



The Brook Project

Aroha Novak



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Foreword

In 2014, Aroha Novak's blank *Brook Books* lay open on a table at the entrance of the Dunedin Public Library and visitors were invited to write down ideas about how the empty Carisbrook site could be used in the future. As a part-time library assistant, Novak was able to monitor how visitors were engaging with the books, talking about the old stadium site and responding to her invitation to imagine a utopian future for it. This public consultation formed the beginning of *The Brook Project*, which has since evolved into a two-year-long research project, producing a memorable public art event in late 2015 and concluding with this publication.

As a resident of Caversham, Novak's core intentions for *The Brook Project* were to: celebrate the socio-cultural history of Carisbrook's surrounding neighbourhood (Caversham), encourage a new dialogue about the potential of disused public space, and provoke a critique around the process of making informed, conscious and relevant public art projects. What has resulted is an

incredible archive of documentation and two compelling texts, one by Novak and another by independent writer Kerry Ann Lee, who attended *The Brook Project* festivities on 7 November 2015. While Novak reflects on the history of the site and some of the challenges presented along the way, Lee responds to her experience of the project, placing it within a larger lineage of locally engaged projects that have also sought to redefine how public art is engaged with.

As Dunedin slowly steps into the existing national dialogue on public art, Blue Oyster will continue to support community minded artists who wish to become a part of a conversation around public art that is largely dominated by louder voices in stronger positions of power. It is my hope that this publication can assist in giving *The Brook Project* its rightful place in the history of public art projects in Dunedin and in fact New Zealand, and to become a valuable resource for future emerging artists that wish to engage with their community.

Chloe Geoghegan
Director
Blue Oyster Art Project Space



2 *The Brook Project*, installation view of first embroideries



3 Rubble mountains at the Carisbrook site, Dunedin



Dreamers vs. Dickheads OR 'An Ancient Dirt Patch with a Crazy End Vision'

Wins & Losses

In these times, privatisation of property often overrides the cultural value of places adopted as storehouses for lived experiences. Removing public access is affecting. The absence is an echo too loud to ignore and can become call to action for remembrance and speculation. Aroha Novak makes space for these things in *The Brook Project*. The work focuses on Carisbrook, a local sports stadium with longstanding national significance that was decommissioned and demolished in 2012. Using the cult status and local pulling-power of the disused site, Novak worked from September 2014 to create a live event and site-specific installation that existed in situ for eight days, from 7–15 November 2015.

The project drew interest and support from Dunedin communities

and enabled citizens to emotionally reconnect with Carisbrook through a historical and personal reoccupation. Memories of what once was, what is, and what could be are collapsed and inseparable. Your first kiss, your first kick, the roar of multiple crowds, long-forgotten after-school antics and the cracks in the pavement... nostalgia, amnesia... everything is important. As a temporary monument, the work provided a space to recall. By inviting locals to subvert their reality with genuine possibilities, Novak offered a rare moment of empowerment.

Welcome to the then and now

With no interest in our national sport, I knew Carisbrook a.k.a. 'The House of Pain' a.k.a. the 'Home of Otago Rugby' a.k.a 'The Brook' as the gateway to 'South D' and Caversham. Staunch, trad, old school and working-class. By the time I got to Dunedin in 2010, The Brook was well into retirement and had been traded up for an expensive new plot across town, the Forsyth Barr Stadium that locals claimed wasn't being used all that much and bankrupted the city. I remember daredevil motor-cross stunt-riders doing their thing at The Brook in its final year of stadium-ness in 2011.



- 4 *The Brook Project Flag*
- 5 *Moveable gardens*
- 6 *Poetry group, 'Pay Per View' performing at The Brook Project*

Living up the road, it still seemed super and real, replete with steely floodlights and revving motorcycles slicing through the cold night air, wheezing: “Don’t forget we’re here!”

The grounds oozed civic and sentimental connotations, reminiscent of a familiar piece of turf, the Basin Reserve, a grassy plughole close to home in Wellington. Aside from its fame as the largest roundabout in the southern hemisphere and cricket-cum-barbeque-reggae-music-festival destination, like Carisbrook, it symbolically evokes the commons: where people can simply come and be together for a brief moment in our tangled times.

Carisbrook didn’t host Springbok Tour riots, ACDC concerts or visits from the Pope like some other stadiums around the country. Since its first international cricket match in 1886 (Otago vs. Australia) its illustrious history has been, for the most part, sporting, chiefly rugby or cricket (although I heard that Joe Cocker played there once). In its later years, The Brook became a contested site for local body politics. The Dunedin City Council first owned the land, sold it to the Rugby Union, bought it back, then sold it again to development firm Calder Stewart as a land bank and in turn lost big money.¹

As a resident of Caversham, Novak would drive past Carisbrook each day noticing the gradual deconstruction of the stadium into a gravel pit and ‘For Sale’ signs, and had long thought of The Brook as a site of possibility. The place held personal memories for many locals, not just for rugby fans, but also for teenagers in the area who used the space in its off-season as a judgment-free hangout.

Permissions

Far from just being an antagonistic presence *The Brook Project* gave permission for people to call out new alternatives for the site traditionally used for indulging in mainstream sporting obsessions. The project began in 2014 as *The Brook Books* that were featured in a group exhibition for the Art and Book Symposium at Dunedin Public Library. Novak asked the public “What do you want the old Carisbrook site to become?” and invited people to write and draw their ideas.

Novak had initially planned to develop this work inside the Blue Oyster Gallery, however feedback from the public consultation suggested a much wider outreach to the Gallery Director, Chloe Geoghegan, who encouraged

Novak to stage her final ‘crazy end-vision’ on-site at Carisbrook. Initial conversations between the artist and owner Calder Stewart, revealed sensitivities were still present three years after Carisbrook’s demolition. The company voiced concerns about the risk of ‘uninformed criticism’ the project could bring them. Novak assuaged their fears and, by stating her intentions to create a temporary social art installation focusing on the wider context of the cultural history of the site, was granted access to the perimeter of Carisbrook.² Seeking such permission strategically shifted the artist (and her community of supporters) from the role of outside critical commentator to becoming a visible and committed stakeholder in the broader narrative of the site.

Novak redesigned the original Carisbrook logo onto a new flag that proudly declared it to be the ‘Home of New Ideas.’ Through opening dialogue with the community, utopian ideas of playgrounds, duckponds, riding stables, and museums came forward. From her initial consultation at the library, live music and gardens proved to be both popular and achievable possibilities to reactivate the space and they featured in the final work. The launch was a street party under grey skies featuring Dunedin’s

finest: neighbours, musicians, street artists, friends, families, colleagues, students, nosey-parkers and us. Moveable tyre gardens and one hundred hand-made white banners affixed to the fencing around the site made it clear that the space was ours to mourn, celebrate and reimagine together for that afternoon.

Art can certainly harness the popularity of sport to appeal to non-traditional art-going audiences. In 2014, Australian live art collective Field Theory occupied the site of the old Lancaster Park in Christchurch for a 72-hour non-stop radio broadcast as part of their residency at The Physics Room. Like *The Brook Project*, *The Stadium Broadcast* blurred the lines between spectator and participant and invited people to pay tribute and fill the empty space with tales of first dates, 21st Birthdays, Tina Turner and Bon Jovi concerts, mischief, madness, favourite test matches and local gossip.³



The Brook Books reappeared at the 2015 Project launch, again as repurposed picture books with painted-over pages, making graphic space for us to keep on writing, wishing, forecasting, ranting and make real our desires for the dirt patch in front of us.

Local links

The Brook Project clocked up many hours and allies who came to the party. Friends and volunteers, including the local Presbyterian support group, helped Novak make the gardens. Older people and kids in her neighborhood got involved and she secured good publicity through local news media. Novak said that, “a lot of people were into it because there was a clear process and end product.”⁴

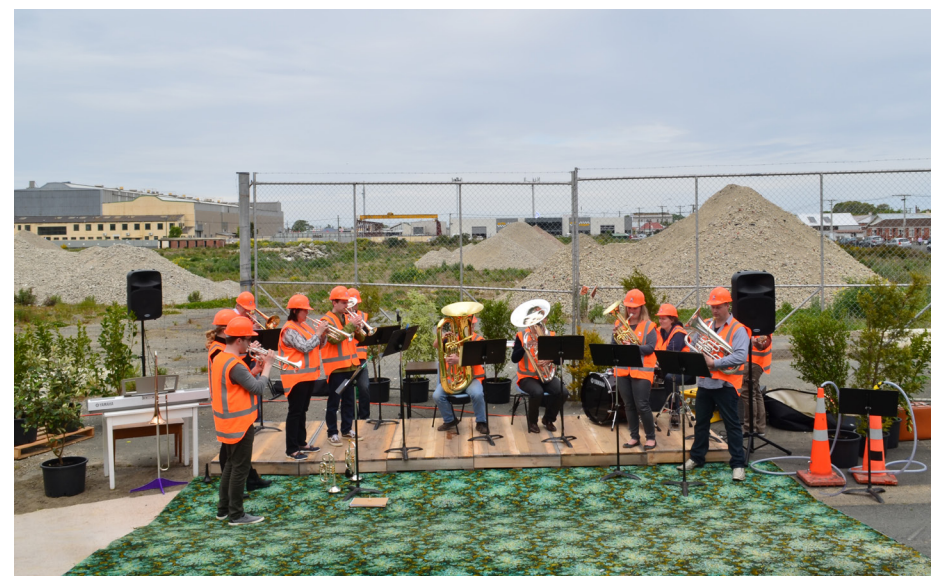
Optimism and goodwill gave currency and life to the project. Novak took care to make the



concept open and easy for people to get involved. Along with the transfiguration of a ruined historic place into a dream space, *The Brook Project* activated a local community around real-time art activities. This is evident in The Brook Project group on Facebook, which still operates online as a live documentation and communication channel. With each post of new work in progress or history uncovered, Novak’s audience reciprocated in kind, actively sharing written and photographic content. Public interest in the project was

certainly evident, and in 2015 another exhibition at the public library called *Memories of the House of Pain* was curated by artist Cath Cocker. The suggestion of a community garden at The Brook was in Novak’s words, “a lasting hopeful moment – The Brook as a site of rejuvenation for an area that was and still could be for the people.”⁵ Plants were sourced from the site itself, while some were donated by people in the community. All of the plants were gifted back again to the Caversham Community Group who supported the event.

- 7 Working drawing for *Moveable gardens*
- 8 Finished mural by VISION and Nico Leitner
- 9 The Saint Kilda Brass Bandits at *The Brook Project*



Surrender to the possibilities

In light of heavy state investment into memorialising New Zealand's involvement in World War 1 and the hasty referendum to change the national flag for no good reason, Novak's extensive fence line flag series featured in *The Brook Project* was a heartening proposition for change from the ground up.

The fencing of Carisbrook was ironic: guarding piles of rubble and reminding us that fences are the ultimate symbol of private property, control and power.⁶ The small white flag works marked a soft occupation of the space and could be seen as a feminising presence on the masculine dominance of the site's identity and construction of the area.⁷ With hand-painted, printed and embroidered images of native flora, fauna, fossils and abstractions and text such as 'Liabilities', 'Kaitiaki' (Māori word for 'guardian'), and 'Urban Oasis', Novak's flags offered a gentle surrender to collective desires.

Novak recalls the unseen history of the land in some of these flags: Once upon a time, Carisbrook was an ancient forest that turned into a huge swampland. When European settlers arrived they needed a place to play sport so they dredged up

the swamp and discovered moa bones (featured on some of the flags) that they ground up and added to the fertiliser mix. This delighted Brook fans on Facebook who added: "South Road was once called Swamp Road!...OMG!"⁸ This collaborative research helped in chronologically grouping the embroidered flags into 6 phases: *Pre-settlement, Colonisation, Pioneers, Rugby Culture, Debacle & Future* – Novak's alternative visual history of Carisbrook from the beginning of time to the future. "OMG!"

It is what it is

Awesome project guys!! Walked past it today and replanted some of the plants dickheads had pulled out!! Really??? Idiots! Loved the chain stitch flags. Again I wish I could've hung up the ones ripped off. So sad people just can't appreciate art.

— *Bambi Beaumont*

THE BROOK PROJECT, Facebook Group

While up for only one week, *The Brook Project* took a battering. The behaviour of the anonymous "dickheads" who systematically ripped out plants and stole flags

illustrated an underlying tension with public art working for 'the public good' where artistic nuances are lost within the local social milieu. Peaceful art gestures can rark up the neighbourhood to react. Interference of the work upset a lot of people involved and close to the project. On a TV news item, Novak rationally responded to the reportage of "blatant vandalism" by reminding supporters and opponents that realistically, the work exists outside the safety of the white cube of a gallery and "is what it is."⁹ This is an artist in good faith surrendering her work to people in public spaces to do whatever it is that people wish to do.

An audience not versed in art installations saw the work to be foreign and strange. Novak was resigned to the idea that there comes a certain point of letting go when putting work in the public domain, of letting it be. The work is visible, fragile, hand-made and very temporary. Novak also noted with interest what exactly got stolen. Shiny things got nicked. The 'utopian vision section' (including 'False Hopes' 'Girls', and 'Kissing Booth') got ransacked and pillaged. The high risk factor added potency the installation's narrative and is now part of the legacy of the work.



10 Tahu and the Takahes at *The Brook Project*

11 Concert pianist Jaroslav Novak at *The Brook Project*

And so on

The Brook Project is part of a nationwide discourse through contemporary art that challenges current economic values, use and access to public spaces through alternative modes of exchange. *Gap Filler*, *Free Range*, *Greening the Rubble* and associated projects have been active in urban revitalisation while creating new communities around rebuilding and occupation in post-quake Christchurch. Wellington-based group Letting Space commission temporary public art projects with the aim to “expand the ‘commons’ to engender social change, urban revitalisation and community development,”¹⁰ while Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery and Whau Arts festival supported *Localise*, a temporary free newspaper by Lana Lopesi and Ioana Gordon-Smith in 2015 to consider how art can meaningfully engage with a specific community.

Transparency, communication, simple negotiation and building good relationships were integral to the project from the get-go and when *The Brook Project* ended and the artist and her community remained on good terms with the landowners. There is still a considerable amount of documentation and writing

that’s emerging from this psychic swampland. David Matless writes: “All of this used to be fields: So much more happens now we have some space to live.”¹¹ At the time of writing this, Dunedinites are still waiting with interest in what the site might become. Regardless of the actual endgame, the earnest suggestions in *The Brook Books*, of things like rogue goat farms, custom-made waterfalls or an indoor pool with slides will forever seduce our imaginations and keep us ever hopeful and guessing.

Kerry Ann Lee
April 2016

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- 4 Aroha Novak, interview.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentred Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 132.
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- 8 Aroha Novak, “The Brook Project,” 19 April 2016, <http://facebook.com/groups/747429895380027/>
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Out of Context

Something was there, and now it's gone. So why do I have to walk by a graveyard of rubble and memories, moa bones and sporting legend's ashes, and mountains of debt shared with home owners throughout the city when something fantastic could take its place? What can we/I/you do? What would I do if I had all the resources in the world? As Richard Noble states at the beginning of *Utopias*: "imagining a better world entails a critique of the existing one [...]"¹ and this is essentially what *The Brook Project* set out to do.

Initially there were two blank books, a pen, a geometric bookshelf made from books and a sign displayed in the foyer of Dunedin Public Library. The sign read: "What do you want the old Carisbrook site to become?" Carisbrook was once the famous jewel in Dunedin's crown, an iconic sports stadium of the South Island that was demolished amidst a political furore.

Members of the general public wrote anonymously throughout the

pages; 'a boating lake,' 'an edible garden,' 'solar panels,' 'a dildo store,' 'Trees! Trees and donuts,' 'supermarket,' 'a replica of the Colosseum so we can have gladiator battles,' 'swimming pool' and many more. Some people wrote lengthy rants about the importance of smiling at each other or what services the Public Library could improve.

I wanted to create a temporary utopian alternative to the piles of gravel currently visible at the site. My ideas were complemented by those anonymous notes taken from the blank books, resulting in drawn representations and plans for describing real uses for the space.

Through the processes of researching the area, gathering information and creating the site-specific installation, the project tests the framework for making public art by projecting the ideas of an anonymous audience onto a privately owned site. The Carisbrook site is full of collective memories which load the context with nostalgia for a place viewed as a public domain, and the ownership of the land becomes murky. *The Brook Project* investigates this murky landscape, choosing to exist in a non-space, free of gallery conditions, constraints and privileges. It engages directly with a suburban environment, while

at the same time it is art with added constraints and conditions imposed on any public project or service. Care was taken to apply for every sort of permission and bureaucratic consent in an effort to understand the system in which building developers reign.

Navigating through the Carisbrook non-space, using free democratic processes to create 'data' and accessing educational resources, can be seen as an experiment to investigate what a socially engaged and community art practice could look like, as well as a way to consider how art functions in wider society as an alternative lens through which to see ways of changing the built and lived environment.



13 Carisbrook site

Pre-Settlement

'...in addition to draining the swamp, flax had to be uprooted and cartloads of fossilised timber had to be removed because the swamp had evolved over an ancient forest.'²

Pre-settlement, the Carisbrook site was an ancient forest with a natural stream running down the hill from what is now Glen Road. Over time, the landscape transformed into swamplands that were home to a variety of native birdlife and fauna.

Colonisation

Kia whakatomuri te haere ki mua
To look into the future, our eyes must be fixed to the past

The cultural differences between western capitalism and Māori spiritualism are clear when looking to the past. The early European settlers imposed strict boundaries, divisions and governance on the land, whereas Māori moved freely through the landscape to gather food, allowing resources time to replenish. The colonisers' concept of ownership and the Māori concept of kaitiaki (guardianship) are two very distinct perspectives that are

hard to marry. In 1844 the Otākou block, which covers the land from Purakanui, through the Taieri Plains to Molyneux (or The Clutha river) near Tokata (or Nugget Point), was sold to the New Zealand Company for a sum of £2400 and early settlers continued to migrate to the fast-growing site of Dunedin.³

This was the beginning of ownership over the landscape. The Presbyterian church owned large blocks of land throughout Otago including the Carisbrook site that was located in the middle of Neville Street, Burns Street and Murrayfield Street, intersecting the suburbs of Caversham and South Dunedin. The church leased the section to the 'Carisbrook Cricket Club' from 1874 until the Carisbrook Ground Company was developed in 1880.⁴ As the land was developed, fossilised logs drifted to the surface of this swampland, and continued surfacing for years to come, along with Moa bones which were reportedly crushed up and put back into the ground as fertiliser.

Pioneers

"Dunedin... a wealthy little city where the rich inhabited the hills and looked out to the sea and the poor inhabited the flat and looked at each other."⁵

The name Carisbrook originated from the Glen Road estate of the infamous Otago Superintendent James Macandrew, which in turn was named after the Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight, England, where Macandrew had honeymooned with his wife.⁶ Officially opened as a sports ground in 1883, the Carisbrook site has been a focus of contentious political and financial debacles since its conception. In 1889, after eight years of running the grounds, the Carisbrook Ground Company had to be liquidated due to liabilities. Henry Rose took over as liquidator and the Dunedin Amateur Ground Company was formed.⁷

Carisbrook is located in the suburb of Caversham, South Dunedin, historically a working-class suburb for skilled labourers and factories. Today the Southern Motorway roars above the site and the empty Hillside Workshops flank Carisbrook's eastern boundary. It is the lowest socio-economic area in the city, having a mixed demographic of elderly, beneficiaries and working-class people. Most manufacturers have either closed up shop or outsourced labour from cheaper labour forces of South America and China, leaving behind empty factories and no jobs.⁸

The area reflects its social status via the lack of signs of municipal

privilege, gentrification and care; for example there is a distinct lack of public border gardens, seating, and pleasant environmental surrounds compared to other suburban areas of the city.

Rugby Culture

OTAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGOOOO

Speights cans, Southern men, burning couches, ‘The House of Pain,’ blue and gold, Otago Highlanders. New Zealand was rugby mad for a long time and watching a game in the Terraces at Carisbrook was a right of passage for any student or rugby reveller new to Dunedin.

The Highlanders and the All Blacks both clocked up an amazing amount of wins whilst playing at Carisbrook stadium, and so it became ‘hallowed ground,’ earning the name ‘House of Pain.’ Some sporting greats even had their ashes scattered and buried at Carisbrook. The ashes of cricketing legend Bert Sutcliffe proved to be elusive to find when family members wanted to move him before the stadium was to be demolished.⁹

During the late 1990s/early 2000s, there was a decline in ticket sales and fans for the rugby union which prompted the question of



- 14 *Brooktopia* digital rendering
- 15 Carisbrook swamplands
- 16 Novak placing *The Brook Project* flag on a mountain of rubble

whether to upgrade or rebuild Carisbrook altogether to gain more attendance and address concerns about how to keep the franchise commercially viable.¹⁰

Debacle

‘Visionaries leave legacies to their children, not liabilities.’¹¹

In 2011 Carisbrook closed its doors forever when a brand new, roofed stadium was built just in time for the Rugby World Cup. The new stadium complex is situated near the University and Polytech complexes, edged by Logan Park fields, an industrial wasteland and the Leith River merging into the harbour. In comparison to the former stadium, the new site is resplendant in architectural sterility, smooth washed and swept pavements and a blocky, glad-wrapped house of synthetic turf and yellow and blue seats.

The closure of Carisbrook in favour of a new stadium was an unpopular choice for ratepaying residents because of the excessive expenditure. Also touted as being a ‘legacy project’ for former Dunedin Mayor Peter Chin and Carisbrook Stadium Trust Chairman and City Councillor Malcolm Farry. The Dunedin City Council unwaveringly went ahead

with new stadium plans against public opposition of 80% per cent.¹²

This public opposition manifested itself in protests, blogs and the incorporated society: ‘Stop the Stadium.’ This group took the Carisbrook Stadium Trust to court in 2008 for not disclosing all the information required to spend ratepayers’ money. The court case was unsuccessful and the group has since been dissolved because of late court fees. Within this debacle around local body politics, deals were made behind closed doors, and discussions about Carisbrook remained private until it was bought by the Dunedin City Council in 2009 for \$7 million to help aid the struggling Otago Rugby Football Union. It was then sold to Calder Stewart Development Company in 2013 for \$4.7 million, making a loss to the City Council of \$3.5 million. The process was not made transparent for residents and the budget blew out of control.

In 2007 the original proposal to build the entire structure of the new stadium, was given to councillors from the Carisbrook Stadium Trust with a cost of \$188 million, with ratepayers’ contributions capped at \$91 million (in comparison a previous estimate for upgrading Carisbrook stadium to meet required

building conditions was a modest \$30 million). Following the new stadium's completion, and with a change of guard for mayoralty and councillor positions, the Dunedin City Council employed PwC to review the real costs of the stadium as well as the funding model on which the operating costs were based.

The actual price of the stadium spend was \$224 million with ratepayers paying \$148 million of this. This issue is still an ongoing concern to the Dunedin City Council's purse because the continuing running costs of the stadium are so high, and the new stadium coincided with other big spends such as the renovation of Toitū Otago Settlers Museum and upgrades to the city sewerage system, Town Hall and Regent Theatre. These costs continue trickling down through every Dunedin City Council orifice. A very real example of the flow on austerity is that the Dunedin Public Library services have been cut to bare minimum. For example my own job of relieving staff has been cut in half.

Future

'When the human elements with their impedimenta and accompaniments are absent, the native element reasserts itself.'¹³

From its inception, *The Brook Project* was about looking to the future by acknowledging what has happened in the past and at the same time allowing space for imagination. The most popular ideas recorded in *The Brook Books* succeeded in becoming an artistic reality at the former Carisbrook site. These were realised as:

- » Gardens (moveable, and with edible plants, so that they could be used after the temporary installation).
- » Live music and poetry performed at the site to reflect on past memories of the space and to activate it in a new way.
- » A permanent mural located at the site.
- » A new Carisbrook flag as a marker for change.
- » Small, square embroideries; many based on the historical, political and personal histories of the site, with some indicating future prospects.

These works were a small gesture, a starting point for a conversation about public and private ownership and community engagement through a contemporary art installation. The point was to engage the public outside of the white cubed institution

of gallery-going audiences. To be fair, the project opening event attracted gallery-going audiences anyway, but it also included Carisbrook enthusiasts, some Caversham locals, and friends and family.

The plan was for the installation works to stay up for eight days, but in the first weekend of its installation, embroideries were destroyed or stolen and gardens were kicked over. The perpetrators might have been late night revellers or perhaps people that didn't understand or enjoy the work. They were not personal attacks toward the artist, however these attacks on the work still created anxiety for what might happen next and I pulled the installation down four days early.

Any engagement is good engagement, right?

For this particular project, this 'negative feedback' was not a huge surprise given the public nature of the space – however it was still disappointing. The site is in, as stated earlier, a low socio-economic residential area with a high foot traffic thoroughfare and unfortunately the stereotypes placed upon low socio-economic areas always suggest that poor education and welfare equals bad behaviour. This is not a stereotype I agree with, but it opens up a question of how

public art projects are perceived in different demographic areas and how temporary public art can exist in a suburban context. In this location no other project had existed in that way, manner or form before, so the arrival of the installation of small flags and gardens could be considered unprecedented, weird, different and out of context.

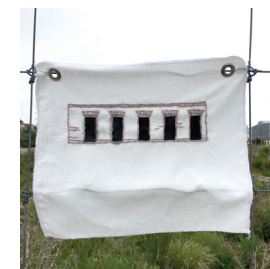
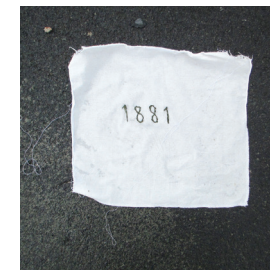
As to a future for the Carisbrook site, it remains in a 'land bank' with property developers, Calder Stewart, who don't want to create 'a false impression the site will become an amenity for the community'.¹⁴ The land is zoned industrial under the Dunedin City Plan. It has now been in a 'land bank' for nearly three years, and is slowly reverting back to its natural swampland state, complete with native birds and feral cats, an industrial wasteland of rubble, moa bones and ashes. Perhaps the best thing to do is to let nature take over.

Aroha Novak
May 2016

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- 13 Geo. M. Thomson, "Changes which have taken place in the Fauna and Flora of the Dunedin District since the settlement of Otago" in *Otago Daily Times*, Tuesday, March 28, 1933, p2.
- 14 Email conversation between Chloe Geoghegan and Calder Stewart Development Manager, 31/10/2014

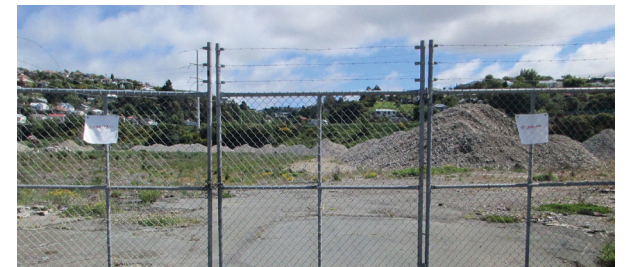


Colonisation



Pioneers

Rugby



Debacle



Pages 23-28 This series of embroideries, based on research and public consultation, was placed along the fenceline to the Carisbrook site throughout the duration of *The Brook Project*.

Boondoggle

On Tuesday 3 May 2016, Aroha Novak (AN) interviewed Gregor B Campbell (GBC), a resident of Caversham who has been observing the changes at Carisbrook from his house across the road for many years.

AN: Do you live near the Carisbrook Stadium?

GBC: Ever so slightly.

AN: Did you live there prior to it being demolished?

GBC: Yes, we were there when it was still being used and it was a strange situation because every so often the road would be blocked off, people would invade and things would happen, bright lights would shine and then people would invade again and everything would go away. It was actually a lot quieter than people thought it was going to be, because after the game people go off and get drunk and do stupid things and we just saw the pre-game and people coming out.

AN: What do you like and dislike about living in and around that area?

GBC: I like it, it's close to town without being in town, the rent is cheap. The people are okay, there are some strange people. What I dislike about it is, well, having to look at something that represents an immense waste of money, looking at the rubble of Carisbrook that just hasn't been put to any good use yet.

AN: How long have you been documenting the site?

GBC: I'm not sure when I started but basically when it was clear it was going to be demolished. They had an open day where you could go in and you could actually buy the turf. I went in and I'm not even sure I asked permission, I just went everywhere there was an unlocked door and photographed everywhere I could. And as it was demolished I found a place with an overview of it and so took several photos sort of showing the progress of it.

AN: What was the most interesting thing you found?

GBC: Fragments of Victorian porcelain from the houses that used to be there. It's of no real monetary value or historic value

because everything had been churned up by heavy machinery during demolition, so roughly in the one area I recognised the age of things, took a few photos and left them there.

They're going to put housing on it. But I have looked at it occasionally and thought you could grow an awful lot of potatoes on that.

AN: Did you go to any events at the former Carisbrook Stadium?

AN: I wonder if the owners are going to put houses on it because it has been industrially zoned?

GBC: One or two, I'm not a rugby fan, but I did once race a ride-on lawnmower around Carisbrook before a game when I ran for Mayor.

GBC: I think possibly that was just to open up their options, but what I have heard is that they plan to build relatively high density housing, but of course the company that owns it has been involved in the Christchurch rebuild and the same company is building the new Emersons brewery so I would imagine that anything with Carisbrook is kind of a spec job that they'll do if they've got nothing else on.

AN: Really?!

GBC: I mean I did it completely satirically, and it was kind of like buying a ticket to the circus and getting to have fun, because once you've paid the deposit, you have to be taken seriously.

AN: Can you talk about the names you have given to the piles of rubble and their significance?

AN: That would make a good art project I think.

GBC: I also appeared as part of the mid-game entertainment, fighting people with rolled up newspapers.

GBC: Recently I was looking at Google Earth for something and I looked at the aerial view of Carisbrook because after the demolition I'd been going through and photographing it as one would a nature reserve or wild place. Watching the plants that had grown up and the birds that

AN: What would your ideal use of the site be?

GBC: Possibly what I've heard they are going to do with it now:



17 Photo of Carisbrook stadium during demolition

had come in. So it was sort of for my own reference I've kind of given names to the piles of rubble on the site. One is quite obvious; the 'Urinal Mountain,' because it's where the big brick urinal that was on the corner of Burns and Neville Streets. It was painted blue inside and there's a lot of blue brick in that pile as opposed to the others which are concrete. Over towards what used to be the car yard, adjacent to the power substation, are a couple of parallel ridges which

I call 'The Ridges'. And there's a conical one close to the far corner from that, nearest South Road, I call 'Conical Mountain.'

AN: What do you think of the new Stadium in Dunedin?

GBC: ... I think it's a boondoggle.

AN: Can you explain what a 'boondoggle' is?

GBC: A boondoggle is a lovely old American word. It is used to



18 'SOLD OUT' flags on the Terrace ticket building, *The Brook Project*

explain when you build a bridge from A to B not because the people at A need to get to B or vice versa, because someone at point C owns a company that builds bridges. We were told the new Stadium was going to make money. We were told it was not going to be a cent over \$188 million. We were told private enterprises would invest most of the money in it. We were told it would be multi-purpose. We were told that Dunedin would be back on the list for all the big acts coming to New Zealand. We were told a lot of things like that by people who I think were too intelligent to be stupid enough not to know the truth. So I think that the people of Dunedin were lied to and above all, I guess the reason why it was built was, or so I've been told, that Carisbrook was no longer good enough to get the really big rugby matches [that

were held] for all the time I was growing up. It didn't matter what got disrupted, if it was for rugby, because rugby is the national game. It's actually not officially but doesn't need to be officially.

We spent all that money, or the council spent all that money on our behalf, for rugby. A lot of people have listened to what I have to say about rugby and I don't really care about rugby, so people who do, possibly think that this means that I don't like it. What I don't like is the fact that rugby is no longer the people's game in this country. It used to be in the 50's, pre-television, and when there was a big match if you were one of the few people not at Carisbrook you would hear the sound of a try, or the reaction to a try, from the Octagon. It used to be the people's game but now it belongs to Sky Television, which is why

you have to go along and freeze your ass off at seven at night to watch the big games because the people don't own rugby anymore.

I thought it was quite fascinating to advance the money for the stadium, to bail out the Otago Rugby Football Union [ORFU] to the tune of half a million dollars and then to have the Mayor sued because he dared suggest that the people running the ORFU were financially incompetent. I'm just really sorry that it wasn't taken to trial as I would have loved to see the argument. I guess Mayor Cull had his reasons, he stated he didn't want it costing ratepayers any more money but it was almost as if he was saying: 'Should I bend over a bit further for you? Is that comfortable?'

AN: So... It's a boondoggle!

GBC: I'm reminded of probably the last anti-stadium meeting I went to when it was almost a done deal, I watched councillor Neil Collins treating us all like a bunch of naughty little school children. I've never seen anyone more condescending in my life, and he took a glass with some water in it and put it on the stage

and said: 'Some people would regard this glass as being half-empty and I think we should all regard it as being half-full.' He was basically saying there was nothing we could do so we should just stop complaining about it. Sadly he had to retire from politics because I was so hoping to go to a council election meeting and ask him how full his fucking glass is now?! And I think that's all I need to say about it.

God listens to the abbreviated version of the New Zealand Anthem on his iPod

Poem read by poetry group 'Pay Per View' at *The Brook Project* event.

Reproduced with permission from *Driving with Neruda to the Fish'n'chips*, by Leonel Alvarado, 2014.

After creating the world and the corporations that would destroy it, God decided, only He knows why, to have a listen to the New Zealand national anthem but the 'God of nations' bit made him uncomfortable – something to do with Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and other hot spots he may have created but wasn't willing to endorse.

Making sure that actual New Zealanders were not at his feet he was moved by 'the bonds of love' that would bring together Māori and Pākehā, Indian and Chinese, drag queens and scuba divers.

When he was asked to defend the entire nation from 'strife and war' he rolled his eyes and sneered: pick one – nuclear annihilation, the IMF, Mordor?

Tired of so many desperate pleas – so many queens to save, so many lands to defend – he didn't bother to check what the 'Pacific's triple star' was about – both his patience and his battery were running out!

Leonel Alvarado



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Further information:

tahuanthetakahes.nz
stkildabrass.org.nz
facebook.com/Suitcase-
Theatre-1002769019749188/
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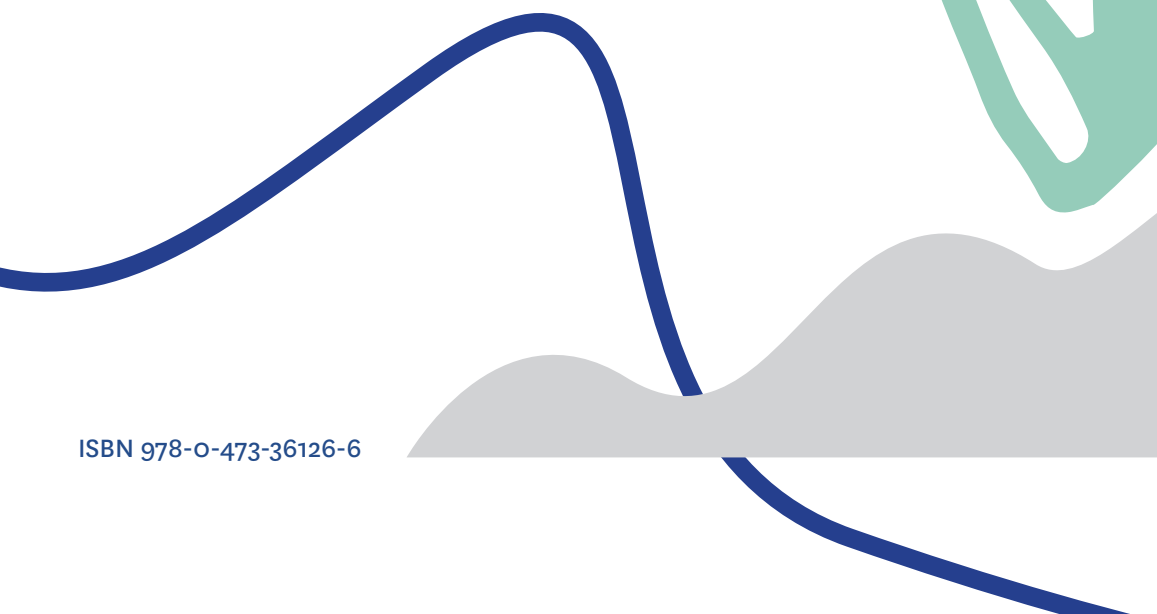
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The Brook Project celebrates the socio-cultural history of Carisbrook and its surrounding neighbourhood and encourages new dialogues about the potential of disused public space and the process of making informed, conscious and relevant public art projects.



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