

Out of the Box

An exhibition of New Zealand prints from Solander Works on Paper

by Vincent Drane, Co-director, Solander Gallery



Vanessa Wairata Edwards, *Taringo Maro* (No Ears), 2009, etching on woven paper, edition of 3, paper size: 35 x 35 cm

Solander Works on Paper gallery in Wellington is proud to present *Out of the Box*, an exhibition by 26 New Zealand printmakers at Tweed River Art Gallery, Murwillumbah from 10 December 2010 to 1 May 2011.

Out of the Box offers a vibrant snapshot of time and place in contemporary New Zealand printmaking. Woven throughout this exhibition is an essence of a New Zealand-ness which reflects the country's historical development as a multicultural nation and its unique and dramatic landscape.

In this exhibition we can see pieces of New Zealand's history woven through the works. Toi Whakataa, Māori print collective artists such as Alexis Neal and Vanessa Edwards

utilise this weaving of cultures more literally than most. *Ihonui* by Alexis Neal weaves relief-printed paper to create a work celebrating traditional 'Whariki' ceremonial mats, while Vanessa Edwards's works entitled *Tricky Tiki* and *Taringo Maro* are drypoint etchings, printed onto a woven surface, that reflect on the interconnectedness of cultures and traditions.

Implement of Change by Marty Vreede continues this contemporary multicultural experience of New Zealand in his depiction of a Māori ceremonial greenstone adze (axe). The symbolism of this tool is simultaneously celebratory, domestic and political, reflecting its use in ceremony, food gathering and weaponry.

New Zealand is shaped by many cultures, not the least of which is that of the Pacific Islands. This influence is both historical as the primary influence of Māori culture and contemporary via large communities of various Pacific Island cultures living in New Zealand. Nuiian artist, Cerisse Palalagi takes the traditional patterns and styles of the Pacific and funks it up with her hip hop-inspired rapper in *B Boy Taniwha*, illustrating the continual reinvention of culture.

New Zealand is a land of dramatic and active landscapes that have inspired artists across two centuries. The works of David Sarich, *Cattle Drive* and *Ninety Mile Beach*, Inge Doesburg's, *Harbour III* and Catherine Macdonald's *This Place We Know* continue in this tradition but bring a contemporary edge with their emphasis on the near abstract interpretation of landscape and the expressive power of the artist's mark through their drypoint etchings.



Simon Kaan, *Untitled (Tiki)*, 2010, intaglio and woodcut, edition of 12, paper size: 71 x 50 cm

Environmentalism is another strong theme in New Zealand art with its origins back in the 1920s when some enlightened artists were, even then, making comment on the impending extinction of species through loss of habitat and hunting. *Thanks to the Tomtit*, an intaglio work by Ben Reid, pays homage to the heroic attempts to bring the Black Robin back from extinction. By using the Tomtit as a surrogate mother and incubator of endangered Black Robin eggs, a program was devised which has successfully ensured the survival of this unique species.

Similarly in *Early Settler #4*, Margaret Silverwood hints at the damage caused to the New Zealand landscape and ecosystem with the introduction by early settlers of exotic species such as the goat, deer, stoat and weasel, which decimate habitat and devour the eggs of native species such as the Kiwi. *Huia's Lament*, a relief print by Jo Ogier, continues this environmental lament in relation to the native Huia, valued for



Sam Broad, *Buzzy Bee Transformer*, 2009, woodcut, edition of 40, paper size: 38.5 x 57.0 cm. r: Ben Reid, *Thanks to the Tomtit*, 2009, drypoint, intaglio and relief print, edition of 10, paper size: 53 x 38 cm



Faith McManus

Te Kaupoi Cowboy from the Riders of the Red Manuka 2010
woodcut, edition of 5
paper size: 38.0 x 50.7 cm

its decorative tail feathers and hunted to extinction. A world away from the grand vista but just as important, domesticity features in the multi-plate etching and mezzotint work of Fleur Williams. *Homebody* describes both the joyfulness of the garden and the beauty in objects, along with the relentless work of maintaining this slice of heaven. *Grasses Study* by John Callaghan also explores the beauty found in simple things. Almost Durer-like in its careful observation, this same patch of lawn looks like it might be mowed every Saturday afternoon.

Stories of the past are explored in the relief print work of Faith McManus. *Te Kaupoi Cowboy from the Riders of the Red Manuka* investigates the legend of a Hollywood cowboy movie supposedly made in the Far North region of the North Island in 1926. While the movie may not actually exist, the strong family connection through her grandfather, who was indeed a Māori Cowboy in the 1920s, celebrates how family stories endure through generations.

While many artists seek inspiration from the world around them, others look within. Artists such as Alex Milsom, Graham Hall and Maree Horner are no exception; for them, imaginary worlds provide the stage for internal dramas. Graham Hall's large *Synus Rythym* drypoint uses the backdrop of the Whanganui Opera House as a stage for his deeply personal journey. Maree Horner uses a cupboard no less dramatically in her photopolymer work *Pandora's Cupboard*, populated with donkeys of totemic meaning, while Alex Milsom's *Silver Bell* conjures a symbolic forest and wolf in her beautifully evocative mezzotint etching reflecting on stories told to her by her grandmother.

'Dreamlike' describes Simon Kaan's *Untitled*. Soft moth and rainbow shapes float on the colour of twilight in this intaglio relief work, which plays with our expectations of pictorial space through the use of a tiki-shaped plate.

Decision making is explored by Michele Bryant in her large relief work entitled *Two Hundred and Thirty-Five Decisions*.



Inge Doesburg, *Harbour III*, 2010,
drypoint, edition of 12, paper size: 39 x 57 cm

Interested in the multi-layered experience of decision making, her work reflects on the infinite reasons behind an otherwise simple choice. Sam Broad propels us into a futuristic fantasy through his woodcut print *Buzzy Bee Transformer*. The unassuming Buzzy Bee toy is transformed into heroic stature as Sam mixes past, present and future with his characteristic humour and irony.

Artists have always drawn inspiration from the world around them and it is interesting that these visions can explore both universal concepts as well as the quirky everyday details of a particular time and place. Solander takes pleasure in presenting the works of New Zealand artists who with skill and perception put forward their ideas about culture, the environment, shared histories and defining our personal place within society. •

Out of the Box officially opens at Tweed River Art Gallery, Murwillumbah (NSW) on Friday, 28 January 2011.

www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/artgallery

A downloadable exhibition catalogue is available from Solander Works on Paper, 218C Willis Street, Te Aro, Wellington 2011, New Zealand.

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Solander Works on Paper is Wellington's specialist contemporary works on paper gallery, situated in the midst of the city's vibrant contemporary arts precinct. The gallery represents over 45 New Zealand and international artists with regular feature exhibitions and an extensive selection of works on permanent display. Works encompass contemporary drawings, watercolours and limited edition artist prints including etchings, screen prints, woodcuts and mezzotints. Solander's website has an extensive gallery of additional works from the artists featured in this exhibition.

Solander Works on Paper draws its name from the famous botanist, Daniel Solander who, on Cook's voyage to the Pacific, designed a specific type of specimen box, now called a Solander Box. This archival box has since become synonymous with museums and galleries around the world for the storage of valuable collections.



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