

# Editorial

As we stated in our first issue of *BackStory* in December 2016, the editorial team has sought to produce a journal with an appeal beyond the academy to those working in the broad field of New Zealand art, media and design history. We have reached out to those working in the country's libraries, galleries and museums for contributions and we have also provided space for commentaries and personal reflections on particular aspects of our cultural history.

In this issue there are two articles which focus on two aspects of what we might label 'kiwiana'. Lesley Kaiser and John Barnett have over many years had an interest in the work of New Zealand painter Henry Thomas Garratt who from 1895 to around 1940, painted under a number of pseudonyms such as – 'de Ritz', Paul Wren, Maxwell and Edwards. They provide a commentary to accompany examples of his mainly landscape work produced on what might be described as an almost industrial scale. Sold around New Zealand by salesmen they were very popular and they state that Garratt was probably the most remunerated painter of his time. It could be argued that Garratt's paintings were part of our awakening as a nation as settler New Zealand started to replace pictures like English thatched cottages by the village green with a whare beside a bush clad river.

Crown Lynn pottery is the most collected example of 'kiwiana' with collectors now paying high prices for ceramics once produced as utilitarian table ware. Growing up in New Lynn where the Crown Lynn potteries were situated, I have memories of accompanying my mother when she went to buy 'seconds' at the factory shop. Not often appreciated at the time when it was compared to European and particularly British china, it is now highly valued not necessarily for the quality of its products but for the fact it was 'ours' – practical and occasionally uniquely designed ceramics which disappeared in a wave of cheap and undistinguished global product. Juliet Hawkins joined Crown Lynn as a designer in 1979 and some of the designs of that time are accompanied by her reflections as the design team sought to create appealing ceramics in the face of multiple challenges.

The development of the potteries out west was one of Auckland's early industries when Rice Owen Clark began in 1854 to make his own drainage pipes by wrapping logs with clay and firing

them. Shaun Higgins in his article looks at what may be the earliest urban landscape view of Auckland and believes that it probably dates to about 1857. The discovery of the photograph marks an important step in the development of local photography as professional and amateur photographers alike began to take their cameras outdoors to capture the development of New Zealand.

Moving film images also provide insight into the development of our identity and can illuminate contemporary problems using historical stories. Jani Wilson draws on the New Zealand film *White Lies* in which a woman seeks to hide what she sees as a shameful secret, to discuss the nature of 'whakama' – a term generally understood as shame, inadequacy or embarrassment. However, the author outlines that it differs from typical embarrassment or shame in that it is a 'mate Maori', a Maori sickness that can blight the body and decision-making and is a factor in contemporary issues such as suicide among Maori.

Public art is another way by which artists can engage audiences with works speaking to social and political concerns. Robin Woodward looks at the work of Nic Moon, an artist whose public art uses a wide variety of forms while addressing issues of human ecology. Contemporary concerns which Woodward believes she shares with a new group of public artists who are prepared to break with traditional historical notions of public art to engage with their audiences.

Marcus Moore seeks to draw our attention to a local artist whose early work has not received much attention. He looks at the work of Paul Cullen, in particular his exhibition in November and December 1979 entitled 'Building Structures' at the Barry Lett Galleries in Auckland. Moore argues that this radical exhibition was "a definitive statement in the context of 'post-object' and conceptual art" in this country.

Undervalued art, re-valued ceramics, re-assessing notions of public art, exploring the development of local photography and using our own movies to address contemporary issues about identity are some of the issues in this edition. We trust you find this diverse content illustrates the value in looking back at stories of our art, media and design history.

**Alan Cocker**