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4 August – 11 November 2012

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● Finalists



Simon Denny

Born:
1982, Auckland, New Zealand

Lives and works:
Auckland, New Zealand
and Berlin, Germany

Nominated work:
Introductory Logic Video Tutorial, 2010
inkjet print on canvas, metal fittings, Samsung 32" television boxes, wooden and other found plinths, vitrine with remote controls
Courtesy of the artist, Michael Lett, Auckland and private lenders

First exhibited:
Artspace, Sydney, 5 March – 10 April 2010



Alicia Frankovich

Born:
1980, Tauranga, New Zealand

Lives and works:
Berlin, Germany

Nominated work:
Floor Resistance, 2011
musicians, performers, kinetic object, music stands
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland

First exhibited:
Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin, 25 June 2011



Kate Newby

Born:
1979, Auckland, New Zealand

Lives and works:
Auckland, New Zealand

Nominated work:
Crawl out your window, 2010
concrete, paint, found objects, ceramics, cotton, carpet
Courtesy the artist and Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland

First exhibited:
Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst GAK, Bremen, 28 August – 7 November 2010



Sriwhana Spong

Born:
1979, Auckland, New Zealand

Lives and works:
Auckland, New Zealand

Nominated work:
Fanta Silver and Song, 2011
digital video and 35mm film transferred to DVD, digital video, steel, perfumed paper and colour filters, silk dyed in Fanta, collaged book pages
Courtesy the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland

First exhibited:
Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, 4 February – 5 March 2011

● Director's Foreword

The sixth Walters Prize includes four recent projects by Simon Denny, Alicia Frankovich, Kate Newby and Sriwhana Spong. They are, by a considerable margin, the youngest group of artists to have their work included in the Prize. I want to congratulate them warmly on their thoroughly deserved nominations, and thank them for their efforts in helping to re-present their works for this exhibition. We have been hugely reliant on their goodwill and often demanding of their ingenuity.

A jury, who initially worked independently and who then came together to agree a shortlist, made the selection. This year comprising David Cross, Aaron Kreisler, Kate Montgomery and Gwynneth Porter, the jury had the task of identifying works that, in their collective opinion, have made an outstanding contribution to contemporary New Zealand art in the preceding two years. I want to thank them for their contribution. Once their task was complete, Curator Natasha Conland worked with the artists and our collection services team to find the most appropriate way of re-presenting these projects.

The culmination of that exhibition re-making occurs when visiting judge, Mami Kataoka, chief curator at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, travels to Auckland in October to determine the prize award. In addition to her role at the Mori, Kataoka is currently joint artistic director of the *9th Gwangju Biennale*, in Korea, and is curator of *Ai Weiwei: According to What?* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington. The partners in the Walters are honoured that Mami Kataoka accepted their invitation to judge the 2012 prize.

Those partners include founding benefactors and principal donors, Erika and Robin Congreve and Dame Jenny Gibbs, who support the exhibition and furnish the prize award, and major donor Dayle Mace, who provides a finalist award to each of the nominated artists. We could not do this without them, and I remain deeply grateful to them for their vision and their resilience. Having set the prize in motion, they remain generous and steadfast in their commitment to its ideals. They want the Walters to deepen understanding of contemporary art, they want to broaden its audience, and they want to support the artists who shape and give form to our contemporary visual culture.

In this, Auckland Art Gallery and its Walters Prize partners have found a perfect alignment, one that has now entered its second decade. This is the first Walters Prize the Gallery has presented since re-opening its newly developed building in September 2011. Given the considerable growth and shift that has created in our audience, this year's prize is destined to be the most visited and talked about ever, delivering exactly to the kind of ambition that the prize partners, including its founding sponsor Saatchi & Saatchi, who have been no less enduring partners in this project, had at the outset. My thanks also to Saatchi & Saatchi for providing a very open form of contribution to the award itself.

Previous Walters Prizes took place in the former New Gallery, which played a central role as our contemporary art annexe from 1995 until it closed in 2011. Since the establishment of the Walters, in 2002, its New Gallery audience often described themselves as an art-interested audience, rather than one potentially discovering contemporary art for the first time. That self-selecting model changes entirely with this year's prize, as it moves to the new level two Chartwell Gallery. Now, the Walters can more directly feed into a much wider programming nexus, and potentially reach a much larger audience than ever before.

The Walters Prize has now found a permanent and highly regarded place in our culture. There is no doubt, however, that without the active agency of the nominated artists and their gallerists, we could not hope to bring it together in the short timeframe of the prize format. Similarly, without the constant support and guidance of our founding benefactors, donors and sponsor, and the vital roles played by the jury and the judge, some of the very best of contemporary New Zealand art would not gain the kind of double exposure and critical scrutiny that this prize offers to all of the nominated finalists.

Congratulations again to finalists Simon Denny, Alicia Frankovich, Kate Newby and Sriwhana Spong, and welcome to the 2012 Walters Prize.

Chris Saines
Director

● Donors' Foreword

Looking back now 10 years at five exhibitions and five awards for the Walters Prize, we are delighted it has achieved so much for New Zealand's contemporary art. It has produced a roll-call of some of the finest artists in the country, and at each iteration it noticeably reshapes to reflect the best of today's artists.

The Walters Prize in its entirety has demonstrated the value of our partnership with Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. The high regard in which the Prize is held both here and overseas reflects the preeminence of contemporary artists in New Zealand and the seriousness with which they are regarded internationally. The professional manner in which the Gallery organises the Prize and the associated public events is a key factor in its success and has allowed us – against all our natural instincts – to adopt a scrupulously hands-off approach.

It is our hope that the Walters Prize brings many benefits to the winner, the finalists and to the scene as a whole. We hope that New Zealand art and artists gain from the interest and exposure the Prize brings. We would also like to acknowledge Dayle Mace, whose generous Finalists Awards means that all the nominated artists benefit from the Prize. We are particularly delighted to note that although all this year's finalists have a solid track record, they are the youngest group selected so far, and all actively travel with their work.

A key feature of the Walters Prize is that it brings to Auckland a distinguished judge with an international perspective. We have set our sights high: the first judge was Harold Szeemann (2002), followed by Robert Storr (2004), Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (2006) and Catherine David (2008) and Vicente Todolí (2010). This year's judge Mami Takaoka, is chief curator at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo.

Robin and Erika Congreve
Dame Jenny Gibbs



Vicente Todolí
judge of the *Walters Prize 2010*
Photograph by Manuel Vason, 2003



Dan Arps
winner of the *Walters Prize 2010*
Photography by Jennifer French

● Jury statement

David Cross artist, writer, curator and Associate Professor in Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington. **Aaron Kreisler** curator at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin. **Kate Montgomery** senior arts advisor for Visual Arts at Creative New Zealand. **Gwynneth Porter** writer, editor, publisher.

In a two-year period marked by a multitude of compelling exhibitions and projects the jury has settled on four bodies of work which each occupy unique and adventurous territories in New Zealand art. Nominations were arrived at on the basis that there was strong evidence of a particular kind of searching engagement within the artists' own practice and with the conditions of the larger world beyond. While a variety of methodological approaches are visible in the selection, this was not the intention of the jury at the outset. Rather, it was a by-product of the vitality and imaginative strength of the field in general. What does inform all of the selections is an engagement with how the discrete sculptural object is pushed beyond itself into film, installation, work in public space and performance. The jury is firmly of the belief that each artist has in startling ways interrogated and pushed their practice with great rigour and dexterity to offer new meditations on the possibilities of material, form and its assorted social contexts. Ultimately, each project demonstrated a palpable influence on the art making and viewing communities from which it has arisen.

Sriwhana Spong's *Fanta Silver and Song* drew together work based on the artist's fathoming of interpretation, gesture, orientalism and sculptural and ethereal presence. The two films – *Costume for a Mourner* and *Lethe-wards* – re-imagined a Diaghilev ballet originally performed by the Ballets Russes of which nothing more than static fragments survived. The show also involved collages made from pages of 1960s ballet picture books, silk dyed in soft-drink, and a geometric sculpture which seem to suggest diagrams of movement as an emergent individual or a group event.

Kate Newby's works alert our attention to specific textures and experiences that subtly set themselves apart from the everyday. *Crawl out your window* presented a series of works developed for the Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst (GAK) in Bremen, Germany. Newby's projects there, like a number of others since, were composed of simple materials and spacial gestures that quietly forged links between her host institution, their gallery spaces and the world outside. Entering into conversation with their surroundings in a sensitive and measured way, Newby's works drew from and amplified the contexts within which they found themselves.

While the jury were impressed with a number of **Simon Denny's** recent works, his major project for Artspace, Sydney, *Introductory Logic Video Tutorial*, was identified as being especially significant. The exhibition set up a platform for Denny to retrace, expand and actualise his academic experiences as a philosophy student at Sydney University. For the Artspace installation, the artist created a network of interconnecting tautological statements, screen grabs, television monitors (both real and surrogates), and an inventory of the gallery's audiovisual gear which together charted a clever path through a fictional educational video.

Alicia Frankovich has developed a number of exceptional bodies of work over the prize period both in New Zealand and overseas. The panel was especially compelled by her performance work *Floor Resistance*, which took place at the Hebbel Am Ufer in Berlin in 2011. This work re-negotiates the audience/performer relationship employing a string quartet in an unconventional configuration to unfold original ideas pertaining to the staging of live art. By altering the positioning and placement of the string quartet in the space, Frankovich asks us to rethink and experience anew the relationship between audience member and participant.

● Judge: Mami Kataoka



Mami Kataoka is chief curator at the Mori Art Museum (MAM) in Tokyo where she has curated *Roppongi Crossing* (2004), *Ozawa Tsuyoshi* (2004), *All About Laughter: Humor in Contemporary Art* (2007), *Ai Weiwei: According to What?* (2009), *Sensing Nature: Perception of Nature in Japan* (2010) and, most recently, *Lee Bul: From Me, Belongs to You Only*. Kataoka is extending her curatorial practice in international projects including *9th Gwangju Biennale* (2012) in South Korea as joint artistic director, *Phantoms of Asia: Contemporary Awakens the Past* (2012) at Asian Art Museum in San Francisco as guest curator, and *Ai Weiwei: According to What?* (2012) at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC. She was the international curator at the Hayward Gallery in London between 2007 and 2009, where she curated *Laughing in a Foreign Language* (2008) and co-curated *Walking in My Mind* (2009). Prior to her position at MAM, she was a chief curator at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery (1998–2002). Kataoka also frequently writes and gives lectures on contemporary art in Asia.



INTRODUCTORY
L O G I C
VIDEO TUTORIAL
MENU

INTRODUCTORY
L O G I C
VIDEO TUTORIAL
MENU

● Simon Denny

In March 2010 Simon Denny opened a multi-part installation at Artspace, Sydney called *Introductory Logic Video Tutorial*. The absence of video itself was not only striking but compelling as 'screens' were turned into paintings then sculptures, sitting on leftover plinths and boxes from the manufacturer. Rather than moving image, the work sought to convey still-frame lessons for his audience in philosophic logic.

The idea of an introduction informs the title of this work, but also, it seems you are creating something like a 'step-by-step' or a 'how to' guide. Are you in some small way testing art's capacity to provide information to users?

This is a nice way to see the work. I think art can be a very good vehicle for information, that this can be explicit and done well. An art exhibition has the opportunity to do this in a way that is not always 1:1. That is, it can make the form of providing information more overt than it is in other situations.

As part of this project I took an Introductory Logic course at the University of Sydney, which was then translated into this faux-video. The paper taught philosophical logic, and logic is interested in *form* – how arguments are structured, and how their form determines whether content is true or false, rather than the other way around. The 'how to' format was also derived from that experience. For me the idea of form determining truth had certain resonances with how something is presented: both that form can determine a lot of its meaning, and that we as people are really affected by the way things are shown to us.

Your presentation logic is however tested within this now outmoded looking hardware, was that intentional?

The fact that the technology depicted looks retro was not really an influencing factor for deciding on the project, it was simply the hardware that that institution had at the time for exhibiting video. It was a portrait of the priorities and limitations of an exhibition space (in this case Artspace, Sydney), of the material that is used to present audiovisual culture in that institution, in that city.

So where did the project begin for you? Was the course a consequence of something you wanted to explore, or did it come first and the material investigation later?

It all came at the same time really. This residency offered a moment to spend some time in Sydney, to make and present a project. The challenge when you are offered a residency like this is to balance the expectations for interaction with the artist's practice, and the place (the host's environment). The decision to go to the university was one way for me to reflect on how culture is presented and taught in Sydney – to be taught ways of thinking from one of the most authoritative knowledge production institutions in the city. The challenge then was to reflect that in an exhibition, using visual conventions that would work within a known language of information display.

Also, because I was attempting to make a portrait of the city, I thought about embedding some images of the landscape in the project. This led me to include these scenes of the desert in New South Wales as desktop-wallpapers in the video frames. It was a chance for me to interact with landscape – a representational mode that has been as important to the art histories of colonial and post-colonial nations like Australia, as it has been, for example, in the tourism industry.

Left

Simon Denny
Introductory Logic Video Tutorial (installation detail),
2010, Artspace, Sydney
Courtesy of artist and Michael Lett, Auckland
Photograph by Silversalt Photography, Sydney

There are lots of transitions in the installation between seemingly incompatible modes – painting canvas as 3D monitors, TV and video remotes displayed in archive cases, philosophy on video TV. These transitions have the effect of disorientating the viewer, which seems of course in opposition to logical, linear flow. Was this a critique or an ‘experiment’ in real terms?

Well, I think that effect for me is about the experience of information, and the experience of objects – what it feels like to interact with things in the world. I think we often don’t have enough information to make sense of our experience of things. Quite simply, when we interact with an object we are therefore not able to make informed judgements about what that thing is.

That might sound a bit abstract, but I think it’s actually something a lot of us experience. The things and processes that build the environments we inhabit often have nothing to do with us. The presence of history or even the properties of stuff around us is quite abstract. This is especially felt in screen formats, again, something we are all very familiar with. Is watching a movie on your phone the same thing as in the cinema? Obviously it’s not, but then again it’s also clearly not an unrelated activity. Therefore, to present something in a format that is confused – a photo of a video, which is then printed and stretched like a painting and presented as a sculpture – expresses this feeling for me quite well.

So to answer your question, I am not sure that I identify this as a critique; in a way I feel that this is not something I can really be critical of, it’s just the way things are. But it’s not an experiment either; it’s more like an expression of an experience – a group of objects that give the viewer an opportunity to think about that experience.

You often use real video footage in installations. At what point did you decide not to display the video footage itself and withdraw any time-based material from the installation?

For this project there was no actual video footage. I only created these stills as possible moments in a video that in fact never existed; these stills were then played through the available screens. However, I have worked with found and produced video footage, both in projects that I’ve done before and since this body of work. For this work I thought it was more powerful not to have that kind of experience in the show. The title claims to be a moving image project and then delivers a graphic sculpture project, which seems to be a helpful strategy to employ in the delivery of this show. I felt that this difference between what is expected and what is experienced reinforced the ideas I was trying to communicate.

One of the single-most intriguing canvas monitors for me is the image of a static screen. It appears to display a kind of ‘outage’, and it’s a screen that we rarely see today in broadcast or video display. What made you decide to include it?

Yes it’s nice how it behaves this way in the set. The decision to include it was related to the constraints of the project – it’s one of the monitors that Artspace owns, and therefore had to be included, but it was so old or whatever, that it couldn’t even play the DVD really. The signal just translated into this static. So it was the same procedure as the rest of the screens, just this one was sort of faulty. It wasn’t the result of a separate or additional decision, it was just one of the series which had this result.

You have an ongoing interest in forms of mass-media communication both of current usage, and those which have slipped from currency – either outmoded or no longer required, and possibly made nostalgic through their reappraisal. In more recent exhibitions you have also explored the use of video in corporate contexts, and the congruence of national television and national identity documents (the New Zealand passport)... There is an aspect to which drawing these forms into the space of art makes them unhomely, or is the opposite the case?

It’s hard for me to think of mass-media communication material as ‘homely’... I think it’s true that because this kind of language is so familiar to us we usually interact with it without really processing its visual codes all that consciously. By presenting it in an art space those conventions are rendered unfamiliar, because we might not necessarily expect that visual language in an art context. But in contrast to this I also think a pretty general audience who has had a little bit of experience interacting with art is used to seeing many types of visual language imported into museums and galleries. An environment where people are prepared to be thoughtful (like a gallery or museum), is a perfect setting for looking closely at aspects of things that we otherwise don’t have time to process carefully. This is what happens in other types of museums and exhibitions – like history or technology museums.

I find my experience of some aspects of news programmes or the language of advertising, for example, to be really complicated. The way these affect me feels complicated. I think making exhibitions that tease out this experience and put it in different terms can be worthwhile for a viewer. Obviously the very formats of news or advertising (their form and logic), can tell us a lot about their content.







● Alicia Frankovich

On the evening of 25 June 2011 at the performing arts venue Hebbel Am Ufer's HAU 3 in Kreuzberg Berlin, Alicia Frankovich opened a performance titled *Floor Resistance*. The work was made for this theatre site, employing musicians, sculpture, performers and its audience in a five-act work that upturned typical expectations for theatrical performance. Throughout the evening the audience remained onstage, and the performers among, below and surrounding them.

There were five parts to Floor Resistance in its original format, how did you interrelate them and over what duration were they performed for the audience?

In this artwork made for the stage I wanted to alter our traditional experience of the theatre and its formalities. *Floor Resistance* was an exhibition, experienced as in theatre, as a succession of events. I wanted the sequence of these events to be both harmonious and dissonant. I wanted the performers to enter from all angles rather than from solely behind the curtain, mixing up the order and relationship between the parts, making every component of the situation the *work*.

The exhibition began when two people rose from their seats and moved around the stage displaying a kinetic object, which referenced their own walking action (1.08 – 6.03). Then an opera singer was introduced from backstage as a pseudo-protagonist, though she was lying horizontally on the ground (6.06 – 12.08). Also lying down and amidst the audience were the musicians from a string quartet, who further unveiled and ruptured traditions of theatre experience, giving viewers a personal encounter with these 'bodies' (13.10-46.18). Next, *Jumping Guy* (the dancer) was introduced to the stage as an interloper, or 'a wild card' and very much a gate crusher (45.26 – 53.30). This was the only moment of overlap between scenes, as he phased in just as the string quartet was finishing. They remained on the floor as witnesses until the end. In the final scene, a black curtain opened

to a brightly lit white backdrop. The audience was prompted to swivel in their chairs to watch *Bisons* (53.50 – 1.02), facing the action front-on for the first time. As director I engaged in a series of one-on-one physical scrums with isolated audience members, our necks and shoulders interlocked with opposing forces in an animal-like embrace. Shadows of our bodies were cast on the screen behind.

The evening's performance captured some ideas you have consistently returned to – that is, an interest in objects, spaces and contexts that provoke performative action, with or without the presence of a 'live body'. At the HAU3 was there anyone or anything that wasn't 'performing' in your terms?

No – exactly. I work with this idea a lot – turning everyone into a kind of performer. I am interested in setting up situations that involve professional, amateur and accidental participants. At HAU3 the audience was effectively sitting in the middle of the work, with access to the loge denied. Everybody plays a role whether they are in uniform, or in their own clothes. What I am interested in is the combination of characters at the occasion, most of whom have arrived with different intentions. The audience came on stage and were 'performing' immediately, as that is the effect the stage has – it presents those who are on show.

At what points did you decide to be present and absent from the event itself and in what role?

I know the limitations of what I can bring to a situation. Others can do much more because they have a distance from my intentions, and bring the specifics of their movements and behaviours to the situation. When I do perform, as in *Bisons*, I have orchestrated a piece which is directly about the encounter that the audience can have with the artist, as a means for exploring how a work is received by an audience. The performance is choreographed, yet

Right

Alicia Frankovich
Floor Resistance (performance detail) 2011,
Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland





Left top

Alicia Frankovich
Floor Resistance (performance detail), 2011,
Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland

Left middle

Alicia Frankovich
Jumping Guy in Floor Resistance
(performance detail), 2011,
Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland

Left bottom

Alicia Frankovich
Bisons in Floor Resistance (performance detail),
2011, Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland

it plays out in an indeterminate way, depending on what mood I am in, and the social and physical differences of the participants. In other works, like in my recent films, I have had different roles, either intervening or mediating between the performers. The decision over whether I might enter is based on whether the situation requires my physical direction.

In your work to date sculptural items are highly characterised – what gives them their gesture or even personality if you don't object to that reference?

With my sculpture I am looking for a way of sustaining performance qualities when the body is absent, so that a 'performance' might be able to continue for an exhibition's duration. My objects would not be 'alive' without my performances, by which I mean one feeds the other. In previous performances I have hauled my body, inverted it and pitched it against another. In my sculptures, I replace these political, physical and gravitational relationships, with objects like wooden planks, inverted music stands and humming monitors, which become stand-ins for the body. *Jumping Guy* adds a further twist to this exchange because his movement is choreographed from these sculptures. The choreography isolates Martin's limbs in a rudimentary way, like a plank, although you are aware that his body is human, and you hear his heavy breathing. Time is always a consideration with these mechanised pieces. The timing or pulse of *Slow Dance* correlates to human breathing patterns as it lifts.

In Floor Piece as elsewhere you make visible the mechanisms for live action – the curator exposed in their role as instigator or producer for the artist's work (for want of a better word); the artist's entry into the exhibition; the audience's typically passive point of observation. Is there an intended politic to this exposure? Or rather is it in a sense formal, that you are re-orientating some of the givens of performance art's display time.

It is certainly political, and also probably formal, as I deal with the form and social encounter of bodies. I expose the systems in which art is produced and displayed. In the gallery, museum or theatre everything and everyone has a function. If I might consider the walls or the mode of entry into a space, I might also consider the curator. The curator is a part of the gallery in the same way a didactic sticker, a hanging painting or an exhibiting artist is – it's just that they are not always in view. In this instance, Natasha,

you are writing the text for a didactic wall panel that will make up part of the piece *Bisons* and will perform like a work in the show. It wouldn't be legitimate for an artist to write a didactic text for a wall mount as their perceived role is to make the work, not explain it. You could say that this work is a little sardonic in this sense. It could also be empowering for the curator in the same way it might be for the artist to exhibit a work.

When re-orientating this work for Auckland Art Gallery you have made the decision to transfer the core concepts from a 'theatre' to a 'gallery' setting. What steps did you take to rethink the relationships between 'live action' 'object' and 'viewing'?

I have planned the new iteration of *Floor Piece* to be something that a viewer wanders through as a series of acts, each with varying speeds and conditions. It has gone from being situated within and also 'about' theatre conventions, to then being transposed, situated in, and also 'about' museum conventions and relations. The exhibition uses the conceptual premises of the original performances to extend into new forms. In addition, some of the live performances will be restaged in the Gallery.

The audience will begin in the Gallery with a darkened projection space. I am interested in how this type of exhibition display has been adapted from theatre and cinema. I will also transfer the relationship between the floor-playing musicians and seated audience members in the theatre to the Gallery. Michael Dahl's *King George I c1714*, from the collection of Auckland Art Gallery, will be suspended from the ceiling facing the wall. To access the painted surface, the viewer will have to go behind the painting, coming into close proximity with this historic image. The 'private viewing' of this painting both disempowers and exposes the subject of the painting in a voyeuristic way, especially when encountered immediately after the video of *Jumping Guy*.

As an exhibition, I display and critique objects within the context of the museum – the painting, the projection booth, the inverted music stand, the video monitor, and the wall label. I attempt to both outline and question visitor performativity and museum politics in an attempt to alter the reception of art among institution, producer and audience, by employing live performance (that of my own body and the bodies of others, as well as re-embodied performances), and contextualising objects, equipment and physical gestures.

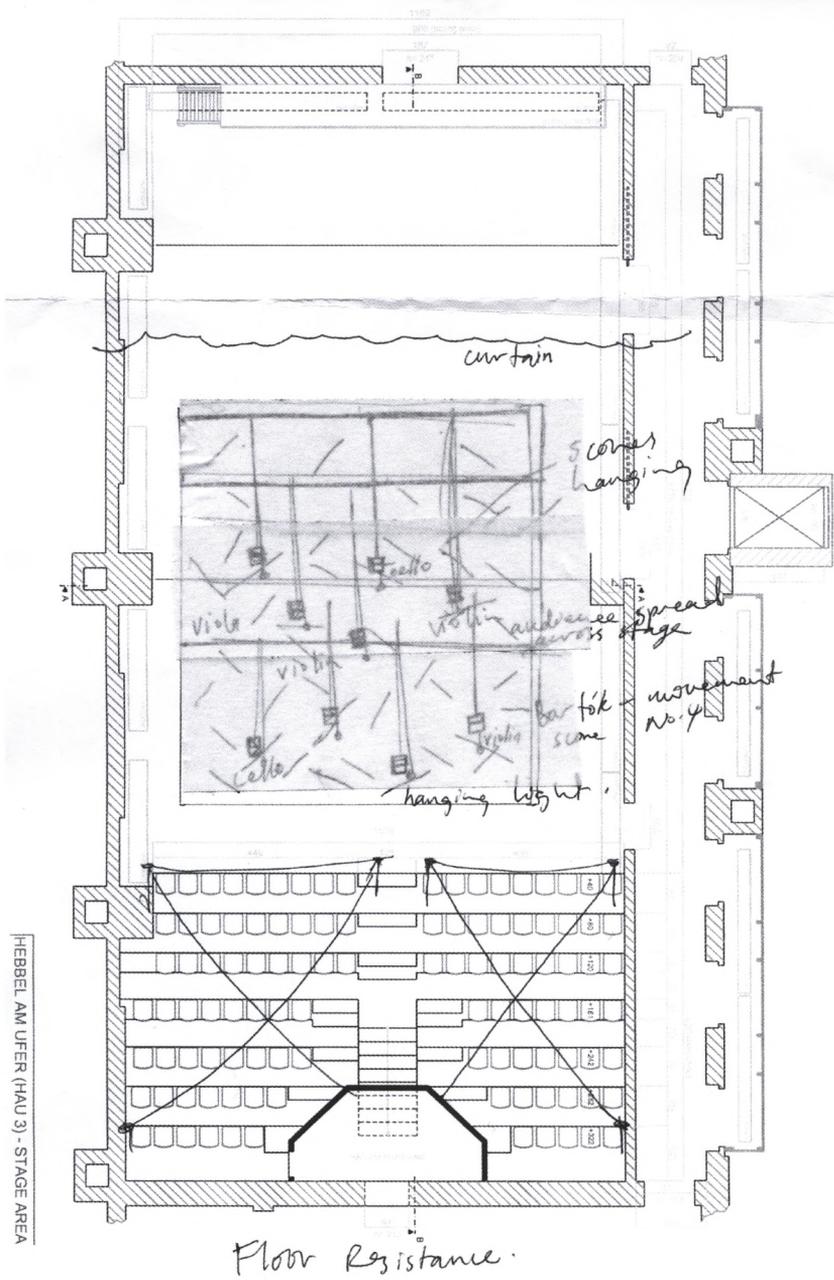


Above

Alicia Frankovich
Floor Resistance (performance detail) 2011,
Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland

Above right

Alicia Frankovich
Floor Resistance (drawing) 2011,
Hebbel Am Ufer, HAU 3, Berlin
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland



HEBBEL AM UFER (HAU 3) - STAGE AREA

Floor Resistance.



● Kate Newby

Left

Kate Newby
Crawl out your window (installation view), 2010,
Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst GAK
Courtesy of the artist and
Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland
Photography by Peter Podkowiak

Crawl out your window was a solo project at the Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst GAK, Bremen in August 2010 in which Kate Newby used a palette of materials to alter the interior space of the museum. Each room enclosed a different spatial and material solution to the visitor's route through the exhibition space, in concrete, cotton sheet, paint and carpet.

The title for the show at Bremen's GAK has a very direct mode of address – who is it aimed at?

I didn't have a specific audience in mind, and that was sort of the point. I've always loved what happens in museums and institutional spaces from a very personal perspective. I try to make work that resonates for an educated museum-goer and for the more casual, infrequent visitor. I wanted to structure something that amplified the excitement, but also the anxiety that these spaces provoke. The idea of escape appealed to me. I liked the idea that no matter who the museum viewer was, or what their investment or experience, that perhaps there is a common desire in such situations to just crawl out the window, get outside of it, yourself, expectations, whatever is involved.

So was the window in reference to the architecture at GAK, or were you referring to an abstract action?

Both, really, although I wasn't thinking about it in those terms exactly. The work is structured to encourage the viewer to almost literally crawl out the window of the gallery and to escape the space. I like that it suggests mobility, having to adapt to one's surroundings, and using space in unprescribed ways. But it also suggests something else, something more personal. Inevitably it will mean something different to each person. I guess I often use phrases like this, and I remove their context to allow a more open engagement and a more intuitive response.

The various components of Crawl out your window have the capacity to feel like independent sculptural elements enticing the viewer on a journey of the space. How did you envisage the concrete ramp operating in relation to the other parts of the installation?

When I plan installations like this I try to think about how to claim the space as much as possible by doing as little as possible. I try to avoid giving the viewer a 'thing' to look at, and instead use space as a primary material of the work. It's important that the elements totally and physically exist there and nowhere else. In the GAK you had to walk over the ramp to enter the back space (which had the carpet work, 'I'm so ready'). It's not so often that one walks around a gallery on a slope. Yet, we do this on a daily basis when we walk around the world. I also wanted it to be imprinted by the act of making it, like marks on a footpath it had footprints, stones embedded in it, etc. I guess I wanted to speak to this somehow without making any great claim to change anything. My work doesn't change anything, or invent anything, it just ghosts or mimics the things that I absorb and notice around me.

The most curious thing about the concrete ramp is that it is both architectural (relating to the building) and sculptural requiring us to observe its surface which gives the viewer an uncomfortable feeling of limbo, like they are literally walking on sculpture. How important is the surface area for you?

The ramp explores and quotes a lot of the things that I pay attention to on my walks around a city or along a street. I saw the ramp as a way to make a floor mural in a very open way. I often quote from the fabric of urban space in my works. I often try to bring in some of the vitality of lived life into the gallery. The idea of 'encounters' and finding things along the way appeals to me.

The curtain and the yellow room are uncannily like a sun-room. It is a cliché perhaps but I can't help thinking about the use of yellow in art historically, from van Gogh onwards, and its association with actual light. What role does the curtain play?

The cotton curtain was there to imply a wall. I saw all the materials in the exhibition as 'primary materials'. Floors, walls, rocks, words, and blue and yellow are of course both primary colours. The curtain was there to provide a sort of corridor, allowing a space within a space inside of the larger gallery structure. The cotton was semi-transparent so that the light from the window and the yellow sort of glowed out into the interior.

The cotton was stained by soaking it in a river and by using it as a massive picnic blanket in the village where I was staying at the time, Worpswede. I liked the idea that the cotton had a life out in the world before it arrived in the gallery. The markings on it are from the people I was living with on this residency – it is also a very casual kind of social documentation.

I wasn't necessarily thinking of art historical references for yellow, but as a colour it has a particular energy, and of course a link to light and its representation. In the GAK, the yellow definitely evoked sunlight. The curtain is stained with the experience of having been in the sun, and the traces of that experience are visible, and made more visible, as the sunlight literally passes through it. The yellow captures light in the space of the gallery, infusing and amplifying what is already present from the windows, and pointing to the permeability of the space.

I was more interested in the idea of windows and their connection to the history of art actually, to pictorial space, and to institutional spaces. But I wasn't trying to reference specific precedents – more nature itself, which is the original point of reference anyway.

At what point did you decide to create a dialogue with the Lawrence Weiner mural which is located immediately outside the GAK?

When I arrived in Bremen I did a lot of research into the building and site from New Zealand and had a rough exhibition plan, but I left myself a lot of time once I arrived to make decisions based on my experience of the site. And there were a few significant things that I missed, one that the river was tidal, and the other one was the mural. I was interested in something that pulled your attention out of the GAK and into the environment around it. Weiner's text mural was referencing the fact that the island where the GAK sat (along with culture), was sinking. I suppose if felt a bit heavy and I wanted to answer back to his comment in some way.

You've often used text inscriptions in your installations, in books and on objects. How do you characterise the presence of language in these instances, as opposed to say Weiner wherein the text usually sits without a relationship to the material support?

For *Crawl out your window* I really wanted the challenge of having the materials and work do the talking as opposed to the words

and phrases that I had become very comfortable using. Words were still very present in this project (in the title, on the carpet, painted rocks, mural) but I was trying to be more precise and more deliberate in my use of language. For this exhibition, in each instance the words were inserted in a physical way that reinforced what the words might mean. The words 'Try. Try.' were off in the distance as a response to the work in the show; and the carpet's words 'I'm so ready' were in chalk, gradually getting trod over during the period of the exhibition.

You have previously described an interest in creating sites of 'intimacy' or at least intimate encounter within mostly urban settings. It seems intimacy for you isn't a state of romantic isolation, rather a time-based experience. That is, intimacy for Newby requires a different time-setting, in which your physical self orientates itself to merely noticing things rather than activating them – where the viewer's body may be passively in art's presence. That's not to say the viewer is inactive, rather drawn into a softer less dependent interaction than other relational practices. Is that a fair analysis?

Yes, absolutely. I did not want to create sculptures to be stood and looked at, rather I tried to create a space to be explored – or create conditions for a particular type of experience that is always ultimately defined by the viewer. Maybe the works are like questions that the viewer can choose to answer, and while given clues, ultimately they figure out the way in which they want to physically encounter the work.

How do you feel about re-siting the work to Auckland, and drawing through these separate components into a new site, will they carry a memory of their original location?

Yes, they will carry a memory of their original location but the work will be very different. It has to be. There is no river involved, no Weiner, no picturesque view of a German town. The specifics of a site – the difficulties, limits, awkwardness, the particulars that guide one's experience of a space - these are the content and make up of the work. So at Auckland Art Gallery it will become something very different again. There will be the distinctive blue ramp and yellow corridor, but the current manifestation is necessarily responding to a very different physical environment. I'm not yet sure how this will work out.







Left top

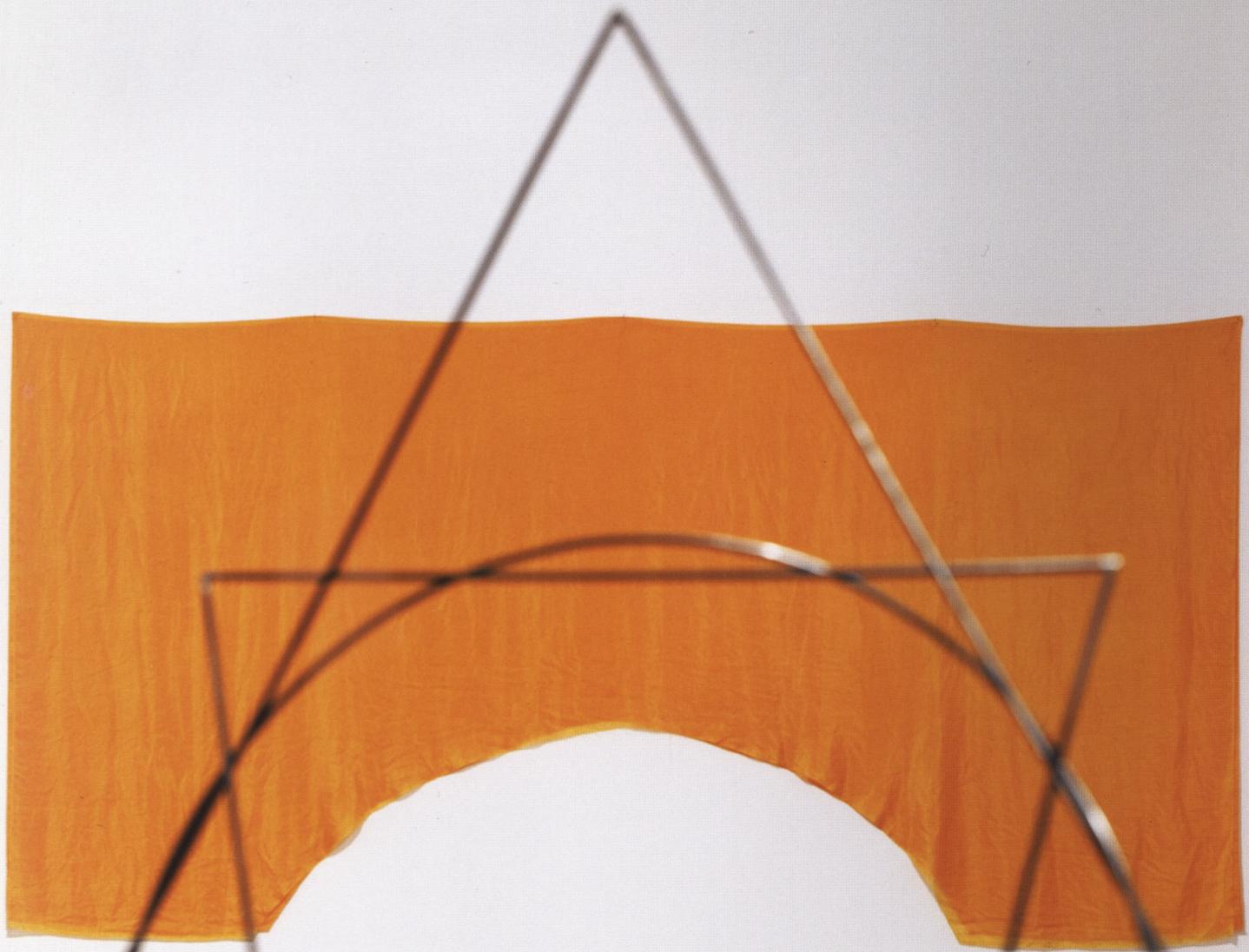
Kate Newby
Crawl out your window (installation view), 2010,
Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst GAK
Courtesy of the artist and
Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland
Photography by Peter Podkowiak

Left bottom

Kate Newby
Crawl out your window (installation view), 2010,
Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst GAK
Courtesy of the artist and
Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland
Photography by Peter Podkowiak

Above

Kate Newby
Crawl out your window (installation view), 2010,
Gesellschaft für aktuelle Kunst GAK
Courtesy of the artist and
Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland
Photography by Peter Podkowiak



● Sriwhana Spong

In February 2011 Sriwhana Spong opened a solo exhibition at Gertrude Contemporary in Melbourne, *Fanta Silver and Song*, the first to combine both of her recent films in an installation environment. These complex and apposite works are exercises on the theme of the Ballet Russes' documentary remains. They were coupled with collages and sculpture which drew upon the imaginative potential of this choreography in material presence.

The works in Fanta Silver and Song emerged on separate occasions and were reunited as part of this exhibition at Gertrude Street, Melbourne. What is the critical thread that links them together for you?

This body of work began with an image of a costume designed by Matisse for the Ballet Russes. Its flatness, its balance of form and pattern, and its implied volume were all compelling. After some research I discovered that the original choreography has been lost due to the lack of film documentation. The director Serge Diaghilev distrusted the cinema, seeing it as rather lowbrow, so no film record was ever made. The photograph that depicts the costume is therefore only an index, the costume a surface. As a costume it desires a body, and it was this lack that I was drawn to. The artifact is pulled into a new staging, with a new body – a contemporary body. The costume is for the character of a mourner emphasised perhaps by photography's frozen or retrospective nature. But this mourner is brought to life through film, as film is a series of still images brought into motion, mimicking the onward push of lived time – a conjuring act.

The second film *Lethe-wards* looked at moving image through two different media – 35mm film and digital video – highlighting the differing qualities that technology brings to the way we document culture. The collages were composed from similar images found in different publications, presenting a mutability of scenes, where quality and size shifts as does paper stock. These images sat alongside works that contained the imprint of liquids – perfume and Fanta. Perhaps I might say that all the works speak

to my interest in forms that are unstable, their materials reflecting movement rather than stasis, and are more disposed to rust, fade, fray and slip – like a gesture, or language or a costume.

Film-making is renowned for requiring multiple roles and input from a variety of creative directions, where do you situate yourself within the process?

In the past I generally did everything myself – production, filming, editing, sound. The works demanded that level of intimacy and seemed well suited to varying degrees of experience and experimentation. The films shown in *Fanta Silver and Song* were the first in which I really let anyone else into the creative process. I worked with dancers Benjamin Ord and Izumi Griffiths and choreographer Timothy Gordon, and discovered a space of dialogue and collaboration that has fed back into my practice in many ways. My films this year have been more spontaneous in response to the longer production periods of these earlier pieces, more open to change through the process of making, and more intimate – with just me and a camera person, or me and Benny. I have always liked to work contrary to previous projects. However I work, it always comes back to the camera, this constantly morphing recording device that marks the time between performance and its reflection. I guess I situate myself here – choosing and finding the point of focus from all the available planes in which a work can go.

You have worked with sound collaborators for a long time, since almost the beginning of your film work – can you describe the acoustic qualities you were seeking in Fanta Silver and Song?

Sound was one of the primary 'artifacts' I had to work with on this project. While the original choreography has disappeared, the Stravinsky score and recordings remain – like a ground with no figures. In choreographing *Costume for a Mourner* we used the original recordings as a way to organise movement, but Benny

Left

Sriwhana Spong
Fanta Silver and Song (installation detail), 2011,
Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne
Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland

Sriwhana Spong
Costume for a Mourner (video still) from
Fanta Silver and Song, 2009, Gertrude
 Contemporary, Melbourne
 Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland

Sriwhana Spong
Lethe-wards (rehearsal photo), 2010, Gertrude
 Contemporary, Melbourne
 Courtesy of the artist
 Dancers Benjamin Ord, Izumi Yoshizawa-Giffiths
 and Timothy Gordon

Sriwhana Spong
Lethe-wards (video still) from
Fanta Silver and Song, 2011, Gertrude
 Contemporary, Melbourne
 Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland

decided very early on to lose the sound as his movements were becoming too driven by the music. The intention of the film was to navigate between the body and costume, but with the music added there was instantly some sort of narration.

I had been making silent films for a while because I wanted to avoid the effect that a soundtrack can have on the viewer, whereby an emotionally charged image encourages a particular reading. *Costume for a Mourner* is silent, although half way through a refrain appears, small and memorable. It is something that lingers after the film has slipped back into silence. It haunts the film once you've heard it, so the 'soundtrack' really utilises memory in that way, and is therefore different for everyone. A similar methodology was applied to *Lethe-wards*.

In this exhibition each work, or addition to the whole, contributes to an experience of the body ranging from the clothed or costumed, to the skeletal or even diagrammatic, which unfolds for the viewer. Was it your intention with the exhibition to set up layers of attentiveness to bodily movement?

Initially I was more interested in how we relate to history through images and artifacts, and how documentation and its very materiality influences the way we read the past. Then it became an interest in movement through materials – a shifting, chimeric quality where nothing is set. The duet in *Lethe-wards* only occurs at the moment of projection, both figures held together by a synching unit that at times can slip out of synch ever so slightly; *Costume for a Mourner's* soundtrack is completed by the memory of the viewer; and material elements held in the weight of the sculpture can slip and shift. My interest in bodily movement came out of this work, but wasn't foremost in my mind when making this particular show.

Collaborating with choreographers and dancers has had a direct impact on your work through which you have allowed a more theatrical 'stage' to be present within the film, but on each occasion you vary between the fidelity to your source and abstract movement. What is the importance of the source material, the original dance, for your viewers?

The original choreography is not important at all, its potency for me is that it doesn't exist as a complete form. Because it wasn't properly documented it exists only as a choreographic form that was passed on from performer to performer, and then I guess at some point it was no longer relevant to perform it and it was forgotten. What was important to me was that this source material

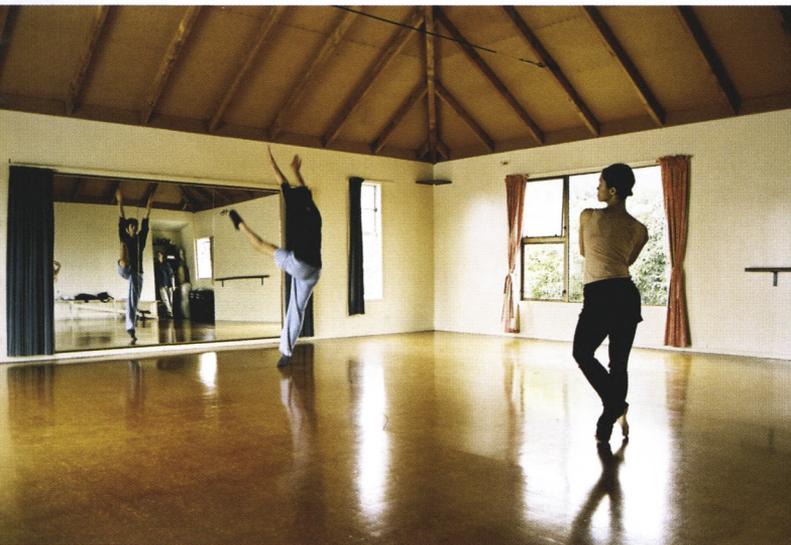
existed only in fragments – music, costume, little pieces of text, images, and facts that seemed to shift from essay to essay – and because of this I was able to work in the gaps between what was known and what had been forgotten, a space both hard and soft.

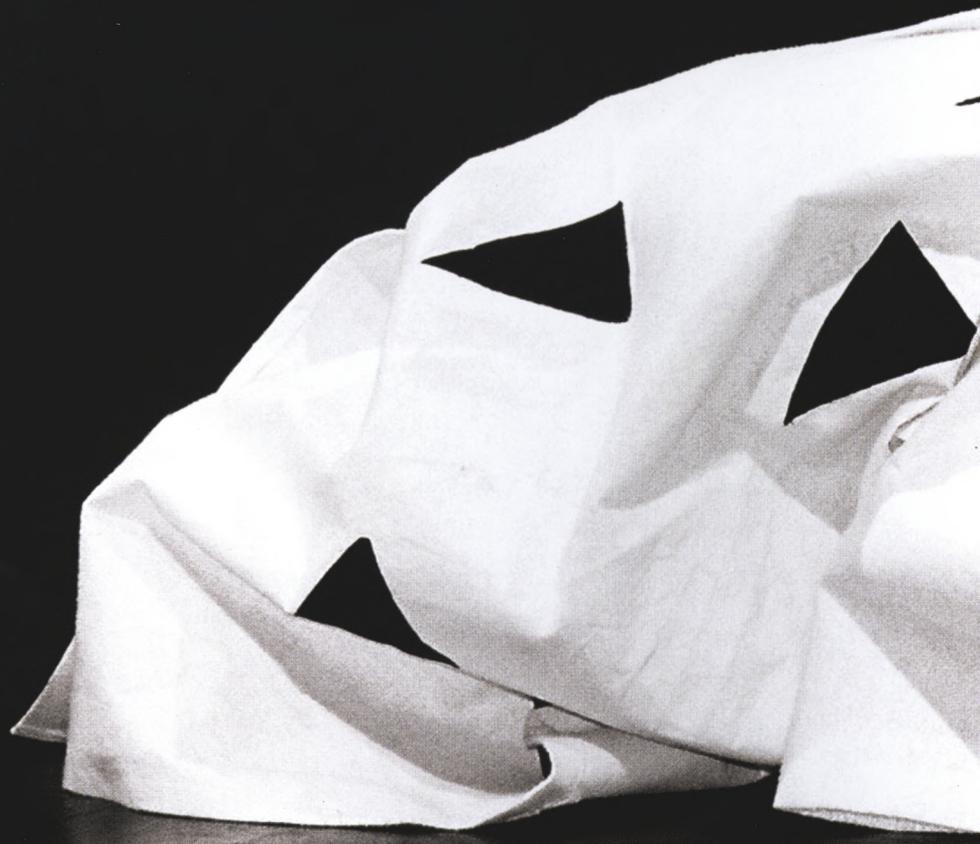
The ballet, *Le Chant du Rossignol* (1920), is itself interesting because it shows how Matisse attempted to shift interpretations of the 'exotic east' through his more abstract patterning, distancing himself from previous productions that presented the 'feast of wonders' that the Ballet Russes was so famous for: *Salome* (1908), *Cleopatre* (1909), *Scheherazade* (1910), *Le Dieu Bleu* (1912), and the original *Le Rossignol* (1914) designed by Alexandre Benois. In Matisse's designs you have costumes that play with both form and surface, and then the symbolic characters such as the nightingale which were more realistic. So I imagine that the whole production wildly and perhaps brilliantly swerved between realism and abstraction, figure and abstract form, and I think *Fanta Silver and Song* carries a little of that too.

What is perhaps not so explicit to viewers of your work is how consistently you have incorporated artifacts of popular culture (Coke bottles, Chanel perfume, and now the Fanta). They gain a rich materiality through their incorporation into the field of your installations. What's compelling for you in their inclusion?

I've used soda cans and bottles in previous work, and most recently Coca-Cola, tea, coffee and Fanta as dyes. Early on these came from looking at my estranged Balinese heritage, and anything that I could familiarise myself with as a starting point. I was drawn to the daily offerings in Balinese society that use everyday materials, and it was these materials that were my initial connection to the unfamiliar. There is an essay by Ian Svenonius where he puts forward the humorous and rather bleak argument that conquerors always imbibe the liquids of their vanquished foes – the British with their tea from India, Americans coffee from South America, Germans their wartime Fanta (made by Coca-Cola) with the oranges of the smashed Republican Spanish army etc, etc.¹ While the toxic nature of this history is of course compelling, for me these materials are also about the familiar, the shared experience of drinking these common liquids. It is an attempt to make something unfamiliar out of the familiar, and a means for thinking about the individual amongst the communal – and of course the body.

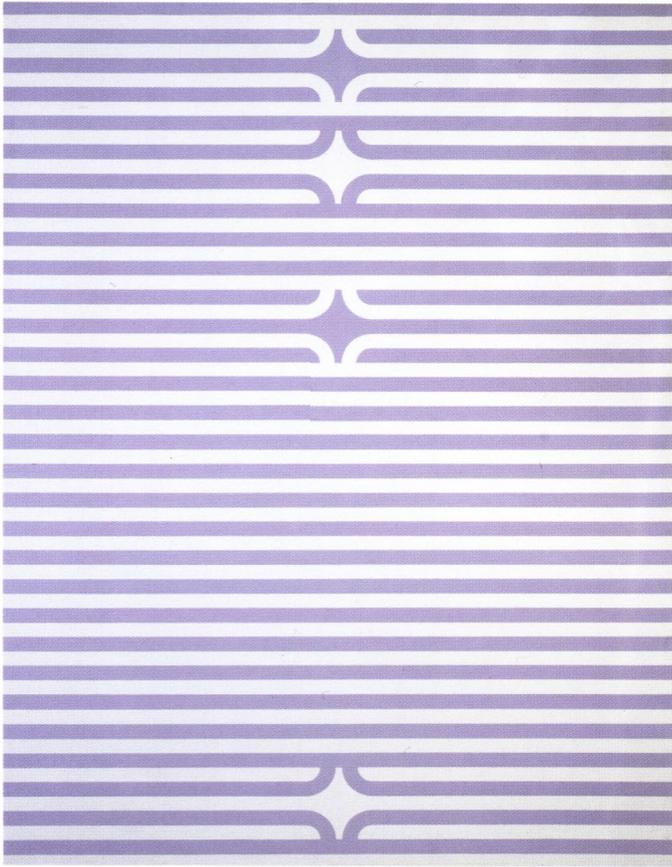
¹ Ian Svenonius, in 'The Bloody Latte, Vampirism as a Mass Movement', *The Psychic Soviet and Other Works*, Drag City, Chicago, 2006.







● **Gordon Walters**



Gordon Walters was born in Wellington, New Zealand in 1919 and trained at Wellington Technical College during 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 at first-hand the abstract art he admired, returning to New Zealand in 1953. Throughout a career spanning six decades, he resolutely pursued geometric abstraction at a time when landscape was a predominant subject in New Zealand painting. Gordon Walters died in 1995.

Left

Gordon Walters
Hautana, 1970
PVA and acrylic on canvas
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
purchased 1976

Walters Prize 2010

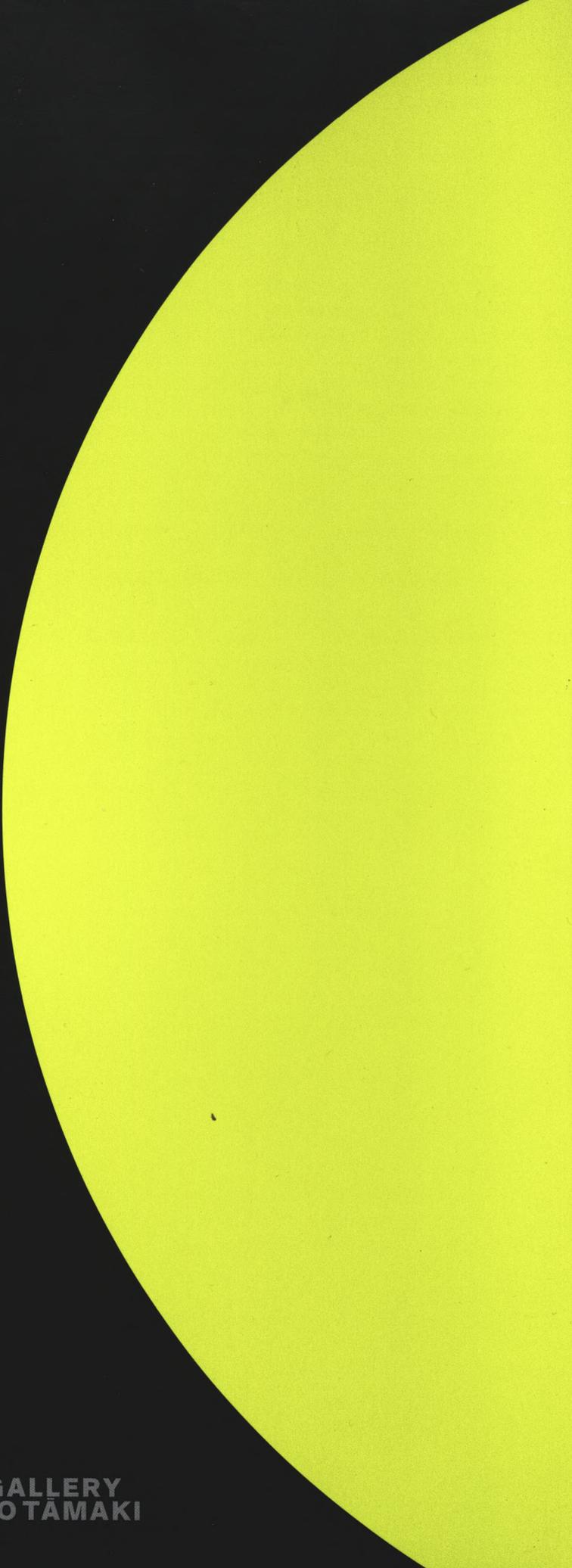
Winner
Dan Arps

Finalists
Dan Arps
Fiona Connor
Saskia Leek
Alex Monteith

Judge
Vicente Todolí

Jury
Jon Bywater
Rhana Devenport
Leonhard Emmerling
Kate Montgomery

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Published on the occasion of the *Walters Prize 2012*
ISBN 978-0-86463-289-0

A large, bright yellow circle is positioned on the right side of the image, set against a solid black background. The circle is partially cut off by the right edge of the frame.

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