

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI

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Finalists announced for the Walters Prize 2014: New Zealand's premier contemporary art prize



The four artworks shortlisted for the Walters Prize 2014, New Zealand's most significant contemporary art prize, are announced today.

The \$50,000 Walters Prize, named after the late New Zealand artist Gordon Walters, is awarded for an outstanding work of contemporary New Zealand art produced and exhibited during the past two years. The biannual Walters Prize sets out to make contemporary art a more widely recognised and debated feature of our cultural life. Previous Prizes have been awarded to works by artists including Kate Newby, Dan Arps, Peter Robinson, Francis Upritchard, et al. and Yvonne Todd.

Each artist whose work is shortlisted receives \$5,000 in recognition of their achievement, thanks to major donor Dayle Mace. Their work is presented in the *Walters Prize* exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki 12 July – 12 October 2014.

The four shortlisted artworks are:

- *All You Need Is Data—The DLD 2012 Conference REDUX*, 2013, by **Simon Denny**: at Kunstverein Munich 19 January – 10 March 2013 and at Petzel Gallery, New York, 20 June – 27 July 2013
- *If you find the good oil let us know*, 2012 – 2013, by **Maddie Leach**: at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and off-site 25 June 2012 – 14 February 2014
- *inthisholeonthisislandwhereiam*, 2012, by **Luke Willis Thompson**: at Hopkinson Mossman (formerly Hopkinson Cundy) and off-site 14 – 31 March 2012
- *Mo'ui tukuhausia*, 2012, by **Kalisolaite 'Uhila**: from the exhibition 'What do you mean, we?' at Te Tuhi Center for the Arts, 3 March 2012 – 6 May 2012.

The winning work will be chosen by an international judge – named later this year – and announced at the Walters Prize Dinner in September. In addition to the \$50,000 prize, the winning artist receives a fully supported trip to New York with the opportunity to exhibit at Saatchi & Saatchi's world headquarters.

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Director, Rhana Devenport, says, 'Each *Walters Prize* exhibition has offered a powerful insight into current art practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. The project engages a wide community of individuals, companies and trusts who are dedicated to sharing a deeper understanding of our world through contemporary art.

'The project is also collaborative in its sharing of the selection process amongst leading New Zealand curators, and the invitation to an international judge to finally select the Prize. Discussion at every level is paramount in this process.

'This year's selection of artists is a particularly interesting one with performance, interventions and actions to the fore, ranging from letters to the editor and maritime ventures to online worlds and home-visits. The reconfiguration of the

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works within the context of the Gallery will hold surprises for us all. Importantly these works will offer us an immediate view into some of the most intriguing explorations of New Zealand art practice occurring today.'

The jurors for the 2014 Walters Prize are:

- Christina Barton – Director of the Adam Art Gallery at Victoria University of Wellington
- Anna-Marie White – Curator at The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū, Nelson
- Peter Robinson – Artist and Associate Professor at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland
- Caterina Riva – Curator and the Director of Artspace NZ, Auckland

The Walters Prize was established in 2002 by founding benefactors and principal donors Erika and Robin Congreve and Dame Jenny Gibbs, working together with Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. This year Elevation Capital joins as a new sponsor.

JURORS' STATEMENT:

In determining the most outstanding contribution to New Zealand art since the last Walters Prize, the jurors have selected four artists who have undertaken memorable projects that prove art's traction as a means to engage the social, economic, cultural, technological, and environmental realities we collectively face. Each project demonstrates a conceptual grasp of the legacies of art's recent history and a commitment to modes of presentation that challenge expectations and shift attention away from objects to processes and situations. They are all willing to test the boundaries of self and society and to question just where art begins and ends. We believe these artists' practices raise issues that are relevant to our lives, and that they are vitally contributing to and advancing discussions about the nature of art at this time.

ARTIST INFORMATION:

Simon Denny

Born 1982 in Auckland, New Zealand

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

Städelschule, Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Frankfurt am Main
2009

Nominated for *All You Need Is Data - The DLD 2012 Conference REDUX, 2013*

Jurors' comment: In the two years since Simon Denny was a finalist in the last Walters Prize, he has undertaken a string of substantial exhibitions that prove his original contribution to what has come to be known as 'post-internet aesthetics'. Denny's *All You Need Is Data - The DLD 2012 Conference REDUX*, which was presented in Munich and New York in 2013, is a clever visualisation and subtle critique of the hyped-up promises offered by the tech gurus of our digital future. Re-using the aesthetics of the Digital Life Design (DLD) media conference, Denny creates a walk-through sculptural installation that proves just how 'thin' a sound byte actually is.

Maddie Leach

Born 1970, Auckland, New Zealand

Lives and works in Wellington, New Zealand
MFA University of Canterbury, Christchurch 2000
BFA (Hons) Sculpture, University of Canterbury 1993

Nominated for *If you find the good oil let us know* 2012-2013

Jurors' comment: Maddie Leach's intensive but dispersed project, *If you find the good oil, let us know*, commissioned by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery as its last artist-residency before the gallery closed for major renovations, has slowly unravelled over the full two years of the 2014 Walters' Prize period. Her work follows an idiosyncratic thread that started with a substance Leach thought might be real whale oil and ended with the relocation of a cube of cement made from recycled mineral oil to the seabed several kilometres off the coast. Through this lengthy peregrination Leach managed to draw in scientists, cement workers, sailors, oil-industry executives, the editor of the local paper, staff of the gallery, a dispersed group of writers, and the people of New Plymouth. This is typical of the artist's practice, which arises out of a particular circumstance and is shaped by a lengthy process of embedded enquiry and social interaction.

Luke Willis Thompson

Born 1988, Auckland, New Zealand
Lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand
Städelschule, Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (Guest Student, Prof. Willem de Rooij) 2013
MFA Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland 2010
BFA Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland 2009

Nominated for *inthisholeonthisislandwhereiam* 2012

Jurors' comment: Luke Willis Thompson's bold project for Hopkinson Cundy (now Hopkinson Mossman) deeply shook the set parameters of how art is traditionally experienced and challenged any passive notion of spectatorship. To find the artwork, visitors had to take a taxi stationed at the empty gallery and, with a palpable sense of unease, set off to an unknown destination, with only the tentative conversation with the driver to break the tense sense of expectation. Arriving at a suburban house, visitors were invited to enter and wander around but not to enter into the bedrooms. With no people inside, yet signs of habitation everywhere, visitors only gradually came to realize - through closer inspection of school projects, books, and photographs - this was the artist's family home. In such an audacious situation, the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion, intimacy and voyeurism were completely blurred; the project demanded we consider anew concepts of intentionality, the location of art and how to ascribe meaning or determine value.

Kalisolaite 'Uhila

Born 1981, Tonga
Lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand
BVA, AUT University, Auckland 2010

Nominated for: *Mo'ui tukuhausia*, 2012

Jurors' comment: In March 2012, Kalisolaite Uhila lived homeless for a two-week period in the vicinity of Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts in Pakuranga. The artist intended this as a consciousness-raising exercise drawing attention to the state of

homelessness. He was successful in his ambition and the artwork was the subject of intense scrutiny by locals, police, and national news media. Undertaken at the start of the Walters' Prize period, this subject has only grown in importance, as homelessness, amongst Polynesian men in particular, has emerged as a pressing issue in Auckland and other urban centres.

As a Tongan-born artist, 'Uhila is broadly concerned with the idealisation of Aotearoa New Zealand as a land of opportunity compared with a reality of minimum-wage factory and seasonal labour. His body of endurance performance artworks undermines these utopian values and holds New Zealand to account for attracting Pacific migrants to support a low-wage, manual-labour strata of the economy. His work speaks vividly to the vulnerable conditions of life for a social underclass in this country.

ABOUT THE WALTERS PRIZE:

Named in honour of the late New Zealand artist Gordon Walters, the prize was established in 2002 by founding benefactors and principal donors Erika and Robin Congreve and Dame Jenny Gibbs, working together with Auckland Art Gallery. The Prize sets out to make contemporary art a more widely recognised and debated feature of our cultural life.

Previous winners of the Walters Prize:

- 2012: Kate Newby for *Crawl out your window*
- 2010: Dan Arps for *Explaining Things*
- 2008: Peter Robinson for *ACK*
- 2006: Francis Upritchard for *Doomed, Doomed, All Doomed*
- 2004: et al. for *restricted access*
- 2002: Yvonne Todd for *Asthma and Eczema*

The 2014 *Walters Prize* Exhibition runs from 12 July – 12 October 2014 and entry is free.

For more information please contact:

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Artist profile shots, biographies and images are available on request.