

the
● walters
prize 2004

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the
● walters
prize 2004

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI
18 SEPTEMBER - 28 NOVEMBER 2004



FINALISTS



et al.

including merit groting, c j [arthur] craig & sons, blanche readymade, minerva betts, marlene cubewell, l budd, Lionel b. and p mule; all presently based in Auckland

restricted access from abnormal mass delusions? 2003

mixed media; courtesy the artists, Auckland; first exhibited Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, 2003

JACQUELINE FRASER

born 1956, Dunedin; lives in Auckland

<<Invisible>> 2004

mixed media; courtesy Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney; first exhibited National Museum and Gallery, Cardiff, 2004



RONNIE VAN HOUT

born 1962, Christchurch; lives in Melbourne, Australia

No Exit Parts 1 and 2 2003

mixed media; private collection, Palmerston North, and courtesy Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, respectively; first exhibited Linden, Melbourne, and The Physics Room, Christchurch, respectively, 2003



DANIEL VON STURMER

born 1972, Auckland; lives in Melbourne, Australia

The Truth Effect 2003

video installation; courtesy Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne; made with the assistance of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; first exhibited Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2003

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

The Walters Prize was named in honour of Gordon Walters (1919-1995). Over a long career he created a visual language with coherence and integrity – international in its grammar yet speaking eloquently of New Zealand. It was a career that epitomised the risks and challenges confronting the contemporary artist. The enduring clarity and courage of Walters' artistic project makes him an entirely appropriate figure to associate in perpetuity with this Prize.

In July 2002 the eminent Swiss curator Harald Szeemann awarded the first Walters Prize to Auckland artist Yvonne Todd. Judging from the national media coverage that followed, it was an unexpected and sensational decision. But Szeemann's call did more than simply exceed local expectations; it immediately confirmed why we had instituted the Prize. If it draws wider public attention to the vitality and intelligence of contemporary New Zealand art, and raises the level of debate that informs it, then I feel certain that the Prize will endure. I know that's what our founding partners had in mind when they generously agreed to recurrently fund the staging and the award of the \$50,000 Walters Prize – the largest award of its kind in New Zealand.

Founding benefactors and principal donors Erika and Robin Congreve and Jenny Gibbs knew from the outset that they wanted the Prize to constitute a significant opportunity for each of the artists involved and not just the eventual winner. They wanted being a finalist to be an accolade in itself. This year, major donor Dayle Mace has made that possible through her generous award of \$5,000 to each finalist.

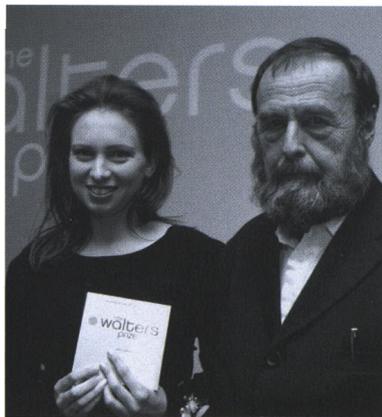
The Walters Prize sets out "to determine and publicly acknowledge the most outstanding contribution made to contemporary visual art in New Zealand in the two-year period preceding its award". But while the Prize is conducted under a set of guidelines, there is more than enough room for the jury to follow their discernment of excellence within contemporary New Zealand art, wherever it takes them. This year's jury – Christina Barton, Dr Deidre Brown, Justin Paton and Greg Burke (who replaced Anna Miles toward the end of her term) – brought that focus to the task of choosing the 2004 Walters Prize finalists. I warmly congratulate the finalists – et al., Jacqueline Fraser, Ronnie van Hout and Daniel von Sturmer – and thank their galleries and the private lenders for their support.

I also welcome this year's judge, Robert Storr, who travels from New York in late October to award the Prize. Storr has an international reputation as a curator of 12 years at the Museum of Modern Art, and now as a scholar at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. This is his first visit to New Zealand. I welcome too major sponsor Deutsche Bank, who have supported the judge's participation. They join with founding principal sponsor Ernst & Young – whose commitment to the project was recognised as Overall Winner of the 2002 NBR Awards for Sponsorship of the Arts – and founding sponsor Saatchi & Saatchi who continue their strong support. My thanks go to Brett Shepherd, John Judge and Kevin Roberts respectively for their passionate advocacy for the contemporary.

I look forward to The Walters Prize 2004 with tremendous excitement. It proves yet again the breadth and diversity of contemporary New Zealand art.

Chris Saines

DONORS' FOREWORD



Yvonne Todd receives the 2002 Walters Prize
from Judge Harald Szeemann.

The Walters Prize combines our passion for contemporary art with our belief in the value of public/private partnership. We established the Prize to promote interest in New Zealand contemporary art, and to demonstrate the value of such partnerships. For us, collaboration with the Gallery has proved extremely rewarding. We trust the Gallery feels the same way.

It is our hope that the Walters Prize brings a huge range of benefits, to the winner, the finalists and to the whole scene. We hope that New Zealand art and artists in general gain from the interest and exposure it brings. We'd also like to acknowledge Dayle Mace, whose generous Finalists Awards mean that now all the nominated artists benefit financially from the Prize.

One of the key features of the Walters Prize is that it enables us to import a distinguished overseas judge, who can bring an international perspective to bear on our art and take a view of it back to the rest of the world. From the start, we set our sights high: our first judge was Harald Szeemann, director of the previous two Venice Biennales. This year's judge, internationally renowned curator Robert Storr – for many years a curator at New York's Museum of Modern Art and recently named director of the 2007 Venice Biennale – is of similar stature. His involvement signals and sustains the credibility of the Prize.

Robin and Erika Congreve

Jenny Gibbs

JURY STATEMENT

Singling out four artists who have made an outstanding contribution to New Zealand art in the last two years proved challenging. We have chosen artists whose work we consider timely, important and distinctive. Each has affected us – as regular viewers of current practice – in memorable ways.

et al. are a conundrum, a shifting group of artistic entities designed to jam the systems and institutions of art. Their installations over the last two years – seen in such shows as *abnormal mass delusions?* and *Public/Private* – have consistently produced an eerie critique of our human condition, exposing our tendency to trust inevitably flawed intellectual models and technological solutions. In such light, *restricted access* from *abnormal mass delusions?*, with its massing of adjusted and recycled objects behind a mesh barricade, is a sombre experiment in resisting the relentless drift to obsolescence.

Jacqueline Fraser has enjoyed outstanding international success in the last two years. She brings an astute and elegantly barbed sensibility to her consideration of contemporary issues. Her installation <<*Invisible*>> was conceived for *Artes Mundi*, an award exhibition at Cardiff's National Museum and Gallery featuring ten artists selected by leading international curators. In it Fraser uses glamorous textiles to clothe a line-up of wraith-like female figures, combining these with pithy epithets that sting us about our fascination with fashion in a world of inequality and grief.

Ronnie van Hout is one of a number of contemporary artists who explore the image of the artist as a wayward figure in contemporary life. But he brings to this subject an array of idiosyncratic obsessions that situate his practice in the realms of the personal and the local. *No Exit Parts 1* and *2* present the artist in a multitude of guises – creepy nature worshipper, alien abductor, abject idler, frustrated artist – in situations as solipsistic as the series' title. His works do something rare in the world of contemporary art; make you laugh but leave you strangely moved.

Daniel von Sturmer may be less well known to New Zealand audiences, having made most of his work in Australia. His video installation *The Truth Effect*, seen last year in Melbourne and Berlin, is a breath of fresh air. It orchestrates simple materials in a series of lightly wrought situations within the confines of a simple white box. Represented via video, the box becomes something more: a spacious light-filled room, the white cube of the modern art gallery, a television studio or laboratory. What we see defies the simplicity of both origins and means, conveying to the viewer a new sense of the marvellous.

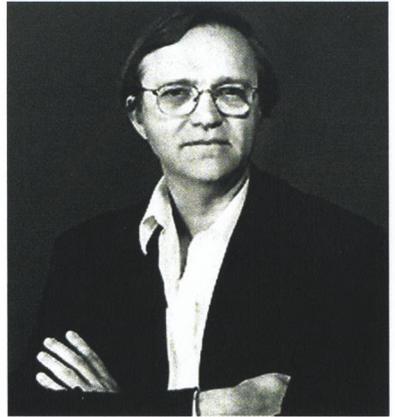
Christina Barton Lecturer, Art History Department, Victoria University of Wellington.

Dr Deidre Brown Senior Lecturer, Architecture Department, University of Auckland.

Greg Burke Director, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth.

Justin Paton Curator, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, and *Landfall* Editor.

JUDGE ROBERT STORR



A pre-eminent contemporary art critic, curator and scholar, Robert Storr is best known for his work as Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture, Museum of Modern Art, New York. During his 12 year tenure at MoMA, Storr was responsible for assembling such shows as *Max Beckmann* (2003), *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting* (2002), *Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor* (1998), *Chuck Close* (1998), *Robert Ryman* (1993) and *Dislocations* (1991). Storr was also the coordinating curator of *Willem de Kooning: The Late Paintings, The 1980s* (1997) and *Bruce Nauman* (1995). He has organised exhibitions of Susan Rothenberg's work for the Roseum Center for Contemporary Art in Malmö, Sweden (1989), and Bruce Nauman's for the 1998 São Paulo Bienal. Storr has written catalogue essays and articles on artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Ellsworth Kelly, Sigmar Polke and Martin Puryear. He has been a contributing editor for *Art in America* and *Grand Street*, and his criticism has appeared in *Art Press*, *Artforum*, *The Art Journal*, *Parkett*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. He has also written three books, *Philip Guston* (1986), *Chuck Close* (with Lisa Lyons, 1987) and the forthcoming *Intimate Geometries: The Work and Life of Louise Bourgeois*. In 2002 Storr stepped down from his position at MoMA to become the first Rosalee Solow Professor of Modern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, however he remains hugely active as a curator. This year, he curated *Disparities and Deformations*, the fifth SITE Santa Fe International Biennial, exploring the grotesque in contemporary art. He has just been appointed director of the 2007 Venice Biennale.

REVIEWS

deliberately placed although its resolution appears provisional: perhaps it is an object to be hung, or maybe it is to be removed to take its place in some other kind of display.

This installation probes the complicity that exists between what and how it is shown in producing momentum in the equation, namely derived to be shown. Susan Judd for Kelly, as it were, has introduced a utopian dimension into but it is a question of utopia: truncated and divided of color, 1973, and the context not only also produced and in a certain way. It is utopia derived from the sustainable and rendered problematic space of control and power. In this work, the artist engages with critical prac



et al.

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In *The Art of War* Sun Tsu advises: "All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder..." et al. have surely taken this principle to heart. The Auckland-based collective toys with viewers, persistently wrong-footing them. Theirs is an art of misdirection. For instance, et al. may engage in post-modern play with personae, persistently exhibiting under nom-de-plumes and side-stepping interviewers, yet the work is astonishingly consistent, even signature in style and content. et al. may use conceptual art formats and trowel on art references and philosophy citations, yet, perversely, beneath this, the work is almost expressionist – emphasising mood and sensibility. With et al. it's always hard to know where to look, to distinguish what's crucial from what's contingent; signal from noise. It's also hard to pinpoint the artists' identifications. The work is full of references to things institutional, but it is never clear whether et al. are at war with the institution, conspiring with it, or both. For the uninitiated, this can be frustrating. But for the et al. fan, it's another matter. The habitual perversity and ambivalence prove reassuring, because they are the constants that define the et al. universe. They're normalised within the works' regime. et al.'s installation *restricted access* exemplifies the approach. The group created it for their 2003 survey show *abnormal mass delusions?* at New Plymouth's Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. Painted institutional grey, the space looked less like a pristine exhibit, and more like a grungy cellar or utilitarian lock-up. Cleaning out their dealers' stockrooms, the artists piled up as much unsold work as they could muster, quantity proving more crucial than quality; then installed Cyclone fencing in front of it, preventing us from getting a decent look. The resulting set suggested a workspace – amongst the stuff was a lamp-and-table-and-chair awaiting the artist-attendant-caretaker. It also recalled Dr. Lecter's cell, making us wonder whether that fence was there to protect the viewer or the artist. The work's title, implying access and restriction at once – a contradiction in terms – contextualised the work's refusal as tease; an exercise in simultaneously evading and accepting the invitation to be surveyed. *Robert Leonard*







<<Invisible>>

<<You make me feel invisible>>

<<Chlorpromazine>>

Walter Benjamin famously remarked, "There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." Jacqueline Fraser plays in the space between civil appearances and barbaric realities. Her hieratic tableaux are drawn and collaged directly onto the wall, typically with wire and fabrics. In the late 1990s she introduced allegorical female characters into these scenes, their chic/facile lines recalling early Warhol fashion illustrations. Impeccably dressed, elegantly shod and immaculately coiffured, Fraser's heroines were incongruously stylish, especially as the works hinted at themes of mental illness, homelessness and general disenfranchisement. It was as though Fraser's pauper-princesses had risen above everyday inequities to achieve a certain sanctity, recalling images of martyrs emanating grace even as defiled. But this reading got harder to sustain when Fraser followed up with a series of drawings of women's shoes on squares of fine fabric, annotated with types of weaponry – <<SURFACE TO AIR BATTERIES>>, <<ANTHRAX>>, <<12 GAUGE SHOTGUN>>; insults – <<YOU'RE A WASTE OF SPACE>>; and groovy militant slogans – <<UNCO-OPERATE, BABY>>. Was Fraser offering fashionable female accessories as means of jihad, laughing at fashion's pretence to be part of the cultural revolution, or just letting those questions hang? In her recent installation <<Invisible>> (2004), Fraser seems to have completely turned on her former heroines, and is now indulging the flipside of her love/hate relationship with them. Her installation mocks up a well-appointed palace-room with pink walls, sumptuous drapes and chandeliers. On the walls, fashionable females teeter precariously on their stilettos, possibly in a trance; one floats horizontally, as though magically levitated. Instead of using her trademark wire outlines, Fraser drew her ciphers' exposed faces, hands and elegantly shod feet on acetate. Interchangeable, like mannequins, they are differentiated only by the treatment of their tailored Italian suits and by their accessories (fur hats and masks pulled over their eyes). Accompanying text panels juxtapose air-head AbFab truisms – <<WE'RE LOOKING AT YOU. CIAO BELLA.>>, <<MY FUR COSSACK HAT ENHANCES MY LOOK.>>, <<NO ONE RECOGNISES ME WHEN I WEAR DARK GLASSES.>> – with brands of anti-depressants, pain-killers, anti-psychotics... drugs that grant the smart set the perma-smiles to go with their perma-tans. One could only recall those headlines: "DONATELLA IN REHAB!" In this Dior hell, this vapid world of *Tattler* tribalism, Fraser's svelte sympathetic freedom-fighters have turned into stylish vampires and victims and crashed the art party; Fraser reframing *la dolce vita* as a drug-induced denial. Style, manners and propriety have a floating status in Fraser's work: sometimes they seem to be part of the problem; sometimes part of the solution. If the artist ultimately offers no real pointer either way, perhaps it's because she agrees with that other dandy, Oscar Wilde: "Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative." Hey, chic happens. *Robert Leonard*

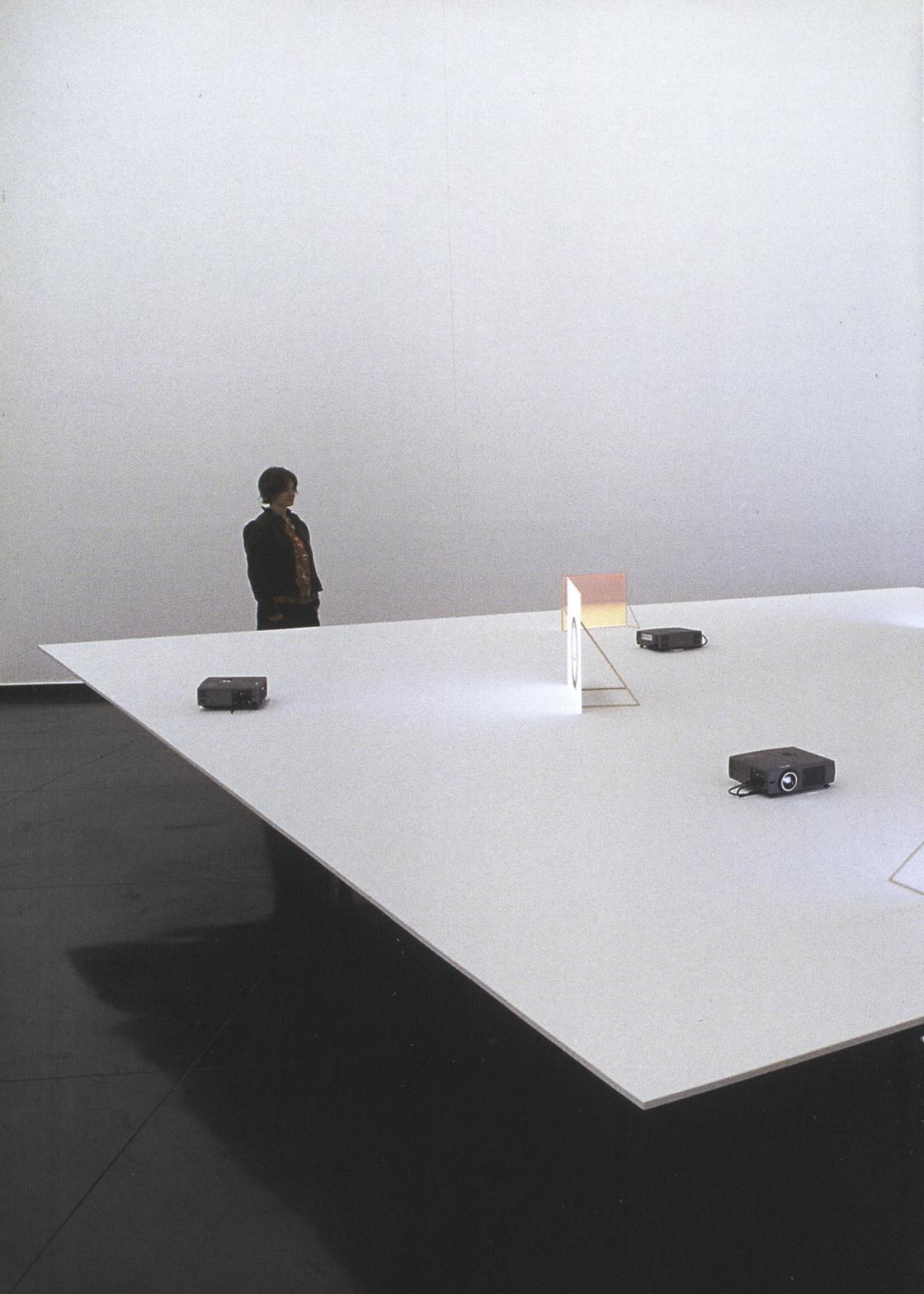


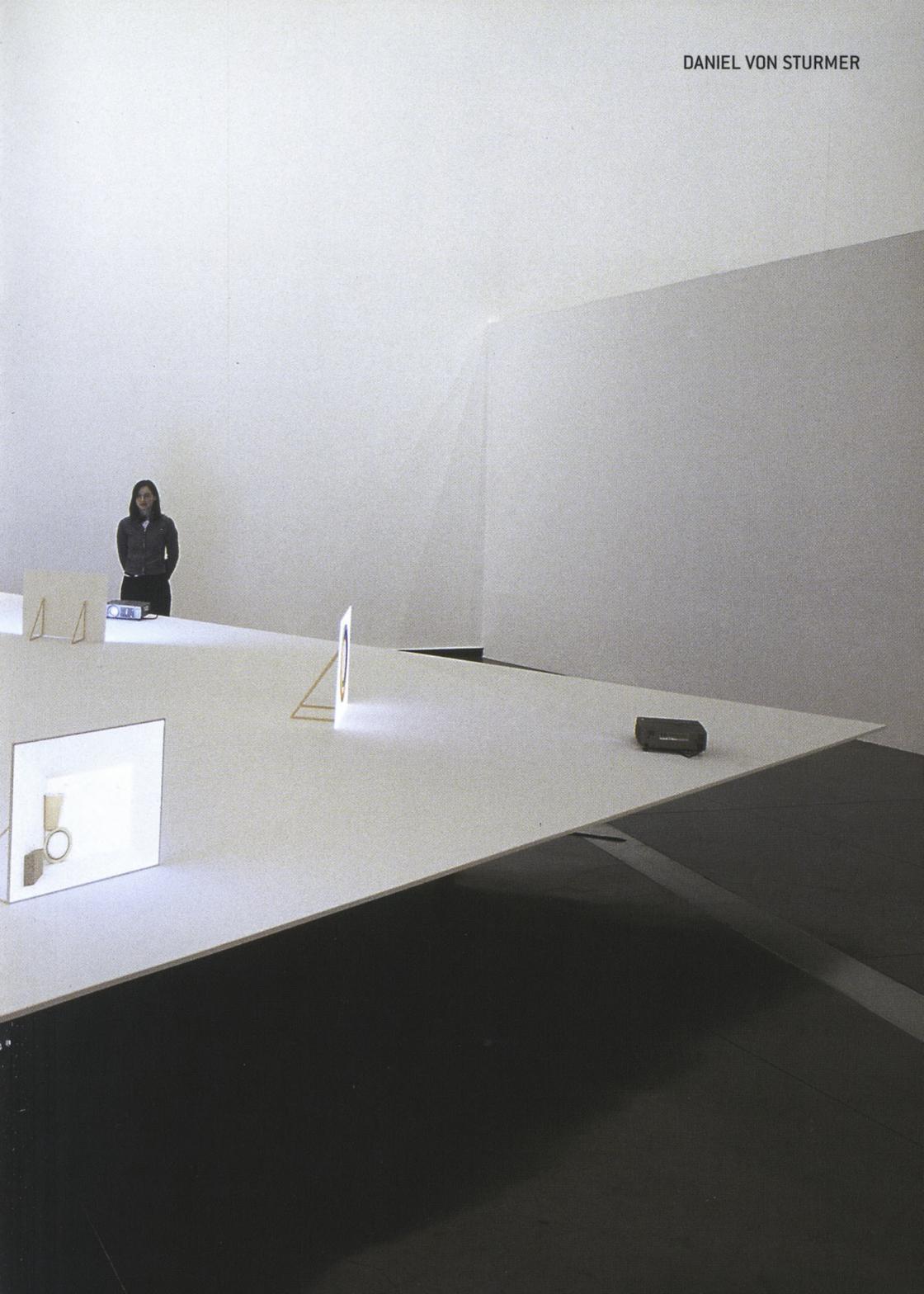
RONNIE VAN HOUT





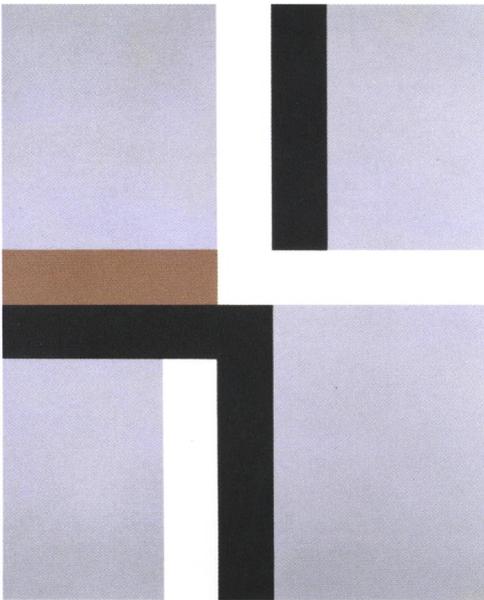
Ronnie van Hout's work is underpinned by a play between comedy and tragedy, between self-abandon and introspection. Some time in the mid-1980s the novel idea that originality is bunk gave him license to mimic canonical artists and fashionable strategies. If artists are typically cast as strong personalities, Van Hout seemed to offer the opposite: a weak personality open to suggestion. In one work he even presented himself in a séance, as a medium through which others spoke. However, no matter how deeply Van Hout got lost, how much he "abandoned me", his work always demanded to be read in terms of his particular adventure, his negotiation of this landscape of others. In the late 1990s self-portraiture became more prominent in Van Hout's work. As he approached self-portraiture through tropes and quotations, doppelgangers, duplicates and doubles, the tension between self and others became more pronounced. Van Hout's installations *No Exit Part 1* and *2* (2003) pay homage to the 1944 play *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*) by French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre argued that other people necessarily recognise and objectify us, limiting our freedom and sovereignty. In his play three dead people – cooped together for eternity – realise they are in their own personal hells. Van Hout's past work would seem to challenge Sartre's view, given that Van Hout is celebrated for finding personal release by camping out in the desires and identities of others. But things have become more complex. In *No Exit Part 1*, a Van Hout mannequin stands before a fireplace, enjoying mystic communion with birds-in-the-hand, like some contemporary Saint Francis, a long-haired hermit, a loner; we hear the birds discussing his plight. Meanwhile, in an accompanying video, another Van Hout in white overalls and alien mask haunts a graveyard. The images are mismatched: one is genuinely spooky, the other something out of Ed Wood. *Part 2* features the work *I'm Not Trying*. A Van Hout mannequin, this time nerdy and tracksuited, lies down on the job on the gallery floor while a stuffed magpie bears witness. Close by a small monitor set into a fake rock shows the same scene played out by the artist for real in the middle of a park. The title is spelt out in play-doh letters in front of a distorting mirror, allowing the viewer to replace the artist in this self-portrait. In an accompanying sculpture, casts of Van Hout's head, fake logs and fake rocks stack up to spell out: "NO NO". It's like a demented Chris Booth sculpture, made in collaboration with the Dead Tree School and cannibals. This piece contains the most overt reference to Sartre's play. An inset video monitor finds Van Hout sitting on a couch with a monkey man (Monkey Madness) and a dog man (Sculp D. Dog) representing alter egos. Bored, the artist conducts a depressing monologue direct to camera, bemoaning his silent partners. Do we count them as him or as others? Certainly in furnishing no dispute, no other angle, they offer him no help in perfecting his point of view. Van Hout's *No Exit* installations exemplify a Catch 22. Self and others may be in opposition, but they aren't alternatives. We can't really look to others to escape the self, or vice versa. As Sartre would have it, "Hell is other people", but only because these witnesses make us self-conscious. *Robert Leonard*







Asked to imagine an art gallery, many of us would instantly picture a classic "white cube". As modern art's preferred showcase, the pristine white-walled gallery has become a cliché. The principle was to strip away distractions, framing art off from the world, and yet the white cube has become a curiously loaded context, combining the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom and the mystique of the laboratory with chic design. Not content with simply allowing us to see the object in splendid isolation, the white cube now stands for Truth itself. It is also a site where the art object is utterly fetishised – granted a mystic vitality. Daniel von Sturmer's work engages our complex relation to the white cube and the varieties of truth it entails. His video installation *The Truth Effect* (2003) has one foot in minimalist-phenomenology, another in filmic sight gags and special effects. The action occurs on an expansive table, a tilted plane. Five video projectors front-project and back-project onto small screens. The videos are all set within a white box. Some of the actions appear to be like magic tricks (concealing), others like science demonstrations (revealing). Quotidian objects become comic characters: some springy and elastic, others dense and dumb. One video shows a paper cup, a cork sanding block and a roll of sticky tape jockeying for position within the box. They move, decisively or sluggishly, perhaps under their own steam, perhaps drawn by hidden forces. We become embroiled in anticipating which thing will move next and how, based on its position, size, weight and shape, and its relation to the others and the box. Of course the effect is caused by rotating the box, slowly tumbling the objects, only we don't see that at first because the camera's position is fixed in relation to the box and there's no outside reference point. In other videos, coloured circles of decreasing size are overlaid on a turntable, creating 3D vortex effects, referencing Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*; a grey rectangle is held in front of the camera, so it appears to become the wall or ceiling it obscures; sticky tape rolls up an apparently inclined plane, miraculously coming to rest on the slope. Some of the videos ask us to reverse-engineer their effects, others let us in behind the scenes. *The Truth Effect* exploits a play between expectation and perception, between real space and pictorial space, between the wide world and the video frame. It doesn't explore something we don't know, so much as revel in a deft display of textbook paradoxes. *The Truth Effect* engages these paradoxes to explore and conjure with the rhetorics of art, science and illusion. *Robert Leonard*



Gordon Walters
Construction With Red Ochre 1985
acrylic on canvas
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Gift of friends of the artist on the occasion
of his 70th birthday, 1989

Gordon Walters was born in Wellington in 1919 and trained at Wellington Technical College in the 1930s. He travelled to Australia in 1946 and again in 1947, living in Sydney until 1949. In 1950 Walters left for London and Europe to study first-hand the abstract art he admired, and returned to New Zealand in 1953. Throughout a career spanning six decades, he resolutely pursued geometric abstraction at a time when landscape was the required subject in New Zealand painting.

WALTERS PRIZE 2002

Winner

Yvonne Todd

Finalists

Gavin Hipkins

John Reynolds

Michael Stevenson

Judge

Harald Szeemann

Jury

Robert Leonard

William McAloon

Anna Miles

Justin Paton

