

A voice speaking with the lived experience of more than ninety years can provide anchoring insight in the uncertain times of a pandemic. Emeritus Professor Jack Woodward in the Auckland University publication *Ingenio* writes that infectious diseases are part of our lives. He recounts that in 1937 his wife Mary drove with her family from Kaitaia to their new home in Invercargill during one of the polio epidemics, a trip complicated by travel restrictions. As in present times schools and cinemas were closed. Around 700 young people were paralysed in New Zealand that year from polio and 46 died. Regular epidemics of the disease persisted until an oral polio vaccine became available in 1961.

In our current pandemic governments battle misinformation spread by 'social media' and a reductive 'infotainment' focus on 'victims and villains' by ratings-driven traditional media. However, one positive feature of media coverage has been a return to the health expert for their advice on disease control and vaccination. During the Second World War the government and the Health Department used radio to promote health. In this issue, Claire Macindoe outlines how radio was seen as 'a cultural phenomenon' and the most effective option to specifically target adults nationwide and educate them on health. Dr. Harold Turbott was introduced as the 'radio doctor', and the medium of radio became a trusted source of information.

Although radio culture in this country developed distinctive local forms, film by and large followed the lead of Hollywood. Brendan Sheridan looks at the genre of the American 'Western' with its "clearly established conventions spanning settlers, journeys and ranching to gunfights and 'Indian Wars'" and examines two New Zealand films that he argues are 'Westerns'. These films are Rudall Hayward's *The Te Kooti Trail* (1927) and Geoff Murphy's *Utu* (1983). Although Sheridan acknowledges that the 'Western' can often romanticize the past, recent 'post-modern' westerns have challenged the preconceptions of history.

Challenging architectural monumentalism, New Zealand architect and landscape architect Harry Turbott sought to celebrate our dynamic landscape and not impose his structures on it. This is the view of his friend, fellow architect and Auckland University Emeritus Professor Tony Watkins. He writes a personal reflection on the work of Harry Turbott (son of the radio doctor Harold Turbott), in the context of the wider global environmental crisis. Watkins draws a distinction between architecture as a noun and as a verb. As a noun it is about objects, as a verb it is about a process.

He says that for Harry Turbott that process was about learning from the natural world and making a broken world whole again.

There is a somewhat seamless segue to our next article by Jessica Agoston who argues that in Aotearoa New Zealand there exists a tangible connection to the natural world and complex layers of history. She writes that when the green spaces of public parks become the location for temporary public art exhibitions, "the power of art and landscape is amplified". She looks at the biennial New Zealand Sculpture OnShore (NZSoS) event held on Auckland's North Shore to "examine the potential of temporary public art to meaningfully represent people and place".

In a recent book¹ Adam Tooze argues that the Covid 19 pandemic has meant that in all polities, public policy has become more difficult with underlying anxiety unsettling the system and we have witnessed other issues flaring. A prime example of this has been the Black Lives Matter movement and the associated attack on monuments of colonial figures. In our final contribution Alanna O'Riley asks why in our current climate is there a deafening silence about Michael Parekowhai's statue of Captain James Cook in *The Lighthouse* on Queens Wharf in Auckland. She concludes that "Parekowhai's *The Lighthouse* illustrates that monuments to complex figures and histories can be used in a way that is productive, one that challenges accepted historical narratives and creates new discourse around our history and society. All we need to do is start the conversation".

BackStory Issue 10 thus embraces the stories of the use of radio to disseminate health messages, 'Western' film-making in New Zealand, architecture as a verb, how art and landscape can powerfully amplify both, and a monument of a colonial figure that, in the words of a reviewer, cultivates ambiguity and irony as strategies for encouraging conversation about our past.

¹ Tooze, Adam. (2021) *Shutdown: How Covid shook the world's economy*. London: Allen Lane.