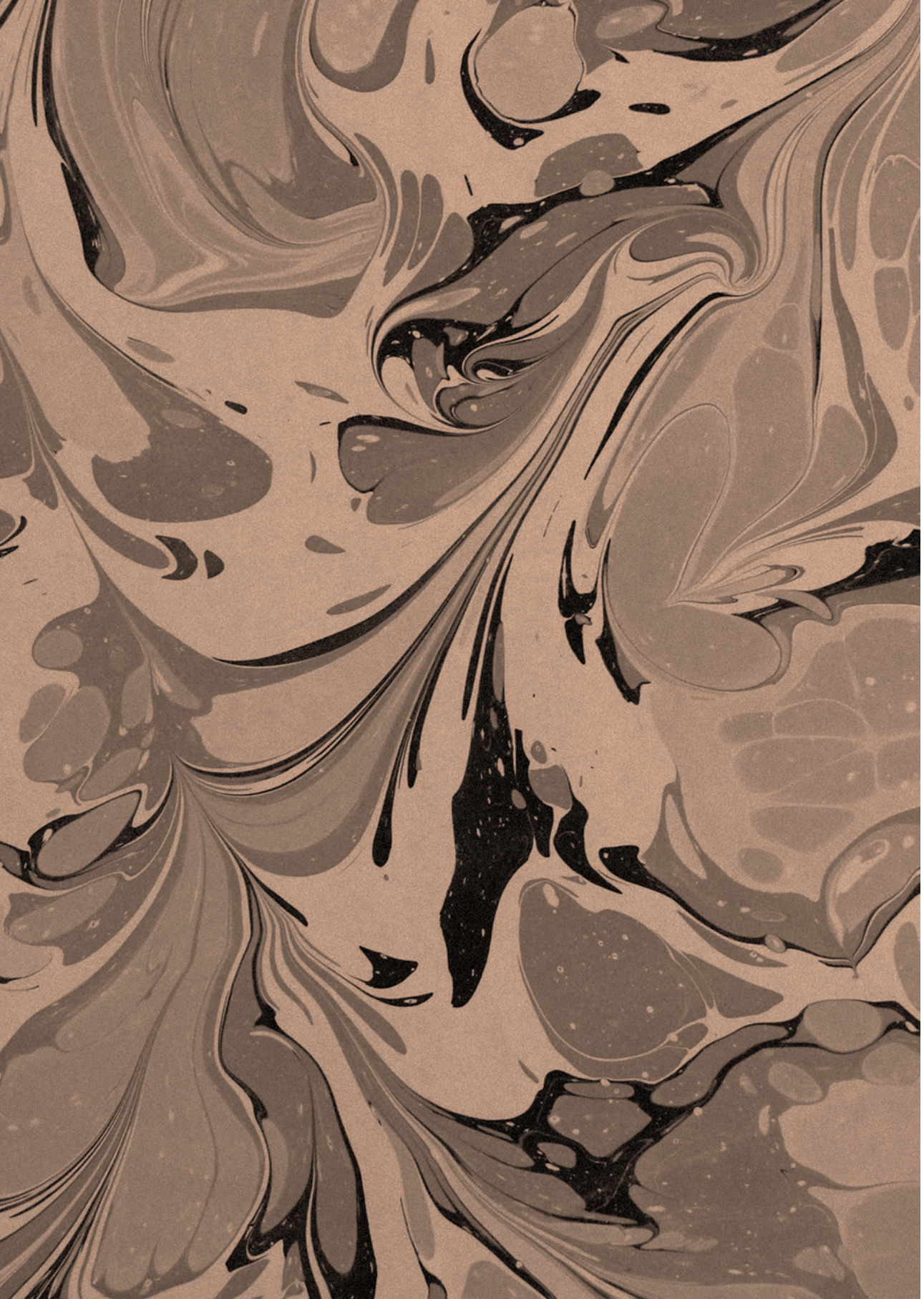
BACK STORY 8

DEC 2020 ISSUE 8

JOURNAL OF NEW ZEALAND ART,
MEDIA & DESIGN HISTORY



BACK STORY

8

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Editorial

Alan Cocker

This editorial is written at the end of a year dominated by the Covid -19 pandemic. Its long-term impact on all aspects of our lives will take some time to assess. We can, however, reflect that it has provided a sharp wake-up call on the limitations of the human. One writer has aptly described the events of the past year as "the global humbling".

In the production of *BackStory* some of our contributors have found it difficult to complete promised contributions as they adjusted to the demands of 'lockdowns' and working from home. Thus the decision was made to produce one issue this year rather than two.

Whilst the coronavirus has meant constraints on many aspects of our lives it is particularly important that elements often viewed as peripheral are not forgone. In a university setting it can be argued that a tertiary education is more than the assimilation of downloadable digital content. A university is a space for a wide range of serendipitous interactions and learning. Similarly we might argue that *BackStory* is a publication whose value lies in its fortuity. The serendipity of discovering in its disparate content little examined aspects of our cultural history.

Travel has not been so restricted in this country since the Second World War. Post 1945 New Zealanders have travelled extensively for what we have colloquially termed O.E. (overseas experience). A 'rite of passage' for many young New Zealanders seeking to further their skills, or perhaps, just experience the adventure of travel. For New Zealand's most internationally recognized photographer, Brian Brake, a scholarship from the British Council to study colour cinematography in 1951 was formative in his career development. After this first overseas experience he determined to travel more extensively to further his career. In her article Vickie Hearnshaw looks at 20 postcards Brake wrote to his father Jack in the 1950s to retrace the significant events in his development as a photographer during this time.

From photojournalism to journalism, Gregory Treadwell writes about New Zealand's "revolutionary and celebrated" freedom of information legislation enacted in 1982. Although groundbreaking for its time it has remained unreformed despite growing dissatisfaction from those requesting information from government and its agencies. At a time when leaders such as President Trump have attacked journalists and their credibility, it is interesting to reassess how effective New Zealand lawmakers were in strengthening the rights of those who seek to hold the state to account.

Representation and cultural recognition have been prominent themes in this year of Covid-19. Tharron Bloomfield writes a personal commentary on his experience of curating a collection of costume and related material gifted to the Auckland War Memorial Museum by the New Zealand entertainer Mika Haka. He states that one of Mika's motivations was that his costumes "would speak for takatapui/LGBT+ communities who are underrepresented in museum collections".

Auckland artist Pauline Thompson was descended from Mauatua, the daughter of the paramount chief of Tahiti who married Fletcher Christian, the leader of mutineers on HMS Bounty. Emma Kelly traces her artistic career from her 'Pop Art' beginnings to what is described as a more 'serious' and 'metaphysical' style in the 1980s. In her later life Pauline believed that New Zealand women artists had not had their story told in the way men's art histories had been written, and that there was a further women's art history that needed to be written and shared.

One little known art history story in this country is that of historic signage. Caroline Powley writes that when signs no longer serve the original purpose of commercial promotion they accumulate rich new layers of meaning signifying notions of survival, continuity and loss as well as contributing to narratives of place, identity and community. They become icons. Powley's intention is "to encourage reflection on the possible heritage significance of historic signage and our current approach to assessment, scheduling and conservation."

Our last issue featured a personal reflection on the journalist, academic and photographer Les Cleveland by his friend Michael Jackson. In this issue Lawrence McDonald, the curator and publication editor of Cleveland's only solo exhibition in a public art gallery, discusses Cleveland's position within local photographic history and culture and argues that his photography needs to be viewed in more than purely local terms.

As governments seek to rally suffering communities by encouraging a mentality of unity and shared sacrifice, this issue illustrates the diversity that lies within notions of a national culture.

Vickie Hearnshaw

Dear Dad... Brian Brake writes home to his father, Jack Brake.

This article draws on 20 postcards from a private collection which have only recently come to light, written by New Zealand-born photographer Brian Brake to his father Jack Brake in the 1950s, and therefore during the years when he was establishing himself as a photo-journalist. Although the collection is not large in number, the messages written on the backs of these postcards provide a wonderful opportunity to locate Brian Brake's whereabouts during these years and retrace the significant events in his life at this time in his own words. Importantly, the postcards cover the critical period immediately prior to Brake undertaking the filming of his remarkable visual documentary, *Monsoon*, in India during the northern summer months of 1960. It would be this assignment that would establish his name as a world-class photo-journalist.

Keywords: #Brian Brake #postcards #New Zealand photographer #photo-journalist #documentary.

Twenty postcards sent by the celebrated New Zealand photographer Brian Brake to his father Jack Brake in the 1950s, have recently come to light from within a private collection.[1] Although not large in number, there is reason to believe that they may be representative of a far more comprehensive correspondence between the two.[2] Furthermore, these postcards may prove to be of considerable interest to researchers, when as R.E. Martinez argues, so much has been lost, since the postcards provide an opportunity to retrace events in Brian Brake's life as they unfold and in his own words, at a critical period in his career as a burgeoning photo-journalist.[3]

As I have already noted, the postcards were all addressed to Brian's father, John Samuel Brake (1878-1961). This may suggest that in spite of the physical distance between Brian and his father, Jack, half a world away in New Zealand, he was in fact never far from his mind. But they may also demonstrate a genuine desire on Brian's part to share his new experiences with him. Hence, the present discussion will go beyond reviewing the events covered in the postcards and also consider aspects of Brian's relationship with his father during these years.

THE EARLY YEARS – JACK BRAKE, ARTHUR'S PASS

In written accounts of Brian's life, his adoptive father, Jack Brake, is usually described as the 'storekeeper' of the small hamlet of Arthur's Pass in inland Canterbury. However, this does not sufficiently reflect the role Brake Senior was expected to carry out in his capacity as the registered licensee of the general store. He was contracted to the then Ministry of Public Works to supply essential goods and services to the local work force throughout the years of the construction of the Otira railway tunnel, from1908 until it was officially opened in 1923.[4] During this period it has been estimated that there were some 300 workers accommodated at the camp set up at Bealey Flat. On the completion of the tunnel, along with continuing his responsibilities of supplying goods to the local community, Brake Senior took on further duties. For instance, with the transition from the era of the stage coach and horses to regular train services and the need for stabling having ceased, he assumed the position of station master. This was one that would take up more of his time as freight from the West Coast increased. In addition, when Arthur's Pass was designated a national park in 1929, and as interest among the public in recreational activities in the area grew, his business further expanded.

At the time Jack Brake and his wife Jane (Jennie) adopted the baby son of their niece Margaret on her death in 1927, they were well into their middle years. Yet having done so Brian's welfare became the couple's priority. So when Brian reached school age, in what they saw as the child's best interests, it was agreed that Jenny Brake would move to live in Christchurch. To this end the Brakes had a bungalow built in Blighs Road, in the suburb of Papanui. Brian attended the nearby Waimairi primary school and then went on to attend Christchurch Boys' High School. He was also a member of the congregation of St Paul's Anglican Church, in Papanui, and active in their bible class.

Nonetheless, Brian usually spent his school holidays at Arthur's Pass. It was during these sojourns that he developed his love of the mountains and acquired an intimate knowledge of them. Significantly, it was also while at Arthur's Pass that he was introduced to photography. Certain members of Brian's extended family were already amateur enthusiasts, some were members of the Christchurch Photographic Society and probably also encouraged Brian to join when in his teens.[5] However it was the local park ranger, Charlie Warden, who taught him the necessary skills. Brian recalls how, as only a youngster, he began assisting Warden with the colouring of his black and white lantern slides in preparation for lectures to the public. Warden went on to show Brian how to take photographs, and how to develop them. By the age of 16 Brian had made up his mind that he would become a photographer. It was at this time his father's help became crucial in fulfilling his adopted son's expressed aspirations. Evidence of an invoice detailing the purchase of a Klimax half-plate camera from Warden dated 8 September 1942 for £5 is perhaps indicative of the way in which Jack Brake was prepared to support his son to achieve his ambitions.[6] Several accounts also mention his father's assistance in facilitating the arrangements for Brian to enter the studio of the then leading Wellington portrait photographer Spencer Digby in 1945. One of the values of the postcards is that they clearly demonstrate that Brian was appreciative of his father's assistance and his messages on his postcards reflect this. But beyond this, in terms of the tone of address in the postcards, it is clear that there was a genuine degree of warmth and affection between the two.[7]

Figure 1. Teal Flying Boat postcard, July 1951.

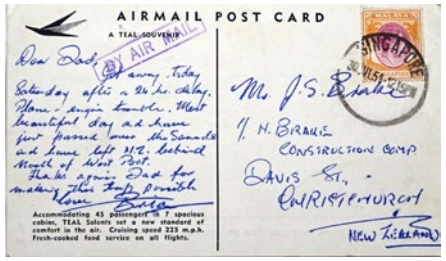

Figure 2. Message written on the Teal postcard, July 1951.

THE POSTCARDS AND WHAT THEY REVEAL

The earliest postcard in this collection dates from July 1951. By this date Jack Brake, now a widower and approaching seventy, had retired to a small block of family land in Brake St, Christchurch.[8] It was here he was living throughout the period of the correspondence between Brian and his father, and which only ceased on the latter's death on 23 March 1961. In this early postcard Brian informs his father how, after a delay of 24 hours, the flying boat operated by TEAL has finally taken off on the first leg of his trip to England to take up a travelling scholarship from the British Council to study colour cinematography (Fig. 1). While, no doubt relieved, yet excited, to be under way, as the flying boat ascends over the west coast of the South Island heading towards the Tasman Sea, Brian has already taken out a pen to write a brief message to his father. This was on the back of an in-flight souvenir TEAL postcard, and he described to him the scene below, and also thanked him for helping to make the trip possible (Fig. 2). At this particular period air travel was comparatively expensive. Therefore, it would have been unusual for recipients of a British Council scholarship to travel by air. A newspaper report outlining his itinerary confirms just how ambitious it was.[9] It emphasizes that in all probability Brian certainly would have required additional assistance with the funding of his travel costs.

The experience of travelling in the United Kingdom and Europe was formative. It left Brian determined that when the opportunity arose he would return to further his career as a photographer. In 1954 Brian quit his job as cameraman with the National Film Unit and headed overseas to gain work experience. This time it was by sea. (Thus, there

was an interval of three years before the correspondence between Brian and his father resumed.) On his arrival at the port of Genoa, Italy, on 23 July 1954, Brian pens a postcard to his father to tell him of his safe arrival and to thank him for his letter. He also tells him how he took the opportunity to purchase a new lens for his camera while berthed at Aden. Then, within weeks, in yet another postcard, Brian informs his father that he has had to make an unexpected change in his plans in order to travel to Scotland for the screening of the films *Snows of Aorangi* and *The Snowline is their Boundary* at the Edinburgh Film Festival.[10] And, although Brian had expressed serious reservations about executive interference in the production of films while he was working with the National Film Unit, this sentiment is not evident in his written comments on the postcard.[11] Rather, he relays to his father his sense of elation at the favourable reception of these films by the critics. He writes 'Skiing film screened yesterday and again tonight,' and he declares that they have been 'Very well received and high praise for my photography. Am very thrilled indeed.'

Of course, the number of different postmarks which feature on these postcards bear witness to the 'jetsetter' lifestyle that soon became part Brake's way of life after he was admitted, first as an associate and then as a full member to the Paris-based photo agency Magnum Corporation in 1956 and 1957, respectively. In the course of fulfilling various assignments in the first years of his association with the agency he was travelling constantly. The postmarks on postcards include destinations as far afield as Morocco and Nigeria in Africa, to Nice and Salzburg in Europe, Aden and Lebanon in the Middle East and Moscow, capital of the then Soviet Union.[12] Nevertheless, it was the assignments which Henri Cartier-Bresson, who had already travelled extensively in Asia from the late 1940s, encouraged Brian Brake to undertake, which would prove to be of crucial importance in establishing his name as a photo-journalist.

Many of these assignments were made in the company of his then life-companion, dentist and aspiring journalist, Nigel Cameron (1920-2017), with whom Brian collaborated extensively from the mid-1950s. Apparently, Brake had met Cameron at the Players' Theatre in London, on his initial visit to England in 1951. Cameron must have understood the deep frustration Brian felt, after coming halfway round the world, only to be thwarted because as a non-union member he could not find work, and he did his utmost to promote Brake. For instance, John Turner relates the rather nice story of how Cameron offered Brake the use of the walls of his professional rooms in London to exhibit his photographs.[13]

Soon after Brake had become officially associated with Magnum the two men implemented their plan to spend a year travelling to several countries in the Middle East and Asia. Cameron would prove the ideal travelling companion for Brake. To begin with he was familiar with this part of the world, having been stationed in the Far East while serving in the Royal Navy during the World War 2, and subsequently he had been involved in the post-war reconstruction in Singapore. He also harboured a strong desire to return. Brake outlines on yet another postcard to his father their plans first to visit Egypt and Yemen, then to travel on through Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong, before continuing on to Australia for the Melbourne Olympics from 22 November-8 December 1956 and then over to New Zealand.[14] While he was back in New Zealand, Brake planned to cover the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh during the second week of December. This particular assignment included a sequence of images of the duke with Sir Edmund Hillary on the wharf at the port of Lyttelton, prior to embarking on their trip to the Antarctic.

MIDDLE EAST AND ASIA

Brake and Cameron arrived in Yemen in mid-1956. First, they spent some time in Aden before venturing into the interior of the country to the area round the Hadhramaut Valley. A more detailed account of this part of their journey was described in a chapter of the book written by Cameron entitled *To the East a Phoenix*, published in 1960.[15] It included an incident that occurred while they were staying in Hadhramaut, whereby a young girl had to be operated on after falling down a well. Selected images that Brake had taken during the course of the medical treatment she received from resident doctor, Dr Eva Hoeck, formed an early photo-essay which Brake published in *Illustrated* in September 1956.[16] Brian also informs his father how during their stay they had been able to make a number of flights with the RAF then stationed in the country. From their time with the Royal Air Force comes the memorable close up shot of the contrasting cultures of the camel driver juxtaposed with the jetfighter pilot. It is noteworthy that more recently, from all the thousands of images available, it was this one that was selected as the cover image for the in depth review of Brian Brake and his contribution to photography prepared by Te Papa Tongarewa to accompany the exhibition *Brian Brake: Lens on the World* in 2010. Brian made his initial visit to mainland China with Nigel Cameron on their return journey to the northern hemisphere in April 1957. Of course, at this stage China was largely still 'closed' to foreigners, therefore, as Brian explained to his

Figure 3. Postcard of houseboats on Lake Nagin, Kashmir.

father on a postcard written on their arrival, their plan was to work on subjects close at hand in the capital such as 'the children of Beijing,' and 'scenes of Spring'.[17] However, as Cameron relates, due to an unexpected encounter with Chou en Lai the pair were able to gain access to people and places to which they had not originally anticipated.[18] And, although as Brake later recalls, that wherever they went in China the pair of them were always accompanied by guides,
he also said that he was able to produce some images which were, in his estimation, to be some of his best.[19] And as a result of their extensive tour of the mainland of China both Cameron and Brake came to the realization that their visit had provided them enough material to put together what would be their first book to be produced in collaboration, *The Chinese Smile* — with Cameron responsible for the text and Brake the photographic images.[20]

Following their successful tour of China, Brake and Cameron travelled on to Nagin Bagh, in the vale of Kashmir in northern India, arriving before the end of May. Here they remained for about three weeks. Brian describes to his father how while they are in Kashmir they are staying on a luxurious houseboat moored on Lake Nagin (Fig. 3). It's worth pointing out that since their visit to New Zealand, where Cameron presumably had the opportunity to meet Brian's father, the postcards

Figure 4. Message on Lake Nagin postcard signed by Nigel Cameron and Brian Brake.

Figure 5. Brian Brake image of Kashmiri woman in a local skiff.

sent after that date were often signed, as in this case, as being from both Brian and Nigel (Fig. 4). This suggests that during their visit to New Zealand a real connection had been made between Cameron and Brake's father. Further, I believe that it is significant that following Jack Brake's death in March 1961, Brian and Nigel made the decision to dedicate their forthcoming collaborative project on the Chinese capital city entitled '*Peking: a tale of three cities*', to his memory.

Once again a written account of their activities in Kashmir was developed by Cameron into another chapter for the book that he and Brake were then currently working on, *To the East a Phoenix*. For instance, concerning the houseboat where they stayed while in Kashmir named the *Triumph*, Cameron notes one of the advantages of this type of accommodation in comparison with a hotel, besides the constant cool breezes from across the water, is that guests can fully take in the majesty of panorama before them. Cameron also goes on to describe more about the geography of the region — which to him appeared to be a seemingly endless network of lakes and interconnecting canals.

Brake and Cameron did engage in some energetic activities while in Kashmir. For example, Cameron described how they joined the Sahdus on their pilgrimage into the mountains to Amarnath. They also took the opportunity to visit the historic terraced-gardens renowned for their water features, notably Nishat Bagh near Shalimar created by the mogul Asif Khan in the 17th century, and the subject of an article which Cameron and Brake collaborated on for *National Geographic*.[21] In addition, they also greatly benefitted from whiling away many pleasant hours skimming over the water and meandering along the canals in a skihara, a local flat-bottomed boat characteristic to this region, and just poking round places nearby to familiarize themselves with their immediate surroundings in the company of their local guide, Ahmed Wanghoo, whom both men found agreeable and knowledgeable.

On one occasion the party of Wanghoo, Cameron and Brake in their skihara became stalled in the heavily congested waterway, the Jhelum near Srinagar, and this gave rise to a scene that Cameron would subsequently remember as one of 'interminable labour, picturesque, and also excruciatingly terrible in terms of [the] human struggle for a living'.[22] Brake, with his cameras slung round his neck at the ready, and an eye for the good angle, took one of those memorable images for which he has become renowned. It was of a local Kashmiri woman shown in profile, reaching out with a long pole, her sari falling forward, as she skillfully propels the loaded skiff forward (Fig. 5). Significantly, as the shutter closed, Brake was able to juxtapose this active figure with the

seemingly spent figure of the man, on the left of the image, and thereby capture the contrast between the two.

Recently, Vinayak Razdan has drawn attention to the fact that Cartier-Bresson had taken almost the same scene when he was working on location in India in 1947, but, as he points out on comparing the two images, Cartier-Bresson's photograph was taken from a higher angle.[23] This poses the interesting question as to whether Brake was actually aware of Cartier-Bresson's photograph of a decade earlier. If so, did Brake then seek out the same scene that Cartier-Bresson had previously taken as an exercise, or as Razdan suggests, as a tribute to Cartier-Bresson by seeking to recreate it? Certainly, as Razdan states, the subject matter is strikingly similar and hence, this could put the subjects of Brake's Kashmiri photographs in a new context.

Brake's image of the Kashmiri woman was originally included with a selection of Brake's photographs in *To the East a Phoenix* under the descriptive title 'Poling transport boats'. Since then, this photograph has continued to be widely reproduced: for example it was included in the retrospective exhibition organized by Te Papa and in the accompanying book, as 'Kashmir, 1957,' and it was also selected for *Monsoon*, in the chapter on the Flood. It has, thus, become disassociated from its specific origins.[24]

TOWARDS MONSOON

His time spent in Kashmir would provide Brian Brake with so much original visual material for his camera and would eventually inspire him to bring his images of these places and their people to a wider audience. Gael Newton outlines in some detail the process taken by Brake towards formulating his ideas and the lengths he went to, to develop a working plan for his project on the *Monsoon*.[25] It would entail on-going discussions with Cameron, also consulting with his colleagues Cartier-Bresson and Ernst Haas from Magnum as well as time spent in practical experimentation, and this clearly demonstrates how Brake prepared for this assignment with considerable care. For instance, Brake went out into the field to experience the rainy season in Yunnan province, while visiting China in 1959.

Some three years after he had first travelled to Kashmir with Cameron, Brake would return to India during the summer months of June-August 1960, to begin filming his remarkable visual photo-essay, *Monsoon*, which would establish his name as a world-class photo-journalist. In one of the final postcards of the group of twenty, Brian wrote to his father from Zurich in Switzerland while en route to India, to let him know that finally, he was on his way:

Zurich 3/6/60
Dear Dad,
Just flown in from Paris en route to Bombay – India. I stay in India for three months to photograph the MOONSOON [sic] RAINS.
Love Brian

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Twist, Jennifer. "Brian Brake's Life told through his passports." blog.tepapa.govt.nz [accessed 26 June, 2017].

ENDNOTES

1. The first postcard dates from 30 July,1951; the last, 30 December, 1960.

2. References to other correspondence in the postcards gives me every reason to believe that these postcards are representative of a larger body of correspondence.

3. R.E. Martinez, 'Brian Brake: selection from a travel notebook,' *Camera*, June 1960, pp. 4-14.

4. Deed signed between John Brake and the New Zealand Ministry of Public Works, CA000852, Te Papa Tongarewa archives.

5. Conversation with the Brake family historian, Wayne Marriott, 2017.

6. Note of purchase, dated 8 September, 1942, CA000852, Te Papa Tongarewa archives.

7. Brian always signed his postcards to his father with 'love'.

8. Jennie Brake died quite suddenly on 24 August, 1942.

9. Newspaper cutting from Te Papa archives *Cameraman Gains Latest Information*, 16 December, 1951, CA000852, Te Papa Tongarewa archives.

10. Postcard dated 7 September, 1954, private collection, Christchurch.

11. For example, see newspaper cutting from *NZ Herald*, 12 March, 1957, Te Aka Matua, Te Papa Library Art File.

12. Jennifer Twist, curator of the Brian Brake archive at Te Papa, made a tally of the 10 passports issued since 1951 and estimates that Brake visited at least 44 countries, and in some instances on a number of different occasions. Jennifer Twist, *Brian Brake's life told through his passports*, blog dated 26 June, 2017.

13. Athol McCredie, 'Introduction', *Brian Brake: Lens on the World*, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, 2010, p. 9.

14. Postcard dated 17 August, 1956, private collection, Christchurch.

15. Nigel Cameron, *To the East a Phoenix*, Hutchinson, London, 1960, pp. 9-40.

16. *Illustrated*, 22 September, 1956.

17. Postcard dated 5 April, 1957, private collection, Christchurch.

18. Obituary, Nigel Cameron, Hong Kong art critic. *South China Morning Post*, 16 February, 2017.

19. Eve Arnold, Introduction, *Brian Brake, China* - The 1950s, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, 1995, np.

20. Brake's images of the May Day celebrations in Beijing in 1957 are perhaps the most noteworthy. *The Chinese Smile* was published by Hutchinson's in 1958. It was republished by Oxford University Press in paperback in 1990.

21. Nigel Cameron and Brian Brake, 'The Emperor Private Gardens, Paradise after on Earth, *National Geographic*, vol. 114, no. 55, 1958, pp. 606-647.

22. Nigel Cameron, *To the East a Phoenix*, p. 63.

23. Vinayak Razdan, See blog entitled' A Beautiful Chain of Borrowed Beautiful Images,' 20 January 2017; https://www.searchkashmir.org/2013/01/a beautiful-chain-of-borrowed-beautiful.htm

24. John B. Turner, 'The Roving Photo-journalist, 1954-1959', Brian Brake: Lens on the World, p. 114; Brian Brake, *Monsoon*, text by Edmund Hillary, Deben Bhattacharya, Subodh Mukherji and Asoke Roy Chowdhury, Bateman, New Zealand, 2007, p. 165.

25. Gael Newton, 'The Colour Photo Essay 1960-1980,' *Brian Brake: Lens on the World*, pp.169-244.

Freedom of information. What were they thinking?

Greg Treadwell

"The right to know is the right to live."
Aruna Roy (1946—), Indian social activist

Ongoing dissatisfaction among information requesters, including journalists, has discredited the early and partially heroic narratives of the Aotearoa New Zealand freedom-of-information (FOI) regime. The revolutionary and celebrated Official Information Act 1982 (OIA 1982) has remained virtually unchanged since its inception, despite ongoing calls for reform. This article examines why the OIA 1982 was so transformative, calling on the literature and two thematic analyses of historic parliamentary debates as it explores the thinking of the time and historicises the moment lawmakers cemented in statute notions of an open society. All media rely on this law, and the idea of FOI behind it, to be able to flourish, even if some are more acutely aware of that than others. All media practitioners, from journalists to filmmakers, benefit from the informed social discourse that results from FOI. To explore its failings in Aotearoa New Zealand today and, indeed, to start to imagine remedies, this research argues an important first step is to better understand the thinking of the time.

Keywords: #transparency #freedom of information #the public right to know #Official Secrets Act 1951 #Official Information Act 1982 #Aotearoa New Zealand

Any history of media practice is also a record of the ideas that sit behind that practice and therefore help shape our mediated social realities in fundamental ways. This article explores the introduction to Aotearoa New Zealand of an idea central to the authentic mediation of political life in any attempt at representative democracy. Freedom of information (FOI) is a 250-year-old idea of universal access that has evolved into a principle with political, legal and ethical dimensions at the centre of modern democracy theory. The idea might be simply described thus: for the will of the people to mean something, citizens must have access to the same information as their rulers

How are leaders to be judged if the body politic is not privy to all the information held by its government? This idea developed into the notion that the wielding of statutory power over others can be kept proportional to requirements, and even legitimised to some degree, through transparency measures placed on the powerful, and against their will if necessary. Today's assumptions for which this idea can be considered a progenitor include those related to our understanding of informed citizenship within an open society. In the end, without the assurances brought by FOI, all media struggles for authenticity. While this study has roots in journalism studies, the research contends all Aotearoa New Zealand's media types – radio, magazines, film, television, web productions, alternative, oppositional, social and indigenous media – rely on the openness that FOI, in large part, is meant to guarantee.

In general terms, the idea of FOI has led liberal democracies to three vital and contemporary assumptions. Firstly, it affirms the individual citizen's presumptive right to information held about them by the State. Secondly, it guarantees the rights of third-party access to information held by the state to increase and maintain government accountability. Thirdly, it affirms the right to involvement by citizens in the making of laws and the affairs of the nation, which cannot be actualised without access to information. The first aspect of FOI described here affirms the place and rights of the individual in an open society, the second creates potential for requisite State transparency and the third is a political ideal in monitory and participatory democracies. Indeed, without FOI, a body politic's right to knowledge about the affairs of government – a notion constitutive of the very notion of publics – cannot, in theory, be reliably actualised; informed publics become impossible and mediated political communication struggles for authenticity. David Banisar, whose research into the global spread of FOI laws is widely acknowledged, says FOI is "an essential right for every person. It allows individuals and groups to protect their rights. It

is an important guard against abuses, mismanagement and corruption". Professor Patrick Birkinshaw (2006, 41) goes further:

> FOI is a human right; it enables us to fulfill our potential as humans. Without such rights, we are little more than subjects. Perhaps we are content, but we are still subjects who are denied the right to make integrity and individual responsibility a reality. FOI is both intrinsically and instrumentally important.

This article explores the thinking behind the development of ideals of open government in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1970s and the creation of the country's FOI regime in the early 1980s. Given the widely acknowledged parlous and degraded state of FOI in Aotearoa New Zealand in the first two decades of the 21st Century, it seems helpful to start at the introduction of the regime and explore, in historical terms, the thinking behind it.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

This study draws from the literature, from document research and from two thematic analyses of parliamentary debates. The historical data analysis on which it draws was conducted as part of a wider, doctoral study and contextualises, in historical and political terms, the passing of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA 1982). Detailed background to the Act, which is still the engine room of the nation's FOI regime today, is followed by an analysis of verbatim transcripts from New Zealand's parliamentary debates. The relevant transcripts of Hansard, the official record of the New Zealand House of Representatives, were downloaded, coded and analysed to provide a clearer understanding of the political and social motives behind the introduction of the nation's ground-breaking disclosure law. To better understand the failures of today and plan for the remedies of tomorrow, this research contends it is necessary to understand the ambitions of those who designed the regime.

This hermeneutic approach is intended to help illuminate the socio-political context of the country's nascent FOI regime in the early 1980s. The researcher first analysed parliamentary debates surrounding the introduction of the OIA's precursor, the Official Secrets Act 1951 (OSA 1951). Four transcripts of parliamentary debates relating to the OSA 1951 were explored thematically to establish a sense of the territory, in terms of transparency, from which a liberalising Aotearoa New Zealand society was emerging in the 1970s. This helps our

understanding of both the culture of State secrecy that grew from the OSA 1951 and of the radical shift required to abandon it. The focus here, however, is the introduction of the revolutionary OIA in 1982, which broke that wall of secrecy; the article explores the debates between the divisions of elite political powerbrokers involved in its genesis. The aim is to establish the intentions – and uncertainties – behind its introduction. Parliamentary debates from May 1980 until December 1983 which included any discussion of the Act (n=62) were coded thematically. Sixteen primary nodes and a further 30 descendent nodes were created in NVivo analysis software.

The aim was to capture both the spirit and purpose of the law but also its complexity through the categorisation of matters that were still at issue when it was passed. It is intended to articulate a sense of the society that desired to, and then managed to, annul the State's long-held assumption of the right to total secrecy.

THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Before the advent of the OIA 1982, the Government of New Zealand was free to pick and choose what information, if any, it shared with the public. Information held by the State was presumed, in legal terms at least, to be categorically confidential unless specifically approved for disclosure, regardless of its nature. Those who released information without approval were deemed to have committed an offence under the Official Secrets Act 1951, which was a carbon copy of Britain's notorious secrecy act at the time. To be a government employee of virtually any sort meant being "good at keeping secrets". If ignorance is a politically weak position (the corollary of the widely accepted view that knowledge is power), the New Zealand Government had virtually unbridled control over the level of power ceded to the electorate.

At its core, the State was guarded and secretive, having enshrined such legislation to help in its defence against the perceived threats of communism in the middle of the 20th Century. Preoccupied with the threat of being spied on, it prohibited any official from passing information to anyone with catch-all lawmaking.

THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION BILL (OIB)

Growing opposition to the Vietnam War, to Prime Minister Rob Muldoon's 'Think Big' energy policies and, later, to the Springbok rugby tour of 1981 was part of a political awakening that included increasing

Figure 1. Leo Bensemann, *Portrait of Alan Danks*, Oil on board, UC-MBL-1985, University of Canterbury Art Collection, Christchurch, New Zealand, www.kohika.canterbury.ac.nz

demands for transparency. Alongside it was increasing consciousness of contemporary Māori land issues, brought to focus by the defining land occupation at Takaparawhā (Bastion Point) in 1977-78 and the principles of tino rangatiratanga (sovereignty). But this awakening came face to face with Muldoon's authoritarian approach, which included such famous confrontations with accountability as the banning of political cartoonist Tom Scott from covering political delegations overseas and even from the Prime Minister's own press conferences. Muldoon declined to halt the Springbok rugby tour that was dividing the country in 1981 and was dismissive of the proposal for an FOI regime, publicly calling the proposed OIA a "nine-day wonder". The Official Information Committee, later dubbed the Danks Committee after its chairman Alan Danks, an economics professor, was formed and directed to review the OSA 1951 and to consider the extent to which official information – a euphemism for any information in government hands – might be made readily available to the public.

What the Danks committee recommended in its two reports amounted to a fundamental upsetting of the existing relationship between state and people in Aotearoa New Zealand. An "official information act" was proposed to deliberately reverse the presumption of the State's right to secrecy and base a new relationship between the State and citizens, at least in terms of information-sharing, on an underlying principle of availability. That is, all information held by the Government would become available to anyone in New Zealand (unlike many other regimes around the world, rights to official information are not restricted to citizens, or even residents, but are accorded to anyone on New Zealand soil) unless there was good reason for withholding it. Indeed, information could still be kept from the public under the new regime if it met certain strict and narrow criteria but situations demanding such secrecy were now defined in law and restrained principally to matters of state and Crown security, commercial privilege, "free and frank" advice to ministers, and the privacy of natural persons. In global terms, New Zealand's list of reasons for withholding information was comparatively short, one of the factors contributing to the conventional narrative that New Zealand's FOI regime led the world in the creation of state transparency.

The Danks Committee's recommendations were adopted for the most part, despite being radical, and the Official Information Act was passed in 1982 and came into effect the following year. It was roundly celebrated as one of the most liberal and permissive regimes on the planet and in late 1999 the country's chief ombudsman, Sir Brian Elwood, was still happy to declare that New Zealanders' right to know was, as far as he knew, "unmatched". Judith Aitken, a senior civil servant, reminded an open-government conference in England of arguments that transparency was the 20th century's most significant constitutional development and equivalent in scale to the introduction of the male franchise in the 19th century.

DISCUSSION

The significance of the law was not at issue in parliamentary debates, even though Prime Minister Rob Muldoon was taken to task for belittling it outside the House. The Government parliamentarian most noted for his advocacy of FOI was the member for Hamilton West, Mike Minogue. He told the House a year before the introduction of the Official Information Bill that the parliamentary democracy New Zealand so valued would not survive without FOI reforms. His comment came during the address-in-

Figure 2. New Zealand Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, reading the budget (29 July 1983). Dominion Post (newspaper): Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post and Dominion newspapers. Ref: EP/1983/2952/6-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand/records/23222557.

reply in response the Governor-General's speech opening the second session of the 39th Parliament.

> I have said on many occasions that I do not think this parliamentary institution can long survive what has become the habitual practice in connection with information. I refer to the growing habit of official secrecy in vital matters. The reason for this growing habit is our continuing support for section 6 of the Official Secrets Act, which has long been used to obscure and conceal information about public affairs. It is quite stupid and untrue to pretend any longer that secrecy has not become the habit of both bureaucracy and politicians. This must change if the health of the institution of Parliament is to be safeguarded.

Analysis of the "importance" node (26 references) showed New Zealand's Parliament was under no illusions about the magnitude of what might be achieved with the passing of the OIA. Except for the Prime Minister's, there was no tangible opposition to the idea that FOI reforms were required or that the goal was the almost-complete political transparency of the State. Introducing the bill, Attorney General Jim McLay apologised for the length of his introductory remarks but

noted it was "one of the most significant constitutional innovations to be made since the establishment of the office of the Ombudsman in the early 1960s". In debating whether the legislation might have an expiry date, a "sunset clause", Minogue said the law proposed to increase citizen rights and, as such, "should be seen as a lasting part of our legal and constitutional fabric".

Underscoring its importance, the Attorney General closed his introductory remarks by returning to the core, constitutional values of FOI:

> I reiterate that the Bill represents a significant constitutional innovation. It seeks to improve communication between the citizen and the bureaucracy. It makes governments more accountable to the people. But perhaps, above all, it materially alters the delicate balance that exists between the citizen and the State, not by diminishing the effectiveness of government but rather by greatly increasing the rights of the individual in his or her dealings with an otherwise all-powerful State. In so doing it very substantially enhances the freedoms of each and every New Zealander.

OPPOSITION TO ASPECTS OF THE BILL

The nodes "criticism" and its child nodes "poacher and gamekeeper", "cabinet veto" and "Labour policy" grouped opposition thematically and allowed criticisms of the bill to be explored. Led by Geoffrey Palmer, the MP for Christchurch Central, the Opposition challenge focused on two aspects of the proposed law. The first was the extent to which it still provided for state secrecy in sections 6 and 7. The second was that the final decision on release of information to requesters lay with the minister whose ministry held the information, and not with the mechanism of appeal, the Ombudsman.

Labour asked what guidelines would help officials decide for or against the release of information because that would affect whether the presumption on balance was for or against disclosure. To ensure the presumption was for disclosure, as the Danks committee intended, the conclusive criteria for withholding information under clause 6 needed to be narrow, since they were the exclusions that did not have to be weighed against the public interest in release, as those in clause 7 did. The most significant reasons for exclusion were listed in clause 6. They were that information can be withheld if releasing it would threaten the security of the nation.That it could undermine the entrustment of New Zealand with information from other governments. That it threatened the maintenance of law, or could endanger anyone, or seriously damage the New Zealand economy (Official Information Act s. 6). In these cases, officials would not have to run the withholding of information against a public-interest test to establish that it is more in the public interest to withhold it than release it. In the criteria under clause 7, which includes the protection of commercially sensitive material and officials' free and frank advice to their ministers, they would have to run such a test. (Note: after subsequent amendments, the intentions behind clause 7 in the original bill are now found in section 9 of today's act).

While there was broad agreement on the nature of FOI principles, Geoffrey Palmer told the House that the quality of FOI legislation lay in its details. He disagreed "profoundly" with some of the Danks Committee's conclusions, including that government ministers should have the final say on whether information was released or not. There needed to be a "neutral umpire" on FOI disputes. "The Government must surrender the keys to the palace," Palmer told the House. At issue was whether ministers would invoke their right to a veto "frequently" and thereby reduce FOI. He hoped the special select committee to consider the bill would change this aspect of it.

In a terse exchange over the Ombudsman's review role in relation to FOI refusals, Attorney General Jim McLay told the Opposition that the public could expect that a "public-interest" argument for the withholding of information would not "become a synonym for administrative convenience or for the avoidance of political embarrassment". Labour argued having a neutral umpire was a basic tenet of FOI laws. It said a ministerial veto was the sort of concentration of executive power that was at the heart of much current discontent with the Government. However, the Government's response was that making the Ombudsman's FOI rulings binding on parties would be "an abdication of the functions of the Government in favour of some other institution that is neither elected nor responsible in that sense", a situation the Ombudsman's office itself recognised. The Government stressed that it expected the ministerial veto to be used "only in very strong and exceptional cases". The veto, which had to be announced within three weeks if used and formally gazetted, would remain (it was later amended to a full cabinet veto which has never been used), which led Palmer to later predict that an important factor in any future success of the FOI regime would be "the attitude of public servants and Ministers to the disclosure of information will be a most important feature of the success of the legislation."

SCHEDULE OF AGENCIES SUBJECT TO THE ACT

The implications of right-to-information laws are that the transparency of the entire government is transformed by them. However, which state agencies and which agencies contracted to the State should be subject to the OIA 1982 is still at issue even today. One focus of this research is on organisations within the privatised sector, in terms of what Alisdair Roberts calls "structural pluralism", the provision of public services through a mix of public, quasi-public and private organisations. And as the Act made its way through the parliamentary process, the length of its reach was indeed at issue, particularly for the Opposition, which complained at the broadening of the clauses that permitted secrecy (primarily sections 6 and 7) by the Government-stacked select committee that considered the bill. Right from the start that organisations connected to the public purse were granted rights to secrecy and that Parliament's exclusion, and the ramifications of that today, was the result simply of the way the Committee on Official Information viewed the parameters of its terms of reference. The Attorney General said he agreed with the committee that including Parliament, the courts and local government under the bill was outside its brief. Local government, however, was already nominated for future inclusion in the country's FOI regime and so the automatic nature of the exclusion of Parliament never was directly explained. In 2012 a central recommendation of New Zealand Law Commission's second review of the OIA 1982 was that it be extended to the business of Parliament but the Government quickly moved to affirm the long tradition of secrecy at Parliament. When it came to quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations, quangos, as they were known at the time, the seeds of today's discontent over quasi-corporate bodies with connections to the public purse being excluded from FOI regimes were germinating even as the bill was passed. In response to a challenge from the Opposition benches, the Attorney General told the House it would "take too long to enumerate all the quangos that are excluded". He then offered examples of organisations for which exclusion took place: judicial bodies (e.g., licensing commissions), local bodies, and occupational administrative organisations (e.g., the Real Estates Licensing Board). He referred members of the House to page 104 of the Danks Committee's supplementary report on official information, which gives the principles on which exclusion of quangos was based.

Local government (city councils, district councils, regional councils, health boards, licensing boards and, after 1989, school boards) were not subject to the Act because the Danks Committee felt any

openness requirements it might need, like those of Parliament and the courts, were outside its brief. But the Opposition was already of the view the right-to-know principles in the OIB must be applied to local government too, as it would be under the Labour government elected in 1984. The Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act, which effectively extended the reach of the OIA 1982 and set rules for access to local-government meetings, would be enacted in 1987.

TIME LIMITS

The law passed by Parliament in 1982 set no time limit by which the State must produce information asked for by New Zealand citizens. Instead, it required it to respond to requests as soon as practicable, a notion under fire from the Opposition in the second-reading debate on the bill. The notion of a timely response has been a point of contention ever since. Labour believed time limits should apply and was "worried that, in practice, delay will often be the most convenient course for the executive branch to take, because time has a habit of making many things less controversial". Auckland Central MP Richard Prebble said that without time limits the whole purpose of the Act would be undermined because "in many cases information delayed is information denied". It became obvious that without time limits, delays were inevitable and they were eventually introduced by Labour through amendment to the Act in 1986. The State was from then on allowed up to 20 working days to respond; either with the information requested or with its reason for either withholding the information or for needing more time.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

At the bill's second reading on December 14, 1981, Labour outlined its main objection: the reasons the State could withhold information, listed in sections 6 and 7, were too wide. The Government's hold on information about the economy remained too strong. The range of sanctions which could be brought against state servants releasing information that was prejudicial to the security of the nation concerned Labour. The Act was not so different to the approach taken in the OSA 1951, in that regard. National, as it turned out, agreed with this last point and sanctions would not be part of the final act at all. At that point, the OIA became entirely an FOI bill and the issue of spying, a remnant of the OSA 1951, was left to other legislation.

The Government rejected Labour's suggested improvements at select-committee stage, during which it had found it necessary to make 22 amendments to the bill itself and was subsequently accused of rushed law-making. Closing the debate before the bill's third reading, the Attorney General dismissed Labour's amendments one by one, saying they would have threatened international relations, disadvantaged the Government in economic terms and upset a careful public-interest balance created by the select committee that considered the bill. Others would have caused trade secrets to be revealed and "imposed an arbitrary 28-day limit on the supply of information, a matter that is more than adequately dealt with by the powers of the ombudsman to investigate any undue delay in the supply of information". The issues the Opposition raised had all been "most carefully considered by the select committee" and he commended the bill to the House for its third reading. The bill was passed shortly before 4.30am. The middle of the night was ironic time to pass a sunshine law, noted Labour's MP for St Kilda, Michael Cullen.

CONCLUSIONS

That much unimportant information flowed from the State to the citizenry in the period before the proposal for a right-to-know law was developed does not obscure the state of secrecy that remained. Questions could be asked of the Government in the House of Representatives by the Opposition but the citizenry had no forum for information gathering. Both the Government and the Opposition made it clear in the House that the FOI situation in New Zealand was no longer tenable. The weight of the issue and the importance of the law change required to solve it were heavily emphasised by both sides. One government member said he believed the rot of secrecy would eventually bring down Parliament and democracy itself. Labour proposed a solution that went further than National's. It would have narrowed the list of possible exclusions from the obligation to release information, included Parliament itself in its legal ambit and accorded the Ombudsman final powers of decision over FOI disputes. But despite these differences in the proposed solutions, the problem was very much the same from wherever you looked. An anachronistic law from earlier times, the OSA 1951, was still enabling a clandestine approach to government that went against the direction society was relatively quickly moving.

Aotearoa New Zealand was a member of the first wave of liberal democracies to adopt FOI laws in the second half of the 20th century

and, through that framing, it might be reasonable to attribute the passing of the OIA, in part, to common external influences. Australia and Canada, similar countries in terms of their wealth, stable liberal democracies and their membership of the British Commonwealth, were passing FOI acts at much the same time and this trend appeared to theorists to mirror each other in important ways. Indeed, the early-1950s threats from communism had now morphed into the battle between the West and the Soviet Union; the latter and militarily more sophisticated stages of the Cold War had begun and Western countries like New Zealand were keen to differentiate their stance on the rights of the citizen. These countries arguably had these political influences in common and establishing FOI regimes was a key part of asserting ownership to the moral high ground in the rejection of totalitarianism.

However, this article has shown that there was also local context to the formation of New Zealand's FOI regime that helps deepen our understanding of it. New Zealand's move to FOI corrected a damaging imbalance that had resulted from society outpacing its own laws. The OSA 1951 was restrictive and authoritarian, everything the ongoing liberalisation of social practice and the recognition of human rights sought to reject. A complete change was required and the presumption of the State's right to secrecy was flipped on its head with the enactment of the OIA 1982. It was, the Opposition argued, a rushed affair, unlikely to work properly and too favourable towards the State. But the law was designed, in technical terms, by a group which included both advocates for transparency and experts in the workings of government. As a result, the law was much more liberal than its counterparts in Canada and Australia and brought some derision from policy analysts who thought its flexibility (for example, information is not defined as necessarily being held in document form) would create havoc for the civil service. As it turned out, its flexibility was its strength, and before long the Act was being lauded as a world-leading piece of FOI legislation. However, as shown in this article, seeds of discontent were evident even in the parliamentary debates that ushered in this imperfect sea-change in power relations within a democracy. Monitoring bodies that were proliferating across multiple planes of society since the end of World War II now had the power of FOI behind them as they carried out their work. It was, in a principle, the shift of the State from master to servant.

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Out of the closet and into the museum: The costumes of Mika Haka

Commentary by
Tharron Bloomfield

The Auckland Museum recently acquired a significant collection of costume and related material from New Zealand entertainer and community leader Mika Haka. Mika has collected material for over thirty years and it was always his intention that his material would become part of a museum collection. Mika's motivations to offer material to the Auckland Museum included the positive experiences he had with the Museum and that these objects would speak for takatāpui / LGBT+ communities who are underrepresented in museum collections. The process of selecting material for the museum was a challenge due to the size and variety of the collection. The costumes that represent Mika's life and are now preserved in the Auckland Museum have wide ranging research and display potential and show the importance of museums collecting contemporary material.

Keywords: #Museum #Collecting #Takatāpui / LGBT+ #Costume #Performance history #Māori

Mika Haka is a New Zealand entertainer and community leader who has been at the forefront (or arguably fringe) of New Zealand popular culture since the 1980s. Mika's varied accomplishments include dancer, singer, actor, model, producer, director, hairdresser, aerobics instructor, activist, entrepreneur and youth advocate. On his business card he describes his role as 'Creative' which is perhaps the most fitting description. Through his charity work he actively supports and empowers young adults particularly LGBT+ youth. Mika identifies as takatāpui. This is a traditional Māori word that has been reclaimed to describe all Māori people who identify with diverse sexualities, sexes and genders.

Mika's entertainment career grew in the 1980s, including a regular role in the New Zealand television drama Shark in the Park in which he played a police officer. His 'big break' occurred in 1991 with the release of a remake of the song *I Have Loved Me a Man* produced by Dalvanius Prime. Mika's version, which he describes as New Zealand's 'first gay pop hit', was not played by many radio stations due to its overt gay message. Mika's celebrity status and notoriety increased in the 1990s with several high-profile appearances. These included staging a haka featuring more than 300 performers at Hero (a gay dance party), playing a takatāpui man in the Academy Award winning film *The Piano*, appearing naked as a model in artist Christine Webster's photography exhibition *Black Carnival* and performing at the Edinburgh Festival.

In 2008 Mika founded the Mika Haka Foundation, a charitable organization that remains his major focus. Establishing a foundation that supports, mentors and provides opportunities for young adults (many of whom could be described as at-risk) demonstrates Mika's commitment to community and young adults. His first charitable trust Torotoro, established in 2001, promoted healthy life choices to young adults, an issue he feels strongly about. 'There was no junk food at all, no alcohol at all, no cigarettes, and don't even start on anything else. But there were condoms if they were having sex'.

Mika's professional and personal life has been preserved in the Auckland Museum where he deposited a substantial collection of costumes and related material. In making this donation Mika fulfilled a long-term goal of preserving his life through material culture. This article discusses Mika's motivations to contribute material to a museum and the process of selecting which material was acquired for the collection.

THE COLLECTION

Mika made a conscious decision early in his career to preserve material representing his life. '(He) decided early on that his life was worth memorializing. Over three decades ago he set himself to the task of preserving his history in photographs, artefacts and narratives'. This desire was not for personal sentimental reasons and neither was it for practical reasons as his costume styling changed constantly through his career. Mika kept material from his career including costumes, props, posters, correspondence and set designs with the intention they would become part of a museum collection.

Mika has previously donated material to other public institutions. In 2011 he donated material to Te Papa Tongarewa / Museum of New Zealand, and he had earlier donated material to LAGANZ (The Lesbian and Gay Archive of New Zealand) at the Alexander Turnbull Library. The author began visiting Mika and assessing his collection in 2016 with the goal of finding material for *Tāmaki Herenga Waka: Stories of Auckland* a new, long-term exhibition scheduled to open at the Auckland Museum in late 2020.

Mika estimates he had approximately 1,200 costumes in his collection. The majority worn by him or members of his performance groups dating back to the 1990s. Many of the costumes were unwieldy and decorated with a variety of non-textile elements including sequins, feathers, Christmas lights and animal parts. Mika's costumes fill his large suburban Auckland studio and two shipping containers. In addition to costume he had large collections of photographs and ephemera from his performances including posters, leaflets and sound recordings.

Another large collection was Mika's Māori 'kitsch' material that he had amassed over many years. Mika puts his interest in this material down to his childhood when he was adopted by a non-Māori family. Without ready access to Māori culture Mika would utilize the Māori material culture he saw around him, including tourist depictions of Māori people, to form his identity.

The storage of his material was systematic and each box or container was labelled with its contents. (Fig. 1) During the acquisition process Mika would often explain the reason for this level of organization was that he was 'a natural archivist'.

Figure 1.

In addition to keeping material from his long career Mika is unusual in that he has maintained exceptionally detailed records on his collection both in the form of written documentation and his own personal recollections. From the perspective of a museum curator this level of record keeping is both unusual and highly valuable. Museum exhibitions rely on the ability to communicate to an audience an engaging story through objects. Ideally objects should not only illustrate a story but provide some unique insight or emotional response that written text or oral history cannot. In contemporary museum exhibitions it is not enough to display an artefact simply because it was worn or owned by an individual, be they a celebrity or not. In preserving the narrative associated with his costumes and freely sharing his own anecdotes Mika has ensured his collection has high display potential in the future.

Clothing was an obvious form of object to represent Mika in a museum collection as his outlandish, provocative styling has always been a major part of his celebrity and persona. ‘Clothes are my thing. I'm from a generation where you didn't get into places if you were Māori and you weren't well dressed’. Mika’s costumes relate to his career as a performer and his takatāpui identity incorporating high fashion, burlesque, cabaret, camp and aspects of ‘traditional’ Māori culture. He describes his style as ‘not drag, but not male’.

MOTIVATIONS TO OFFER MATERIAL TO THE MUSEUM

People gift or sell material to a museum for a variety of reasons. Historically it was a measure of personal prestige, wealth and good taste to donate material to a museum. Today donors are often motivated by a sense of responsibility to preserve the past and a need to divest that responsibility. Museums are seen as validators of history. Therefore, in assuring his life story is part of a museum, Mika is validating not only his identity but that of takatāpui / LGBT+ people and Māori people who had an urban upbringing – both are groups underrepresented in museum collections. This philosophy of considering the needs of community is consistent with Mika’s approach to life and his work.

Memorable museum visits and positive experiences with staff members may also inspire people to donate items. In this way acquisitions become part of a reciprocal relationship and a way for individuals to mark their positive experiences at the museum. Mika first worked with the Auckland Museum on a project in 2009, a series of spoken word performances titled *Wonderland: The Mystery of the Orchid*.

This was a positive experience for Mika and encouraged him to consider the Auckland Museum as a future home for his collection.

It is unusual for an artist to donate material while they are still working. An additional motivation for Mika to part with a substantial portion of his collection was the publication in 2018 of his biography *I Have Loved Me a Man: The Life and Times of Mika Haka* written by Sharon Mazer. Mika felt that once his life story had been recorded he was able to let go of the material that represented it. With the publication of his biography Mika was ready to move on to his next project. Mika was pragmatic in his approach to letting go of his collection. If anything, the acquisition process was too slow for him. Mika’s lack of sentimentality was a different experience for the curator, who was more accustomed to donors acting more emotionally, but it made the project more efficient. Mika was clear on the material he was ready to let go, the material he still required and which pieces he would expect payment for rather than donate. This is another example of his systematic approach to his collection. Mika had considered the divestment and deaccession of his collection which is another role of the curator or archivist.

SELECTION OF MATERIAL

One of the challenges of selecting material for the museum collection was the sheer size of Mika’s collection. The first visits to the studio were overwhelming for the curator as Mika brought out so many costumes. He was able to narrate the history of each costume in detail. This often included the multiple performances they had been worn in, details on the designer and other anecdotes that were or were not always related to the costume.

Initially the curator and donor did not assign significance to the costumes in the same way. Significance for the donor was often related to who designed the outfit, which other celebrities had worn clothes by the designer and the price of the outfit. These measures of significance were circumstantial for the curator who was focused on the historic relevance of the outfits and how they could potentially be utilized in upcoming exhibitions. This was a lesson for the curator in prepping the donor as to how museums assign significance and an example of the need to build a strong relationship with the donor which can only develop over time. After discussing significance from a curatorial perspective Mika quickly realized which costumes would be most relevant for the museum and the selection process was streamlined.

The timespan between the first visit to Mika's studio and the final selection of objects was three years. This gave the donor and curator time to build a strong relationship and allowed the curator to learn more about the career and motivations of the donor.

The acquisition of new material for the museum is an important role of the curator. Curators are guided by a collecting policy and need to justify the significance, research and display potential of objects before acquiring new material. The Auckland Museum Collection Policy for 2018 / 2019 makes specific references to strengthening the collection in contemporary Māori fashion, material that represents contemporary Māori art practice and objects that show Māori participation in New Zealand life in the 20th and 21st Centuries. The Mika Haka Collection ticks all these boxes. Collecting priorities have evolved and continue to evolve in museums, making contemporary material such as the Mika Haka Collection more relevant to the purpose of the museum.

An issue with contemporary objects is that many are inherently ephemeral and not produced to last for generations. A rubber suit Mika had worn on many occasions and which would have been aesthetically appealing was not collected due to the inherent issues with the material. The unstable nature of rubber meant the outfit would only be able to be on display for a maximum of six months. Storage would also be problematic as it would require a specific temperature and humidity-controlled environment beyond the already strict museum environment. Museums need to be responsible for ensuring they can provide a safe home to an object for its entire lifespan.

In total 12 costumes were selected for the Auckland Museum Collection. Four of these costumes are described here and their significance discussed.

"SUGGESTIVE" COSTUME WORN ON WHEEL OF FORTUNE

This costume (Fig. 2) made by DeeZaStar was worn by Mika from 1991-1995. The costume is representative of Mika's early career when he did not have the financial resources for elaborate, designer costumes and was instead using shock value in his costuming. 'Mika's performances (in the early 1990s) were becoming more extreme, often in direct response to attempts to force him back – if not into the closet, then certainly into line'.

The most significant occasion Mika wore this outfit was in 1993 on an episode of the New Zealand version of the television game show *Celebrity Wheel of Fortune*. During the episode Mika performed

Figure 2.

his version of the song *I Have Loved Me a Man* which resulted in a complaint to the Broadcasting Standards Authority, an authority established to ensure content on television is not offensive to society. The complainant believed Mika's appearance on a family show breached good taste and decency referencing the suggestive answers he gave to questions, his 'gyrations', suggestive body movements and the 'distasteful' song he sang. 'Such performances surely should be restricted to adult clubs – certainly not on a TV family type show'. The episode screened on Easter Sunday which caused further offence to the complainant.

In the written response to the complaint the state broadcaster TVNZ emphasised Mika's performance was comedic rather than sexualised, pointing to 'the tradition of female impersonators as entertainers (including) Danny La Rue, Barry Humphries and pantomime dames'. TVNZ also expressed the belief that Mika's appearance was neither offensive nor unsuitable for children suggesting, 'any sexual innuendo in Mika's performance would have gone over the heads of the prepubescent'. The Broadcasting Standards Authority did not uphold the complaint considering the 'enthusiastic reaction from the audience which included a lot of children' in making their decision. However, the Authority made the point in its findings that 'broadcasters must exercise some degree of caution when broadcasting an item in which a female impersonator has a significant role'.

The primary historic significance of this costume is its ability to speak to the societal change and increased tolerance toward LGBT+ and gender fluid communities in New Zealand. However, terms such as 'female impersonator' would no longer be appropriate (or accurate) to describe Mika. His costume and performance would be considered tame to today's audience and unlikely to cause offence. In the period since this complaint in 1993, LGBT+ and gender fluid people have become more visible both in society and in television and other media. This costume would have high display value and could be used by the museum in a discussion on a wide range of subjects including gender, sexuality, television history and censorship.

Another elaborate costume was also made by DeeZaStar, a long time Mika collaborator. It is made from 'faux Issey Miyake fabric scraps left over from the 2006 Commonwealth Games' and features a beaded tiki. As with many of his costumes Mika has his own name for this outfit which is his 'Issey Miyake meets Grace Jones octopus dress'.

The most significant occasion Mika wore this outfit was for a performance after the death of Dame Te Atairangikaahu (the Māori Queen) in 2006. Mika first performed for Te Atairangikaahu in 1986 when he was with the Māori theatre group Te Ohu Whakaari. She enjoyed watching him perform and over the years the two formed a bond. Mika recalls Te Atairangikaahu would describe him as the 'official naughty Māori' or the 'Māori Court Jester'. Inherent in these descriptions is the suggestion Mika is something of a 'loveable rogue', a provocateur, but one who only has the best intentions.

Mika actively uses his performances and celebrity to challenge racism and homophobia which at times has made him unpopular with more conservative Māori performers. Mika has spoken out about the homophobia that exists in Māori society noting that many Māori people will speak out on land rights or human rights but treat takatāpui / LGBT+ people as invisible. In 2006 Mika responded to an anti-gay demonstration organized by a Māori fundamentalist Christian church leader by standing in front of protestors holding a single flower. Mika's close relationships with many influential Māori leaders such as Dame Te Atairangikaahu shows that while institutionalized homophobia is present in Māori society, it is not universal. Mika has described his invitation to perform after the death of Te Atairangikaahu as validation of his place as a Māori performer.

This costume could be used to speak to the tension between LGBT+ and Māori identities, Mika's role as a 'naughty Māori' and his close relationship to Dame Te Atairangikaahu.

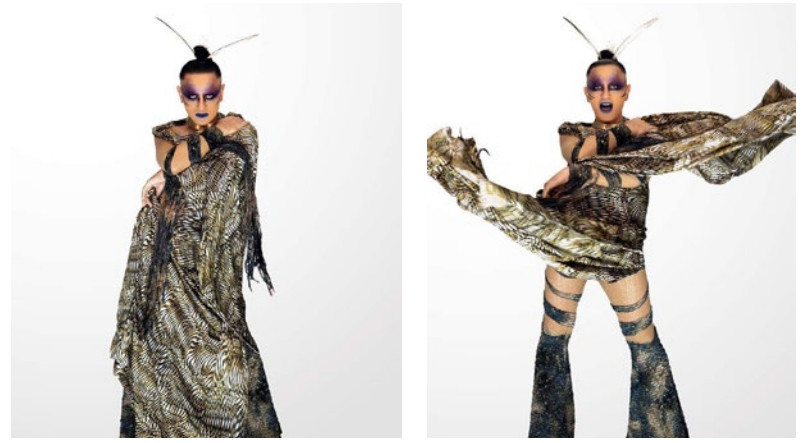

Figure 3.

THE OUTFIT THAT CAUSED A 'COMMUNIST SCARE'

This outfit (Fig. 3) was designed for Mika by Patrick Steele, an Auckland based designer active between the 1970s and 2000s. The outfit is made from lycra and is designed to appear as though large portions of the body appear naked.

Mika wore this costume on several occasions including the final Hero Parade and the Sydney Mardi Gras. The most memorable occasion for Mika was when he wore it while on tour in Cuba in 2008. According to Mika this costume caused a 'communist scare'. Mika recounts that Cuban Government officials spoke to him with concerns his performance would be immoral and questioned whether he intended to perform naked. Homosexuality was illegal in Cuba until 1979 and the country has government enforced censorship. Mika responded to the Government officials that he would be wearing a traditional Māori costume referring to this outfit. This response from Mika is an example of his quick wit but also his opinion that what many people perceive as traditional Māori performance is post-colonial. 'People ask if my costume is traditional Māori. I say yes. Why not? The piupiu was made up by the white man as well'.

Mika believes a Māori cultural show does not have to fit into a stereotype and his assertion that this skin-tight, semi-naked outfit is traditionally Māori is valid in his opinion. This brings up an interesting and relevant discussion as to what constitutes a Māori textile. Is it an item made by a Māori person, worn by a Māori person or is it the design or material the textile is made from that designates it Māori? This costume could be displayed to challenge the stereotype of Māori performance and discuss notions of authenticity.

Figure 4.

BLACK RUGBY JERSEY AND RED BURLESQUE HEADDRESS

This ensemble (Fig. 4) is a black rugby jersey and a red burlesque style headdress designed by contemporary fashion designer Kiri Nathan. Mika accessorized this outfit with black fishnet stockings and stilettos. The ensemble was worn by Mika during the 2011 Rugby World Cup in Auckland. As part of the entertainment surrounding the World Cup Mika organized the Aroha Mardi Gras, a music and dance event that featured drag, burlesque and multicultural performances.

The juxtaposition of the black rugby jersey with the burlesque headdress and fishnet stockings is not just comedy or for shock value. The costume can also be seen as a comment on gender identity and the important role elite male athletes have as role models in New Zealand. The national rugby team the All Blacks and therefore the black rugby jersey are arguably the most quintessential symbols of masculinity in New Zealand. Rugby players are role models for many people especially Māori and Pacific youth. In 2018 Mika made headlines by claiming his former mentor Carmen (a drag performer, brothel owner and activist who was a household name in New Zealand) had several All Black lovers.

Through his charity Mika works extensively with LGBT+ / takatāpui youth. Common feelings for LGBT+ youth are isolation, fear, guilt, depression and hopelessness. LGBT+ / takatāpui youth are overrepresented in negative statistics for mental health, addiction and suicide. Mika has stated publicly that an openly gay All Black would have a positive impact on those struggling with their sexuality and hopes one day a male rugby star will have the courage to come out. 'I think

the All Blacks are positioned enough to support that person'. Mika's appearance in a black rugby jersey speaks to his desire for LGBT+ / takatāpui youth to seek positive role models and develop a positive attitude toward their body image.

This outfit could be used in an exhibition to discuss sporting culture, masculinity, youth culture, sexuality or multiculturalism.

CONCLUSION

Tāmaki Herenga Waka: Stories of Auckland, a long-term exhibition that tells the story of the people and places of the city of Auckland, will open at the Auckland Museum in late 2020. Mika Haka will feature in a section of the exhibition titled *Creators and Innovators*. This section of the exhibition explores the stories of 'Aucklanders who have thought outside the box to solve a problem or seen an opportunity and acted on it'. The costume that represents Mika will be the Patrick Steele designed flesh toned body suit, the costume that Mika describes as 'the outfit that caused a communist scare'. This costume was chosen to be displayed for several reasons. Aesthetically it would be appealing and evoke curiosity in a visitor, it was a costume Mika wore in many high-profile performances and it challenges the perceived 'traditional' Māori identity that is archetypally depicted in museums.

The Mika Haka Collection will provide much needed breadth to the Māori collection at the Auckland Museum and shows the importance of collecting contemporary material. The Mika Haka Collection acknowledges takatāpui and urban Māori as equally valid Māori identities and questions the authenticity of some 'traditional' Māori material in museums. Museum collecting priorities continue to evolve ensuring museums give voice to those previously unrepresented in museums.

The acquisition of Mika Haka's costumes for the Auckland Museum collection will allow the museum to display and discuss several aspects of popular culture. These include performance, television, gender, sexuality, contemporary Māori identity, fashion, activism and youth culture. Mika Haka's mission to preserve his personal collection of material culture and see it in a museum collection has been achieved. He can add 'museum donor' to his list of many accomplishments.

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Mainmast Speaks: The paintings of Pauline Thompson

Emma Kelly

This paper explores the work of Pauline Thompson (1942-2012), an Auckland based artist who painted throughout her adult life. Although she received local critical acclaim for her work in a 'Pop Art Idiom' in the 1960s, as Pauline's work shifted to a more 'metaphysical' style she arguably became less fashionable. This paper considers the reception of her work by art critics, the context in which she was creating her work, and the general discourse of art critics in Aotearoa over the period of her career. Pauline's own writings and discourse on her practice are interpolated into the discussion. This paper was first presented at the conference of PHANZA (Professional Historians Aotearoa New Zealand Association) in 2019, and following feedback, has been developed into this article. The author knew Pauline Thompson personally, and interweaves informal discussions she had with the painter into this narrative.

Keywords: #feminist theory #art history #women artists #pacific #painting, #oceania #Mutiny on the Bounty #reception studies

Figure 1. '*Moana Nui*', Pauline Thompson (1995), 770 x 610mm, James Wallace Trust Art Collection reproduced with permission http://collection.wallaceartstrust.org.nz/collection/search.do?view=detail&page=1&id=14235&db=object

Pauline Adele Thompson was born in 1942 and died in 2012. She lived in Auckland throughout her life and was descended from Mauatua, nicknamed 'Mainmast' by the men of the Mutiny of the Bounty. Mauatua was the daughter of Tu, the paramount chief of Tahiti and the wife of Fletcher Christian, the leader of the mutiny on the ship the Bounty on April 28, 1789. Pauline painted throughout her adult life and was often referred to as a 'metaphysical painter' by critics. She lived on the North Shore of Auckland and was the sole parent of three children after the breakup of her marriage in the 1980s to fellow artist Ross Ritchie. Although featuring in many exhibitions of the 1960s and 1970s, Pauline's work became less fashionable in the 1980s as she moved away from the pop art aesthetic for which she was noted in the 1960s. Exploring themes of reproduction, women's life narratives and the story of the Mutiny of the Bounty and Pacific mythic themes, her later paintings

were not widely celebrated in the world of art criticism though they were exhibited at various galleries in New Zealand, Australia and the South Pacific (particularly Norfolk Island) and her work is held at the Auckland Art Gallery and the James Wallace collection. This paper suggests that Pauline's work deserves consideration outside the trends of art criticism.

NZ WOMEN PAINTERS

In 1975, Auckland Art Gallery opened an exhibition of NZ Women Painters. The exhibition catalogue stated:

> These are not Sunday painters, dabbling in art in the midst of domestic duties, but professionals, professionally trained and devoting their life to their art. Yet they are not the ardent spinsters, beloved of the myth-maker; many married, many have children.

In the year this exhibition opened, Pauline Adele Thompson was in the midst of domestic duties. Married to the painter Ross Ritchie who was the typesetter and designer for the NZ Women Painters exhibition catalogue, Pauline and he were raising 3 children under the age of six. She was not included in this exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery. However, her work was already well thought of. During the 1960s, Pauline was embraced as one of the up and coming young artists, being, as art critic Anne Kirker later wrote, 'virtually the only woman mentioned in Gordon Brown and Hamish Keith's influential book "An Introduction to New Zealand Painting 1839-1967" as being among the new generation of painters emerging at that time'. Yet as Pauline described it in later life, she was beginning to resist maintaining her place in the dominant modernist ideology. Some of this was in her control, in terms of the subjects she chose and the style in which she painted. But she realised much of her experience was also gendered – she was treated differently than contemporary male artists.

Pauline Thompson had her work first displayed in 1959 and had subsequently attended Elam School of Fine Art in Auckland during 1963 and 1964. Colin McCahon and Garth Tapper were her tutors. In 1997, Megan Corbett wrote that in the 1960s Thompson 'worked in a Pop Art idiom in conjunction with her husband. After the breakup of this relationship her work took a more serious and metaphysical aspect'.

Pauline's attendance at Elam School of Fine Arts was in itself an accomplishment at a time when only 50 or so students were accepted into art school in each cohort (compare this with about 4 to 500 students

in the degree and masters programmes today). It is often mentioned by writers of Pauline's biographical notes that Colin McCahon, indisputably the king of the New Zealand art canon for many years, was her tutor. Unrecorded in the official biographical notes, is that while she was his student, McCahon told her that as a woman she would never be a real artist, because she would have children and be distracted from her calling. Pauline told the author she quit Elam because of this conversation.

In her memoir painter Jacqueline Fahey, an artist a little older than Pauline, recalled in 1956 spending time with artists and writers such as Bruce Mason, James K Baxter and Louis Johnson when she was working at Harry's Café, above Parsons Bookshop at 126 Lambton Quay, Wellington. She described the male artists' behaviour and attitudes towards women:

> It was clear that the arts, at that time, were a macho pursuit. No doubt this had its roots in the belief fostered in boys' schools that being involved in the arts was a sissy thing to do. The natural reaction to this charge was therefore to behave like an out-of-control footballer. There was constant emphasis on their penises in their work and in their conversation. They also drank like drovers who had just hit town after six months in the back country. It was a difficult act to balance, as performing well in bed and drinking like a drover don't work very well together. Another disturbing factor [for these men] was Katherine Mansfield and Frances Hodgkins. The two most creative persons from New Zealand who made it overseas were women.

At the end of the 1950s Fahey was invited to demonstrate oil painting at Auckland Art Gallery. Four or five other women were also invited (she does not name them). 'Pretty quickly I had to understand that it was the men of the gallery who were demonstrating painting. We women were the fall guys. We played intellectual groupies to their already achieved status. I was attempting to paint a bush outside a window. Colin (McCahon) explained to me that I saw only a bush but he saw a cylinder…But at that point I stopped listening.'

This was the national artistic atmosphere in which Pauline Thompson was exhibiting her work for the first time in the late 1950s. Born in 1942, Pauline was a Glendowie schoolgirl and attended Seddon Technical College; from early on she loved poetry and painting. Her first job was as an illustrator for the NZ Herald. She married Ross Ritchie

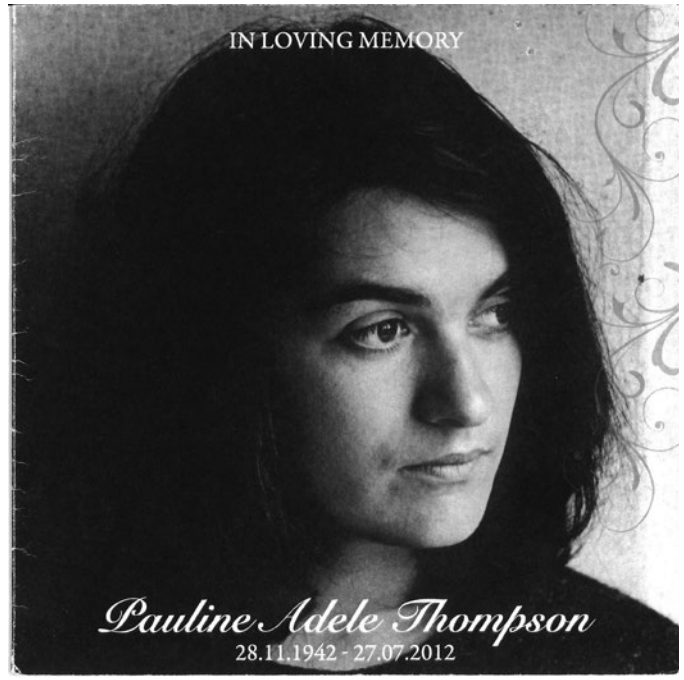

Figure 2. Pauline Thompson portrait 1960s from her funeral order of proceedings

in 1964 (after quitting Elam) and at that time was influenced by the formal abstract style of Mondrian. Her first solo show at 16 was at John Courts (a department store on K Rd in Auckland), followed by a 1959 Palmerston North show, a show at Uptown Gallery in 1964, and at New Vision Gallery in 1965 with Jeff Macklin. In 1966 she had a solo show at New Vision, in 1967 she was part of 'Ten Years of New Zealand Painting' at Auckland City Art Gallery, and in 1969 herself, Ross Ritchie and David Armitage were shown at Barry Lett Gallery. In 1971 she had a show with Ross and Neil Dougan at Mollers Gallery, and in 1973 she was part of a group show at Remuera's Osborne Gallery. This extensive list of exhibitions demonstrates that during the 1960s and 1970s she was being regularly shown in prestigious gallery spaces with other 'up and coming' (often male) artists.

During the 1970s, artist Jane Zusters was attending Art School in Christchurch, where she said that the 'dominant modernist ideology of art for art's sake espoused by Clement Greenberg' was the accepted doctrine. This meant that the art some women were creating which was inspired by investigating their own sense of self and identity was not well received. Often inspired by feminist artists from overseas such

as Judy Chicago and informed by local knowledge and experience of pro-abortion, anti-Vietnam protests, demonstrations for Māori, gay, and lesbian rights, their work was resisted by the art establishment, and therefore was considered unacceptable to many art gallery and art school spaces. In response to this situation, the Women's Gallery was created in 1979, intentionally and exclusively showing women's work. One year after it opened, Neil Rowe wrote in a review of a Women's Gallery (Wellington) show for the Evening Post:

> a gallery . . . that is so determined to show art that serves its own polemical ends has less to do with art than it has with politics and a form of therapy for disgruntled ladies . . . There is no such thing as 'women's art', or 'men's' art - there is just art which remains, in my definition, the ultimate expression of the individual regardless of sex or political persuasion.

At this time Pauline Thompson probably agreed with Neil Rowe's view. Seven years after this review of the Women's gallery Wellington show, she said: 'I don't think art has any sex. I think the spirit is sexless. I am very influenced by men such as Goya and Velázquez, who painted the dark side of things....' Yet in the very same interview she described her struggles to retain her confidence as a woman artist while raising children, particularly since her husband Ross Ritchie told her she was a 'failed painter'.

I grew up as a contemporary of Pauline Thompson's children in the same neighbourhood, and due to this connection was a model in the early 2000s for Pauline's series 'Under the Horizon', which was exhibited in New Zealand and later Norfolk Island for the Mutiny of the Bounty 150th anniversary celebrations. 'Under the Horizon' included a series of paintings of Tahitian women associated with Pitcairn Island. Pauline would tell me about being a painter while she sketched me, and we had a number of conversations during this period about art, feminism, and the critical reception of her work.

The stories of the women of the Bounty were of interest to Pauline. She wrote her version of the Pitcairn Island history in a letter two years before she died:

> 'Mainmast' was the Bounty men's nickname for Mauatua, daughter of Tu, the paramount chief of Tahiti in 1789. Mauatua was 6 ft tall and the wife of Fletcher Christian, leader of the Bounty mutiny on April 28 1789. Following quarrels over women and land on Pitcairn Is, Fletcher was shot as he worked in his kumara patch on 3rd October 1793. During that day Mainmast began labour with their 3rd child, Mary, and others on the island supposed the groans of the fatally wounded Fletcher to be the groans of the labouring Mainmast. Mary Christian never married and was known as the 'The Maid of the West'. She is buried on Norfolk Island, next to my great-great-great grandmother Dorothy Young. 'Mainmast' is my great-great-great-great-grandmother on my mother's father's side'.

Pauline was extremely interested in the stories of the Mutiny of the Bounty because of her ancestral connection, but for other reasons too. She was well aware that the Europeans on the Bounty did not always treat the Tahitians as equals. She described in other correspondence how the white men did not give land to the Tahitian men at Pitcairn. Of the series 'The Women' which was shown within the collection 'Under the Horizon, Seven Paintings by Pauline Thompson' she said that the

> …turbulent and violent early years of Pitcairn ended in the late 1790s with the execution of Quintal and the suicide of McCoy. Young died in 1800 of a lung complaint, leaving Adams the only adult male on the island. By his own account he was for some years often intoxicated, so much of the work and decision making came to be done by the women. When in November 1838 Captain Elliot of the "Fly" ratified Pitcairn's laws and carried to London the community's wish to join the British Empire, he noted that Pitcairn men and women had equal voting rights and added that this had been in effect for many years.

While she was sketching Pauline would tell me stories of Mauatua and talk about her views and frustration about the contemporary New Zealand art scene. By the early 2000s, her views on sex, gender and art had changed considerably from the 1988 interview I previously quoted. It is also worth bearing in mind that Pauline spoke to me as a friend, and although she encouraged me to write about NZ women artists, she was not recording her views formally with me for that purpose. Pauline believed by this time that New Zealand women artists had not had their story told in the way men's art histories had been written, and that there was a further women's art history which needed to be written and shared. She unpacked some of the details known to others about her public life recorded in exhibition catalogues and biographical pieces (such as those from Megan Corbett quoted previously) and she provided

Figure 3. Pauline Thompson, *'Auckland View: Central Police Station, Guy Fawkes Night II'* (1982), 505 x 610mm, Collection of Auckland Art Gallery, reproduced with permission.

intriguing glimpses into her experiences as a Pacific/Scots/Pākehā woman artist working in Aotearoa over five decades.

Art critic Anne Kirker wrote in 1993 that Pauline's 'small works' of 'the urban environment' are painted with such sensuous delight and transient light conditions' that 'simple rhythmical shapes set in open spaces' create 'an atmosphere laden with symbolic potential'. Kirker's publication on 150 years of New Zealand women painters, like the Women's Picture Book (1988) publication before it, quoted Pauline directly, unlike other articles written previously or subsequently, and therefore provided her perspective on her paintings in her own voice, concurrently destroying some myths which had circulated regarding her biography. For example, where Gordon H Brown stated in a 1983 piece on a Pauline Thompson May/June exhibition at the Denis Cohn Gallery that catering 'to the needs of a young family…during the nineteen-seventies' meant that Pauline's 'creation of artistic work was considerably curtailed over the next several years', Kirker quoted Pauline

explaining that during the 1972-9 period she was painting sexual organic forms, cells, sperm, and ova, a 'less fashionable iconography' which corresponded partly to the artist's involvement with the Sufi religion. In this interview Pauline said; 'I am popularly supposed to have confined my activities to child-rearing. The plain fact is that these cyclic symbols and cellular forms were not greeted with any delight by dealers who saw them. During these "inactive" years I made about 30 paintings and hundreds of drawings'.

In the aforementioned 1983 Gordon H Brown review in Art NZ, Brown is clearly impressed by the works, praising Pauline as a 'skilled, sensitive painter', but in the same breath says that her work is usually metaphysical; often 'overshadowed by a particular mode of feeling'. It is the 'very absence of such visionary or supernatural aspects [in this exhibition] that allows the viewer to concentrate on what it is that these paintings possess as paintings'. There is an echo in this passage of the Clement Greenberg philosophy 'art for arts sake' Jane Zusters previously described.

As you may recall, Megan Corbett had described Pauline's art changing to a more 'serious' and 'metaphysical' style after her relationship break up in the 1980s. She does not mention that this was in the mid–1980s when the children were still quite young (early to mid-teens). Pauline was suddenly alone facing the dilemma of the mother left to care for children, with very little money. Pauline told me at this time she heard a performance on RNZ National of a 1974 play called 'Judgement' by Barry Collins, which elaborates upon the bare details of an historical incident of cannibalism in WWII.

The play portrays a group of Russian soldiers trapped in a basement in Poland, eventually drawing straws to see who will be eaten. When they are finally rescued, the remaining soldiers are executed for cannibalism. Pauline said she stayed up for days and nights painting the series which would become known as 'Judgement I' (1987). She also painted a second series, 'Judgement II' (1989) which is held by Auckland Art Gallery.

Pauline's stories of her own experiences, her response to the play 'Judgement' (which she said was rage and adrenaline filled) at the ending of her marriage, and the differing accounts of Pauline's output during the time her children were small demonstrates Pauline's own awareness of the judgements being made upon her work, her passion and determination, and her ability to continue on regardless, to have enough faith in herself and her instincts as an artist to continue her practice.

As we have seen, the Women's Gallery was specifically founded as an alternative gallery space for women's art which did not fit the dominant modernist ideology. That same group became the Spiral Collective, publishing books for women who were not able to find publishers – J.C. Sturm's first collection of poetry, Keri Hulme's 'The Bone People' (both in 1983) and their own 'A Women's Picture Book: 25 Women Artists of Aotearoa New Zealand' in 1988., Although not involved with the Women's Gallery particularly, Pauline was interviewed for the latter publication, in which she is quoted as saying that art has no sex. But she did recognise that an artists' experience is gendered. When asked if it made any difference to the 'seriousness with which you take yourself, that you have a husband who's a painter? Has there been a struggle for you to be painters?' Her reply was very brief – 'At times, yes.' The interviewer then says somewhat provocatively: 'You don't want to talk about it. It's very interesting, no-one will talk about it'. Pauline responds:

> Is that right? The husbands deny it, that's why…After I had kids, because I lost concentration I think he thought I was an utter zombie. Because you're wrapped up in the kids and things like potty training, they find that after a day out in the wide world it's a bit much. But that's also what they expect, and anything else is a funny little hobby and any ideas that you've got are quaint little ideas. That, on top of lack of sleep and physical exhaustion, can really undermine your self-image and self-confidence. I think a lot of women could just stop. Before I started painting again I actually left Ross for about three months.

So, did Pauline's painting change after the (final) break up of her relationship? And should the change be defined by the end of that relationship? Or was her work being understood through a (male) gendered lens which made assumptions about her work, her abilities, and her paintings in relation to her husband and children? The fact that her style had been described in a 'pop art idiom in conjunction with her husband Ross Ritchie' is in itself problematic. Pauline had a separate art practice from her husband's (although we've seen that they were shown in several exhibitions and in the 1969 Brown and Keith publication alongside each other). But they had distinct and separate art practices. It is just as likely that Pauline, like many women in the 1970s and 1980s in New Zealand was becoming more aware of a feminist conversation which suggested life could be organised differently, that men might

share the household and childcare duties equitably, allowing women the time and space to create in a way that had not previously been regarded as acceptable.

The term 'metaphysical' recurs in art critics' descriptions of Pauline's art; along with comments that her paintings are effused with 'emotion', 'atmosphere' and 'feeling'. For example, in Warwick Brown's '100 New Zealand Paintings' (1995 Godwit), (in which 28 of the paintings are by women) he opens by stating that:

> The luminous, almost abstract atmospheric painting of J.M.W.Turner stands at the beginning of the development of modernism. It is therefore interesting to see it being used in the 1990s by a senior contemporary painter, particularly one who came to notice in the 1960s as the maker of some of the few pop paintings done in New Zealand in that decade.

Brown describes Pauline's career shifts and changes through to 1985, saying her work changed 'towards a strange mix of lyricism and high drama, a blend of Goya and Turner. Her colours changed to yellows, reds, and dark browns and greens. In glowing fields of colour, scenes of death, cannibalism and sickness were vividly, harrowingly portrayed. Subjects included Mother Aubert's care of lepers, Russian prisoners surviving two months without food or water, and the histories of the Bounty mutineers and Norfolk Island'. The review then abruptly halts (representing 100 paintings means you only have a page for each which is a challenge) but the strongest opinion expressed by the author is through the work which he has chosen to represent Pauline's oeuvre – a painting from 1985, 'Rangitoto View Guy Fawkes Night', before her (supposed) shift to a 'strange mix' which he appears to disapprove of.

Gregory O'Brien, who included a painting by Pauline in the 2000 exhibition and book 'Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance' considers this metaphysical aspect of her work in a more positive light, stating that Pauline's:

> Metaphysical paintings of the early 1980s established her as one of New Zealand's foremost narrative painters. A direct descendant of one of the Bounty mutineers and his Tahitian wife, Thompson has explored her links to Norfolk Island and Pitcairn Island.

O'Brien, who has written about Pauline's work in various contexts and corresponded and communicated with her, appeared to understand her

as she saw herself – as a painter very much engaged by Oceania, the Pacific, and the country in which she lived. She was interested in the indigenous experience, in the non-European versions of the stories of these places, in women's experience of these histories, and in spirituality and the paintings she created reflecting these interests.

In the mid-1980s Pauline read 'Petticoat Pioneers' in which there was, she said 'one article…about this eccentric nun who swam across rivers with all her clothes on her head. It seemed so bizarre… so I went and got a book on her and found she was ten times as bizarre as it showed in the other book, an incredible woman. I thought she was somebody who symbolized, if you like, one who looks after those parts of ourselves which are the hidden parts, the darker parts, the part that's not out in the open, not out in the marketplace: the role that's often taken by or symbolized by women, or children, or the dark races, religion, anything on that side. The illogical rather than the logical, unconscious rather than the conscious'. Pauline also later read Jessie Munro's biography of Suzanne Aubert which described Aubert's experience struggling against the work of the bishops who were jealous of her success, her personal wealth and her autonomy. Eventually as a woman in her eighties Suzanne went to Rome for six years to secure the independence of the sisters of the Home of Compassion to ensure it could not be harmed or dismantled by the Bishops in New Zealand.

Pauline's work from the mid-1980s onwards followed these strands: the illogical, that which is not aimed for 'the marketplace'. She painted or drew Suzanne Aubert many times and gave some of the resulting prints and paintings to the sisters at the Home of Compassion in Island Bay. She corresponded with the sisters thereafter, often describing and explaining the origins of a work. The Home of Compassion Archive holds a number of her works (copies and some originals) and correspondence. She wrote:

> [my work] is a process by which, beneath different series, persistent themes such as death and rebirth occur, and interweave my work, as does Mother Aubert.

Pauline depicted the Bounty descendants spiritually, almost biblically at times, but explained to the sisters:

> My depictions are not intended as a deification of my forbears, or indeed of Mother Aubert, but more (I hope), as a glimpse of the immanence of God in the world, through all manifestations, even little dogs and birds as well as great whales.

In a 1991 review in Art NZ, Wendy Vaigra said:

> Pauline Thompson is working through narratives derived from other genres: a play, a novel, a biography, and oral and written histories of Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands. She is using religious symbolisms in a complex way, along with art historical references as a framing device…Foucault's concept of the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges' is relevant to these paintings that so powerfully resist the conventional readings of the majority culture.

In response to a description by Sister Bernadette of whales and sea-turtles she had seen while working in Fiji, Pauline said – 'The world is full of never-imagined beauty, light-in-darkness, and never-ending surprise.'

By 2000, art critics were perhaps more open to Pauline's work, with Keith Stewart describing her as 'rare not just in her ability to paint the unseeable, to give us images steeped in passion, but in her unequivocal approach to a subject which is at odds with the nagging intellectualism which surrounds the world of fine art'. He described the difficulties of the art world responding to 'emotion' in art theory, and said that Pauline had 'little time for fripperies of fashion, or intellectual art banter', and was therefore 'something of an outcast, at least in the contemporary art marketplace where rational painting, especially as a form of calculated investment, is successful painting'. Stewart appeared sympathetic to Pauline's work, but simultaneously supported the male dominant ideology of the 1970s art schools and gallery world when he described Pauline's home in an Auckland suburb which he said:

> makes the point that hers is a gritty spirit woven from a life no more or less ordinary than that which most people experience. Her insights are drafted from this life of shopping and washing, preparing meals, raising children, paying a mortgage, gardening, holding all those strands together to the end of each week, taking pleasure where you can find it, and inspiration.

Most of this is absolutely true – Pauline lived at the time in a working class state house street in Birkdale – yet I have never seen a senior contemporary male artist described in such terms. Stewart is using

coded, gendered language– and in 2000 when he is writing this, her kids have long left home. Yet Stewart pursued the myth of the domestic goddess, the mother, the struggling artist awash with housewifely detritus, as if the 1975 passage with which I opened this presentation where the author feels the need to protest that the women artists 'are not Sunday painters, dabbling in art in the midst of domestic duties, but professionals, professionally trained and devoting their life to their art' was written only yesterday.

Pauline's life and work proved that one could be both a professional painter, devoting ones life to their art, and be a mother, not an 'ardent spinster'. Yet to the end of her life, some art critics pursued descriptions of her in gendered terms, in a way which they did not describe male senior contemporary artists of her generation – including her ex-husband Ross Ritchie, who told her all those years ago that she was a 'failed painter'. She certainly never became wealthy in the sense of the art marketplace, she never had the retrospective which would have put her work in context over time and allowed her to discuss the shifts and changes with hindsight, but she is represented in most major galleries in New Zealand and Australia.

In 2012, Pauline was dying of cancer. John Kelly, her friend and my father, took her to Monte Cecilia Pah Homestead where the James Wallace Art Collection is held and exhibited. They went to see one of her paintings, of Mother Aubert opening the door to a stranger. Pauline was upset to see the label on it was incorrect. It simply said a woman opening a door to a stranger. Dad went to tell the docent, while Pauline sat down by the painting and began to explain to anyone who came to look at it, that it was actually Suzanne Aubert, Mother Superior of the Home of Compassion, who was taught to respect everyone, no matter their station in life, and to open the door even to a beggar for food, just as you would Jesus himself, with a curtsey and a warm greeting. By the time they left that day the label had been corrected.

This story personifies for me Pauline's nature and her work – she believed passionately in her own work and the importance of representing it, of telling the stories of women, and indigenous peoples. The 'unofficial histories', as Wendy Vaigro said; Pauline Thompson presented 'another history, told from the point of view of the losers, the silenced ones'. Often those silenced ones are women painters like Pauline, who to the end of her life insisted on telling her own story, her own way, within the art gallery itself, and through the life she created as an artist and in the discussions she had about her work. But it also should be remembered, that through the struggle and challenges,

Figure 4. Pauline Thompson, '*Suzanne Aubert giving alms to the poor*' (1985) 610 x 760mm, James Wallace Collection, reproduced with permission http://collection.wallaceartstrust.org.nz/collection/search.do?view=detail&page=1&id=15368&db=object

Pauline Thompson always recognized and delighted in beauty; only two years before her death she was telling the sisters from the Home of Compassion that 'The world is full of never-imagined beauty, light-in-darkness, and never-ending surprise.'

In the 1988 Women's Gallery publication, Pauline was asked what gave her confidence to keep painting when she wasn't being exhibited and her husband had told her she was a failed painter. She replied:

> Well I suppose I just got terribly desperate, I got my back to the wall…I realised I was a lot stronger than I was giving myself credit for being and I'd been covering this up by my lack of self-confidence and negative self-image – which was just as stupid as if it were an overly good image like a lot of men.

Figure 5. Pauline Thompson at the Bounty celebrations, Norfolk Island, (2007)

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25.

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Self Help, Sunlight and a Modern Chair: Considering Auckland's historic signage as a heritage object

Caroline Powley

Cities are an ever-changing space, filled with commerce and community. Signage plays a strong role in the visual narrative of the urban environment. It creates a constant visual hum, a street level monologue of promotion, identification and direction. Commercial signs are designed to serve and improve business. So, what role could an old, fading or non-functioning piece of signage possibly play in our neo-liberal capitalist society? From a designer's perspective, there's a lot to like—the craftsmanship, the idiosyncrasies of a hand-generated piece of typography, the sense of nostalgia for a time before globalisation and brand guidelines took over. Looking at historic signs from a broader context they also represent an "intricate urban history."[1] They speak of the changing face of commercial enterprise, social values and cultural expression. Even when they no longer serve their original semantic role of commercial promotion, they "accumulate rich layers of meaning. They no longer merely advertise, they are valued in and of themselves. They become icons."[2] The semiotic function of an historic sign shifts to a new role—signifying notions of survival, continuity and loss. They also feed into our complex personal narratives of place, identity and community.[3] These multiple and interwoven values can form the cultural significance of historic signs. Despite this recognisable value, historic signage tends to fall through the gaps of heritage practice and legislation in New Zealand. This paper offers a set of case studies that represent a range of possible outcomes for historic signs, when they exist outside a system of heritage management. I propose six categories for framing the case studies: remain, repair, regenerate, relocate, replace and remove. These examples are combined with a broader reflection on the value of historic signage and an overview of relevant heritage practice in New Zealand. The intention is to encourage reflection on the possible heritage significance of historic signage and our current approach to assessment, scheduling and conservation.

Keywords: #signage #heritage #historic places #preservation #cultural value

Signage forms a key part of the urban semioscape—it communicates information and enticement, while also reflecting the surrounding society and culture. Historic signs represent the ebb and flow of commerce—they speak of long-gone products and businesses, while providing insight into the evolution of capitalism. Early in the 20th century signage was often unique to a particular shop and location—allowing for a level of cultural specificity.[4] Coppoolse and Kwok suggest that local neon signage has the ability to tell stories that not only 'speak' consumption but to also 'speak' Hong Kong.[5] The rise of a globalised economy and large corporations has meant that generationally-owned small family businesses have begun to make way for franchises and multinational chains.[6] As Baines and Dixon suggest, "nothing eradicates a sense of locality more than the consistent promotion of an [corporate] identity."[7] This is not merely a nostalgic notion that historic signs are from a more 'innocent' era of capitalism. The shift from idiosyncratic variety towards ubiquitous uniformity reflects a lost opportunity for the expression of local cultural identity.

Huyssen identifies our need for "spatial and temporal anchoring in a world of increasing flux in ever denser networks of compressed space and time."[8] By acting as a point of distinctive character for a local area, historic signs can function as landmarks that help us build our internal representations of the familiar, built environment.[9] These cognitive maps contribute to our sense of place, community, and personal identity.[10] Historic signs can also reinforce these connections, by signifying a sense of continuity through time. By reflecting a localised and often culturally specific history, historic signs allow people to feel part of an ongoing community and social narrative.

Another human connection is formed by seeing something so clearly handmade in a commercial space. Baudrillard suggests that "the fascination of handicraft derives from an object's having passed through the hands of someone the marks of whose labour are still inscribed thereupon."[11] A piece of hand-painted type unevenly aligned to a baseline of bricks brings a reassuring sense of humanity to an increasingly standardised and slick urban environment. The ability of a signwriter to adapt a design to a specific site also brings a sense of responsiveness to context that stands in contrast to the surface application of adhesive vinyl that has been printed offsite. Laser-cut plastic signage can offer little of the beauty of gold leaf on glass or the rich depth of colour of pigment in paint. Mastery of these traditional materials has dramatically reduced, as the skilled craft of hand-generated signwriting gave way to the rapid uptake of a digital design and production process. Historic signs therefore signify the erosion of both time and craft.[12]

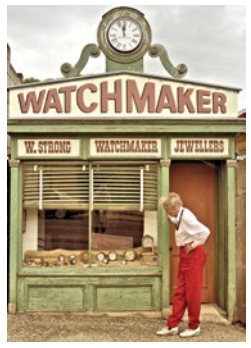
By narrowly surviving the best efforts of climate, gentrification and globalisation to destroy them, historic signs manifest as a "metaphor for survival."[13] Conversely the slow physical decline of materials—the flaking of paint, the decay of wood—can represent the precarious nature of existence. This dialectic narrative of survival and loss may create some of a historic signs resonance, while also hinting at the difficulties of situating it within heritage management.

HERITAGE

Heritage has been described as a 'capricious' and 'nomadic' term that represents "an unstable and contested idea."[14] In its most basic form, heritage practice deals with "things of value, which are inherited."[15] The 2010 New Zealand Charter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) describes 'cultural heritage value' as "treasures of distinctive value that have accrued meaning over time."[16] The means of identifying, assessing and managing these taonga in Aotearoa is a complex system involving multiple organisations and legislation. Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT), the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the local authorities are largely responsible for the formal registering and management of New Zealand heritage. The two key pieces of legislation are the Resource Management Act (RMA 1991) and the Heritage New Zealand Poutere Taonga Act (HNZPTA 2014). Both provide for identification and protection of heritage, but at different levels and to different degrees. The focus of HNZPT on a national context of significance and the lack of resources to identify locally significant heritage means there are gaps in identification and protection.[17] Given the complex heritage landscape, it is understandable that historic signage has largely fallen through these gaps between various organisations, legislation and scheduling lists.

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) is an autonomous Crown Entity and its primary function is to "identify, record, investigate, assess, list, protect, and conserve historic places, historic areas, wāhi tūpuna, wāhi tapu, and wāhi tapu areas…"[18] It does this through fostering public interest and involvement in historic places and historic areas and advocating for their conservation and protection.[19] HNZPT also maintains the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero ('the List'). This "informs and notifies owners, the public, community organisations, government agencies and local authorities about significant heritage

places" and is a source of information about New Zealand's heritage "for the purposes of the Resource Management Act 1991."[20] When assessing the significance of a possible heritage subject HNZPT use a set of criteria that look for aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, technological or traditional qualities.[21] When I spoke to Andrew Winter from HNZPT in March 2018, he suggested that historic signage could possibly fall under three of the assessment criteria—historical ("reflects a trend that had an impact on New Zealand history"), cultural ("provides insight into the culture of a community") or aesthetic ("outstanding or famous visual attributes").[22] He couldn't recall any signage being specifically identified in the List, but directed me to a listing for the Strong's Watchmaker shop in Naseby.[23]



1. Unknown. *G. Strong Watchmakers*, Naseby, Otago, ca. 1890, Naseby, Central Otago. © All rights reserved, Maniototo Early Settlers Museum. 2. Unknown. *G. Strong Watchmakers*, Naseby, Otago, 1938, Naseby, Central Otago. © All rights reserved, Maniototo Early Settlers Museum. 3. Maryann Devereux, *Watchmaker's store*, 2018, Naseby, Otago. © All rights reserved, Maryann Devereux. 4. David Green, *Watchmaker's store*, 2018, Naseby, Otago. © All rights reserved, David Green.

This watchmakers shop was built in the late 1860s, during the gold rush in Central Otago and has Category 1 scheduling in the Heritage List/ Rārangi Kōrero ('the List').[24] The assessment criteria information about this listing mentions the decorative and ornate façade but does not specifically refer to the hand-painted signage, despite it being a primary visual feature of the building's exterior.[25] A level of disregard for its significance and design qualities can be seen in the recent repainting of the signage. The insensitive typographic treatment includes poor scaling and kerning on the sans serif capitals, along with a strangely tiny drop shadow. The choice of a heavy slab serif for the smaller text may be an attempt at referencing the 'gold-rush' era of the store, but this American 'Wild West' aesthetic bears no resemblance to any of the typography seen in historic photos of the shopfront. These images show multiple reworkings of the design—a common practice in the past that now creates complications for any attempt at contemporary conservation. The ICOMOS NZ charter states that preservation should involve as little intervention as possible and any alterations should be compatible with the original form and avoid inappropriate or incompatible contrasts of form, scale, mass, colour, and material.[26] While it is clearly difficult to define what the 'original form' might be in this case, the recent repainting fails to conserve any of the signage's possible historic design references, despite the sites Category 1 listing.

Making it onto HNZPT's list is not the only way to formally recognise the significance of our cultural heritage. It is also worth noting that the List does not guarantee protection or "directly create regulatory consequences or legal obligations on property owners". Instead the "real teeth of heritage protection" sits in the Resource Management Act (RMA) and is administered by local authorities through their District Plans and heritage schedules.[27] The Auckland Unitary Plan states the need to "avoid significant adverse effects", including the "total or substantial demolition or destruction" or "relocation or removal" of the primary features of scheduled significant historical heritage places.[28] The Auckland Council facilitates this by maintaining a Historic Heritage Schedule—anything included is "protected by provisions in the plan to ensure its significance is not lost."[29] When I spoke to Tanya Sorrell, who was in the Auckland Council Heritage Team, she said that, "the rules in the plan are not set up well to protect historic signage on its own, particularly when it is attached to a building that doesn't qualify for scheduling. Historical signs can easily lose their integrity through neglect as well, meaning an inability to require proactive maintenance under the RMA makes protecting this kind of heritage a struggle."[30]

5. Caroline Powley, *BJ Ball mural*, 2018, 35 Graham Street, Auckland Central.

While the Auckland Council Heritage Team were aware of several historic signs, they noted that the only currently scheduled item that clearly related to signage is the BJ Ball mural. This large mural was commissioned in 1958 by BJ Ball (a paper manufacturer) for the side of their central Auckland office building.[31] It was designed by Milan Mrkusich, one of New Zealand's most highly respected abstract artists.[32] It is constructed from thousands of glass and ceramic tiles, crafted in Italy and shipped to NZ for installation.[33] The exterior of the entire building currently has Category B scheduling, which acknowledges the site has considerable overall heritage significance to the locality or greater geographic area.[34] This means the site should be protected from "inappropriate subdivision, use and development, including inappropriate modification, relocation, demolition or destruction."[35] While the scheduling of this piece as part of the building's exterior shows what is possible, it must be noted that it is distinct from what might ordinarily be classified as purely 'commercial signage' in several ways. It is largely abstract in design, more robust in its materials and created by a well-established artist.

CASE STUDIES

In 2004, I made an informal survey of hand-generated signs in Auckland. I took over 1000 photos of signage, ranging from dairy signs through to gilded pub windows. I focussed largely on 'historic' signs, which I arbitrarily defined as over 20 years old. The signs were diverse in materials and site placement. Some are still 'active' as they promote a business, service or product that is still available or operating today.

Over the last 16 years a significant number of these signs have experienced some form of alteration and I have continued to document their fate. On review of this ongoing photographic archive, I identified a set of twelve case studies that suggested a system of categorisation—remain, repair, regenerate, relocate, replace and remove. These proposed categories offer a framework for mapping what can happen to a historic sign when it is not proactively protected. They fall into three groupings that reflect the broader outcomes – 'HERE' where the signs have stayed in their original locations, 'TRACE' where some aspect of the sign continues on and 'GONE' where the signs no longer physically exist. None of these categories directly suggests heritage assessment or management strategies. However, this paper hopes to prompt reflection on the cultural significance of historic signs and encourage an increased amount of scheduling and protection.

HERE—Remain / Repair
TRACE—Regenerate / Relocate
GONE—Replace / Remove

HERE—REMAIN

It may seem that the obvious best option for a historic sign is for it to remain in its existing place and context. However, there are several factors that may complicate this immediate solution.

6. Robert Powley, *Bushells sign*, 2018, Devonport, Auckland.

On a practical level, there can be issues with leaving the sign exposed to ongoing environmental impact. Part of the aesthetic appeal of vintage signs is often the signs of visible wear that indicate the passing of time. However, these signifiers of antiquity can easily slip into the total loss of the sign. If nature is left to take its course, some signs will crack, peel or rot away entirely.

Leaving a sign in situ when it refers to a business that is no longer active, can also raise a number of issues. This can be particularly

problematic if the signage is analogous with a proposed new use of the building. Signs exist in a commercial space—they are created to communicate a quite specific and often singular message. New businesses moving in to a building with a historic sign painted on it, may be concerned about mixed messages, brand clarity or a negative effect on commercial outcomes.

7. Caroline Powley, *Sai Louie window*, 2018, Rishworth building, 171 Onehunga Mall, Auckland.
8. Caroline Powley, *Sai Louie window*, 2020, Rishworth building, 171 Onehunga Mall, Auckland.

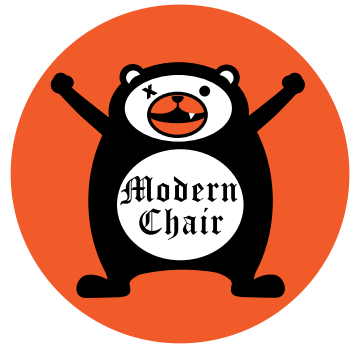
Some signs may strike it lucky with their new owners. When I asked Warwick Jordan, owner of the Hard to Find Bookstore in Onehunga why he kept the vintage fruit store sign on the front window of his business, he said, "I think it's wonderful, it wasn't even a decision."[36] This response is possible when there is a synergy between the business and the vintage sign. A second-hand bookstore has a clear relationship to notions of antiquity and the value of history. The Gordon Sai Louie—Quality Fruits sign was painted sometime in the early 1940s and is one of only two remaining vintage fruit shop signs that I'm aware of in Auckland. It is an aesthetically appealing link to both the prominent local Sai Louie family and the strong cultural heritage of Chinese family-based produce businesses across New Zealand. In this situation, the historic sign actively added character to the Bookstore premises and implies value on the repurposing of history.

However, this symbiotic relationship recently came to an end. In 2018 the Rishworth building changed hands and the Hard to Find Bookstore could not continue its lease. After 22 years Warwick and his books moved out and the additional hand-painted signage that promoted the Hard to Find Bookstore was scraped off the glass window. Warwick was concerned about what new owners of the building might have planned for the building and the vintage fruit shop signage. "It's

very valuable and has got to be kept", he said, emphasising the way it reflected "the core nature of Onehunga"[37] and connected the site to "an important Onehunga family." Fortunately, the Auckland Unitary Plan Heritage Schedule has listed the Rishworth's Building under Category B, through the historical, social, physical attributes, aesthetic and context criteria.[38]

HERE—REPAIR

One response to environmental wear and tear on a historic sign is to repair it. This can vary in scale from ongoing minor fixes through to full-scale overpainting.



9. Caroline Powley, *Modern Chair sign*, 2004, 238 Richardson Rd, Auckland.
10. Jane Westaway (WestawayInk), *Modern Chair logo*, 2014, Auckland.

Modern Chair has been designing and manufacturing furniture since 1912 and the typographic sign was moved to its Mt Roskill site in 1962. I've seen the sign in various states of disrepair—missing letters or suffering from graffiti, but it is always returned to its former Old English glory. Andrew Riley, who worked at Modern Chair, says the sign is "like the one on Fawlty Towers—you go out and there's a letter dangling down."[39] Since the sign is part of the "family history and the story of the company" Andrew says they will continue to "repair it as long as the business is going."[40] In addition to the historical value to the company, it also forms a part of their brand. The company does not have a website, largely picking up new customers through word of mouth. Andrew says that "people will see it and go "I know that place!""[41] The community value of a distinctive local sign has been demonstrated through a

local band's appropriation of the 'Modern Chair' name. Their t-shirts prominently feature a version of the sign as the branding for their band. Andrew from the Modern Chair furniture business doesn't see this as a conflict of interest, instead viewing it as an indication of the affection for the sign within the local community.[42]

11. Caroline Powley, *Sunlight Soap sign*, 2004, 25 Mt Eden Rd, Auckland.
12. Caroline Powley, *Sunlight Soap sign*, 2004, 25 Mt Eden Rd, Auckland.

The ongoing maintenance of the Modern Chair sign is prompted by its value to a functioning business. The repair of an eroded sign that no longer has any active promotional purpose needs to be motivated by other perceived benefits. The opportunity to exploit the recognition value and play upon the public's fondness for an old sign often makes keeping historic signs a good marketing strategy.[43] The 'Sunlight Soap' sign in Uptown Auckland was probably created in the late 1920s and was repaired in 2004. During the repair process, the signwriter told me that a new building owner had chosen to spend the money to repaint the sign.[44] Historic signs are increasingly being conserved as part of the building's 'character', which can have both aesthetic and commercial benefits.[45] It is no longer about selling Sunlight Soap, but instead it becomes about creating an aura of authenticity that imbues value on the bar now running out of the building.

Overpainting a faded painted sign can prompt both positive and negative reactions. Some could be happy to see a piece of the past come back to life and gain some insight into "how striking these advertisements would have been when they were fresh and young."[46] Dissenting voices would bemoan the destruction of the original sign's integrity and authenticity. The patina of age often forms a large part of the aesthetic appeal of a historic sign, while also signifying continuity, loss and survival. A more cynical viewer could also frame it as the commercially-based appropriation of the past, and question the superficiality of reapplying paint to a no longer active sign.[47] Repainting

may also remove the possibility of heritage scheduling, as the criteria usually considers the level of integrity and originality of an object when assessing its significance. If an object is scheduled, the Auckland Council requires all repairs to be carried out in a manner and design and with similar materials and appearance to those originally used.[48] A quality restoration requires research and hiring a signwriter with the requisite skills and lightness of touch to replicate the qualities of a historic sign. This dissonance between preservation and authenticity is part of what makes the protection and conservation of historic signs problematic.

TRACE—REGENERATE

Rather than repair a vintage sign through repainting, there are examples where the business has decided to regenerate the original signage through more contemporary materials.

13. Caroline Powley, *Lawnmower Doctor sign*, 2004, 956 Dominion Rd, Auckland.
14. Caroline Powley, *Lawnmower Doctor sign,* 2018, 956 Dominion Rd, Auckland.

When I first started documenting local signs in 2004 I spoke to the owner of Barrett's Lawnmowing Services, commonly known as 'The Lawnmower Doctor'. He recalled how this memorable name and visual identity had been developed for his business by a local signwriter.[49] Several years later I noticed that the hand-painted signage had been covered with digitally created and printed sign boards. The new design clearly referred to the previous historic sign by including an updated version of the 'Lawnmower Doctor' icon. While this regenerated design was clearly not trying to entirely replicate the original historic signage, they were probably aware of the brand value held by the 'Lawnmower Doctor' image. This was a small local business, whose visual identity

was generated by its store signage—the digitally produced signs represent an evolution of that brand. I may pine for the irregular type that used bricks as a baseline grid, but I was also happy to see the 'Lawnmower Doctor' live on in some form.

15. Robin Morrison, Wellington St. Dairy, 1980, 103 Wellington St, Auckland. © All rights reserved, Auckland Museum—PH-NEG-RMX214 16. Caroline Powley, Bushells sign, 2004, 103 Wellington St, Auckland.

Attempting to regenerate an iconic historic sign can present a serious risk for the business owners involved. When a sign is a local landmark, the surrounding community may feel a sense of shared ownership and can become quite vehement in their opinions about what changes should be made. The Rupa family who owned a small grocery store in Freemans Bay fell foul of both local residents and Auckland Council in 2001 when they removed the historic Bushell's tea sign above their premises. They had been granted permission to repair the original late 1940s era sign. Instead they 'solely funded' a signwriter to create a new, reimagined version of the signage. Auckland Council served Dilip Rupa with an abatement notice "giving him four weeks to remove the wording 'solely funded by the Rupas', or risk prosecution under the Resource Management Act."[50] Mr Rupa thought "the council should concentrate on the bigger issues"[51] and did not make any changes to the sign.

TRACE—RELOCATE

When confronted with the possibility of losing an iconic sign, people often suggest donating it to a museum. This is not as simple a solution as it sounds—there are only a few public institutions that actively collect any form of graphic design. The Auckland Central Library has an extensive collection of design ephemera, but focusses on works on paper and the Auckland War Memorial museum has a limited remit

for collecting large commercial artefacts. Small local museums do sometimes include signage in their collections and there are several individual historic sign collectors active in Auckland.

While any of these options would be preferable to a sign of heritage significance being destroyed, there are costs associated with removing the sign from its original context. The pragmatic cost of removing, transporting and installing signage requires funding. However, the more significant cost is to the cultural significance of the sign itself. They need an on-going association with their original location in order to maintain their authenticity and integrity. Relocating a historic sign to another site dislocates it from the rich social, commercial and community histories of its local environment.

17. Clinton Firth, *Neon Cowboy sign (Auckland)*, 152 Queen St, Auckland. © All rights reserved, Sir George Grey Special Collection, Auckland Libraries—34-R493B. 18. Chris Peacock, *Neon Cowboy sign (Wellington)*, 2017, Auckland. © All rights reserved, Chris Peacock.

In the 1960s, Queen Street was home to the 'Neon Cowboy'. The original single-sided cowboy swung an animated lariat outside the 'Keans for Jeans' store.[52] At some point, he was replaced with a double-sided version and in the 1980s he moved to a new location outside Armadillo's Mexican restaurant on Symonds St.[53] This was an instance where there was an opportunity to 'send it to the museum'. Claude Neon, the company that created the sign, reportedly offered to cover the costs of moving the sign to the Auckland Museum, as well as maintain the sign. Unfortunately, the Neon Cowboy never found his way there. Instead he was separated into two sides, with one half allegedly coming to the end of his journey in a fire that claimed an art collector's home.[54] Wellington's iteration of the Neon Cowboy made his way up the country on the back of a ute and now resides in a signage collection, based just north of Auckland.[55]

19. Geoffrey H. Short, *Kiwi Bacon*, 1988, 317-319 New North Rd, Auckland.

20. Caroline Powley, *Kiwi sign*, 2018, Auckland Airport Kiwi Hotel,
150 McKenzie Rd, Auckland.

The roof of the Kiwi Bacon factory in Kingsland used to be home to a large, three-dimensional, rotating kiwi. When the factory closed there was much public concern and speculation about finding it a new home.[56] The two metre, two tonne kiwi managed to squeeze its way through the doors of the Auckland Museum, but only for a short stay. After featuring prominently in the Kiwiana exhibition curated by Richard Wolfe in 1990, the sign was returned to its owner, Claude Neon. Then in 1992, the giant fibreglass kiwi was painted gold and relocated to its current home on the rooftop of the Auckland Airport Hotel in Māngere.[57] This historic sign made the transition from a brand icon for Kiwi Bacon company to signifying the national brand of New Zealand. The kiwi was lucky to have the opportunity of a second life, many other historic signs are not so adaptable.

GONE—REPLACE

Commercial signage is subject to changing circumstances, trends and values. The following two historic signs were replaced, despite the businesses they advertised continuing to operate. The signs were not fading or structurally unsound. Rather their replacement reflects a slippage in their perceived value.

21. Caroline Powley, *Victoria Superette sign*, 2004, 165 Victoria Rd, Auckland.
22. Caroline Powley, *Victoria Superette sign*, 2018, 165 Victoria Rd, Auckland.

The bold and idiosyncratic statement that was the historic Victoria Superette sign has been replaced with a thoroughly generic branded board sign. What could motivate a business owner to replace a distinctive piece of local signage with something reflecting the brand guidelines of the Coca Cola company? The funding of dairy shop signage by Coke and various milk companies has largely obliterated the individual nature of our local dairy signage. To me this feels like an extension of the homogenisation of our retail environments, where the same set of retail chains appear in each shopping area. In some situations, small business owners may need access to funding in order to conserve a historic sign and retain their individual voice.

23. Caroline Powley, *Roskill Fisheries sign*, 2004, 1256 Dominion Rd, Auckland.
24. Caroline Powley, *Roskill Fisheries sign*, 2018, 1256 Dominion Rd, Auckland.

Fish shop windows were once a visual feast, displaying some of the most technically accomplished hand-painted signage in town. Over the last few decades many of Auckland's fish shops have closed, reflecting a change in shopping habits. As consumers moved towards the one stop supermarket shopping, rather than visiting a range of specialist food stores. The highest quality fish shop sign left in Auckland was in the

window of Roskill Fisheries. When I drove past and saw that new owners had replaced with a clunky piece of vinyl signage, I was devastated. This loss demonstrates the need to schedule historic signs in their own right, independent of the heritage value of the associated building. This could mean there is someone to advocate for the long-term conservation of their cultural significance.

GONE—REMOVE

Given all the forces conspiring against commercial signage, it can seem like sheer good fortune that any examples last long enough to be considered historic. Baudrillard (1968, p.83) suggests that "In the last reckoning every antique is beautiful merely because it has survived, and thus become the sign of an earlier life".[58]

25. Caroline Powley, *Self Help sign*, 2004, 719 Mt Albert Rd, Auckland.

The 'Self Help' sign in Royal Oak was one of my favourite historic signs in Auckland. Gilded glass typography, with shaded 3D serif all-caps—what was there not to like? The 'Self Help' does not refer to new-age psychology, but is instead the brand name of a long-gone chain of grocery stores. Self-Help was New Zealand's early manifestation of the supermarket—a co-operatively owned 'groceratia' where customers 'helped' themselves by selecting and/or wrapping their own groceries. This was a sea-change for consumer experience—a move from the traditional process of being served individually by a grocer, who would select and wrap your groceries for you.[59] As far as I'm aware the Royal Oak signs were the last two remaining Self-Help signs in the country. Unfortunately, they have since been scraped off to make way for frosted film. This represents not only an aesthetic loss, but also the removal of cultural significance.

26. Caroline Powley, *Pleasure Chest & Kinks signs*, 2004, 464-466 Karangahape Rd, Auckland.

Karangahape Road is one of the oldest roads in Auckland and has experienced a series of transformations.[60] Its history begins as an early Māori travel route, was commercially developed from the 1860s, hits a shopping heyday in the 1960s, has a motorway cut it in half, embraces the adult industry and then transforms into the 'gritty', 'edgy', 'colourful' and 'quirky'[61] place that is loved by many today. The road is now moving into the next phase of renewal with the Karangahape Road Plan 2014-2044. The wider area is scheduled as Category B through the Auckland Council's Historic Heritage Schedule as the Karangahape Road Heritage Area and the 2014-2044 Plan says it is "hugely important to do all of this while protecting and enhancing Karangahape Road's historic heritage, unique cultural identity, and the 'gritty' character."[62] A comment in the Karangahape Road Streetscapes Improvement Project online feedback summary acknowledges the role historic signs play in the character of the area, "I particularly like the various old signage along the road… It would be a real shame to lose these things that give a visual history… to the place."[63] Karangahape Road has now lost every single one of its original sex shops[64] and all the associated signage. The Pleasure Chest building was renovated in 2015 and the sign was sold for $2662 on Trade Me.[65] The slightly worse-for-wear Vegas Girl is now the last girl standing (or perhaps lounging) on Karangahape Road. She is the only remaining historic sign to clearly signify the area's previous life as a red-light district. She is mentioned in the 2014 draft evaluation of the Karangahape Road Heritage Area. It suggests that, "it is possible for the façade to be restored to a more original appearance"[66], which may indicate an interest in repainting the fading glamour of the Vegas Girl.

ARCHIVE—RECORD

My twelve case studies present a diverse range of outcomes for historic commercial signage and identify associated heritage management issues. Given that historic signs are subject to much change, it seems useful to consider alternatives when conservation is not possible. Internationally there are a number of digital archives that document examples of historic signage. These range from individual amateur collections, through to collaborative community crowdsourcing and the professional archives of heritage organisations.

The value of even a straightforward photographic archive is made apparent by looking at a local example; Mark Spurgeon's Preserve website. It largely consists of photographs of pre-quake Christchurch signage, much of which has now been destroyed. The documentation of these signs now forms a resource for researchers and residents wanting to recall the cityscape before the earthquake. However, a solely photographic archive can offer only basic insight into a sign's broader social, historic and cultural context. A survey on Sam Roberts' Ghostsigns project identified that the "full meaning and value was only realised when people were told stories about the signs."[67]

Ghostsigns started out as an amateur-led collection that used crowd-sourcing to photograph, research, and digitally archive a large number of 'ghost signs' in the United Kingdom.[68] Project founder Sam Roberts then collaborated with History of Advertising Trust to embed it within the institution, as part of its remit to "preserve and protect the heritage of UK advertising history".[69] There has been some debate about the ability of an amateur to gather and systematically organise a diverse range of rich content around the history and significance of a sign. However, digital culture researcher Laura Carletti thinks, "The Ghostsigns project is a pioneering example of 'history-from-below' and represents a rare example of crossover between grassroots and organisationally-driven digital preservation initiatives."[70]

INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE

Internationally, both the UK and Australia have a similar model to New Zealand, in that heritage management is largely executed through local authorities. When questioned about the lack of active conservation for historic signs, a UK MP suggested that a 'ghost signs' charm came from "the fact that such things survive only rarely and accidentally" and that, "although their loss may be regretted, perhaps it is necessary to allow such changes to happen, untouched by a regulatory framework."[71] In contrast, the Australian state of New South Wales published Rachael Jackson and Caroline Lawrance's Conserving Historic Signs Guidelines. This document is the first time that the Australian heritage sector tried to respond to the specific issues relating to painted signs.[72] It outlines criteria for the assessment of significance and unpacks a range of conservation approaches, while also promoting the scheduling of signage as a heritage item in its own right, independent of the associated architecture.[73] Also in Australia, Heritage Victoria and the City of Yarra jointly commissioned a study of historic illuminated signs. In addition to identifying and reviewing the heritage importance of this type of sign, the study also explores management issues, retention strategies and funding options for conservation. Both the National Trust of Australia (NSW) Register and the Victorian Heritage Register include a number of historic signs as stand-alone items in their scheduling lists. Heritage advisor Leisa Clements believes that the NSW guidelines could "easily be incorporated into new frameworks, or adapted by heritage agencies and practitioners."[74] There are also ideas to be gleaned from other specifically sign-focussed international examples, such as the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service—Preservation Briefs 25—The Preservation of Historic Signs.

CONCLUSION

Given the fast pace of commercial change in Auckland, it's not surprising that we don't have a lot of historic signs left in situ. This emphasises not only the fragility of this form of heritage, but also the significance of the rare survivors.[75] Heritage practice involves a fine balance between allowing room for progress, while also celebrating and conserving our shared histories and values. As Lewis and Wright suggest, "It is not only impractical but impossible for everything that evidences us to survive."[76] However, this logic does not diminish the stab of sorrow I feel whenever I drive past a favourite sign and see that it's gone. Glenn Albrecht's idea of Solastalgia describes this sense of loss as, "the erosion of the sense of belonging (identity) to a particular place and a feeling of distress… about its transformation."[77] I'm not suggesting that all of the signs included in this paper should have been conserved. More that historic signs need specific consideration within our current heritage management systems in New Zealand. In the meantime, there is a joy to be had in the hunting out of historic signs—keep an eye out for what you can find and celebrate their survival.

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A Raised Bonnet on the Lost Highway: Whither Les Cleveland?

Lawrence McDonald

Six years have passed since Les Cleveland's death in 2014 and next year will be the centenary of his birth. Recently, there have been two warm personal accounts of Cleveland the man and the respective writers' personal relationships with him.[1] However, amongst the obituaries published shortly after his passing, there was a tribute by Peter Ireland in which he claimed, "the reception of his work in the present day remains stalled", and he concluded that although his "adventuring has ended . . . his work's has just begun."[2] I would concur with the first of these claims and agree to some extent with the second. In what follows, I want to address possible reasons for this stalling by returning to the question of Cleveland's place in photographic history and reexamining the significance of his framing within public exhibitions and related critical publications. I will argue that his position within local photographic history and intellectual culture in general needs to be clarified; and that the nature of his photography needs to analysed in more than purely local terms.

Keywords: #Cleveland #New Zealand #Photography #History

Les Cleveland's public critical reception and reputation as a photographer began with his inclusion in the exhibition *Witness to Change: Life in New Zealand – John Pascoe, Les Cleveland, Ans Westra Photographs 1940 – 1965*, curated by Janet Bayly and Athol McCredie, which toured throughout New Zealand in the period from 1985 to 1987. Each of the three photographers featured in the exhibition was represented by 12 photographs, all of which were reproduced in the exhibition catalogue; and further images were included in albums and as in-text illustrations. All of the 12 Cleveland exhibition prints were taken in the second half of the 1950s, eight of them in the Westland region, accompanied by four studies of wooden buildings in Wellington. The three photographers, each of whom represents a decade, are positioned as transitional or pioneer figures that paved the way for the generation of New Zealand art photographers who emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the exhibition and catalogue can be seen as the first part of a two-part project, the second being Athol McCredie's book and accompanying Te Papa exhibition, *The New Photography: New Zealand's First-Generation Contemporary Photographers* (2019). The importance of *Witness to Change*'s three photographers is seen to lie in the straight documentary qualities of their work, their freedom from camera club conventions, and their independent spirit. However, in his essay on Cleveland, Athol McCredie differentiates him from Pascoe and Westra by referring to his alleged "lack of interest in photographic aesthetics".[3] This is a claim I will contest over the course of this essay by examining a selection of Cleveland's photographs and demonstrating that these images are open to an aesthetic reading.

The next stage in the formation of Cleveland's critical reputation was, of course, his first and so far only solo exhibition in a public art gallery: *Les Cleveland: Six Decades - Message from the Exterior* (1998). The period in which this exhibition was staged (1 August – 11 October 1998) is the only time in its history when all of the exhibition space in the City Gallery Wellington was given over to photography. In addition to the Cleveland exhibition, the gallery also hosted exhibitions of the work of Lee Miller and Ansel Adams, and these three exhibitions of black and white photography ran in conjunction with the inaugural Wellington Fotofest. However, in contrast to the two exhibitions from overseas, which were purely photographic, the local exhibition embraced other, non-photographic dimensions of Cleveland's work, in both the exhibition space and in the pages of the accompanying publication.

As exhibition curator and publication editor, I wished to address the full spectrum of Cleveland's creative practice, not just

his photography, even though 87 framed photographs formed the core of the exhibition. Accordingly, I incorporated the following extra-photographic components within the exhibition: a soundtrack composed of songs from Cleveland's published albums, which played continuously in the exhibition space[4]; a selection of published magazine (e.g. *New Zealand Listener*) and book (*The Silent Land*) page spreads, which were housed in two vitrines, placed in the centre of the gallery; outside the gallery space, *The Ghost Town Ball – Waiuta* (1986), a National Film Unit documentary narrated by Cleveland, was screened daily at 1pm in the City Cinema, as was a compilation from the TV2 documentary series Not so Long Ago (1980, written and presented by Cleveland), daily at 2.05pm. There was also an extensive programme of events throughout August and September: two slide talks by Cleveland himself (one on "The story behind *Message*" and another on "Utopian New Zealand"); my Gallery talk on works in the exhibition; and a performance of New Zealand songs and ballads by Les Cleveland with students from Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School and their music tutor Laughton Patrick.

In my original proposal I envisaged an exhibition of 150 photographs and other creative artifacts, an accompanying catalogue, and a four-page brochure (free to the public).[5] When it became clear that the gallery's project budget could only accommodate the four-page brochure, I prepared a further proposal for publication funding, which the gallery submitted to Creative New Zealand. The success of this application then led to a publishing partnership with Victoria University Press, quite appropriately given that Les Cleveland was a former Reader in Political Science at VUW.[6] There were two main reasons why I felt that a substantial monographic publication was an essential part of the project. Firstly, this was a once in a lifetime moment to address the full range of Cleveland's achievement. Given his advancing age and the fact that it would certainly be a long time before there would be an opportunity to mount another solo exhibition, it was important to get it right. Secondly, the ephemeral nature of exhibitions and the uncertainty about touring prospects made it imperative to have a more permanent record.

One of the aims of the exhibition was to emphasise that Cleveland was still very much a practising photographer, rather than someone whose work was enclosed within the period stretching from the early 1950s until the mid-1960s. In an end note in my essay for the book, I argued, "An unintended consequence of his positioning in *Witness to Change* may have been to associate Cleveland exclusively as a

photographer of 1950s Westland and Wellington in the minds of some viewers."[7] It is true that in the near thirty-year period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s Cleveland did little photography, as he was primarily focused on the teaching, researching, and writing commitments of his academic career. However, following his retirement from VUW, he returned to photography in earnest from the early-1990s onwards, not only making images in Wellington but also in various parts of the USA in the course of two trips to that country (1994 and 1996). Twenty-four of his American images were included in the exhibition and 17 of them in the book, many in juxtaposition with his earlier New Zealand photographs, in order to register the continuity of his thematic interests in 'frontier' imagery and the representation of relics and ruins.

As was the case with the exhibition, the aim of the publication was to address the full range of Cleveland's creative practice. His photography was represented by a selection from the exhibition: 56 plates in the central section of the book; a further two plates in the essays by Peter Turner and Laurence Simmons; and numerous gutter illustrations throughout my essay, the biographical chronology, and the bibliography. In addition, I included several examples of Cleveland's creative writing: a short story ("A Course in Survival"); and two poems, one published previously ("Hearths"), and another hitherto unpublished ("Enchantment at Barn Bay"). The overarching editorial purpose behind the three essays was to provide balanced discussion of Cleveland's work from a variety of angles. My essay addresses all major dimensions of Cleveland's creative and intellectual practice: photography, music and musicology, and writing. Peter Turner's essay is a personal reflection on the significance of the photographer's work;[8] whereas, Laurence Simmons examines the relationship between documentary and poetics by means of a close reading of a single Cleveland photograph ("The European Hotel").[9]

An overarching purpose animating my essay for the publication was to locate Cleveland's creative project within the intellectual field of New Zealand culture. These concepts are derived, of course, from Pierre Bourdieu. There wasn't the space within the set word count of the essay to explicate them, but I would like to say something about them here. Cleveland's two main creative practices were photography and popular music (as both practitioner and musicologist). Certainly in the 1950s and 1960s, neither of these artistic forms qualified as "consecrated arts" positioned within "the sphere of legitimacy claiming universality". Rather, they fell within "the sphere of what is in the process of legitimation".[10] In 1958, the local painter and photographer

Eric Lee-Johnson put it this way, "Among the fine arts, photography occupies a position midway between doodling and washing the dishes [...] Let's face it: still photography as an art form isn't taken too seriously, and the photographer despite and perhaps because of the efforts of the photographic societies, has little standing as an artist …"[11]

Within the New Zealand context the achievement of John Pascoe, Les Cleveland, and Ans Westra was to pave the way for the emergence of 'serious' art photography within the network of art galleries and publications beginning to populate the intellectual field from the 1970s onwards. Such, anyway, is the claim of *Witness to Change* and, by extension, *The New Photography*. Prior to this period, venues for the publication of photography and indeed popular song were extremely limited. The fact that a handful of Cleveland's photographs "were published in that registered vehicle of literary nationalism, *Landfall*", as David Eggleton puts it, does not mean that they fitted seamlessly into that journal's cultural project.[12] The broad question to ask here is what degree of unconscious consensus was there among Landfall contributors of the period and what degree of dissensus? I would suggest that a reading of Cleveland's MA research paper[13], his letter in response to an essay by Rob Wentholt[14], and the thematic and formal qualities of *The Silent Land* [15] point in his case to a considerable degree of dissensus within the consensus, to invert Bourdieu's categories.

In his essay on the 19th century Nelson-based photographic enterprise of the Tyree brothers, Cleveland characterizes photographers as "popular artists" and commercial photography in particular as "a form of mass communications". He refers to New Zealand as an "export cultural fragment" that is still linked to the "parent whole", and asks, "Given the essentially imitative and dependent nature of the New Zealand sub-culture, what prospects has the writer, photographer, painter got for fashioning a genuine native idiom or a personal style that will express the differences and the tensions between the export cultural fragment and the parent whole?"[16] To a large degree, this echoes a programmatic statement made by Charles Brasch in 1947, "… colonies begin as crudely broken-off fragments of the parent society; the impulse behind their foundation generally includes an urge to realize more fully some part of the implicit ideal purpose of that society … the colony once established easily drifts into a stagnating existence as a dull provincial reflection of the parent society …"[17] This congruence could be said to represent the "consensus within the dissensus" or, to put it another way, "the unconscious consensus on the focal points of the cultural field".[18] But because of Cleveland's own creative investment in non-consecrated

Figure 1. Les Cleveland, "Farmer's killing shed at Haupiri, Westland, 1957".

arts and his intellectual investment in the study of mass media and popular culture, his dissensus within the consensus points in a very different direction to the literary nationalism of the *Landfall* project.

In the same year that *Les Cleveland: Six Decades - Message from the Exterior* (1998) was exhibited at the City Gallery Wellington and Victoria University Press published the accompanying book, VUP also published Stuart Murray's *Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s*. The cover of *Never a Soul at Home* carries a reproduction of Cleveland's photograph "Farmer's killing shed at Haupiri, Westland, 1957". Regardless of who chose this image for the cover, publisher or author, a clear connection is made between the New Zealand literary nationalists of the 1930s and beyond and Les Cleveland's 1950s photographs. This is arguably the most powerful and suggestive of Cleveland's 1950s Westland photographs, which, in the particular move made here, propels the image back towards what Walter Benjamin calls cult value[19], and it is undoubtedly a good fit with the book's title and its central thematic. However, it does not thereby follow that Cleveland's project can be assimilated to the literary nationalism that began to take shape in the 1930s and had achieved a certain high cultural hegemony by the time he made the photograph in question.

A more explicit link to literary nationalism came eight years later in *Into the Light: A History of New Zealand Photography* when David Eggleton placed Cleveland amongst "The Nationalists" in the fourth chapter of the book ("Dominion"), summing him up as, "a nationalist who was 'out' about it."[20] It is never made clear in what way the disparate group of photographers assembled in this chapter all share some undefined investment in a nationalist discourse. Nor, for that matter, how Cleveland is more "out" about his alleged "nationalism" than, say, Leslie Adkin. Of the three Cleveland photographs reproduced in the book, the first is none other than "Farmer's killing shed at Haupiri" (Fig. 1), incorrectly dated 1956. Eggleton then goes on to make a direct link between New Zealand literary nationalism and Cleveland's photographic book, *The Silent Land* (1966): " . . . the actual title is meant to remind us of Charles Brasch's 1940 poem of the same name and its message: "the plains are nameless and the cities cry for meaning.""[21] There are a number of reasons to be sceptical about this claim. Firstly, when I asked Les Cleveland if the title of his book makes reference to Brasch's poem, his response was curt: "no". A more compelling because less anecdotal reason is Cleveland's summation of literary nationalism (not specified as such): " these various literary theories were largely some sort of intellectual rubbish."[22] But perhaps the most cogent reason

to doubt an affinity between Brasch and Cleveland's poetic artifacts can be found by means of a close comparative reading of the two works. Brasch's poem was written in the 1930s and published in his collection *The Land and the People* (1939).[23] The first verse asserts the absence of a cultural patina on the New Zealand landscape. The second registers the brute facts of the natural landscape. The third sees the country (both rural and urban) as unspoken and unwritten ("The unproved heart still seeks a vein of speech"). The fourth emphasises "quiet" and "solitude". The remaining three verses point towards a resolution of the dilemma, whereby solitude will be overcome in a "homecoming" within which "He" will "hear the sea talking" and, in the memorable final line, the angel will sign "life's air with indefinable mark". Obviously, a bald paraphrase such as this does not do justice to the poetic qualities of Brasch's verses. Nonetheless, for comparative purposes it does indicate the near timeless nature of the poet's Olympian view onto the landscape and its would-be occupants, articulated in a formal tone that borders on the portentous.

When we turn to Cleveland's work of the same name (not a poem as such but an interaction between image and text), the differences rather than any alleged similarities are immediately apparent. Following the establishing shots of two very specifically identified West Coast landscapes, we encounter a horizontal image shot from a low angle of two trampers traversing hilly terrain (via the leading line of a ridge of rock), which is echoed in the ninth photograph of one of the trampers walking across a bridge "Towards a silent land"; and over the page a double-page spread featuring two photographs of dead trees is headed "A SILENT LAND". I would stress that the land depicted here may be silent but not only is it not timeless or generic but also the figures which journey across it are fully embedded and at home within it. Above all, though, this is a thoroughly historical and social landscape. The photographs register both the traces of the past and signs of life in the present (all the photos were shot in the 1950s and early 1960s), just as the verse too ranges across "the wreckage of the past" ("a reassuring heroic past") to "An excluded present", and on to "labyrinths of future speculation". I will not persist here with a full reading of *The Silent Land* because I have already done so in *Message* and the reader is referred to that.[24] Suffice it to say, my comments here provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate the chasm that separates Brasch's "The Silent Land" from Cleveland's.

Although, on the whole, the exhibition and the publication received favourable critical appraisal, this often did not extend to the

photographs made in America. Paul Thompson, in a review of the book, asserted, " . . . the images of New Zealand in the 1950s and 60s . . . are the strongest in the book . . ."; and he went on to speak against "trying to position Cleveland internationally".[25] Neil Penman, also in a review of the book, stated, "The 17 American pictures . . . rather lack the strength of the New Zealand photographs, although several are worthy of attention."[26] Justin Paton was rather more forthright in his criticism of this aspect of the book's editorial choices: "Cleveland's mid-century works are pointlessly rhymed with recent photos that simply aren't as telling".[27] Underpinning these comments, especially Paton's, is the assumption that the exhibition (and perhaps, by implication, monographic exhibitions in general) should have been a cherry-picked display of the artist's greatest hits. In other words, an amplification of the temporal (1950s) and geographical (Westland and Wellington) choices exemplified in *Witness to Change*. By contrast, in his review of the book, Peter Ireland refers to "…the uniformly excellent reproductions in an unusual sequencing that seems to mirror the random mechanism of memory…"[28] And Damian Skinner, in a brief but perceptive exhibition review, discussed Cleveland's work in relation to the exhibition's curatorial strategies: "the emphasis on systems of signification . . . complicates 1950s images that might otherwise be taken as a unique and authentic New Zealand. Here the difference between Las Vegas and Wellington is rendered closer and more intimately than we might expect."[29]

The view that Cleveland's American photographs and his interest in aspects of American culture in general are marginal to his photographic achievement and his wider intellectual accomplishments is simply unsustainable. To begin with, recall that in the late 1950s the working title for the project that was eventually published as *The Silent Land* was "The Frontier". Although to my knowledge he never directly cited it, there is a clear echo here of Frederick Jackson Turner and his influential paper "The significance of the frontier in American history" (1893), which at some level can be seen to have provided a prompt for Cleveland's visual and literary representation of Westland in *The Silent Land*. Secondly, in my analysis of *The Silent Land* in *Message*, I argued that it differs markedly from other New Zealand photographic books of the period and since, and that it is more profitably seen as doing something comparable to the American photographic book *Land of the Free* (1938).[30] The photographs in *Land of the Free* are mostly from the photographic archive of the Resettlement Administration, a Depression era New Deal initiative that immediately preceded the Farm Security

Administration, whereas the text is a long poem by Archibald MacLeish. I argued that in both books the relationship between the images and the text is analogous to the image track and the soundtrack (voice over) of a documentary film, specifically American and British documentary film making of the 1930s. Another point of connection between Cleveland and American sources can be found by examining his essay on the Tyree brothers Nelson-based photographic business of the late 19*th* and 20*th* centuries. His interest in the Tyrees began in the mid-1960s when he put together "A memorandum in information gathered to date in the course of biographic research".[31] But it wasn't until 1979 that he published an article on this topic. In the article he refers to the New Zealand frontier ("a Pacific frontier") characterized by an urban architecture of wooden facades. He draws attention also to three factors that structure New Zealand history: the natural environment / geographical location (in other words the frontier concept); relationship to the parent culture (i.e. the fragment concept); and Polynesian culture as a "modifying influence".[32] As he works his way through the essay, he draws on historian Daniel Boorstin's *The Americans: the Democratic Experience* (1974) and political scientist Louis Hartz's *The Founding of New Societies* (1964). Taking into account these connections and resemblances to American history, theory, and culture, it is not surprising that in the period following his retirement from VUW, Cleveland would be interested in taking up a Smithsonian fellowship in the USA, and that once there he would be interested in photographing parts of the country.

One reviewer of *Message from the Exterior* (the book) remarked that the wide geographical and temporal range of the plates made the book "rather chaotic".[33] Another considered that the inclusion of Cleveland's poems and fiction, along with the commentary on popular song made "the book feel overly rambling".[34] The first statement is related to the familiar and uncontroversial claim that the 1950s/60s photographs are Cleveland's strongest. The second, however, seems unwilling to accept one of the premises of the project: viz. that Cleveland is not a medium specific artist or, indeed, intellectual but rather a multi and interdisciplinary one.

Nonetheless, the word "rambling' inadvertently points to a feature of the book that mirrors a quality in Cleveland's practice. In an interview-based profile, published just prior to the opening of *Message*, Cleveland says, "I'm an observer who just flits about and comes up with perspectives on a life journey."[35] In a UK context, a rambler is someone who traverses landscapes of varying degrees of wildness with varying degrees of planned precision, which is something that the tramper/

mountaineer Les Cleveland did throughout his life. But he might also be seen to have done so across the cultural landscape as well. Furthermore, someone who "flits about" sounds rather like an urban flâneur engaged in a form of drifting across the byways and through the backstreets of the city. Someone like the German writer and translator Franz Hessel who, according to Walter Benjamin, treated "the city as a mnemonic for the lonely walker", and "… would be happy to trade all his knowledge of artists' quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces for the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile …"[36] In short, Cleveland can be seen to be something of a psychogeographer. In this he resembles Eugene Atget. In many respects he is to the Wellington of the 1950s/60s what Atget was to the Paris of the early 20th century. Take, for instance, the photograph "Shop window in Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington, October 1957" (Fig. 2) and place it beside Atget's "Boulevard de Strasbourg, corsets, Paris, 1912" (Fig. 2a). Cleveland's camera is closer to the shop window, and thus reveals more details of the tags on the garments, but like the Atget image its slightly oblique angle brings the display vividly to life. Moreover, the composition of the Cleveland image makes very good use of horizontal and vertical leading lines. Thus, what is at work here is not just a matter of a shared thematic interest but also involves an affinity in formal terms.

A further point of connection between the two photographers can be found in the representation of urban workers in situ. Cleveland's precisely located and dated photograph, "Workman cleaning points in tramlines at corner of Manners and Willis streets, Wellington, 16 September 1957" (Fig. 3), is an outstanding depiction of a stooped tramways worker captured at work in the middle of an inner city road. He is positioned in the frame at the top of a shaded area bordering on an illuminated section of the street. The chiaroscuro quality of the image is further complicated by the curvilinear pattern of the tramlines. Atget's "Pavers, Paris, 1899-1900" (Fig. 3a) is a closer shot of men at work in the city, structured by a contrast between a foreground that captures the workers' movements in sharp focus and a blurred background involving a passing horse and rider; although, unlike the Cleveland photo, Atget's has posed the central figure.

Turning now to a more recent Cleveland photograph, one shot in the United States, I will compare it and the circumstances within which it was taken to the other photographer with whom he has the most affinity. The photo in question is "Mother and Daughter, New York 1994"(Fig. 4), which clearly was made within the confines of a mode of public transport, most probably the New York subway. This is a balanced

Figure 2. Les Cleveland, "Shop window in Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington, October 1957".

Figure 2a. Eugene Atget, 'Boulevard de Strasbourg', Corsets, Paris, 1912.

composition in which the picture plane is bifurcated by a central pole, which the daughter grips. The centre of attention is an arrangement of hands and faces and the diagonal gaze of the two figures seems to mimic the implied motion of the train. Moreover, the viewer's eye is drawn to the contrast between the open and closed eyes of the daughter, emphasized by the position of her elongated middle finger just below the closed eye. This photograph can be compared with an untitled study by Walker Evans, one of many taken on the New York subway between 1938 and 1941.[37] In his random journeys across subterranean New York, Evans worked with a concealed camera to capture travelers unawares, lost in their thoughts. In the particular Evans photo, we also see two women, but they are of a similar age and the direction of their gazes is in the opposite direction to the Cleveland image (i.e. leftwards). The Evans photo, too, is bifurcated, in this instance by a central vertical strut behind the head of one of the women, and again the direction of the gazes rhymes with the movement of the train. Also, a similar kind of blanked out introspection is evident in both photographs, although more pronounced in the Cleveland. However, a photograph such as this is not the first that comes to mind when considering points of connection between Cleveland and Evans. Studies of vernacular architectural buildings, especially wooden ones, are the more obvious candidates. Nevertheless, in the example just discussed an affinity is clearly there.

Mention of vernacular wooden buildings reminds us that there are many fine examples in the pages of Evans's *American Photographs* (1938). If Cleveland's comparable photographs had found an equivalent home it might have been called "Wellington Photographs". Unfortunately, such a book, which might have done for Wellington what *The Silent Land* did for Westland, does not exist. Interestingly, a book of photographs we do have from the same broad period as Cleveland's 1950s/60s Wellington photos seems on the surface to cover similar territory. *Vintage Wellington* (1970) by architect Charles Fearnley is a photographic record of a wide range of Wellington's distinctive buildings, accompanied by lengthy, detailed captions.[38] Fine as Fearnley's pictures are, they are very much architectural records in a plain documentary style. To a degree, Cleveland's style is also plain and documentary in character (the appropriate term here is vernacular style), but despite the claim that he had little interest in aesthetics there is a poetic quality to it that transcends mere documentation. There is also invariably the suggestion of traces of the historical and social transactions between the urban environment and its inhabitants. If Les Cleveland had made a book of Wellington photographs, it is likely

Figure 3. Les Cleveland, "Workman cleaning points in tramlines at corner of Manners and Willis streets, Wellington, 16 September 1957".

Figure 3a. Eugene Atget, 'Pavers', Paris, 1899-1900.

Figure 4. Les Cleveland, "Mother and Daughter, New York 1994". Image from *Les Cleveland: Six Decades – Message from the Exterior*, published by City Gallery Wellington and Victoria University Press, 1998.

that he would have also composed a verse or prose text to accompany them, as he did with *The Silent Land*. And it is also likely that he would have included some of the photographs he took in the transformed/transforming Wellington of the late 20th century and the new millennium, thereby matching elegiac qualities with criticism of the imperatives of thoughtless development and 'progress'. A glimpse of what such a book might have been can be found in "The Harrowing of Te Aro: a Photo Essay". This photo essay contains three photographs of Wellington in the 1950s and one from 2002 (Apartments in Courtenay Place"). In an accompanying text Cleveland states, "Te Aro has been devastated by the forces of modernity", and he laments, "Metropolis is triumphant in Neverland".[39] Five years later, Cleveland presented a fuller version of this nascent project in "The Secret City – 35 Photographs", his final solo exhibition at the Peter McLeavey Gallery (14 March – 7 April 2007). In her biography of the dealer, Jill Trevelyan states that McLeavey considered the exhibition to be one of the ten most important he ever mounted. And she quotes him thus, "… it was an anthem; a love song; a sermon; and maybe a rant, to or about our city … at 86 [Les] still has fire in his belly, and can shake his fist at the powerful, the greedy, and the apathetic."[40]

In the early 1990s, Alistair Morrison pithily and memorably described Les Cleveland as "a good keen man with a PhD"[41], and since then various commentators have repeated this phrase to such a degree that it has become the standard way to sum him up.[42] There is an unavoidably masculinist connotation to the phrase, with the emphasis falling on the Crumpian first half. And certainly there are plenty of photographs that can be made to fit this image. Yet there are also many that depart from it and belie this now rather reductive view. I will discuss a few of them in detail now.

One of the most striking 1950s/60s photographs included in the exhibition was not made in either Westland or Wellington, but rather in the central North Island: "The Patient, Mt Ruapehu 1962" (Fig. 5). Indeed, such is its power of suggestion that I chose it as the cover image for the exhibition catalogue. The photograph's setting, subject matter, and narrative content can be summarized as follows: a young woman has had a skiing accident on the slopes of Mt Ruapehu and is now being attended to by three people (presumably older men, but not necessarily) in an unspecified interior. There is a marked difference between the two iterations of the photograph. Whereas the exhibition print/book plate was printed from the entire negative, the book's cover image was cropped. Both iterations revolve around the two most expressive features of the human body: the face and the hands. In the exhibition print, arms

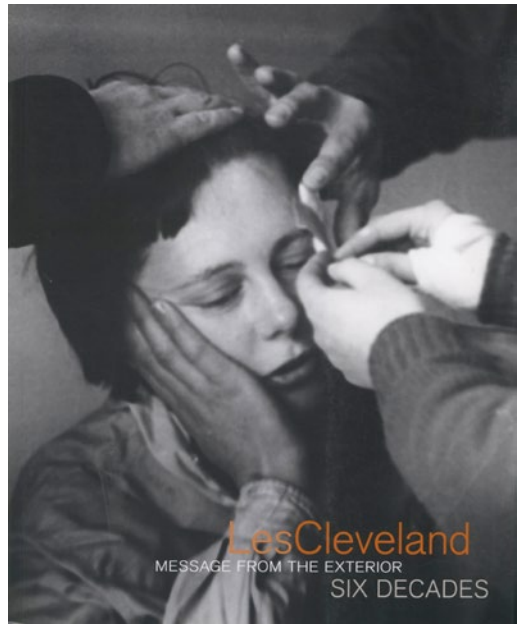

Figure 5. Les Cleveland, 'The Patient, Mt. Ruapehu 1962'. Photograph used on the cover of the catalogue/book *Les Cleveland: Message from the Exterior. Six Decades*. Image courtesy of Victoria University Press.

(as opposed to just hands) converge on top of the young woman's head and in conjunction with her body form something of a tau cross shape. Two of the hands are applying a dressing to the "patient's" face, while another performs a comforting and steadying action on the top of her head. There is an elaborate horizontal but slightly diagonal interplay of arms across the picture plane, which creates three areas of negative space in the composition as a whole. The central subject's closed eyes and hand supporting her cheek are also important elements in the composition and the mood it creates. Interestingly, the detail of the chained pole attached to the left-side figure and his black clothing impart something of a liturgical feel to the picture.

In the cover iteration of the image, what little wider context there is in the exhibition print is removed and the emphasis falls firmly on the symphony of face and hands, which are decisively foregrounded in close up (as opposed to the original's medium shot). And, as this is a book cover image, the photograph is the major element, with the title running across the bottom segment. The key phrase in the title is Message from the Exterior, which resonates with an image that depicts the laying on of hands to the surface of this young woman's head and face. Moreover,

the quality of tenderness and care is represented in more concentrated form here.

In addition to this photograph's undoubted power, there is another reason why I chose it for the cover, and it is an intertextual one. For me, this photograph brings to mind sequences from one of the great films of the late silent era: Carl Th. Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928). I'm thinking specifically of the scene in which Joan (Maria Falconetti) is being prepared for her execution at the stake, by having her hair cut. There is a similar monochromatic dynamic here involving the interplay of hands in proximity to a close up of the face. Except that the Cleveland image inverts the imposition of the punishment and agony inflicted on Joan to its opposite: the relief of pain and distress by means of care and empathy. What the two images share, though, is the invocation of a 'spiritual' quality, or, in Paul Schrader's terms, transcendental style, a style in which "the immanent is expressive of the Transcendent."[43] But more than this, "The Patient" speaks to the obligation towards the other that Emmanuel Levinas addresses in his disquisition on "Ethics and the Face". He expresses it in these terms, "The face opens the primordial discourse whose first word is obligation, which no "interiority" permits avoiding".[44] Thus, within the small and modest confines of "The Patient", there is indeed a profound and lasting message from the exterior.

Having just analysed a photograph that not only appeared in the exhibition but also occupied the cover of the book, I now want to turn to a photograph that played a similar role in the project. The photograph in question is "Woman in Coffee Bar, Herbert Street, Wellington 1959" (Fig. 6), and like "The Patient" its composition is distinctive. In this elongated portrait, a young woman (Lynn Rogers, a Wellington copywriter at the time), shot from a low angle, is stitting on a bar stool. Her body is slightly swivelled and the key features emphasised in her pose, as with "The Patient", are her face and hands. Her confident, and slightly knowing gaze, directed straight at the camera, is offset by the poised but casual manner in which her right hand holds a cigarette while her left hand rests lightly on her thigh. The Café setting is plain and functional but the patterning on the wall mats that dominate the lower two thirds of the photo mingle strikingly with the shadows cast by the struts of the stool. The austerity of the setting rhymes with Rogers's simple monochromatic dress. Her hair is fashionably cropped – think Anna Karina in Jean-Luc Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie* (1962) from the same period.[45] Without doubt this is an image of nonchalant elegance. In short, it's a chic pic.

Figure 6. Les Cleveland, "Woman in coffee bar, Herbert Street, Wellington 1959". Image from *Les Cleveland: Six Decades - Message from the Exterior*, published by City Gallery Wellington and Victoria University Press, 1998.

So arresting is this photo that it was picked as the sole image on the banner announcing the three photographic exhibitions in the central foyer of the City Gallery. And its companion photograph (Rogers walking up the steps of the National War Memorial) was reproduced as a gutter illustration within the Cleveland bibliography at the end of the book. This photograph formed part of the cover of the August 28, 1959 edition of the *New Zealand Listener*, which directed the reader to the opening story: "Focus on Hemlines". The photograph I have just examined is printed on page three with the caption, "Short skirts are handier on coffee bar stools". And inside the unattributed article (the bottom of which refers the reader to a forthcoming YA/YZ radio programme – "Showing the Knee") we read: "For centuries feminine legs have been hidden, with the result that men have striven for the glimpse of ankles revealed by wind or steps."[46] These two photographs are as much a part of Les Cleveland's Wellington as his more well known and celebrated studies of buildings. Furthermore, the fabric and garment captured in them is a long way from the world of Swandri. Thus we are confronted with a hitherto underappreciated phenomenon: Les Cleveland fashion photographer.

A few years prior to beginning work on *Message from the Exterior,* I co-curated with Virginia Callanan the inaugural exhibition for The Film Archive's exhibition space in The Film Centre: *Number 8 / Super 8: Amateur and Home Movie Making in New Zealand* (1995). In contrast to film archives in other Western countries, a higher proportion of the collection of Nga Taonga: Sound and Vision comprises amateur and home movies. Accordingly, an exhibition based in this type of film making seemed an appropriate way in which to begin an ongoing exhibition programme at The Film Centre. The films and film excerpts that constituted the heart of the exhibition were organized into ten subject categories. Broadly, the home movies fell within seven distinct groupings: at the beach; on the road; in the camping ground; in the backyard; down the garden path; at the A & P show; and the main street parade. Whereas the more elaborate or ambitious amateur films were grouped into the categories of drama, local news, and soldiers' wartime experiences. One of the film makers we included in the exhibition, whose work crossed both categories, was W.T. (Wally) Knowles. Knowles, who was based in Dannevirke and was a friend of members of my extended family. He used a Pathe 16mm camera and filmed mostly in the greater Hawkes Bay region, although occasionally he operated further afield. He covered street parades and A & P shows but also made compilations of local news items, most likely modeled on the pathe newsreels made

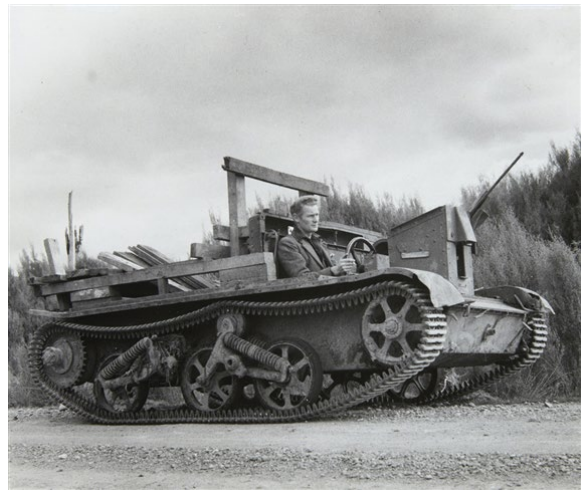

Figure 7. Les Cleveland, "Doug Macalister driving war surplus Bren carrier 1957". Image from *Les Cleveland: Six Decades - Message from the Exterior*, published by City Gallery Wellington and Victoria University Press, 1998.

in the UK during the period from 1910 to 1970. He also made dramas with local actors. I spent some time in his company, had numerous conversations with him, and eventually acquired much of his film making equipment, including his Pathe camera, which I included in a display case in the exhibition space. Knowles was a near contemporary of Cleveland and in many respects my conversations with Les were reminiscent of earlier ones with Wally. But to my mind their main points of connection were their shared interest in camera-generated image making and their intense focus on the particularities of regional New Zealand. Furthermore, there is also the no small matter of their joint investment in amateur modes of engaging with cultural realities. "Amateurism", writes Edward Said, is based in "the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a speciality, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession."[47]

If I were to take just one Cleveland photograph that chimes with the spirit of some of the images in the films featured in *Number 8 / Super 8* it would be "Doug Macalister driving war surplus Bren carrier 1957" (Fig. 7). Here we see Macalister, a bushman at the Kopara sawmill whose informal portrait appears in *The Silent Land*, driving down a gravel road on the said Bren gun carrier, which has been converted into a vehicle for transporting timber out of the bush. Heath Robinson contraptions comparable to this make appearances in a number of kiwi amateur films. Another point of connection to Wally Knowles and other *Number 8 / Super 8* film makers is Cleveland's exhibition at the Peter McLeavey Gallery in 2000, ""Small Towns": Twenty Two Vintage Photographs". These photographs were taken in the lower half of the North Island and the top of the South Island, mostly throughout the 1950s (there are two from the late 1960s). In a short essay that accompanied the exhibition, Cleveland mentions Skin Hackett who "presides over the transformation of a church into a radiator repair factory" in Watt Street, Wanganui.[48] He concludes by listing the factors ("the termites of progress") that have sentenced "some small towns to lingering death".

Like the film excerpts in *Number 8 / Super 8*, the photographs in *Message from the Exterior* were also organised into broad categories, six in number: celebration, work, landscape, people, streetlife, and dreams. As one would expect, although based in straight photographic souce material, the final category contained photographs that departed from realism by experimenting with montage by printing from two negatives. "Nightmare on Tongariro 1960", for instance, combines one of Cleveland's studies of Wellington ornamental stone facades with a location photo of the photographer's future wife (Mary Sears), naked on the side of the mountain. Needless to say, the staged narrative qualities of this photograph are a long way from the kind of image that Cleveland is most known for. This picture is something like a strange composite of, say, a less elaborate Jerry Uelsmann photomontage and an item from the rather extensive catalogue of notable photographers' studies of their partners: viz. Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe; Paul and Rebecca Strand; Harry and Eleanor Callahan; and locally, Hardwicke and Molly Knight.

I have focused on the two major exhibitions of Les Cleveland's work in public gallery spaces. But it is important to remember that in the period stretching from 1990 until 2007, he had five solo exhibitions and was included in a number of group shows at the Peter McLeavey Gallery in Cuba Street, Wellington. Given his strong love of photography

and his extensive personal collection of vintage prints, many of them by 20th century masters, it is perhaps not surprising that Peter McCleavey became Les Cleveland's dealer. But there is a further reason. For McLeavey there was something of a parallel between Cleveland and Colin McCahon. At some level, they both can be seen as simultaneously outside and inside the international framework and conversation of their respective mediums. As contemporaries, they both worked away at the bottom of the world, seemingly unconcerned with anything other than the internal imperatives of their own projects and pathways. Clearly, local public exposure and recognition came much earlier for McCahon but his international recognition has been slow to come and intermittent. Les Cleveland's, in contrast, has not even begun.

In the early 1990s, Peter Turner wrote, "Regrettably, I had just finished my *History of Photography* [1987], otherwise he would have had a place in it", and he asked an important question: "… what is being done, however belatedly, to place Les Cleveland, his peers and successors in the international museum, collection and gallery sphere where they belong?"[49] And in an interview-based article published when *Message* opened, he is reported thus, "Turner goes so far to consider the fact that Cleveland is virtually unknown outside New Zealand as a cultural crime."[50] Turner was not the only figure from the northern hemisphere to hold Cleveland's work in high esteem. In the mid-1990s, during a visit to the Peter McCleavey gallery, which was showing some Les Cleveland photographs, Peter introduced me to Manuel Borja-Villel, then director of the Antoni Tapies Museum in Barcelona, who was on a brief visit to New Zealand. When I mentioned I was planning an exhibition of Cleveland's work, he said he would definitely be interested in having an exhibition of the photographs at the Tapies Museum. He summed up his reason as follows: at first sight you think Walker Evans but then you realize there's something else at work. He didn't specify what that 'something else' was but his comment draws attention to the interplay between international and local resonances in the photographs.

Les Cleveland's photography has yet to be exhibited outside New Zealand and even within this country its dissemination has mostly been confined to Wellington (City Gallery Wellington and Peter McLeavey Gallery). Moreover, even though the City Gallery Wellington offered *Message from the Exterior* to 12 other galleries and museums across the country, all of them declined to take it, giving budgetary considerations or full schedules as the reasons for not proceeding. The local public and private "adventure" of Cleveland's photography made a strong start in the final 15 years of the 20th century but it has

slowed considerably across the 21st. In this essay, I have argued that the principal reason why the reception of Cleveland's photography remains "stalled" in the 21st century is because it has become locked within a particular time and within particular places. The dominant view is that he is a "nationalist" whose enterprise can be reduced to a relatively small number of largely 1950s Westland and Wellington photographs, which reveal an essential New Zealand that has long since passed. While in no way denying the power and resonance of these photographs, I have contested this view. Here I have concentrated on discussing photographs that fall outside this limited repertoire and argued that they are just as worthy of attention as his more well-known images. I have also argued that there is more of an aesthetic dimension to his work than some have been willing to contemplate; and that rather than being seen and assessed in purely local terms, his pictures can be fruitfully discussed and analysed within an international framework. In sum the "Good Keen Camera [man]" image needs to give way to a more expansive and nuanced one, which connects Cleveland to the aesthetic and intellectual realms where his work clearly belongs.

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END NOTES

1. Most notably Michael Jackson's "Remembering Les Cleveland", *Backstory*, no.7, December 2019, 5-23, which stresses the importance of Cleveland's early wartime experience for his later endeavours. See also, Geoff Lealand, "Such a Modest Man: the Cultural Heritage of Les Cleveland", *New Zealand Memories*, no.143, April-May 2020, 51-53.

2. Peter Ireland, "Les Cleveland (1921 – 2014)", Photoforum-nz.org

3. Athol McCredie, "The Social Landscape", in *Witness to Change: Life in New Zealand – John Pascoe, Les Cleveland, Ans Westra Photographs 1940 – 1965* (Wellington: PhotoForum 1985), 49.

4. The soundtrack consisted of three songs from *The Songs We Sang* by Les Cleveland and the D-Day Dodgers (1959): "The Quartermaster's Store"; "The Lousy Lance Corporal"; and "The Dugout in Matruh".

5. The working title for the project, which appeared on the cover sheet of the proposal submitted in March 1996, was "Vernacular Icons: Les Cleveland Photographs". Subsequently, I changed the title of the project to *Les Cleveland: Six Decades - Message from the Exterior.*

6. A consequence of the success of this application and the subsequent co-publishing partnership with Victoria University Press was that the gallery decided not to proceed with the brochure, which was to have taken the form of an interview with Les Cleveland conducted by me.

7. Lawrence McDonald, "A Dwelling with Many Rooms: Les Cleveland's Construction of New Zealand Experience in Images, Words and Song", in *Les Cleveland: Six Decades - Message from the Exterior*, ed. Lawrence McDonald (Wellington: City Gallery, Wellington & Victoria University Press 1998), 26.

8. Peter Turner, "Reflections", in ibid., 41-47.

9. Laurence Simmons, "Looking Back: Les Cleveland's Poetics of Documentation", in ibid., 105-113.

10. Pierre Bourdieu, "Intellectual Field and Creative Project", trans. Sian France, *Social Science Information*, vol.8, no.2, 1969,107, 105.

11. Eric Lee-Johnson, cited in John B. Turner, *Eric Lee-Johnson: Artist with a Camera* (Auckland: PhotoForum Inc. 1999), 8.

12. David Eggleton, *Into the Light: a History of New Zealand Photography* (Nelson: Craig Potton, 2006), 76.

13. Les Cleveland, "The New Zealand Experience – an Analysis of the Organic Tradition in New Zealand Fiction", unpublished MA research paper, Victoria University of Wellington, 1964.

14. Les Cleveland, Letter to the Editor, *Landfall*, vol.17, no.2, June 1963, 204. Cleveland wrote this letter in response to Rob Wentholt, "A Choice of Worlds", *Landfall,* vol.16, no.4, December 1962, 343-362.

15. Les Cleveland, *The Silent Land* (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1966).

16. Les Cleveland, "The Tyrees: Notes towards a Critical Assessment", *PhotoForum Supplement*, spring 1979, 7,8.

17. Charles Brasch, "Documentary", in *Landfall Country: Work from Landfall*, *1947 -1961*, ed. Charles Brasch (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1962), 447.

18. Bourdieu, 116.

19. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 219.

20. Eggleton, 76.

21. Ibid. This statement echoes an earlier one by Wystan Curnow who writes that *The Silent Land* "takes its title from Charles Brasch's well-known poem of that name". See Wystan Curnow, "Landscape and the Body", *Antic*, no.3, November 1987, 147.

22. Les Cleveland, cited in Athol McCredie, "The Social Landscape", in *Witness to Change: Life in New Zealand – John Pascoe, Les Cleveland, Ans Westra Photographs 1940 – 1965* (Wellington: PhotoForum 1985), 49.

23. My access to this poem is via *A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923 – 1945*, ed. Allen Curnow (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1945), 149.

24. McDonald, 10-19.

25. Paul Thompson, "A Good Keen Camera", *New Zealand Books*, December 1998, 19.

26. Neil Penman, Review of *Message from the Exterior*, *New Zealand Journal of Photography*, no.34, February 1999, 24.

27. Justin Paton, "Slivers of Time", *NZ Listener*, October 3-9, 1998, 44.

28. Peter Ireland, Review of *Message from the Exterior*, *Landfall* 197, Autumn 1999, 132.

29. Damian Skinner, "Wellington", *Art New Zealand*, no.89, Summer 1998/9, 27.

30. McDonald, 11-12.

31. Les Cleveland, "William and Frederick Tyree – Photographers of Nelson and Collingwood", a memorandum dated September 29, 1966. Unpublished typescript, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

32. Les Cleveland, "The Tyrees: Notes towards a Critical Assessment", *PhotoForum Supplement*, spring 1979, 6. The first two concepts persist in the theoretical approach of the first volume of James Belich's history of New Zealand, but in place of the third he advances the "ethos of expansion", which he applies to both Polynesian and European colonizing initiatives. See James Belich, *Making Peoples: a History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the end of the Nineteenth Century* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996), 37-38.

33. Iain Sharp, "Clever Cleveland's Captivating Images", *Sunday Star-Times*, August 16, 1998, F4.

34. Mary McPherson, "Photographer Presents View of Workers' Lives", *The Dominion*, September 26, 1998, 20.

35. Les Cleveland quoted in Matt Johnson, "Snapshot of Six Decades", *Sunday Star-Times*, July 26, 1998, F3.

36. Walter Benjamin, "The Return of the Flâneur", in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1, 1927 – 1930*, ed. Michael Jennings et al., trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 262-3.

37. Although these photographs were all taken between 1938 and 1941, it was not until 1966 that they were exhibited publicly at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, accompanied by a book with an essay by James Agee (written in 1940), the title of which also served as the book's title:

END NOTES

Many Are Called. For a reproduction of this photograph see Gilles Mora and John T.Hill, Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004): 227.

38. Charles Fearnley, *Vintage Wellington* (Dunedin: John McIndoe Ltd, 1970). This book is a "companion volume" to another McIndoe publication, *Victorian City of New Zealand* (1968), a study of Dunedin architecture, which pairs architect Ted McCoy's text with the photographs of Gary Blackman.

39. Les Cleveland, "The Harrowing of Te Aro: a Photo Essay", *New Zealand Journal of Photography*, no.47, Winter 2002, 6-7.

40. Jill Trevelyan, *Peter McLeavey: the Life and Times of a New Zealand Art Dealer* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2013), 379.

41. Alistair Morrison, "Songs to Warm the Heart and the Billy", *The Dominion* October 19, 1991, 9.

42. The list is extensive and includes the following items: the title of Paul Thompson's review of *Message* ("A Good Keen Camera", *New Zealand Books*, December 1998, 19); Matt Johnson's reference to a "feather in the Swandri cap of this good keen man with a PhD" (Matt Johnson, "Snapshot of Six Decades", *Sunday Star-Times*, July 26, 1998, F3); and Mark Amery's two variations on the theme - "The Barry Crump of photography" and "… a thinking man's Barry Crump" (Mark Amery, "Work is Life", *NZ Listener*, August 1, 1998, 40, 41).

43. Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Berkeley: University of California Press / Da Capo, 1972), 8.

44. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 201.

45. Furthermore, I would draw attention to a remarkable scene in *Vivre Sa Vie* wherein Nana (Anna Karina) attends a screening of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and the director cuts between close ups of her tearful face and Joan's (Maria Falconetti).

46. "Focus on Hemlines", *New Zealand Listener*, August 28, 1959, 3.

47. Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), 57. For his part, Roland Barthes is clear that "… in the field of photographic practice, it is the amateur … who stands closer to the *noeme* of photography." Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 99.

48. The photograph in question is "Old Presbyterian Church, Watt St, Wanganui, occupied by S. (Skin) Hackett, radiator repair expert 1957".

49. Peter Turner, "After you with the Megaphone", *New Zealand Journal of Photography*, no.9, November 1992, 7. Twenty-three years after he asked this question, five New Zealand photographers were included in a large reference work published by Thames & Hudson, but Cleveland was not one of them. The photographers are: the Burton Brothers, Laurence Aberhart, Brian Brake, Anne Noble, and Peter Peryer. See *The Thames & Hudson Dictionary of Photography*, ed. Nathalie Herschdorfer (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015).

50. Peter Turner quoted in Mark Amery, "Work is Life", *NZ Listener*, August 1, 1998, 41.

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Tharron Bloomfield is Ngāti Porou. From 2016 - 2020 he was Project Curator, Māori at the Auckland Museum. His previous positions include Mellon Teaching Fellow / Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (2012 - 2014), Senior Paper Conservator at the National Museum of Australia (2009 - 2011) and National Preservation Officer Māori at the National Library of New Zealand (2003 - 2008). He holds degrees in English Literature, Conservation of Cultural Materials and Museum Studies.

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STANDARD REFERENCES

(Books and academic articles, newspaper and magazine sources)

R (references): Phillips, Jock, and Terry Hearn. *Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England*, Ireland and Scotland 1800-1945. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008.

N (Notes/Endnotes): Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, *Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England, Ireland and Scotland* 1800-1945 (Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press, 2008), p.41.

R: Porter, Bernard. "Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness." The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 36, no. 1 (2008): 101-17.

N: Bernard Porter, "Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 1 (2008): 102.

New Zealand Farmer Stock and Station Journal (Auckland), "Speed Mania," November 1903, Home and Household Supplement: iv.

Observer (Auckland), "Advertisements," December 27, 1902: 22.

[n.b. This newspaper referencing format has been adapted from Chicago to suit 'Papers Past' references.]

INTERVIEWS AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS
(normally only cited in endnotes).

John Key, interview by author, Wellington, April 1, 2015.

Andrew Little, e-mail message to the author, April 1, 2015.

WEBSITE REFERENCES

Statistics New Zealand. "Digital Yearbook Collection." (1893-2010). http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/digital-yearbook-collection.aspx [accessed January 30, 2015].

IMAGE REFERENCES
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Burton Brothers, *North Shore*, Auckland, 1870s, Museum of New Zealand.

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ISSN 2537-6659
ISSN 2703-1713

Back Story: Journal of New Zealand Art, Media & Design History
Issue 8, Dec 2020