

Media Release
Tuesday 17 October 2017

Major new work brings international artist Michael Stevenson back to New Zealand



Michael Stevenson, 'Thiel's Chair' in *Serene Velocity in Practice: MC510 & CS183*, 2017 (full credit below)

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki presents an exhibition by one of New Zealand's most internationally renowned artists, Michael Stevenson, from Sunday 12 November 2017.

Serene Velocity in Practice: MC510 & CS183 will be Stevenson's first solo exhibition at a New Zealand public gallery in more than 15 years.

For the occasion Stevenson has developed a significant new large-scale installation which has been commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery with partners the Biennale of Sydney 2018 and Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA).

Serene Velocity in Practice: MC510 & CS183 is based on two seemingly unrelated academic courses, MC510 and CS183, which were modules taught for a short time in Californian higher-learning institutions.

The installation takes the form of an imagined tertiary institution of two classrooms, each of which represents one of these courses.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says Michael Stevenson has earned an exemplary reputation as a rigorous and exploratory artist working on the international stage, yet the artist's work is rarely seen in his home country.

'Stevenson has exhibited around the world to critical acclaim, but New Zealanders seldom get the opportunity to see his new work,' she says.

Both academic courses referenced in the exhibition were transformative in their respective fields, and each quickly developed a mass following globally, resulting in best-selling books and a multitude of spin-off courses.

Mission Class 510 or MC510 was the code used by the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena for a course taught for four years from 1982. John Wimber, then leader of the Vineyard Ministries, an evangelical Christian movement, became synonymous with this programme, using it as a testing ground for his radical ideas in the experiential realm of miraculous healing and exorcism.

CS183 was the course code for 'Startup' at Stanford University's Computer Science faculty, which Silicon Valley entrepreneur and venture capitalist Peter Thiel taught in 2012. CS183 provided a platform for Thiel's new intellectual framework in which he analysed case studies of failure in the tech industry and modelled a future of exponential progress where technological miracles take place.

While previously unrelated, Stevenson brings these two courses together in *Serene Velocity in Practice* as an installation of two conjoined structures.

One is constructed from airline blankets and elevated on large aircraft tyres; the other is built from radiating black anodised aluminium heat sink. A walkway based on the passageways of post-war educational institutions unites the two rooms and simultaneously disorients the viewer.

For Wimber and Thiel, the teachers, in order to be open to future possibilities and real change – or what Thiel calls 'vertical progress' and Wimber terms 'paradigmatic shifts' – old ways of thinking had to be left behind and new ways of thinking adopted and practiced. Both MC510 and CS183 taught the abandonment of past (failed) models and old foundations of knowledge in favour of full participation in the mission for a radical future.

Auckland Art Gallery Curator, Contemporary Art, Natasha Conland, says Stevenson investigates these ideas and their impact and objectives.

'The historical legacies of these courses are united by this artist in a fictitious analogy of what can only be described as an 'accelerated learning environment', something we could consider as an extension of their ideas.'

'Stevenson's hybridised visual language models an addled pathway within this new 'learning facility' from daily practice to wonderment,' she says.

Serene Velocity in Practice: MC510 & CS183 is curated by Natasha Conland, commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki with commissioning partners the Biennale of Sydney 2018 and Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA).

(Ends)

For further information, high-res image requests and interviews, contact:

Olivia Boswell, Communications Officer, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

M +64 21 952 759

E olivia.boswell@aucklandartgallery.com

W www.aucklandartgallery.com

Exhibition details:

Serene Velocity in Practice: MC510 & CS183

When: Sunday 12 November 2017 to Sunday 4 February 2018.

10am – 5pm daily except Christmas Day

Where: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Corner Kitchener and Wellesley Streets

Auckland, New Zealand

Entry is free

Artist Bio:

Michael Stevenson (born 1964, New Zealand) has lived in Berlin for over 15 years. He is known for adopting an anthropological approach that often results in moments of irrationality. His ambitious sculptural practice over many years has mapped historical narratives from certainty to ruin, mathematics to miracles, and secrets and exchange. Significant recent projects have been seen at Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2015); Dojima River Biennale, Osaka (2015); Sculpture Center, New York (2015); Liverpool Biennial (2014); Berlin Biennale (2014); Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland (2013); Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2012); and Museum Tamayo, Mexico City (2012).

Image Credit:

Michael Stevenson, 'Thiel's Chair', in '*Serene Velocity in Practice: MC510 & CS183*', 2017. Commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki with commissioning partners the Biennale of Sydney 2018 and Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA). Supported by the Contemporary Benefactors of Auckland Art Gallery; the International Ambassadors; Michael Lett, Auckland; and the Chartwell Trust.