or reflecting our identity and attitudes, is an essential part of our experience."

Seddon Bennington, Director, *Opening*, Wellington City Art Gallery, 1980

FOOTNOTES
1. *Greater Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 1989, p.339.
2. Quoted in Lipsey, Roger, *An Art of our own. The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art*, Shambhala, Boston, 1988, p.9
3. *Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, John Murray Publishers Ltd, London, 1974, p.281
4. Elizabeth Thomson, Artist's statement, 1992

WORKS LIST

JUTTA CHISHOLM
Return to nature, 1989-90
Oil on board
1150 x 2320mm
Courtesy of the artist

MARGARET ELLIOT
Empty vessels I, 1992
Oil on canvas
895 x 1730mm
Courtesy of the artist and 33 1/3 Gallery

Empty vessels II, 1992
Oil on canvas
635 x 1800mm
Courtesy of the artist and 33 1/3 Gallery

OLIVIA FOGG
Mary from Waitetoko Marae, 1990
1100 x 800mm
Cibachrome photographs
Courtesy of the artist

SUPPRESSION, 1988
200 x 255mm
Cibachrome photograph
Courtesy of the artist

ROBERT FRANKEN
Transformation at the gateway, 1989
Handwoven cotton, Procion, Naphtol, Indigosol dyes and lacquered bamboo
2750 x 2150mm
Courtesy of the artist

TERRENCE HANDSCOMB
I dreamt I fractured the ANAL-frame, 1992
Oil and drafting ink on polyester film
920 x 910mm
Courtesy of the artist

SUSAN HILLERY
Salvation, 1990
Mirror glass, wood, light sockets, light-bulbs
1500 x 1000 x 200mm
Courtesy of the artist

THOU SHALT NOT, 1992
Mirror glass, sandblasted 4mm glass
530 x 500 x 625mm
Courtesy of the artist

ENLIGHTENMENT, 1990
Sandblasted 4mm glass, steel, light fittings
600 x 600 x 200mm
Courtesy of the artist

ROBYN KAHUKIWA
Ngati Porou
E Hine, Ko Koe Te Whare Tangata, 1992
Oil/alkyd oil and enamel on loose canvas
2000 x 300mm
Courtesy of the artist

TONY LANE
Jewels, Constellations, 1992
Mixed media
280 x 800mm
Courtesy of the artist

THREE NECKLACES, 1992
Mixed media
820 x 1000mm
Courtesy of the artist

UNTITLED, 1990
Mixed media
415 x 250mm
Coll: Lindsay Missen

GERDA LEENARDS
Fluid light, 1991
Acrylic, cloth and emulsion on canvas
1500 x 390mm
Courtesy of the artist

FOR THE NAVIGATOR, 1991
Acrylic, cloth and emulsion on canvas
2000 x 300mm
Courtesy of the artist

HARBOUR ISLAND, 1991
Acrylic, cloth and emulsion on canvas
350 x 560mm
Courtesy of the artist

LEANNA LEI'ATAUA
Hold fast, 1989/90
Blockprint
300 x 300mm
Courtesy of the artist and 33 1/3 Gallery

FLIGHT, 1992
Acrylic on hessian with sennit
1100 x 1100mm
Courtesy of the artist

LAUREN LETHAL
Dogma kennel, 1990
Mixed media
250 x 250 x 150mm
Coll: Tunja Nola

ANOTHER SACRED COW, 1992
Mixed media
250 x 250 x 150mm
Courtesy of the artist

GRIMALKIN, 1990
Mixed media
250 x 250 x 150mm
Coll: Clare and B.J. Duck Crossing

VIVIAN LYNN
Beyond the etherior: ice burns, poison cures, 1983-1989
Mixed media
Six works: 2000 x 1000mm
Courtesy of the artist

DARCY NICHOLAS
Te Atiawa, Ngaiterangi, Taranaki, Ngati Ruanui
Matau te Kore, 1990
Steatite carving
395 x 225 x 260mm
Courtesy of the artist

AWANUI A RANGI, 1984
Steatite carving
240 x 210 x 320mm
Courtesy of the artist

LAND OF MY ANCESTORS, 1972
Acrylic on board
835 x 1080mm
Courtesy of the artist

JANE POUNTNEY
Untitled landscape, 1990
Oil on canvas
2000 x 900mm
Courtesy of the artist and Gregory Flint Gallery

UNTITLED LANDSCAPE, 1990
Oil on canvas
560 x 560mm
Coll: New Zealand Correspondence School

UNTITLED LANDSCAPE, 1990
Oil on canvas, recycled cedar frame
910 x 910mm
Coll: Rutherford Art Trust/Electricorp

ERENORA
PUKETAPU-HETET
Te Atiawa
Tuku mana whakahaere, 1990
Waxed linen threads
4 woven cord cones:
190 x 75mm (1)
230 x 86mm (2)
250 x 70mm (3)
179 x 59mm (4)
Coll: Dowse Art Museum

TUKU MANA WHAKAHAERE, 1992
Woven cord cone, waxed linen thread
Courtesy of the artist

CLARE RYAN
From the evolution series, 1991
Acrylic, charcoal, watercolour, pastel
195 x 425mm
Courtesy of the artist

FROM THE EVOLUTION SERIES, 1991
Watercolour and pastel
210 x 170mm
Courtesy of the artist

ECLIPSE, 1992
Oil on canvas
250 x 180mm (10)
Courtesy of the artist

BEVERLEY SHORE BENNETT
Stained glass, Mary Potter Hospice Chapel bay window and skylight representing the 23rd Psalm, 1991
Watercolour designs (2)
150 x 385mm
230 x 180mm
Designed by Beverley Shore Bennett, crafted by Stephen Belanger-Taylor
Courtesy of the artist

THE CATHEDRAL DOSSAL, 1987-90
Fabric mosaic and applique with machine embroidery
3 panels measuring in total 8.8m x 4.5m
Cibachrome photograph
courtesy of 'The Dominion'

WI TAEPA
Te Anawa, Te Atiawa
Mariner's Lament, 1991
Clay
450 x 350 x 350mm
Porirua Public Library Artistic Works Collection

PARA-WENUANA, 1992
Totara, basal, perspex, copper, greenstone, white stone
1000 x 150mm
Courtesy of the artist

SANJAY THEODORE
Untitled, 1992
Mixed media installation
Courtesy of the artist

ELIZABETH THOMSON
Hole in the wall, 1988
Photo etching and aquatint
575 x 445mm
Courtesy of the artist

WINGED VICTORY — THE REDEMPTION OF MAN AND VICTORY OVER DEATH, 1989
(Stick insect, *Order Phasmatodea* (ghost insect))
Bronze, silk organza, tulle
2600 x 1640mm
Coll: Craig and Katherine Heatley

MICHEL TUFFERY
Vaka I, 1992
Wood
1320 x 200 x 210mm
Courtesy of the artist

VAKA E'AKA II, 1992
Wood
1245 x 90 x 90mm
Courtesy of the artist

RUTH WATSON
Religious study, (cut up and rearranged), 1986
Collage
470 x 320mm
Courtesy of the artist

SNAKES AND LADDERS, 1992
Enamel and acrylic on canvas on board
1300 x 1300mm
Courtesy of the artist and Sue Crockford Gallery



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The Sacred Way

Deborah Lawler-Dormer



WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY

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