



Jason Greig *Like the Back of my hand* 2010
Collection Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand, Wellington

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Occulture: The Dark Arts

About the exhibition

This exhibition brings together works by artists who share a fascination with other-worldly subjects, highlighting the age-old connection between art and the occult. The word occult simply means that which is hidden or concealed. For many people it conjures a sinister definition, but the term encompasses a wide range of practices including pagan traditions, astrology, alchemy and witchcraft.

Australian artist Mikala Dwyer casts a spell in the form of a wall painting. The charcoal *Liquidation Maps* of Taiwanese artist Yin-Ju Chen explore possible links between atrocities in Asia and astrology. Dane Mitchell's *Ceramic Fields* were made in collaboration with a shaman. Fiona Pardington presents an altar in both photographic and sculptural form. These and other contemporary artists—working across drawing, painting, sculpture, book making, film, sound, printmaking and photography—are brought together with key historical figures of the occult tradition.

About your visit

Our education programme will examine drawing and printmaking techniques, focusing on works that were inspired by literary characters. Our tour will include works by the following artists:

Jason Greig is a NZ printmaker whose subject matter often draws on dark, gothic themes. The exhibition features a series of ten monoprints retelling Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde—a story of dual personalities in which mild-mannered Dr Jekyll, unable to suppress his dark side, transforms into Mr Hyde. Alongside literary influences, Greig draws on heavy metal music for inspiration, as well as the work of master printmakers Giovanni Piranesi and Francisco de Goya.

Leo Bensemann was a NZ artist and designer whose work bridged the world of literature and visual arts. The exhibition includes illustrations from his book *Fantastica*: Thirteen drawings that were inspired by a range of literary texts including Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, the Brothers Grimm, Sir Thomas Browne, Japanese folk tales, and the Arabian Nights. Among the many influences on Bensemann's unique style are Albrecht Durer, Aubrey Beardsley and Japanese woodcuts.

Pre-visit Discussion

List some books or movies that contain supernatural or otherworldly themes? Why do people find these themes fascinating and what might this reveal about our relationship to the unknown?

Post-visit activities

Reflect on your visit. What different types of artworks did you notice? What unexpected things did artists do to evoke something mysterious or otherworldly? Which works were you most curious about? Why?

Write a short story about a character that has both a light and dark side (it could be your own alter-ego). Devise a scenario that might spark this character's internal battle between good and bad. Which side will triumph? What will happen next? **Sketch** a storyboard illustrating key moments from your tale. Each frame could show either the whole scene or a just close up of a face, gesture or significant object. Pass your storyboard to a friend. Did they guess your story from the pictures or create something new? **Develop** one frame into a finished artwork. Choose a technique that allows dramatic use of light and shade. Options include black and white photography, monoprinting or charcoal drawing.

Sculpt a charm bracelet, talisman or amulet for a fictional character – something small to be carried or worn. Investigate jewellery techniques such as threading, binding, beading, casting or carving. What shapes, symbols, colours and materials might be appropriate for the purpose and recipient of your piece? Imagine the effect of scaling up your object. Look at the work of Mikala Dwyer for inspiration. <http://www.mikaladwyer.com/>

Discuss some ideas around the concept of 'belief'. Rank the following according to their believability: fortune telling, lucky charms, wishing wells, astrology, talismans, witches, ghosts. Discuss your answers. Do you believe in all, none or some? Did everyone believe the same thing? Could your answer change according to your mood or the time of day (e.g. in the middle of the night?) Can you be afraid of or influenced by something you don't believe in?

Research the work of Jason Greig and one of the artists that influenced him. Choose from Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Francisco de Goya and Odilon Redon. Examine the printmaking techniques used by each artist. Compare and contrast their subject matter and use of line and tone.