

← B BLUE OYSTER

11 August 2004

Dear Blue Oyster,

If there was a proposal which could be said to be the most significant, pivotal, momentous of one's life, one might suggest it to be the marriage proposal. In the event of preparing for such a proposal - which may potentially result in a painful rejection one never recovers from, or perhaps damage an otherwise loving relationship full of promise - the suitor, in hopes of avoiding such disastrous consequences, may consider important factors such as timing, approach, originality (for anecdotal value) and most of all, the present state of the relationship with whom she/he wishes to marry. Yet of course, however much effort is invested into planning and polishing the precise details of a marriage proposal, an affirmative answer could still prove elusive.

For a new artist like myself, the approximate equivalent would, arguably be the proposal to exhibit in an artist-run space. The comparison fails only in that no pre-existing relationship determines the ultimate decision as such. The nameless novice is in this case, akin to the mail-order bride/groom presenting her/himself as the perfect spouse or at least, a highly compatible mate (for say two to three weeks).

As such, I ought to provide you with as much information, as much history, as much tangible/visual evidence of my suitability, or otherwise attempt to convince you just how perfectly my work would operate in the exact dimensions of this space, how your floor-plan made my heart skip a beat, how seamlessly the nature of my work would fit into the greater ideology and politics of the gallery, how we were truly made for one another, just how very very happy we would make each other and maybe we could dance, maybe we could dance, together...forever.

But you and I know better, that these are mere speculations posed against a landscape of hope; and hope ~~its-elf~~ lends itself to disappointment, regret, heartache among other tragedies. I could do everything possible to impress you, to convey my best intentions, nest and rest all of my eggs in this basket. But I honestly couldn't tell you why this new artist over the other. All these unknown new artists are more or less a gamble on your part; good or bad you never really know. But it really isn't supposed to matter too much. Hence I won't offer you any reassurances, solid references, firm plans or sound proof of my high critical and professional standards. Instead, I present to you a perfectly blind date, a greater risk for you to take, an absurd leap of faith: for this is the true currency of the new artist. Let it be my foot you let in the door for no good reason at all.

Please enclose a reply in the stamped, self-addressed brown envelope. I'd greatly appreciate a show in this space, but I will shed no tears if this is not to be.

Much Love,

New Artist



Old, New, Borrowed, Blue
10 Years at the Blue Oyster

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Introduction

Jo Campbell and Erika Wolf

Established in 1999 by a group of artists seeking to create a venue for alternative art, the Blue Oyster Art Project Space is now marking its tenth year of work. This publication and the accompanying exhibition *Unstable Institutional Memory: 10 Years at the Blue Oyster* celebrate the decade anniversary of Dunedin's only dedicated experimental art space. This collection of essays and creative projects relates significant defining moments and events in the lifespan of the project space alongside more sweeping historical perspectives. While memory is inherently fallible and fragmentary, institutional memory is particularly unstable and subject to contestation. Nevertheless, the transience that tends to mark organisations like the Blue Oyster stimulates the impulse to commemorate and document. The production of artifacts of memory, such as this publication, provides an opportunity to document the gallery's presence and its role.

In order to commemorate its first decade, the Blue Oyster has invited individuals who have been involved with the gallery in myriad ways to contribute personal reflections on their experiences and to identify highlights in their particular areas of engagement. In such an endeavour, omissions are inevitable. Similarly, overlaps will occur and are welcomed, as they facilitate appreciation of different perspectives and add to the richness of the discourse. Dominant narratives evolve and myths are eventually made.

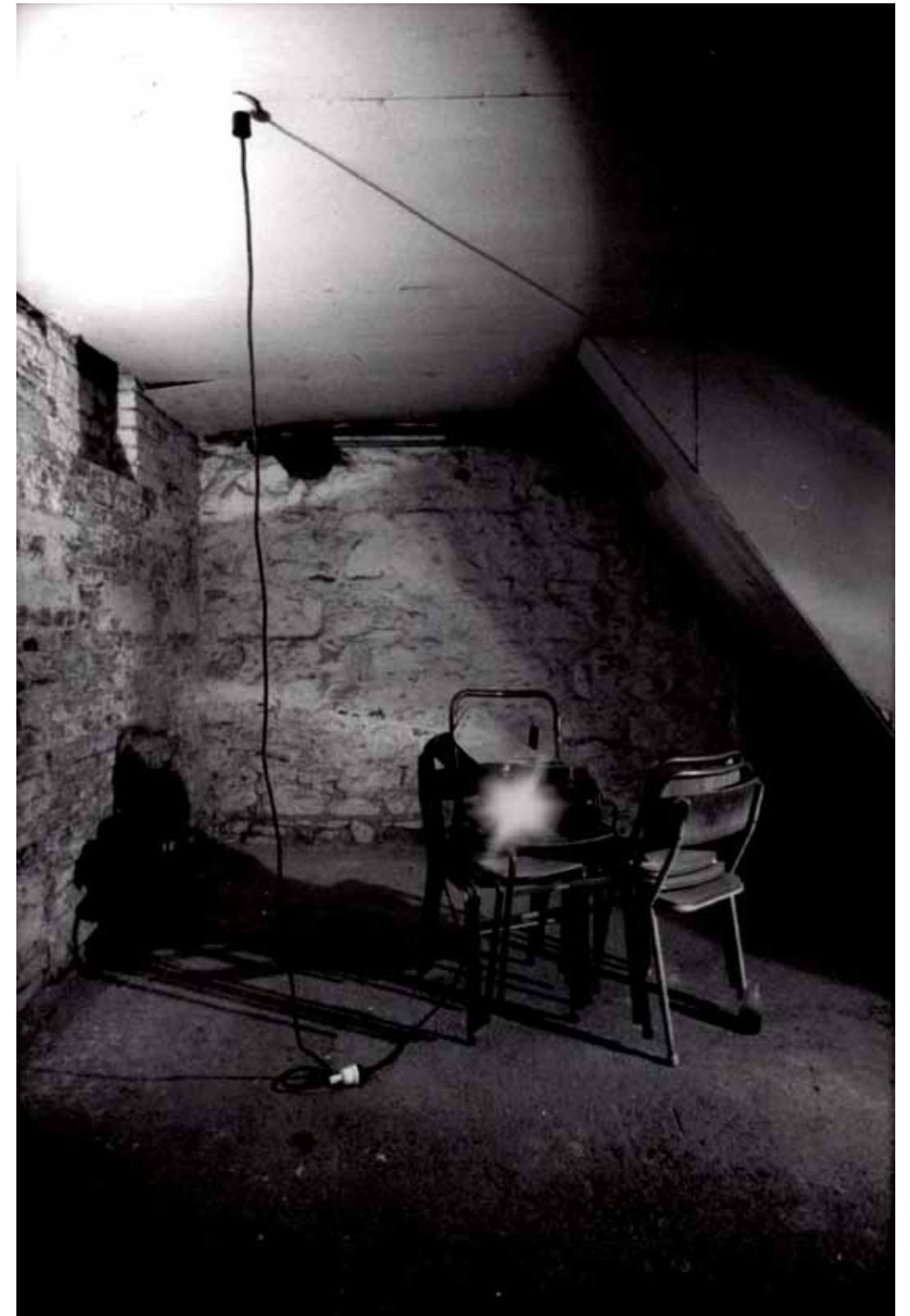
Unstable Institutional Memory: 10 Years at the Blue Oyster, the exhibition at the heart of this celebration, highlights myth and memory. Curated by Ali Bramwell, this show takes as its starting point a group of memorable works and installations produced for the Blue Oyster over the past ten years. Instead of attempting a faithful restaging, Bramwell has asked the artists to reprise their works in some negotiated way, in full knowledge that a return to the original starting point is impossible. This précis compels the artists involved to consider the reality of incomplete memory and the distance between now and the original moment of creation. This recovered or reconstituted history sits in the space between memory and actuality, between past and present, and is consciously at odds with aspirations of completeness and coherency. Bramwell's essay reflects on the original artworks, contextualising the show for audiences both long familiar and just discovering the Blue Oyster.

Additional essays illuminate facets of the gallery's history as well as individual projects with which it has been involved. Douglas Kelaheer, one of the initial founding members of the Blue Oyster Arts Trust, provides an account of the establishment of the

gallery and its early years. The Blue Oyster's longevity is a direct result of the foresight of those who formed the trust, an organisational model that gave the gallery a life beyond the involvement of its originators. Melanie Oliver, an early manager of the Blue Oyster, offers timely insights on the ways in which the desire to document and memorialise key moments has informed gallery projects and exhibitions throughout the past decade. Anna Muirhead provides personal reflections on the significance of the relationships and networks formed through her involvement with the Blue Oyster as an art student, exhibiting artist, and trustee. Likewise, Jenna Todd provides a similar account of the Blue Oyster's establishment of a performance art series in conjunction with the Dunedin Fringe Festival. An artist and former trustee, she highlights the participatory nature of performance art and documents both her own responses and those of others she observed engaging with the works. Rachel Gillies and Caroline McCaw reflect on their experiences organising the Dunedin contribution to the One Day Sculpture programme for the Blue Oyster. Their collaborative project Intertidal explored notions of history and its relation to specificity of place. In order to contextualise and order the events related in these divergent recollections, Sarah Wilson has scoured the Blue Oyster's archives to construct a more dispassionate overview of the first decade of the Blue Oyster, from its origin as a grassroots, artist space run on the smell of an oily rag to an established local institution.

These essays, gifts in honour of the tenth anniversary, are wrapped in two artist projects, one at each end of the volume. While anniversary festivities began the very first year, the Blue Oyster received the proposal on page one in its fifth year of existence. Cleverly conflating the conventions of the marriage proposal with the requirements of exhibition proposals, the letter and ring highlight some issues that have absorbed the trust throughout its existence. The challenge of creating a fair and unbiased selection process for the evaluation of proposals is one area of ongoing debate. Bekah Carran's project *Citizens of the Future* will take up permanent residence within the gallery structure, awaiting later discovery. Made of tin, this time capsule harks back to a traditional material for tenth anniversary gifts, but Carran's offering also looks to the future.

These essays and artist projects emphasize both the continuity and the ongoing evolution of the Blue Oyster. Past, present and future intermingle in celebration of the dedication of the numerous artists, volunteers, staff and trustees who have helped the Blue Oyster reach double digits.



Richard Crow, *Executor / The Living Archive*, 1999



Invitations promoting the Blue Oyster's first exhibitions, 1999

Unstable Institutional Memory: 10 Years at the Blue Oyster

Ali Bramwell

History is something we usually understand as a progression and this particular history is no different. The Blue Oyster has an institutional memory that is both administrative and social in structure, and each of these takes a distinctive form. The most obvious institutional idea of memory rests in administrative details, but, despite the best of intentions, the Blue Oyster's records are patchy. Some periods are documented well and others less so. Images from the earliest shows, when they exist at all, are scattered. Social memory is held in the continuity of shared experience. However, no single person has stayed with the gallery for the entire decade of operation or seen every single show. Hence, the balance of social memory is held in the recollections and reminiscences of people who were there at the time and then passed them on to others who care enough to hear them. Myth-making is part of the slippage; exhibitions become stories to be retold. Both of these forms of memory are somewhat inadequate in this case. Elisions, errors, and lacunae have crept in when systemic continuity has faltered from time to time. Hence, from the outset this curatorial project is one of recovered or reconstituted history, sitting in the space between memory and actuality.

Several people searched laboriously and diligently through old files and records to piece together a continuous exhibition time line for the Blue Oyster Gallery. Over 1,000 artists included in over 270 different projects have been staged over 10 years. What does this list of names, dates, and events impart? Ostensibly, this list is only useful to the person who was there, as a placeholder or a prompt. This kind of administrative knowledge functions primarily as a mnemonic. Nevertheless, there is something profoundly soothing about a progression that begins somewhere and ends somewhere with a predictable and reliable rhythm. Origin is identified and due credit is given.

At the same time that dates and facts were being cross-checked, stories were being solicited, and social memory tickled into activation. Key people were asked about the identities of other key people to create a web of recollection or social mapping, a kind of democratic census-taking about who and what should be considered noteworthy from the last 10 years.

One particular artist seems to mark the beginning of the Blue Oyster in the mind of many. It was not the very first project but has frequently surfaced as the earliest significant memory during the conversations threading through this process of institutional recollection. Over a six-week period in 1999, the visiting UK artist Richard Crow produced a series of site-specific works and installations in forgotten and decayed places. Cumulatively, these works became a progression of experiences whereby

the artist led a group of people on an adventure that celebrated the artistic potential of urban debris, which was presented as is (grimy, of course) or simply arranged with an opportunistic aesthetic pleasure and playfulness. Crow mined the processes of rot and decay as artistic materials and simultaneously generated genuine communal engagement. He found spectacularly gothic sites to activate, climbing into and excavating hidden cavities and crawlspaces and taking us all with him. In the attic of one of Dunedin's oldest buildings, he held a midnight supper for an invited few, defining degrees of separation from the artist. The net effect of this activity was myth-making on a lasting scale. A cocktail of novelty, pleasure, and just enough delicious Edgar Allan Poe atmospheric frissons blended to create enjoyable stories that continue to be told in the right company. While in residence, Crow also collaborated with the Dunedin artist Michael Morley (legendary in his own right) on a sound work that utilized found sound and organised cacophony produced with various mundane and discarded objects. Now that the underground labyrinths are all sealed again, the sound recoding *Mr White* and a few documentary images are the only remaining concrete evidence.

Despite the lack of physical reminders, projects like Richard Crow's appear to be remembered more clearly than others, in part due to anecdotal repetition. On reflection, it is not surprising that the things we enjoyed doing together are also what we choose to talk about when reminiscing. The work embedded itself snugly and warmly into cultural memory by inviting participation. It also contributed almost accidentally to the creation of Blue Oyster's early support community in a way that many more recently staged relational and dialogic projects self-consciously aspire to but seldom achieve.

A conversational approach to building our very specific art history yields a mixed set of results, arguably based on residual good feeling more than critical depth or intellectual complexity. A notion of accessibility is at stake, as is the converse. The art moments that leave a perplexed and thoughtful silence in their wake are equally important but far less likely to emerge in the warm glow of nostalgia.

If Crow's work created community around shared activity and provided a sense of adventure, then Hannah Beehre's installation work (2001) invited both of these things and simultaneously deferred them. Beehre designed an almost recognisable (analogue) game space coding the gallery as a site governed by half-understood rules of engagement. The set was inviting yet frustrating. It deployed a light and cheery pop aesthetic with bold clean primary colours and non-threatening geometries to set up an enigmatic sports ground with unfathomable rules of play. The floor was marked in territorial zones that recalled a variety of familiar court based ball sports, without actually resembling any one in particular. These zones were apparently already set up for play, with the game pieces ready for use. The function of these game pieces was completely obscure, as was the object of the proposed contest. The idea of interaction prevailed over its actuality. Confronted with a



Hannah Beehre, 2001, invitation

situation where you are apparently supposed to have organised fun, the formality of the work served as a subtle barrier to actual play. This orderliness created a kind of social self-consciousness, akin to arriving to a beautifully laid dinner service and not being invited to sit at the table. Alongside the light and slick design aesthetic is a sense of arriving at a private club, where other people play according to rules to which you are not privy.

Steve Carr's performance work *The Steve Carr Experience* (2000) was an excruciating investigation into male identity and self-image. Many of Carr's works around this time assumed and explored different personae with a disarming and unsettling mixture of arrogance, sincerity, and camp irony. In my recollection of this particular performance, the persona arrived into the room with several items: a ghetto blaster, towel, exercise apparatus, and a bottle of oil. He was wearing a 1980s shiny blue nylon leisure suit and a terry headband reminiscent of Richard Simmons. He removed his jacket and liberally oiled his pale and slightly flabby arms chest and shoulders, cutting a few body-builder poses and preening, as if he were alone. Once ready, he turned on his tape to play "Eye of the Tiger" at high volume, assumed a position on the floor, and performed a series of jack-knife press-ups with a wheel, pushing the wheel out in front of him, extending his body flat, and then pulling back up. He struggled to repeat these actions for the length of the song track, starting quite strongly but tiring quickly. He pushed himself very hard, his body shaking with effort, and movements becoming slower and more visibly strained until he eventually failed. The intense effort expended radically altered the self-aggrandising,



Hannah Beehre, 2001, installation view

vain, and absurd persona initially encountered. By the end, the audience was witnessing something deeply private about self-doubt and a biting anxiety about not being good enough. The audience, who at first laughed openly, fell silent as the stress in his body became more obvious as pain. By the finish, viewers felt voyeuristic and perhaps even strangely ashamed.

This performance was recorded on video. Unfortunately, the quality was poor. Carr has made a new version of the work, capturing the re-enacted event in film with much higher production values. The artist has reworked his intentions for this performance, and the result is set against our memory of the original event. The presentation of the new film as a stand-in for our official memory foregrounds longstanding issues related to the documentation of time-based work. With even greater perceptual distance than usual occurring between the documentary record and live experience, years passed between the first iteration and this new and altered version recreated with the benefit of hindsight. For those who were present to see the original performance this new document will very likely overwrite or even completely replace the first memory, now quite distant and probably inaccurate.

An unacknowledged ideal of inclusion lurks behind an approach seeking to re-construct a progressive historical account as the sum of community recollection. One of the most pressing philosophical arguments to occur in this institution over the years concerns how artists' works are selected or rejected for exhibition. This issue has a social dimension and repercussion; a cooperative model is not easily compatible with a system that also seeks conceptual rigor and strives to promote quality standard. Some kind of balance is required.

In late 1999, Julian Dashper was responsible for the enigmatic work *CV Performance*. The visitors arrived at the gallery to see the show apparently still being installed. Following the artist's instructions, Steve Carr (the gallery director) waited until after the exhibition officially opened and then took about twenty minutes attempting to install twenty sheets of apparently blank A4 paper as carefully gridded and level as possible on uneven walls. The paper, half black and half standard office white, was not actually

blank but was imprinted with the artist's curriculum vitae. *White on White* was a normal printout of the curriculum vitae but was installed facing the wall and thus remained illegible. *Black on Black* was printed with black ink on black paper, so it was also illegible. This installation engages with institutional critique, by inserting evidence of the professional credibility of the artist literally, in the form of his ten page curriculum vitae, as a substitute for content more easily recognisable as art.

It is often assumed that only young artists who are unable to get better bookings will show in an "artist run" space. As an established artist, Dashper had numerous other potential exhibition venues, but with characteristic professional generosity he chose to work at the Blue Oyster. In this context, the display of a well-known contemporary artist's curriculum vitae on the walls of an artist-run project space so new that the paint was barely dry served as an ironic acknowledgment of a genuine imbalance in the professional relationship between artist and gallery. A wry commentary on institutional selection processes more generally can also be inferred; perhaps even a tongue-in-cheek criticism of ubiquitous curatorial method that is sometimes known as "cherry picking," where programming decisions are mainly based on the track record of an artist rather than consideration of the merit and relevance of specific ideas and work.

In 2003, by which time the gallery was more established and considerably more confident about turning away artists, a situation arose that critiqued the same aspects of programming challenged by *CV Performance*. The gallery received an anonymous proposal that included a provocation: the gallery would have to make a decision regarding the exhibition proposal based solely upon its own merit, as no CV information would be provided. The proposal was accepted. *The Hawthorne Experiment* (2005) took the form of a multimedia installation that examined the identity and autonomy of the individual in institutional settings and touched upon failed bureaucratic methods of encouraging both productivity in the workplace and public obedience. One of two video channels included in this installation featured an animation of telephone book listings being systematically blacked out. Visitors were invited to fill out a form if they wanted to be struck from the public record, or if they wanted to have someone else erased in a form of potentially violent bureaucratic mischief. The artist or artists involved in *The Hawthorne Experiment* never attempted to take credit for this work, and the authorship remains anonymous to this day. Extreme measures were taken to avoid identification during gallery negotiations and installation. This functioned as a kind of *quid pro quo* with the gallery in exchange for the weight given to an idea without a recognisable personality brand attached. The permanent elision of identity was and remains a vital part of this project.

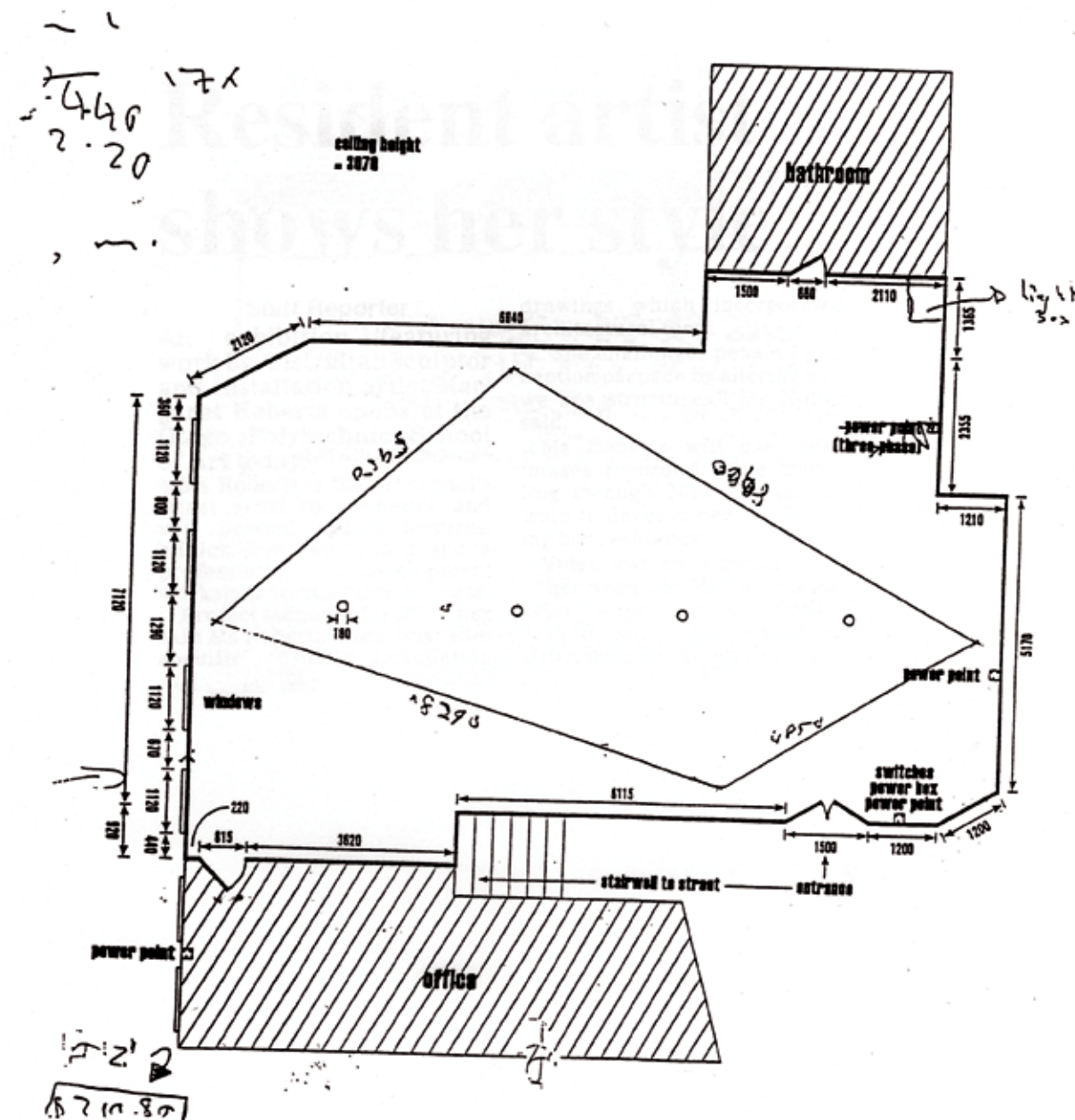
With her project *New Walls* (2000) Australian artist Margaret Roberts took institutional critique to a different teleology than that taken by Dashper and *The Hawthorne Experiment*. Here the gallery was altered architecturally,



Steve Carr, *The Steve Carr Experience*, from *A Night Performance*, 2001

Blue Oyster Gallery Floor Plan for Margaret Roberts' *New Walls*
Dunedin June 20 – July 4 2000

Detail from Artist's Work Book



ArtISTS AT WORK Project Report: Margaret Roberts, December 2000

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with a major structural intervention that profoundly changed an airy and open space by walling off a large rhomboid area in the centre of the exhibition space. The newly activated space destabilised short-term spatial memory and existing patterns of social interaction. The four pillars that usually dominated the room were completely hidden and became oddly difficult to recall, while the outer borders of the gallery space were newly exaggerated as each change of wall direction was emphasised. With the accessible space altered into a series of roughly triangular open areas linked by narrow tapering passages, the experience of moving around in the room became an alternating sensation of compression and expansion. Negotiating the usually spacious room became a claustrophobic experience as the narrowed access ways caused a bottleneck effect that inhibited people from moving freely. Rough aggregations of people formed in the corners. Visually isolated from each other, these groups created a kind of provisional social map in the process. *New Walls* foregrounded the physical and social experience of negotiating the gallery and instigated a phenomenological study of audience behaviour in the space. The institution of the Blue Oyster Gallery is understood in concrete terms that can be interrogated; literally as a building and also as the specific group of people who constitute a gallery's main function; of generating art experiences.

New Walls was an explicitly site-specific work, drawing on and creating mathematical relations to the room within which it was built. As such, it can only be remade or relocated as an algorithm. This concept transposed into a new space would inevitably yield different relations both socially and spatially. Direct experience would be required to discover to how and to what degree these relations are altered.

The works discussed here by Hannah Beehre, Steve Carr, Richard Crow & Michael Morley, Julian Dashper, the anonymous artists responsible for *The Hawthorne Experiment*, and Margaret Roberts form the basis of the exhibition *Unstable Institutional Memory: 10 Years at the Blue Oyster*. Each generates different modes of institutional engagement and processes of recollection (as a set of interactions and negotiations, as a set of shared experiences, and as a site where propositions and assumptions are tested). The participating artists have all been asked to reprise their original works in some negotiated way. We look back in full knowledge that a return to the same starting point is impossible in every case.



Anonymous, *Hawthorne Experiment*, 2005



Caro McCaw, *To Bee or Not to Bee*, from *B-Grade*, 2004

Memories of the First Half

Douglas Kelaher

The Blue Oyster Arts Trust is 10 years old. That's great to hear, considering how it arose in Dunedin back in 1999.

An upheaval was going on in the Dunedin art community with the recent closure of two project spaces. One of these was the Honeymoon Suite, an influential project space for many artists at that time. Its closure provided the motivation to set up the Blue Oyster Arts Trust.

The Honeymoon Suite had provided a great venue for artists to experiment, develop their practices, and have a bit of fun outside of the confines of the dealer galleries, while still practising within a professional framework (i.e. a formal proposal process for shows, written artist statements, deadlines for work, and providing copy for press releases).

Emma Bugden and Warren Olds were the last of the original group that set up the Honeymoon Suite and had been running the space professionally for years, donating much of their time and energy to the project (something that the Dunedin art community greatly appreciated).

However, as the Honeymoon Suite was not set up as a trust, it was difficult to procure funding grants, and as people moved on, it was also hard to hand over the reins to other people to run the space. Despite this, the group managed to keep the space running well for a considerable time, all the while having to deal with lawsuits, lack of funding, dodgy landlords, stalkers and – worst of all – artists!

Another alternative space that closed around the same time as the Honeymoon Suite was Everything Incorporated, an outgrowth of the Super 8 art collective. Everything Incorporated was originally set up to provide a gallery space, library, darkrooms, workshop, studio space and recording/editing suites that anyone could use. It was established as a trust, so the collective could get funding for projects, but this organisation ran largely on volunteer work. The basic working model of Everything Incorporated was a good idea, but it seemed to be perpetually biting off more than it could chew in terms of how much funding was available for what was planned. Eventually this was this alternative space's downfall. The closure of Everything Incorporated was another major loss to the arts community and a major blow to the people who had donated so much time, materials, equipment, and energy to the collective.

With the winding down of these two spaces, a gaping hole in the Dunedin arts scene needed filling. Hence, a group of friends (Wallace Chapman, Kate Plaistead, Emily Barr, Steve Carr, and Douglas Kelaher) got together and set up Blue Oyster Arts Trust. The aim of the trust was to provide a venue in which to show experimental artwork. This new alternative space would be administered a gallery

manager, would be able to apply for funding, and would have a mechanism for handing over the reins when individuals left the trust. The Blue Oyster Arts Trust aimed to build on the experiences of previous art collectives and to be flexible enough to keep evolving with the changing needs of the arts community. Aware of the precedents of the Physics Room and the High Street Project in Christchurch, we had seen that this trust model could work. Knowing that these art trusts were able to operate successfully for a prolonged period showed us that it was possible to set up a sustainable arts trust in Dunedin as well.

Once the trust was established, we had the problem of finding a venue. The old Honeymoon Suite had been turned into a bookshop, so that was out of the question. The Everything Incorporated space was available, but we had to negotiate with some members of that group who still wanted to use the gallery space for their original intentions. They thought the Blue Oyster Arts Trust might be too selective, and therefore exclusive, in their approach to organising shows, and this conflicted with their ideology. However, we thought that this selection process (through proposal writing and invitation) provided a more equitable basis for filling the limited amount of spaces in the exhibition program for each year. As a trust, we wanted to provide a venue for more experimental installation-based art that did not fit into the confines of dealer galleries. However, we felt that the “anyone could show” idea, although nice, would take up valuable venue time and could possibly reduce the prestige of the space. In addition, the Community Gallery had also recently opened near the Octagon and was providing that service, so another space like this seemed redundant.

We also believed that the invitation aspect, though sounding biased and exclusive, was important to establish the Blue Oyster Arts Trust name and niche in the arts scene as it provided the possibility of inviting more established experimental artists to show in the space. Over time, the success of this strategy became evident with the increasing quantity and quality of the proposals submitted to the trust over the years.



Michael Morley, *Midnight Cowboy and Lost Weekend*, from *B-Grade*, 2004



Amy-Jo Jory, *Street*, from *B-Grade*, 2004, stills

After further dialogue with the Everything Incorporated collective about our intentions, they were happy for us to take over the space. We contacted the landlord and organised an unbelievably good lease with rent of only \$30 per week, a bargain even in those impoverished Dunedin days. As this space originally had alcoves, windows in walls, and no office or storage area, we applied for funding to create a more neutral space better suited to the work we wanted to show. Unfortunately, this first funding application was unsuccessful, so the trustees invested considerable time and money to set up the space and cover the rent, until we could start putting on shows that would cover the running costs of the space.

This first space that the Blue Oyster Arts Trust operated out of also had access to a huge dingy basement that provided a great contrast to the clean white space upstairs. Several artists used this space to their advantage over the short period of time we were there. The English artist Richard Crow showed in this space. He has been described as the “King of Rot,” and his aesthetic was particularly well suited for the basement. Richard was in New Zealand for a residency at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art through the Artist at Work scheme. For his exhibition at the Blue Oyster Art Gallery, he set up a video projection of Harold Pinter’s film *The Caretaker* onto the dingy walls and created sound works, including a petrified mouse that he found in the space being jiggled around on a speaker while it blurted out an intermittent electrical hum. Crow also left some little interventions in the space, to be discovered as you shuffled around in slippers (which

you were required to wear as part of the work), while drinking warm milk and nibbling on liquorice. This had the effect of making the visitor feel like an elderly person lost in a dilapidated dystopia with dodgy wiring and crumbling walls. It was a nice introduction for the public to this paradox of the Blue Oyster’s gallery spaces – the basement was the antithesis of the clean white space upstairs.

Another good show that appeared in the main gallery space around this time was by Kathleen Peacock, who set up a series of tiny speakers mounted in little wooden boxes on the floor. These speakers simultaneously played different songs performed by Kathleen’s mother, songs that she had sung to her daughter in childhood. Using the basement in a different way, Kathleen hid all the wiring under the floor, which gave the show a minimal haunting dreamlike ephemeral quality that left you feeling like your childhood was on the tip of your tongue.

Following a strong series of shows that kick-started the space, we were informed that the building was going to be torn down to make a car park for the Casino, and we had to vacate the premises. Ironically, the building was still standing when I left Dunedin 5 years later.

Around this time, the Artists at Work programme needed a hand to set up a space for a temporary exhibition of one their artists above the Arc Café across the road. The Blue Oyster’s trustees volunteered their time to help out, with the ulterior motive of securing it as a future venue for the Blue Oyster Art Gallery. Luckily, this strategy paid off. The Blue Oyster Arts Trust gained the space as an exhibition venue for their own projects and developed a good working relationship with the Artist at Work residence programme. The trust provided a professionally run venue for future Artist at Work shows, and the trustees regularly volunteered to assist with the installation of their shows. In effect, this provided free workshopping opportunities with international artists.

The Artist at Work show of Australian artist Margaret Roberts was a particularly large undertaking on the part of the trust. We only had three days to install her show after the closing of a Blue Oyster exhibition, so there wasn’t much time to stage this particularly ambitious work, which involved building walls to form a large diamond within the space. This project also included a video work that showed a train journey across the Australian desert. The



Kathleen Peacock, *If I Were a Blackbird*, from the *Future Proof Series*, 1999
In association with High Street Project



Violet Fagan, *Conformist Ltd*, from *B-Grade*, 2004



Anna Muirhead, *The Package Deal*, from *The Graduate Show*, 2004



Blue Oyster 1st Birthday - Paper Show, 2000, installation view

trust helped build the walls, and it was a bit touch and go. The trustees and other volunteers worked hard until just before the opening to complete the installation. Nevertheless, the finished work was impressive and made you experience the space in a unique way, while the video component added depth to the work.

In comparison with the old venue, the new Blue Oyster Gallery space was huge, and this worked well with group shows. I had some enjoyable times brainstorming with other trustees for group show ideas. I particularly liked the group show *B-Grade* due to the various possible associations of its name (although we were a little worried about inviting artists to participate, as they might be offended by not being in the A grade). The trust also organised two themed group shows each year, which provided some continuity within our exhibition calendar. These were the Graduate Show, which helped keep links with the Otago Polytechnic School of Art, and the Birthday Show, which followed the traditional gifts for wedding anniversaries and gave artists an opportunity to respond to a theme (paper, cotton, leather...and the current 10th year being marked by tin or aluminium). The Birthday Show also celebrated the ongoing work of the trust.

Some out of town artists found the new venue a bit daunting due to its size (the comment I heard a few times at openings was that it was "a little empty"). Nevertheless, as the saying goes, "less is more". In comparison to other project spaces around the country, the new Blue Oyster Gallery was enormous (2–3 times the sizes of other venues). The inspiration to divide the space in half came from a very successful show by Christchurch-based artist Hannah Beehre. She installed a work with two walls that split the space in half and hid the columns in the centre of the space. These walls visually divided and interrupted the space, making us look at the space in a different way and see new potential there. This motivated us to apply for funding to split the space in half in order to provide two venues for artists to show simultaneously, as well as providing the possibility of a separate video screening area. The new layout revitalised the space and allowed the trust to accommodate more exhibition slots within the year.

Around the time I left Dunedin in November 2004, the trust was organising to move out of this space. The building had been sold, and the new owners wanted to redevelop it. While the Blue Oyster Gallery had been in the old building, rent had increased dramatically around Dunedin, so we didn't have many options available with our limited funding. Luckily, the trust managed to find a space in the basement of a building near the Public Art Gallery that was the right price and had a lot of 'potential' (i.e. needed lots of work to get it up and running). Sadly, I left Dunedin before the work started in the new space and have only seen snippets of it in photos of shows. It was hard to cut the apron strings, but it had to be done. Fortunately, the trust setup made this transition possible. I was glad to see the Blue Oyster successfully move spaces, which was a huge undertaking. The fact that the trust is still going strong to this day is a tribute to all the trustees, gallery managers, volunteers and patrons who have put so much time and energy over the years. Thanks!!



Hannah and Aaron Beehre, *BLUOY05.03*, 2003



Angela Singer, *The Sin Eaters*, from *The Cotton Show*, 2001



Warren Olds, *12:01 AM Y2K*, from *The Cotton Show*, 2001



Sophie Harnell, *Twenties Two-Step*, from *The Cotton Show*, 2001



Jane Venis and Kay Lyons, *Galloping Consumption*, *The Cotton Show*, 2001



Su Ballard and Sarah Pink, ... a sort of wing, 2002, installation view

“My one and only prayer, is that some day, you’ll care...But it’s only make believe”

Melanie Oliver

For what seemed like a lengthy two weeks in my tenure as the Blue Oyster’s Gallery Manager, Connie Francis incessantly crooned “it’s only make believe” as the sound component to Susan Jowsey and Marcus Williams’ *Don’t Leave Me This Way* (2002). The lyrics continue to haunt me, despite several years having passed. The line, “my one and only prayer, is that some day, you’ll care,” reminds me of the irksome enthusiasm for audience development that I possessed in those days. Yet it also somehow hints at the archival urge that seems to have underpinned both the institution and the practices of the Blue Oyster community.



Susan Jowsey and Marcus Williams, *Don’t Leave Me This Way*, 2002 installation view

Over the past few years, many of the artist-run spaces in the nationwide network to which the Blue Oyster belongs have produced publications similar to this one. This impulse to memorialise the ephemeral and contingent projects these spaces present is neither surprising nor unusual. The desire to create and revisit historical accounts parallels developments in the wider contemporary arts community. In terms of art practices of the 21st century, Dieter Roelstraete identifies “a ‘historiographic turn in art’ apparent in the obsession with archiving, forgetfulness, memoirs and memorials, nostalgia, oblivion, re-enactment, remembrance, reminiscence, retrospection—in short, with the past.”¹ Roelstraete claims that artists, curators and institutions have all been “digging”, trawling through various historical archives, as an alternative to addressing our current conditions or speculating on the treacherous future that lies ahead. He equates the emergence of this trend with the events of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent “War on Terror”. Roelstraete suggests that “This ‘new historicism’ (is *that* what we should call it?) is really nothing other – like it or not – than *the art of the Bush era*,” a period defined by a media-saturated culture of fear. Rather than merely nostalgic yearnings or attempts to

reveal marginal or repressed histories, in these uncertain times explorations of the past have gathered a sense of urgency. Retrospection has replaced visionary thinking and acts as a substitute for hope in the future.

As artist-run spaces play a unique role in supporting emergent and experimental practices, this fascination with looking back, the preservation and excavation of the past, can be found in the content and form of many artist projects exhibited at Blue Oyster. Over the couple of years that I was involved, notions of historiography consistently featured in the programming. Artists directly referenced archiving, as in Nathan Thompson’s *Images from the Rotting Archive* (2001). Recycled materials also featured, including the array of quirky high heels that strode across the floor in Su Ballard and Sarah Pink’s ... a sort of wing (2002). Based on old family snapshots, Cathy Helps’ *Suburban Dreams* (2002) included a series of small, hazy paintings that only gained clarity when viewed from a distance, as though reproducing the myth that historical accounts gain objectivity with hindsight. Similarly, Michael Morley’s *Humiliation IQ* (2003) examined the distance between memory and cognition.

Whilst facilitating projects that incorporated historical reflection, this same ideology filtered through to many other areas of the institution. From the beginning, Blue Oyster coordinated an anniversary series. Held each winter, it celebrated the continued existence of the space, tracking its progress through the traditional symbols of paper, leather, and so forth. The Blue Oyster documented every exhibition and event, and the modest publication *Space Invaders* collated the early stories and activities of the space in 2002. In conjunction with the celebration of the 10th anniversary, the Blue Oyster will be transferring its archives to the Hocken Collections at the University of Otago, so that these records will be easily accessible for future researchers.

In contrast to the obsolescence usually intrinsic to web-based media, visitors can trace back through each digitally archived incarnation of www.blueoyster.org.nz via the current website. The 2007 version, Rowan Wernham’s 2003 site and the earlier 6-month project sites of Duncan Bruce, Warren Olds, Georgiana Morison, Terrence



Cathy Helps, *Alexandra Christmas*, 1969, from *Suburban Dreams*, 2002

Wood and Nicola Farquhar are all still accessible. These archived websites preserve particular moments of online presence, which recognises them as creative projects as well as records. Scrolling back through the various sites, the reluctance to relinquish the big “B” brand becomes clearly visible. Although the logo has been tweaked a number of times, the original typeface has been retained. In line with advertising industry tactics, the constant subtle adjustments maintain a sense of freshness without losing brand recognition. This reflects the short lifespan of the designers involved with the space, each keen to contribute their individual style. Design has played an important role in Blue Oyster over the years, so its natural integration into the archival accounts is especially appropriate.

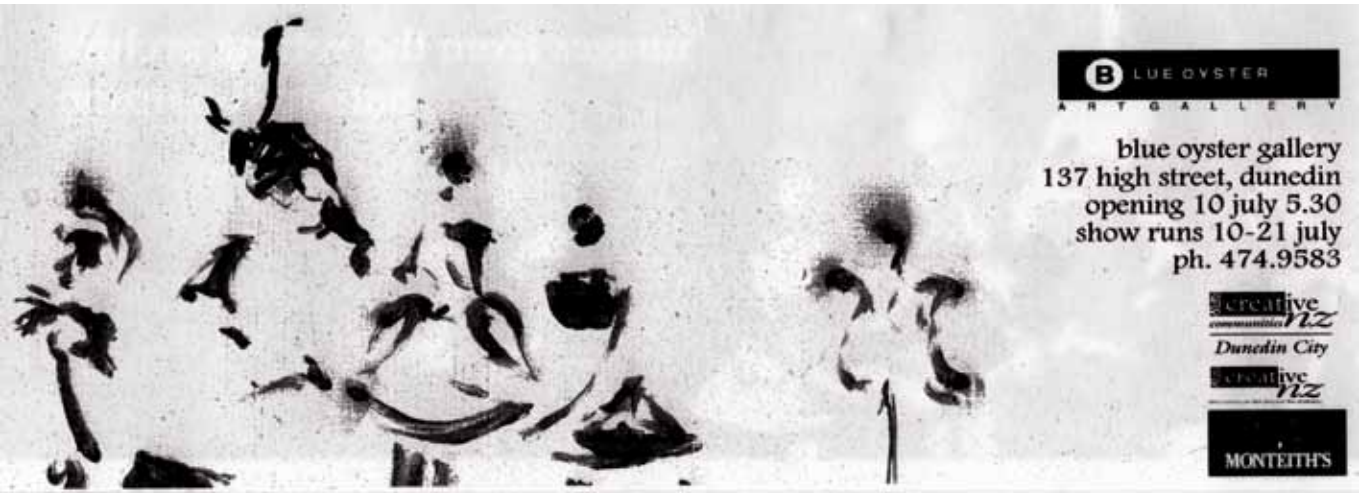
In addition to the “Archives” link that navigates visitors to Blue Oyster’s exhibition history, the websites “About Us” page provides the background to the administration of the space. All of the previous managers and trustees are acknowledged, providing a succinct summation of the personalities that have shaped the initiative in some way. No doubt, this publication also underscores the diversity of people, projects, aims and memories. So what does all this recounting and reflection indicate?

Walter Benjamin observed that only those aspects of history that seem to speak for the present are invoked, “for every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”² Despite an apparent fascination with the past in Blue Oyster’s practices and a focus on history

in our culture more generally, are these fixations not most attuned to the anxieties of the current day? While Roelstraete may see it as an avoidance of contemporary commentary and future prediction, the revisiting and construction of histories also serves as a mechanism through which to assess this moment and to hypothesise the next.

In dusting off vague recollections, the physical space of the High Street incarnation of Blue Oyster is what most readily comes to my mind: the large windows through which sharp sunlight streamed; the prominent pillars that divided the gallery; the uneven walls, floor and ceiling too. The surroundings bled in, with Arc Café downstairs and art advocates The Higher Trust above. It sounds clichéd, but 137 High Street was a hub of creative activity. Many experiences shared by the Blue Oyster community remain swept into the cracks between the floorboards, just as intimate encounters nestle unspoken between these pages. I would like to suggest that the process of writing a history for Blue Oyster affirms the critical role the gallery has played and continues to play, even if this is all make-believe. Rather than acting to preserve the past, this history writing is a sign of thoughtful movement forward.

1. Dieter Roelstraete, “After the Historiographic Turn: Current Findings,” *e-flux journal*, no. 6 (May 2009).
2. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the philosophy of history” [1940], *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257.



Nathan Thompson, *Images from the Rotting Archive*, 2001, invitation



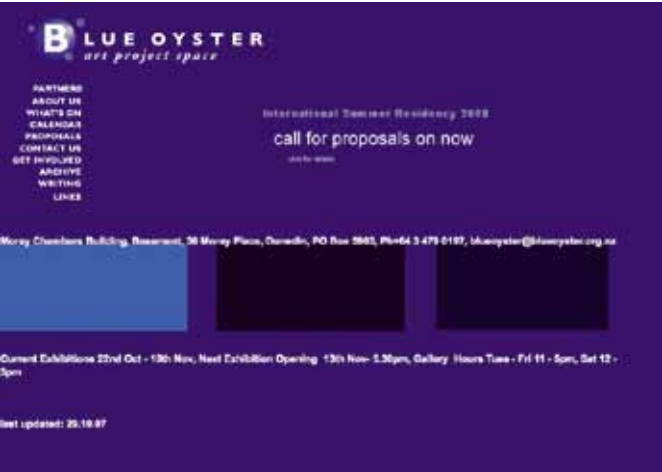
Duncan Bruce, 2000 website



Georgina Morison, June–December 2001 website



Nicola Farquar, 2002 website



Nick Dewar, 2005–2007 website



Warren Olds, January–June 2001 website



Terrence Wood, January–June 2002 website



Rowan Wernham, 2003 website



Clare Fleming, 2008–present website



Michele Beevors, *Carnage*, from *Back Boot Project*, 2007

Tit-bits

Anna Muirhead

The Most Favoured Sundays

My first introduction to the Blue Oyster Gallery was its wide stairway, wooden floors, arched windows and the pillars interrupting the space. Unsure of what to expect, I walked around and found some friends to talk with and hide behind. I soon became comfortable with the gallery and became a regular at BOG openings and jaunts. The Blue Oyster provided a firsthand introduction to projects and experimental philosophies of making (that I didn't have to read or view in art magazines and books), where commodities and the dollar were conveniently and temporarily forgotten. The Blue Oyster, like any group, included a diverse social network of unexpected connections. At one opening, I stood beside my friend Kate, who was talking with two older gentlemen, Ray Yallop and Desmond Smith, about a Sunday soirée the pending weekend. Ray pointed at me and said, "You should come too." On arrival at Ray and Des', the exterior of the house looked regular enough, but the inside was another story. A vast collection of artwork was hung in salon style, consuming all available space. A precious space where every nook and cranny was filled with purchased and gifted works. With Ray's specialty food and Des' stories, the Sunday meals were greatly anticipated and festive events. In this place of celebration friendships were made, wine was consumed, anniversaries, a wedding, and a wake were held, and legends were created. Thank you Ray and Des, with love.



Party at Des and Ray's

Mobile

A plinth and a list of numbers printed on the gallery wall. Unsure of what to expect, I dialed one of the unidentified numbers connected to an artist involved in this project. A beautiful anonymous voice sang back to me from Queen Street in Auckland. She was funny, charming, and disarming. It was a moment when distance and pretense disappeared. Later she (Kah Bee Chow) sent a disk of her work and a hand-written letter; the novelty of real posted mail was unexpected and treasured. In return I sent a series of postcards *The Lamington Experience* – a small exchange of work and ideas.

People Shaker

The Vinyl Frontier included domestic materials, floor linoleum, and cardboard. An inlayed tree made of modular components was stacked, each part functioning as the following stack's counterbalance. Vinyl botanical cutouts were hung from butcher hooks. A steel-plated patterned vinyl replica D10 bulldozer blade, with its lights on full, appeared ready to roll through the gallery wall. Marked with a cutout, the blade was inlayed with an Easter Lily (a symbol of purity or death). The bulldozer is a representation of force, a tool and weapon used both in armies and against the landscape. During the last stages of the installation, I went outside for a drill and some last-minute supplies.



Anna Muirhead, *The Vinyl Frontier*, 2006

While away, the D10 became animate and destroyed the precariously balanced vinyl tree. The exhibition was sprawled all over the floor. *The Vinyl Frontier* was reassembled in time for the five o'clock opening, with whispered rumours of the supposed destruction murmuring through the crowd.

The Graduate Show

Exhibiting with friends in the selected group show from our graduating class was an exciting start to the first year out of the Otago Polytechnic School of Art. Reiko Kunimatsu exhibited her photographs, portraits of herself standing in strange, surreal landscapes. Reiko died tragically that week. The graduating show became a memorial to Reiko, an outstanding person and artist.



Reiko Kunimatsu, *Untitled*, from *The Graduate Show*, 2004

B-Grade

I spent a couple of weeks in the old High Street Blue Oyster toilet making a puzzle-like lino landscape. It was a sort of padded cell and domesticated landscape in the most unattractive of locations. I realised after this that there were opportunities to exhibit in galleries, away from the back room. The *kid in the corner* decided to leave the shithouse.

Trust

Two colleagues and I stood in the alleyway of the Blue Oyster. We were the newest and sole remaining trustees. Our staff meeting was most interesting, especially when we realised that we needed more people to reach a quorum. We ended our meeting and began to advertise.

BBP

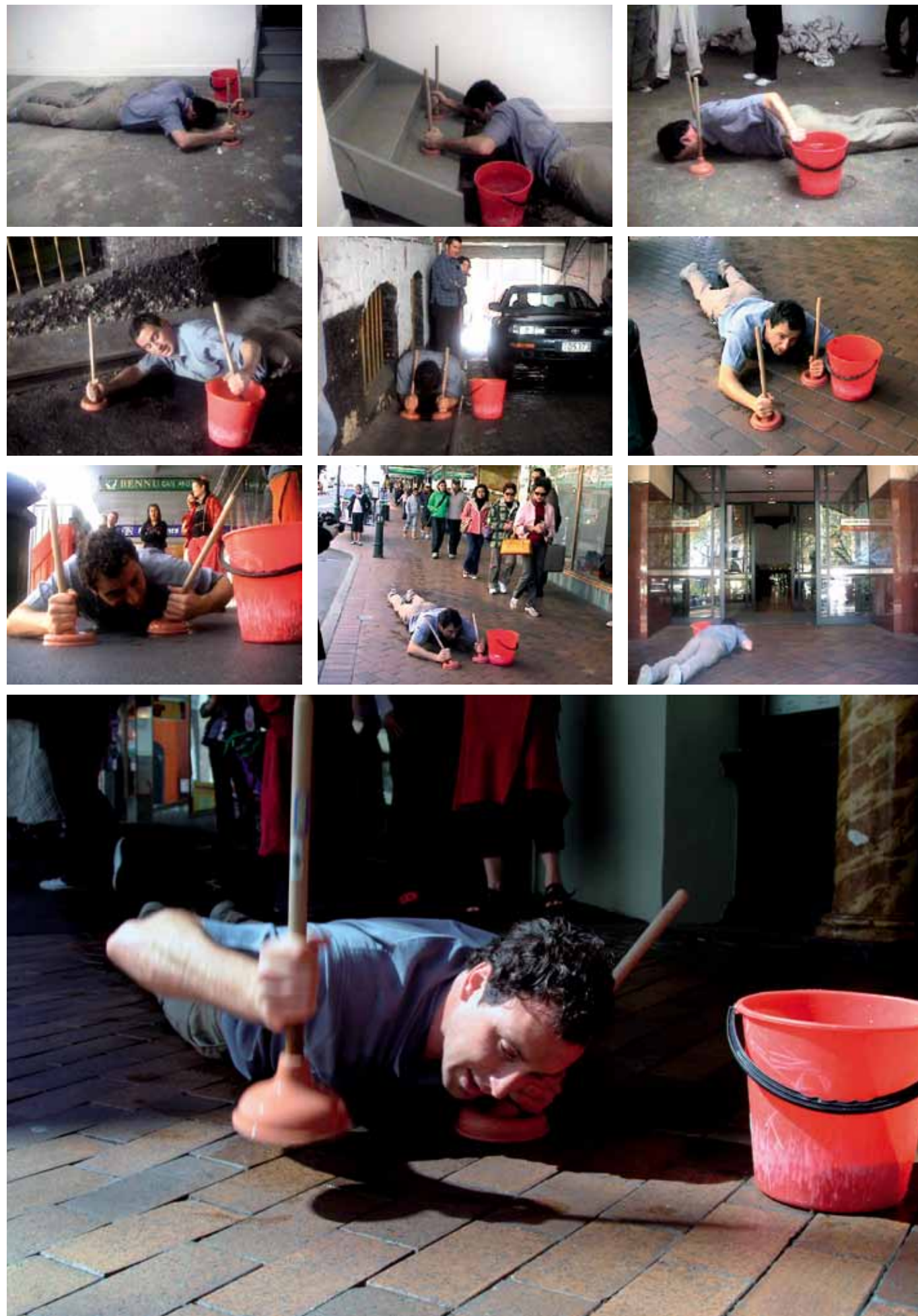
The *Back Boot Project* was an exhibition space in the back of my 1986 Toyota. I first conceived of this project as *Little Politic*, an exploration of the intimacy of the small object, the double take, and the unexpected. Seven artists (Victoria Bell, Michele Beevors, Bekah Carran, Scott Eady, Michael Morley, Emily Pauling, and Benjamin Smith) used the car for their individual exhibitions. Su Ballard wrote the accompanying text *Car Boot Libraries* for the final poster show at the Blue Oyster Gallery. For each exhibition, the car was driven, parked, and displayed in various public locations in Dunedin. It created an opportunity for artists to situate their work in public spaces, out of the usual gallery environment. The *Back Boot Project*, like the gallery, had its own set of limitations and challenges. Each artist contributed their own project to the *BBP*. Because the projects were shown in the boot of a car, they implicitly referred to ideas related to mobility and transitional spaces. To extend our viewing audience we crashed some Tuesday night Blue Oyster openings. Amid threats of wheel clamping, Michael Morley's sound work *Petraeus* commandeered other people's parking spaces in the Oyster's alleyway. Rasping metal sounds came from the large speakers nestled perfectly in the back boot. We all drank and listened to this nouveau bogan moment, while the chef and disgruntled staff of a nearby restaurant yelled from the window above adding to the noise. The *Back Boot Project* operated in public spaces, but, the car navigated back to familiar lovers – The Blue Oyster and its audience.



Bekah Curran, *Cosy Dell: A Portable Garden*, 2007, from *Back Boot Project*, BP opening



Michele Beevors, *Carnage*, from *Back Boot Project*, 2007, warehouse opening



Mark Harvey, *When You're By My Side: Volume One*, from the 2006 Performance Series

The Interactive Audience: The Blue Oyster Brings Performance Art to Dunedin

Jenna Todd

In 2006, acting director Charlotte Dick curated Dunedin's first ever Performance Art Series for the Blue Oyster Gallery, under the umbrella of the Dunedin Fringe Festival. Dick brought a mix of eleven well established artists from all over New Zealand to Dunedin for a concentrated week full of varied performances. This series showcased performance art on a scale that the Blue Oyster team had never attempted before. Dunedin audiences had never experienced anything quite like it.

Charlotte asked me to video and photograph the entire week. I took a week off from art school and relocated myself into the oddly shaped basement gallery on Moray Place. Being a young, untraveled art school student, my previous exposure to live performance art was minimal, and I soon realised how lucky I was to have this opportunity. Over the next week, from behind the camera lens, my preconceptions about performance were taken out, twisted, and thrown back at me again. This series not only changed my thoughts on performance, but it was the catalyst for me to look at all art forms in another way, and I believe this echoed the feelings of the enthusiastic and responsive audience.

However, I had a different view from that of the general audience. My recording equipment gave me the license to get closer into the artists' space to capture details; it also required me to step back, outside the audience, taking myself out of the work to record audience reactions and interactions with the performance. I had more freedom to move in and out of the artists' "circle". During some of the long performances, it ended up being just the artist and myself in the room, the only sound being the whirring of the video camera and the click of my shutter. In contrast, during some of the more energetic, busy works I had to move quickly between the crowd and the artist.

One of the things I love about performance art is that it can take the audience on a live journey, an experience that can't be fully planned. It just happens because it does. From my position documenting the events, I found the audience just as captivating as the work itself. What got me thinking the most – and what I still think about now in terms of performance – was not the audience that chose to attend the performances but the accidental audience, the individuals who unintentionally stumbled across one of the many performances – whether it was on Moray Place, at the University or in a Citibus. These accidental encounters and interactions brought performance art into the everyday life of the Dunedin community.

In Seoul, South Korea, I recently shared a long taxi ride with a Dutch artist, a Japanese artist, and Dunedin's own

Ali Bramwell. Somehow, the 2006 Performance Art Series came up and we were able to remember and discuss each and every performance as if it were yesterday. This large undertaking by Charlotte Dick and the Blue Oyster were foundational works on the Dunedin Performance art scene. It cemented an active audience and lively conversation that is still happening today.

Although I enjoyed each performance in its own way, a few standout works were great examples of this unique interaction between artist and audience.

In *Who am I? Where am I?* Vivian Atkinson explored her nomadic lifestyle. The work featured interaction with an unsuspecting individual. Vivian had prepared her participant in advance, hiring a courier company employee to wrap up something at the gallery. When the woman arrived to do her job, she was informed that she was to wrap Vivian. Her instructions were to wrap Vivian in a particular way, wrapping newsprint around her, holding it together with brown packaging tape. She would work her



Vivian Atkinson and Jan Scoullar (Crown Relocations), *Who am I? Where am I?*, from the 2006 Performance Series



way up Vivian's body, starting at the feet and ending with the face. She was then to sit down on a chair provided and wait for Vivian to claw through the paper and emerge from the package, leaving behind an outer shell that would be placed in a corner of the gallery. This process was repeated ten times over three hours.

I watched this woman react over the first hour, her eyes often drifting sideways looking for the joke to end. However, as the performance continued she became more focused on her job and gained a motherly concern for her package. There was one tense moment, just after Vivian's head was covered and the paper took longer to rip. The woman ignored her instructions to stay seated and rushed over to Vivian, as you would to your child stumbling to make sure she was okay.

I heard Mark Harvey's first performance, *When You're By My Side: Volume One*, before I saw it. I was in the Darkside Gallery, when two loud suction noises echoed up the stairs, followed by a dragging scraping sound. I rushed to the Lower Gallery (afraid that I had neglected my documentation duties) to find Mark lying flat on his stomach, his eyes staring directly at the cold, concrete floor. His arms were rigid, directly out in front of him and clutching onto two pink rubber plungers. An old red bucket full of water stood beside him.

He asked, "Is this okay?" The audience said nothing; I thought he was talking to me regarding the recording.

"Yup" was my response.

I soon learned this was not the case, as he asked questions like, "Should I go here?", "Was that alright?" – all the while pulling his body around the edge of the gallery like a worm. These questions were answered with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Regardless of the answers, Mark continued inching his body around the gallery. The air filled with the audience's anticipation, which kept building as he finally reached the famous blue door at the end of the gallery. There was a pause, a feeling of achievement as he had made it to the end. However, this was interrupted by the suction noise of plungers being placed into the outside alley; he just kept on going.

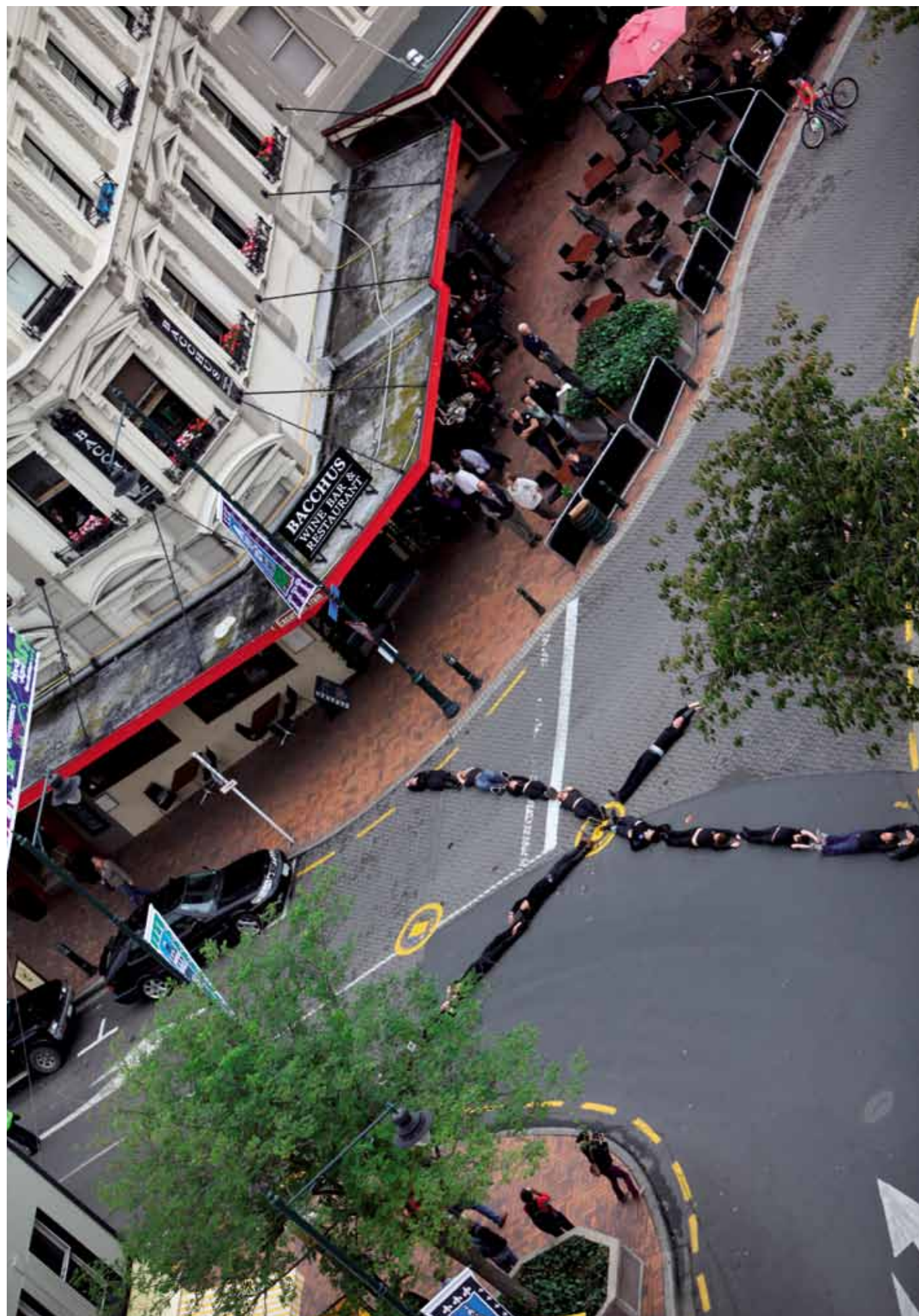
A man plunging himself around Moray Place and down the main street is probably not a sight that every Dunedinite sees during their lunch break, so Mark and his followers were greeted with many a confused stare. A select few would ask what he was doing, stand around, and watch for a bit, and then move on. Some of these accidental viewers would laugh, some would look confused or concerned, and others simply could not be bothered.

A young teenager who took a protective role in relation to Mark was particularly fascinating. He walked along with him, encouraging him. He fended off a few strange onlookers and even one man who tried to grab Mark.

Ali Bramwell, *Under Construction*, from the 2006 Performance Series



Sylvia Schwenk, *X Performance: Dunedin*, from the Dunedin Fringe Festival 2009. Photo credit: Barry Evans



Sylvia Schwenk, *X Performance: Dunedin*, from the Dunedin Fringe Festival 2009: Photo credit: Barry Evans

Later the young man refilled the water bucket. At the end, he disappeared without a trace before anyone could speak to him. He did not question the performance, he just took it in, and the moment just became something that he did that day.

Vivian and Mark's performances took place over long periods of time – both spanning about three hours, during which the audience would continuously come and go. There were many silent moments, but the air seemed filled with thought and contemplation throughout. In the evening, Mark was to present a second performance, *When You're By My Side: Volume Two*. This work involved a lot of cardboard and brown packaging tape. The time was condensed to half an hour. It was a much faster-paced, yet relaxed version of the earlier events of the day. Mark posed the same questions that he had asked while plunging "Is this alright?" and so forth. Except this time he was encasing his body in a robot-like shell using the cardboard, tape, and other various objects. The audience was more active in this situation, creating a dialogue with Mark and one another. Towards the end of the performance, as he became more immobile, the audience was in hysterics.

This active community atmosphere was repeated by Ali Bramwell, who orchestrated her work around an unsuspecting group of viewers in the performance *Under Construction*. I invited a good friend who had never seen performance art before to come with me. The response was "Will I have to do anything? I'm going to sit at the back." Ali had placed rows of chairs in the Dark Side Gallery facing towards the middle of the space. There was a hook and pulley device attached to the ceiling, and construction materials were arranged around the gallery. The chairs filled quickly. As the audience waited for the performance to begin, the air was filled with an unknowing anticipation. This performance was very different from the ones I had seen earlier in the week. At the start, Ali rather humorously emerged from the bathroom and casually addressed the audience, which instantly created a relaxed atmosphere.

Ali simply went up to one of the seated viewers and asked if she could have their chair. They awkwardly got up and gave it to her. She then placed the chair on a contraption hanging from the ceiling. She repeated this process until all the chairs were hanging from the ceiling in the shape of a metallic spider-like creature. The audience assisted in attaching chairs and pulling them up toward the ceiling, helping and interacting not only with the work but also each other. All of this happened without anyone necessarily knowing what would occur next or when it would end. The atmosphere was noisy and full of excitement. When the structure was finally tentatively hanging from the ceiling, there was an overall sense of achievement. Under the laid-back direction of the artist, the viewers' participation was just as much the work as were the objects. My friend, who had initially been afraid of participating, ended up incredibly excited by the whole experience and was left wanting more.

The artists involved that I haven't mentioned made an equally significant contribution to the Performance Art Series, and the week was perfectly wound up with an excellent panel discussion held at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

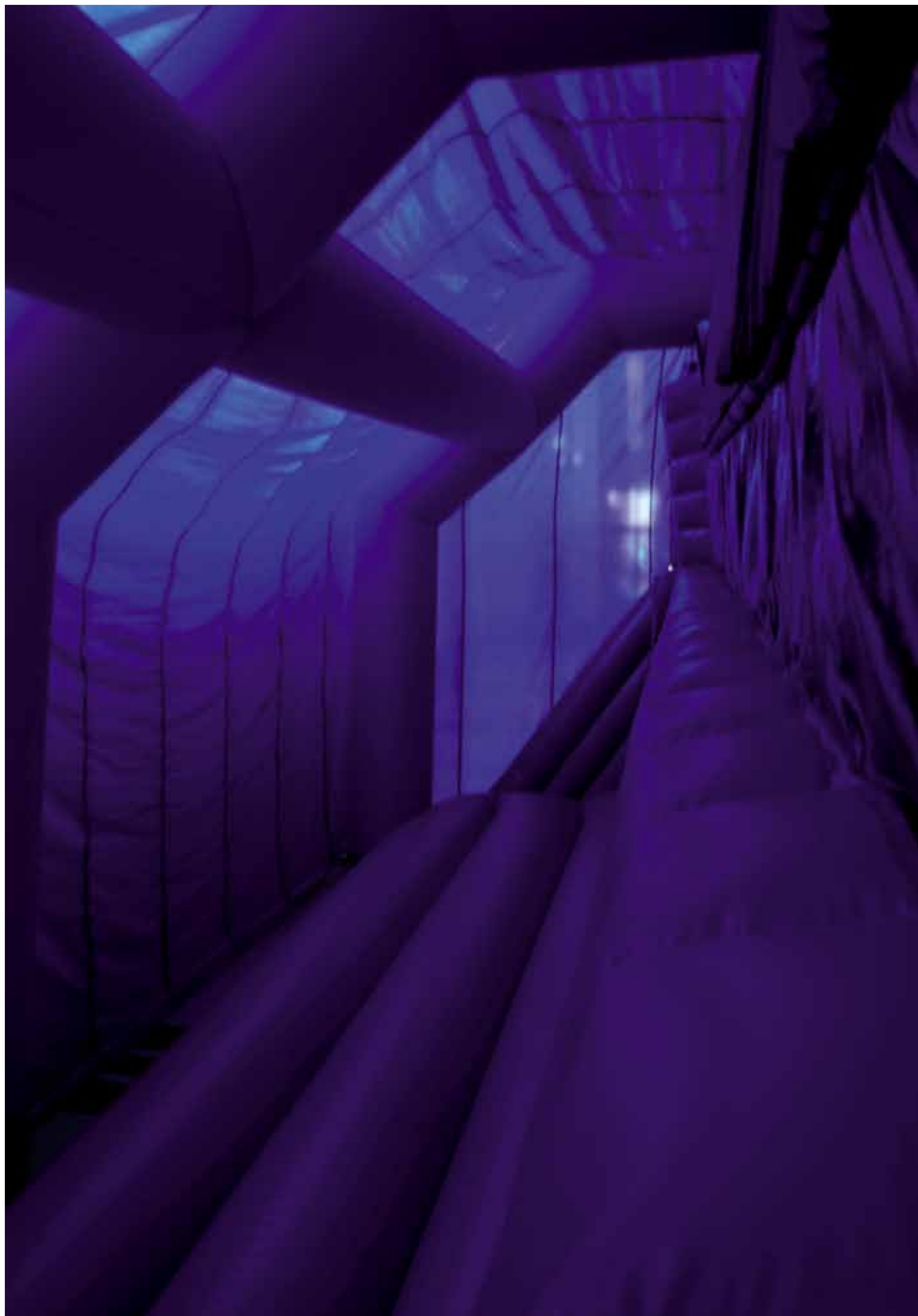
Encouraged by the success of that first series, we held the second Blue Oyster Performance art series in 2008, once again as part of the Fringe Festival. I moved up a few steps in the food chain from documenter to curator, and I knew that I had big shoes to fill. My main aim for the 2008 series was to continue the work that Charlotte had begun by bringing a professional and varied group of performance artists to Dunedin. I wanted high-quality performance art that our community would not usually have the opportunity to see because of our southern location.

We had a great response to the call for proposals and chose a group of eight talented artists from New Zealand and Australia, but we felt that we still needed a key work. Emily Pauling and I were sitting in the cold little office brainstorming ideas, when she suggested I watch a video called *Bounce* on youtube.com by the Wellington-based artist David Cross. I was instantly hooked by this work, a large bouncy red bug-like shape. When the viewer climbed on to the work to bounce upon it, they soon realised that peering through two holes at the top of the structure were a pair of eyes, which belonged to the artist standing inside the work. I called Cross immediately to enquire about the possibility of bringing this work to Dunedin. He was not keen; the work had proven to be too dangerous, as some children had jumped violently on his face and broken his nose. However, he noted, "I have another work I would like to show..." And, thus, I was introduced to the big blue work *Hold*, a large bouncy castle structure. Participants would enter via a dim staircase, and then a mysterious hand would emerge from the shadows and lead them along a ledge with a six-metre drop. I found it so intriguing and exciting, and I was sure our audience would feel the same.

There were a few logistical challenges in bringing the work down to Dunedin. I was informed that it was 8 metres wide. 6 metres high and 25 metres long, including the entranceway. Furthermore, it had to be kept inside. Three staff were needed to operate the work at all times, working two-hour shifts at a time. It literally weighed a ton. A forklift was required to move it, and the set-up would take an entire day. This was going to be a big project. "Okay...let's do it."

We ended up finding a great space in the Union Hall at the University of Otago, located about twenty minutes walk from the Blue Oyster but adjacent to the Fringe Festival headquarters. We were on location, in the centre of the University with a new and unsuspecting audience. After many moments spent worrying whether it would work, *Hold* was finally up.

The nice thing about *Hold* was that it had no rules (except that visitors had to sign a release form before entering).



David Cross, *Hold*, from the 2008 Performance Series



David Cross, *Hold*, from the 2008 Performance Series

There was no set amount of time allocated. It was also a little scary. Viewers were not told that there would be someone else inside or that there was a large drop in the structure. *Hold* was a completely interactive immersive space that tested your senses and your mind. Many people arrived in groups of friends, took their shoes off, and were ready to jump on the “giant bouncy castle”. Little did they know that they would be taken away from their friends one-by-one and led into the deep blue unknown to have their own completely unique experience.

David Cross and the other artists in this second series presented high quality art to the loyal Blue Oyster audience, while nurturing a growing interest in performance art in the broader local community. Since the start of the series, there is a heightened awareness of performance art in Dunedin, and this has stimulated more performance in the regular programming of the Blue Oyster. One of the standout performances in our regular programming was *Made at the Sweatshop* by Dunedin artist Jay Hutchinson, who installed a one-man sweatshop factory in the Upper Gallery in 2007. In March of this year, Australian artist Sylvia Schwenk moved out of the gallery and presented her performance *They paved paradise, put up a parking lot* in the Octagon. The Blue Oyster's Performance Series is now a regular part of the Fringe Festival, which in 2009 included Schwenk's performance, Irvine and Sarah Forgan's *Wish – About Spaces* and Sudhir Duppati's *Devolution #1* and *Thus I Spoke Silence*.

Bringing fresh contemporary ideas to Dunedin audiences underpins the philosophy of the Blue Oyster Gallery, and what we have shown so far through performance art has

definitely fulfilled this aim. The audience is a vital part of a performance. Whether willing participants or unsuspecting passersby, the audience becomes a part of the artwork by giving up their chair, holding a conversation, or telling their family about the man they saw crawling along the street.

Because we are so far south in Dunedin, it seems that out-of-town performance artists have not previously worked here, and they have many valid reasons (almost every visiting performance artist mentioned to how cold they found Dunedin). Unless an artist secures funding for travel, they have to pay their own way. The 2006 Blue Oyster Performance Art Series opened up a new avenue for artists and demonstrated that we have a small but enthusiastic audience base. The presentation of performance in conjunction with the larger Fringe Festival also makes the trip a safer venture. We can provide a thoughtful audience and some funding, but we can't help the weather. Two outta three ain't bad.



Walker & Bromwich, *The Cave*, from *Intertidal* for One Day Sculpture, 2008

The Island Experience

Caroline McCaw and Rachel Gillies

Over 100 people travelled to Quarantine Island in a cool grey drizzle on the last Saturday before Christmas 2008. The option of last minute shopping didn't stop a dedicated audience from snaking along the Peninsula road to catch the journey to *Intertidal*, the Dunedin project outcome of the One Day Sculpture series.

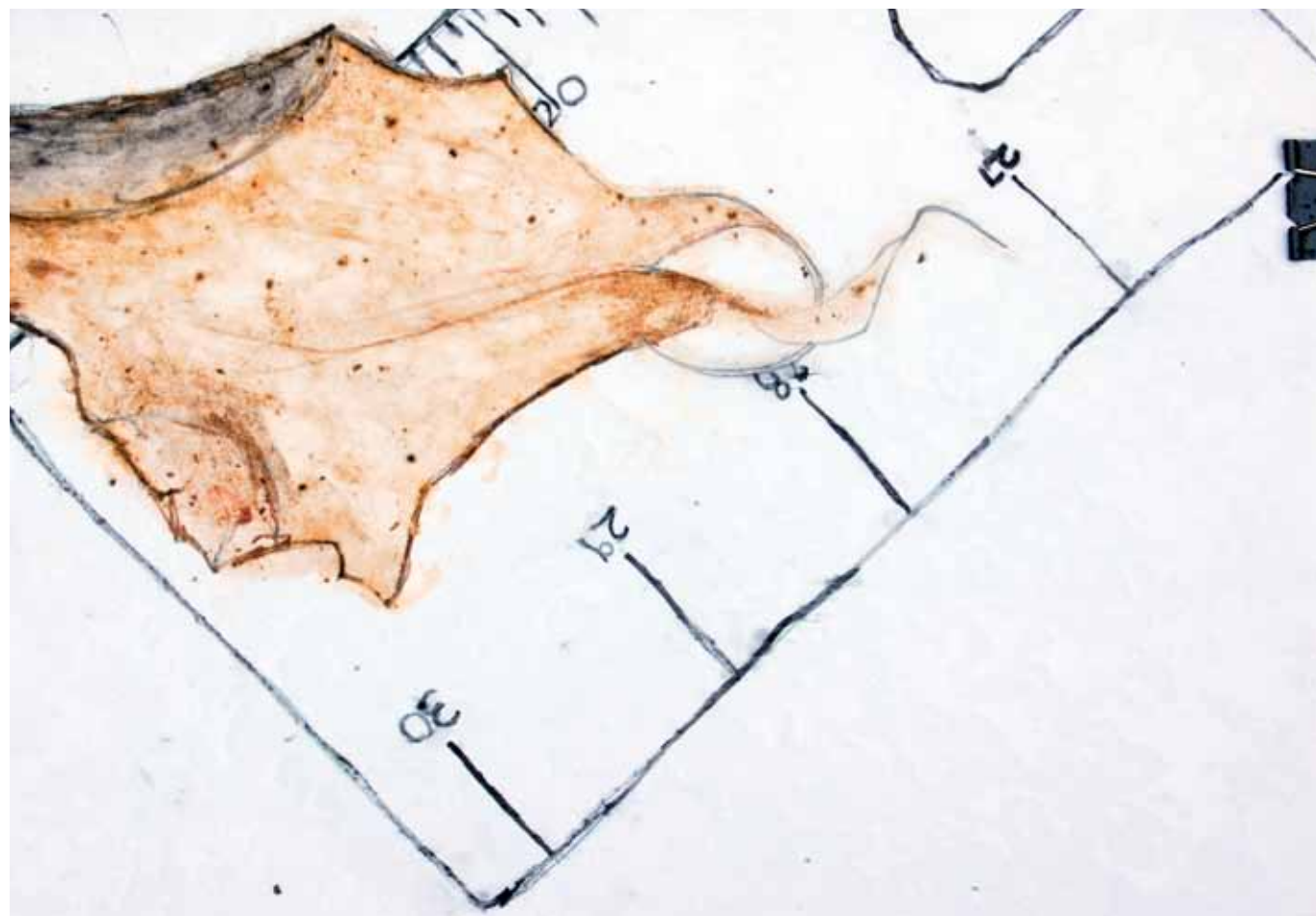
Place shifts and folds, operating between practice and memory, and four New Zealand and UK artists drew upon histories and ideas of knowledge framed in their chosen site, Quarantine Island. Located between Port Chalmers and Portobello, in the Otago Harbour, the island was once used as a quarantine station for settler ships arriving. The relationship between Scotland and Dunedin is unavoidably colonial, and the site as well as the day's art works clearly reflected these connections. The island is now owned by the Department of Conservation, but managed by the St Martins Island Community, an inter-denominational community who are slowly restoring historic buildings, and both welcome and ferry visitors to the island.

Intertidal was a collaborative project, developed by four artists, within which two distinct works emerged. Both artworks incorporate a sense of 19th Century (researched) knowledge. However, it is the rich experience of travel by sea, ferried on small boats by Sea Cadets from the Portobello Marine Centre, which framed our visit to the island. As with those earlier colonial visitors to the island, arrival by sea, and in a controlled and orderly fashion, was the entry point for art visitors to the island, reflecting the artists' own ideas of place as a geographical destination. It is this physical journey, requiring the necessary help of others, that began the island experience, and for us as curators also provided a rich contrast to the online communication that first brought artists and curators together.

We began curating for the Dunedin contribution to the One Day Sculpture project about a year earlier. We were selected by The Blue Oyster Art Project Space to represent the gallery's bid for inclusion in the series. One Day Sculpture set out to examine how contemporary artists "critically navigate and activate the public sphere" and we quickly got caught up in the myth. The series was motivated by UK-based curator, writer, and researcher curator Claire Doherty and involved New Zealand-based and international artists, each of whom was invited to produce a new work that would occur during a period no longer than 24 hours.

From the start collaboration was a key concept and operation for this project, beginning with the curatorial collaboration between the two of us. Rachel had recently arrived to Dunedin from Edinburgh, and Caroline had lived in Dunedin for the last 20 years, so we began by considering our different relationships to Dunedin through both our experience of this place and through our media





Adam Hyde and Douglas Bagnell, *Discovery*, from *Intertidal* for One Day Sculpture 2008, participant's drawings

practices. A place is experienced differently depending on one's level of intimacy with it. This is not only a concern for artists, but underpins our sense of belonging as humans wherever we are. When we consider knowing a place, there is always a continuum of possible nearness or distance, stretching from tangata whenua, being people of the land, through to visitors passing through and barely touching the surface of a new place. This familiarity is troubled, challenged, or shifted by other technologies of knowledge, such as the internet, travel technologies and media stories. There is a strong historic connection between Dunedin and Edinburgh, which could also be considered a collaboration. Indeed, Dunedin is often referred to as the Edinburgh of the South. The One Day Sculpture project provided an opportunity for us to make connections between these two places and ideas.

We selected artists to collaborate based on their connections to both Dunedin and Edinburgh. The artists, however, had never met each other. Our initial conversations began via email and later involved blogs, a wiki, e-mails, synchronised telephone communication (Skype), and Google Maps, which helped the artists engage with place, space and site at a distance prior to their physical arrival to Dunedin. The invited artists had their own strong visual arts practices, worked successfully with others in the past, and were confident in using digital media in their art practices, but none was based in Dunedin. We became the eyes and the ears of Dunedin, beginning conversations and filling in the gaps that Google Maps and other online sources could not for these distant artists.

The two artworks that grew out of this exchange also required collaboration from visitors. Art visitors enacted an expedition as both ethnographers and enablers of new stories, and the island became a "ground" for this experience; examined and experienced at various points and in all the spaces in between. From the time that they got off the boat and climbed the hill to be offered their first cup of tea, art visitors became a part of the artwork, whether intentionally or simply through their presence in this living island museum.

The temporal framework for the One Day Sculpture was the time between the shifting of tides, the four hours surrounding the low tide. It is during this time that the liminal zone, also known as the foreshore, is revealed. This liminal zone is a fertile space from which new life emerges.

Taking as a starting point the story of Robert the Bruce's epiphanic encounter with a spider, Walker & Bromwich (aka Zoë Walker and Neil Bromwich, UK) set out to discover new histories created through the exchange of stories on Quarantine Island in the Dunedin Harbour. Located in a cave (created by the action of tides over time) perched on the edge of the intertidal zone and situated somewhere between fact and fiction, the artwork reignited a historical notion of adventuring in relation to

Dunedin's past. In a scenario played out with the audience, the artists invited visitors to the cave to actively exchange a story, or a personal history, and in doing so the artists were able to specifically capture these moments on video and take them away, perhaps as a treasured memento of their own experiences in another land. It was probably the long queue, as audience members waited for their turn in the cave, which created the social environment of the work.

On the opposite side of the island, Adam Hyde and Douglas Bagnall set out to discover a new species in the intertidal zone, throwing into focus the ever-present potential for new knowledge. Drawing upon 19th century methods of species discovery, which entail collecting, looking, and drawing, their work formed questions around what we do not know. By engaging the audience in their activity, the artists facilitated for each participant an opportunity to create their own experience, to share and then to take away – both personal moments and moments as part of a collective whole. It transpires that they may also have found either a new species of seaweed or an invasive one, also brought by ship. Bagnall is continuing to explore this new discovery in his present work.

The extended notion of a journey that had to be *chosen* in order for one to *arrive* is explicit in both the artists and audience's experience. Again, conversation connected people and ideas. Whether satiated by art or the picnics and gossip with new and old friends, people were connected for the four hours of their journey. Knowledge was periodically and temporarily revealed, and, overall, it was shared. Stories transported across time and continents, distorted histories that may or may not have happened, take on a different form in different lands. Through the distortion of history, new meaning is created. The project's success lies in all of these areas and is the sum of their parts. The extended process of becoming resulted in a "third artwork", *The Island Experience*.



First Blue Oyster gallery, 154 High Street, 1999



Second Blue Oyster gallery 137 High Street 2000–2005

Pearls Need True Grit: The Origins and Evolution of the Blue Oyster

Sarah Wilson

The oyster is well known for the delicious and stimulating food inside its shell and for its capacity to grow a pearl from a small grit of sand. The Blue Oyster, like its name-sake, began as a small artist-run space filled with thought-provoking art and has grown into one of Dunedin's cultural jewels. Over the past ten years, it has evolved into a professional gallery that promotes non-commercial, experimental, and contemporary art in a non-profit and educational space. Its art stimulates and provokes critical discussion, while the gallery acts as a meeting place between local educational organisations, the community and other art institutions.

Since its establishment in 1999, the Blue Oyster's core mission has been the promotion and development of contemporary art. The founding Board of Trustees (Emily Barr, Steve Carr, Wallace Chapman, Douglas Kelaher, and Kate Plaisted) aspired to create a community art gallery through which the public could gain a greater awareness of emerging art in Dunedin. They looked for innovative art that pushed the boundaries and played with exciting new art practices.

While more conventional public and dealer galleries displayed accessible, established and commercial art, the Blue Oyster sought to provide opportunities to present experimental art in both traditional and newer media through exhibitions and events. Paintings and sculptures were displayed along with photography, installation, film, and digital media. Special events showcased diverse media, including performance and sound art.

The birth of the Blue Oyster was preceded by the closure of other artist-run spaces in Dunedin. Everything Inc, Galerie Dessford Vogel, and The Honeymoon Suite had closed by 1998, and by the next year there was no space in Dunedin for artists to exhibit emerging and experimental art. The desire for a permanent and sustainable contemporary art space led to the formation of the Blue Oyster Arts Trust (BOAT) on 31 March 1999. The Gallery's first home was at 154 High Street. The board members actively transformed this space into a gallery. Kelaher took primary responsibility for outfitting and painting, assisted by Carr, Plaisted, and Barr. The gallery was situated opposite the Arc Café, an important site of alternative culture in Dunedin that acted as a drawcard for artists and audiences, thus providing the Blue Oyster with a solid support base. Less than a year later, however, the building was condemned and slated for demolition, and the gallery moved across the street to 137 High Street, above the café.

The Blue Oyster's opening exhibition on 29 June 1999 embodied the new Trust's aims. Titled *Collections*,

Taonga, Trash, this quirky show was curated by Emma Kitson and displayed the personal and obsessive collections of a group of artists. These deliberately blurred the lines between art versus trash. Steve Carr, for example, installed a series of *Return of the Jedi* cards, minus one, accompanied by an image of the suspected thief. Douglas Kelaher displayed soft porn record covers, and Clare Warrington set up a collection of Catholic merchandise. By allowing the artist free reign to experiment away from the presentation of authorial artworks for commercial sale, this exhibition exemplified the non-profit ethos of the gallery. At the same time, English artist Richard Crow was invited to exhibit in the basement. He took over the dingy room, creating an eerie atmosphere of gloom by using dirt and decay in an installation that incorporated film.



Caro McCaw, *The Picnic*, 2000

The exhibition of an international artist gave the Blue Oyster a credible reputation and a positive base on which to apply for funding.

The Blue Oyster also created national networks with other alternative galleries, including Artspace in Auckland, Enjoy in Wellington, and The Physics Room and High Street Project in Christchurch. Connections to the wider national art community were important in enabling broad awareness of artist projects in other cities and in presenting local artists opportunities to exhibit beyond Dunedin. In August



Blue Oyster alleyway 24b Moray Place 2005 – present. Photo credit: Max Oettli



Log *Illustrated*, issue eight, Spring 1999 p.42, with image by Douglas Kelaher from *Collections, Taonga, Trash*

1999, the Blue Oyster collaborated with High Street Project on a series of exhibitions titled *Future Proof*. Eight artists were shown in a touring exhibition between the two galleries, lasting until November. Facilitated by a grant from Creative New Zealand, this was the first Blue Oyster project to receive external funding. Other collaborations also led to shared events throughout New Zealand. **The Picnic** for example, was held in Dunedin, Port Chalmers, Christchurch, and Wellington in October 2000. Curated by Caroline McCaw, this event encouraged people to gather in these locations for lunch or to sit at their computer to watch a live webcam performance from Amsterdam and experiment with an interactive MUSH (multi-user shared habitat), a kind of virtual environment. By facilitating the sharing of a virtual picnic, the internet aided in developing connections between people and places, marking the rise of the internet in our daily lives and creating a global sense of connection and community.

In addition to exhibitions, the Blue Oyster took up responsibility for promoting the discussion of contemporary art issues within the local community. This was accomplished through exhibition programming, reviews, artist talks, and nurturing links with other local institutions, including the Otago Polytechnic School of Art, the University of Otago, other galleries, and local high schools. This broad promotion of contemporary art in and around Dunedin was critical to the Blue Oyster's survival, as it built a strong network of local support. For students of local art institutions the Blue Oyster provided the first major

professional opportunity to exhibit publicly and facilitated connections with the wider New Zealand art community. First initiated in 2002, *The Graduate Show* became an annual exhibition of selected works by students completing their undergraduate studies at the School of Art. It showcased each emerging artist, while providing them with invaluable professional experience. This show also established strong ties between the gallery and artists embarking on their careers, thus ensuring a place for the Blue Oyster in the creative lives of new artists.

The administration of the space also forms an important aspect of the Blue Oyster's history. Begun as an artist-run space, the gallery's gradual professionalisation is the result of both arduous work and the desire to maintain a profile within New Zealand's art world. The initial trustees created the position of Gallery Manager (renamed Director in 2007) to take charge of the basic administration of the gallery. The Director's responsibilities include drafting funding proposals and reports, paying the bills, exhibition scheduling, and installation. In 2005, Work and Income New Zealand provided funds to hire an assistant to help with the growing administrative demands placed on the gallery. The following year, the Dunedin City Council provided funding to continue this position, with the intention of fuelling further developments in advertising, funding, and networking. The board invites new trustees to join it from the pool of local artists, curators, and academics engaged with the gallery's activities. The board has fluctuated from between three and nine members. The somewhat tumultuous nature of the gallery is evidenced by the turnover of both board members and directors (to date there have been eleven). However, the gallery's survival was ensured by widespread community support and a large network of volunteers, without whose help the gallery would not have lasted. These critical volunteer contributions range from students sitting in the gallery to experts contributing valuable skills in facilitating installations and other programming. The board defines the programme by reviewing proposals for exhibitions and artist projects. Initially artists were invited to exhibit, but as the Blue Oyster's reputation grew proposals were welcomed and the gallery now receives more than they can accept.

Funding has also played a key part in the continued existence of the Blue Oyster. Many art spaces have a limited lifespan due to changing ideas and audiences, but the Blue Oyster has maintained an established set of clearly defined priorities and has benefited from annual government funding from Creative New Zealand (CNZ). The initial trustees committed to serving the art space for two years, with the intention of training future trustees to take over. Over the past ten years, CNZ's support has gradually increased.

In 2000, the Blue Oyster received a grant of \$10,000 to fund six months of artist projects. The gallery received its largest grant to date in 2008, when it was awarded \$87,000 for a twelve-month programme. Annual proposal applications, regular consultation, and mandatory reporting have created a strong working relationship between the



The Graduate Show, 2002, installation view



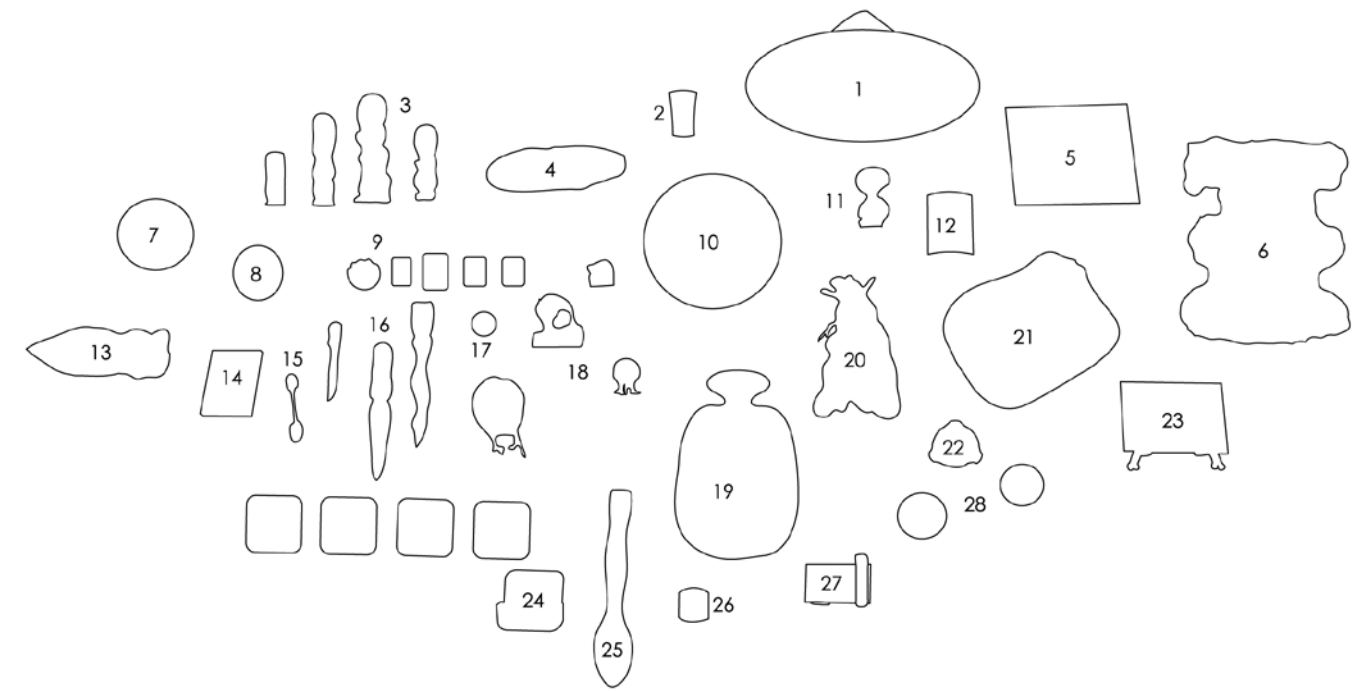
The Graduate Show, 2002, installation view

Blue Oyster and CNZ. This relationship in turn has led to its gradual evolution into a professional gallery. Funding also ensured a degree of security for the Blue Oyster and convinced other organisations and businesses that the gallery was a cultural asset. The Dunedin City Council, Dunedin Cassino Charitable Trust, Alexander McMillan Trust, Bendigo Valley Foundation, Community Trust of Otago, Perry Foundation, Pub Charity, Southern Victorian Charitable Trust, and other charitable trusts have all proven to be invaluable sources of support. The funds to buy something as small as stamps right up to a digital camera had to be proposed and money from a variety of these sources secured. Careful budgeting was required to cover the broad range of expenses – artist fees, rent, advertising, and the purchase of equipment. While the gallery is non-commercial, and the art tends to be of limited commodity value, the costs associated with putting on the exhibitions remain. Video and other digital art forms, for example, are not very marketable but require the maintenance of expensive equipment; bulbs for data projectors, for example, cost hundreds of dollars.

While the relationship between Creative New Zealand and the Blue Oyster demonstrated the maturing of the gallery from an upstart artist space into an established local art institution, annual events like *The Grad Show* and the establishment of international connections confirmed the gallery's role as a contemporary art space. Closer attention by the board to the Blue Oyster's past and future also began to play a bigger role and highlighted the importance of this kind of space. In 2002, the gallery released the retrospective catalogue *Space Invaders*, which presented a selective look at "highlights" of the gallery's programming since its opening. Five hundred copies were printed, to be sold at \$10. While the catalogue's selective nature generated some controversy due to its purported exclusivity, this first publication of the gallery was deemed a success, even though many copies remained unsold.

In 2004, the trustees began to consider the gallery's need to address the changing nature of experimental art practice, especially the large number of artists exploring new media. The trust moved to provide support for digital and video work, which led to the fundraising exhibition *The International Art Fair and Cake Stall*. For this show, 38 artists, former exhibitors and audience members, donated works to the gallery. Sold in the hybrid art fair/cake stall, these works raised \$4000 for the gallery. With extra money from the DCC, the Blue Oyster purchased much-needed new media equipment, including a data projector, a video monitor, and a DVD player. Following the cue of the gallery's non-commercial ethos, this fundraising exhibition irreverently played with the idea of selling handmade goodies to raise funds for something of value for the larger community.

In 2005, the High Street premises were sold, and the Blue Oyster was forced to move. The trustees procured a new space in the basement of the Moray Chambers, closer to the business and cultural hub of Dunedin. The new space was a gutted room with no walls, exposed wires and holes



1. Assembled without conventional artistic finesse in a variety of materials is made to look ferocious.
2. The hunter-gatherer existence of aborigines limited the number and size of objects that could be transported from one camp to another.
3. Such collections had a ready sale either to those with a then fashionable taste for representation of encounters between Europeans and savages or those impelled by the colonising urge.
4. Seemingly simple artifacts from Australia have been misinterpreted to infer an unsophisticated culture.
5. Similar assumptions have been made about other indigenous cultures around the world.
6. Offers a generic, fictitious view.
7. The acquisition of brilliant images of other people's cultural identity with little if any knowledge of the context in which they were created became a Western habit.
8. Is this an imposed European-based styling or does it indicate something in the subject's personality?
9. This group is not depicted as a completely convivial and harmonious one.
10. Does this picture, rather than conveying a exact moment of New Zealand's history, idealise the history of colonialist expansion in this country? Sadness is therefore a powerful and understandable reaction to this seemingly ideal scene.
11. Many indigenous peoples around the world who have similarly suffered the 'downside' of colonialism.
12. Some such works were certainly admired as evidence of indigenous craftsmanship, but more characteristically they were seen as evidence of the "primitiveness" of their users.
13. The inevitable consequence of colonialism.
14. Decorative Art objects are well made, useful and beautiful. We can study their design and makers as well as the quality and method of their construction.
15. One says of an object that it is decorative when it ornaments the place it occupies.
16. The difference between good and bad is that good collecting does not harm anyone or anything.
17. It mirrors the complex, convoluted history of race relations in this country.
18. Ancient discoveries offer an insight into how the present is shaped by the past and help us understand everyday life in other places and other times.
19. The painting provides a rich opportunity for multiple interpretations and pays a multi – layered homage.
20. With regard to artistic intention: It could be said that the artist is documenting an actual event.
21. A Common motive for placing this material was to make it available to people who would not otherwise not have access to it; such a theory may be supported by The Colonial View.
22. Objects from other cultures, often acquired with little knowledge of their meaning, were collected because of their exotic appearance.
23. Placed on display in a museum, carefully lit, almost any object can appear cosmopolitan.
24. At first these artifacts were valued as representatives of their societies that produced them and whose very existence was a source of astonishment.
25. Early encounters had repercussions that remain with us today.
26. A museum collection may document aspects of social history and the interaction between both countries and individuals.
27. Maori culture and history has been sanitised by European colonialism.
28. Most foreign artifacts capture attention because they look striking, strange or beautiful, but they seldom, of themselves, tell an immediately obvious story.

ALL TEXTS INCLUDED IN THIS WORK HAVE BEEN COLLECTED FROM THE DUNEDIN PUBLIC ART GALLERY AND THE OTAGO MUSEUM PRINTED MATERIALS, CATALOGUES AND SIGNS

Alex Rizkalla, Clare Fleming and Rohana Weaver, *Collecting Culture*, from *Instructional Models*, 2009

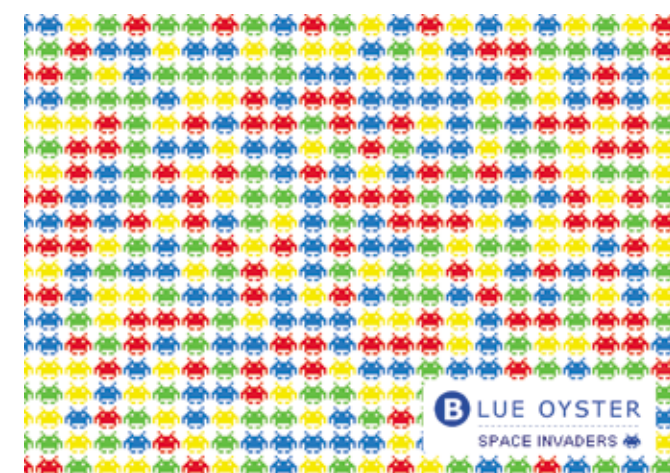


Gregor Kregar, *Matthew: 12/12*, from the *International Art Fair and Cake Stall*, 2004



Michele Beevors, *Psycho Killer and Friends 3/10*, from the *International Art Fair and Cake Stall*, 2004

in the ceiling. Director Ali Bramwell and the trustees put endless hours into extensive renovations in order to create a usable space. While they faced financial issues and an unforeseen rise in the required compliancy standards, the successful realisation of the space gave the Blue Oyster a new direction and sense of character. The gallery reopened on 21 June 2005 in the Moray Place basement, tucked down a shadowy alleyway. The new premises radically differed from the more traditional, light and airy High Street gallery, which featured, high ceilings and wooden floors. In contrast, Moray Place had low ceilings, brick walls with irregular surfaces, and a cold cement floor. The windows were barred, and the gallery was illuminated by artificial rather than natural light. The new space, however, was bigger, with three galleries. While the High Street site had a more traditional gallery feel, the new premises were less suited to conventional art, more conducive to pushing the boundaries. The larger and multiple spaces led to a diversification in the exhibition programming, enabling three or more distinct projects to be exhibited at once for just under a month (in contrast, the 1999 programme allowed for a single exhibition for two weeks). Surrounded by cafés, near several dealer galleries, and on the same block as the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, this location also allowed for constant evolution in audience diversity and stimulated greater community participation with contemporary art.



Rowan Wernham, *Space Invaders*, 2002, cover design

While the Blue Oyster continued to provide a successful alternative venue for local and national artists at its new location, there were rising tensions between the gallery's role as a professional, established art gallery and its identity as an alternative project space. While it strove to maintain professional standards comparable to more commercial galleries, the space has continued to challenge institutional practices by maintaining its key mission to provide a venue for innovative and confrontational art. Following the trust's original ethos, the art is generally non-commercial, but occasionally an exhibition has intentionally blurred the lines between commerce and alternative art. In 2007, for example, *Made at the Sweatshop* consisted of a twelve-day performance by Jay Hutchinson, who slavishly produced printed t-shirts in the gallery and

then sold them for a price based on the cost of materials and ten cents an hour for labour. His aim was to draw attention to the exploitation of labour in Third World countries. The resulting queues to buy these bargain artworks underscored the consumerist drives that fuel the use of sweatshop labour. While this work critiqued consumerism, the use of the Blue Oyster space for more overtly commercial intentions tends to be less well received. Mike Cooke's exhibition *Thunder Head and Rainbow Face* (2008) was criticised for its overt attempt to sell the artworks. In the early years of the Blue Oyster, artists paid a fee to cover the costs of showing and the opening night, and they were in principle allowed to sell their work (although this was reputedly a rare event). More recently, the provision of artist fees led to the implementation of a policy that discouraged artists from pricing works in the gallery. Despite this, Cooke's show of large, brightly coloured acrylic works of cartoon like subjects was very popular, and the artist sold the majority of his works during the exhibition. This made the Blue Oyster appear far too similar to a traditional dealer gallery, crossing the line between alternative space and commercial gallery. As a result, the present board is taking care to avoid further uncritical consumerist interventions.

The first show of 2009 marked the continuation of the Blue Oyster's international ties with the Japanese- New Zealand collaboration Hello Lamb. Michelle Armistead, a past Blue Oyster Director, travelled as curator with the



Mike Cooke, *Thunder Head and Rainbow Face*, 2008, installation views



Jay Hutchinson, *Made at the Sweatshop*, 2007

similar methods and materials. They created their sculptures within the gallery itself, and then made drawings of the city before and after an environmental disaster. This programme continued in conjunction with Anya Sinclair's environmental installation of large stalactite sculptures, *Future Girl*. Described as immersive phantasmagorical landscapes, *Future Girl* created a private universe that questioned the lines between virtual and physical realities. After experiencing the installation, students were encouraged to write short stories in response to Sinclair's environment and their ideas about caves. These stories were then used to construct their own fantasy landscapes through various drawing techniques. This non-profit educational programme, available to any school year, makes the Blue Oyster's offerings accessible to a new generation of Dunedinites, the future contemporary art audience.

More mature audiences have also been targeted, with artist talks and discussion sessions encouraging open debate and facilitating discussion about difficult or controversial art. Max Oettli's gallery talk in conjunction with his exhibition *Men* (2008) revealed a growing feeling on the board that simply holding and opening and exhibiting art was not enough, more engagement with the audience was needed. In 2009, therefore, forums were organised to discuss controversial and interesting exhibitions. The group exhibition *Instructional Models* (April 2009) was met with heated discussion over one of the exhibited works. A collaborative project organised in conjunction with the Aotearoa New Zealand Arts Educators conference, *Instructional Models* featured works that were realised by Dunedin based artists in response to instructions sent to them by Melbourne artists. The realisation of artworks for the exhibition was open to interpretation, with the instructions either re-ordered or rejected. The work *Collecting Culture*, the result of a collaboration between by Melbourne artist Alex Rizkalla and Otago Polytechnic School of Art students Clare Fleming and Rohana Weaver, examined issues of national identity and the misappropriation of indigenous culture through tourist souvenirs. This work consisted of a wall-mounted display of souvenirs collected from Australia and New Zealand. During the installation, concerns arose that some of these retrograde New Zealand objects were highly offensive because of



Onward! Education workshop, 2009



Hello Lamb: *The Perspectives of Elsewhere*, 2009, Installation view

their tapu nature. The artists substituted for these objects signs that read, "We have removed this object due to its offensive content." These events stimulated controversy and accusations of censorship. In the wake of the exhibition, a panel discussion was held that centred on issues surrounding the display of culturally sensitive material. With a panel that featured Paul Tapsell (Dean of Te Tumu, the University of Otago's School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies), Bridie Leonie (Head, School of Art, Otago Polytechnic), Elizabeth Caldwell (Director, Dunedin Public Art Gallery) and the local artist Simon Kaan, this well-attended event stimulated an engaged discussion with the audience.

Although the Blue Oyster began as a small gallery, with a small budget, and a small group of volunteers, its big ideas have had a significant impact on Dunedin's art scene, establishing an innovative and respected art space dedicated to promoting new and experimental art. The gallery gives creative autonomy to the artist or curator, allowing them to create alternative works and to provoke critical discussion relevant to contemporary culture. Over its ten-year history, the Blue Oyster has hosted a range of national and international emerging and established artists, notable exhibitions and events, and played a part in furthering New Zealand's contemporary art scene. The pearls of wisdom that have grown from this gallery show the invaluable role of contemporary art, how something can be priceless while eschewing commercial value.

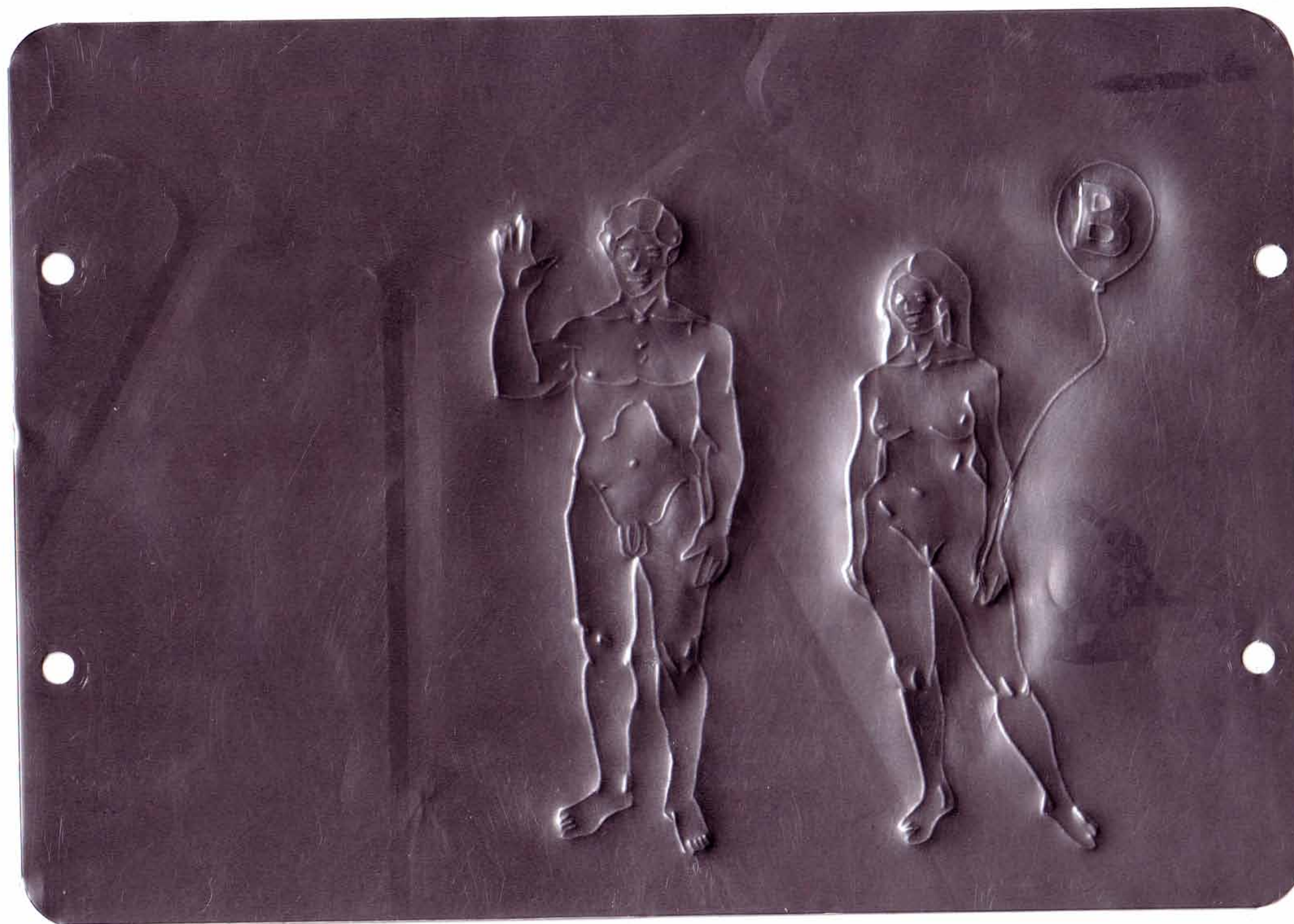
The Pioneer 10 is lost in space, billions of miles from here, heading toward the eye of Taurus. Aboard is a golden plaque with earthy greetings from a friendly nudist couple, and helpful directions, should anyone feel like dropping in.

I wish that I could shoot this book out of the atmosphere, in the hope of making contact across time and space. The alternative is space that is closer to home. Some copies will no doubt be lost in bookshelves, storerooms, and landfills. But one copy will be safely stuffed in a hole and cemented over within the Blue Oyster Project Space to be unearthed by BOG gallery-goers in civilizations to come, so they might know what's been happening lately.

There is hope in expression, communication.

We greet you, citizens of the future!

Bekah Carran



Blue Oyster Art Project Space Chronology: 1999–2009



1999

29 Jun–10 Jul
Collections Taonga Trash
Rachael Bye, Steve Carr, Douglas Kelaher and Clare Warmington
Curated by Emma Kitson

13–24 Jul
Tell Me Something That I Do Not Know
Michael Morley

29 Jul–7 Aug
Executor! "The Living Archive"
Richard Crow

10 Aug–21 Aug
Future Proof – If I Were a Blackbird
Kathleen Peacock
In association with High Street Project

24 Aug–4 Sep
Future Proof – Paradiso, XXXI, 108/109 and the Tin Foil Super Shields
Robert Hood
In association with High Street Project

7–18 Sep
Future Proof – Target
Ian McDonald
In association with High Street Project

21 Sep–2 Oct
Future Proof – zombie@co.nz
Amanda Newall
In association with High Street Project

5–16 Oct
Future Proof – Boggane
Steve Carr
In association with High Street Project

19–30 Oct
Future Proof – Waiting Room
Douglas Kelaher
In association with High Street Project

2–13 Nov
Future Proof – Obsolete
Emma Kitson
In association with High Street Project

15–27 Nov
Future Proof – Blueprint
Sera Jensen
In association with High Street Project

30 Nov–11 Dec
Out of the Blue
Rudy Adrian, Teresa Andrew, Duncan Bruce/Coadm, CYAN, Shay Dewey, Cathy Helps, Sandra Kellian, Emma Riah Kitson, Jacqueline Elley, Isaac Francis Leuchs, Warren Olds, Tania Robinson and Sahaaliah Staah
Curated by Steve Carr

2000

1–12 Feb
Better Than the Real Thing
Dan Arps, Nick Blanchet, Megan Brasell Jones and Shannan Collier, Tanya Carlson, Eddie Clemens, Issac Leuchs, Greg Lewis, Demarnia Lloyd, Michael Morley, Jonathan Nicol, Warren Olds, Tiso Ross, Layla Rudneva-Mackay, Richard Shaw, Julaine Stephenson and Ben Webb
Curated by Doug Kelaher and Emily Barr

15–26 Feb
Photometric Fish
Arthur Goldsmith

29 Feb–11 Mar
At The Blue Oyster
Dane Mitchel and Victoria Munro

14–25 Mar
Mind and Matter: Revisiting the Romantic Sublime
Peter Belton, Maryrose Crook and Nathan Thompson

28 Mar–9 Apr
Paintings/Construction
James Robinson and Jimmy Cooper

11–22 Apr
A Little More Big Bang Theory
Nicolas Sratt

25 Apr–6 May
Love and War
Belinda Harrow

9–20 May
The Idiot Who Lost the War
Michael Morley

23 May–3 Jun
Meaning?
Pauline Rhodes

5–17 Jun
the Abuser
Sean Kerr

20–30 Jun
New Walls
Margaret Roberts

4–15 Jul
Paper Show – First year Anniversary show
Fiona Amundsen, D.D.C, Katherine Claypole, Maria Forde, Helen Geraets, Monique Jansen, Martin Kean, Katie Keane, James Kirkus-Lamont, Emma Riha Kitson, Peter Madden, Caroline McCaw, Dane Mitchell, Kari Morseth, Shaun Oughton, Kim Pieters, Dylan Rainforth, Nick Spratt, Betty Summers and the others, Grant Thompson and Nathan Thompson
Curated by Steve Carr

15 Jul
Recycled Memories
Raphael Vella Ma

18–29 Jul
Touch me not
Teresa Andrew

2–12 Aug
Swarm
Ali Bramwell, Cathy Helps

16–26 Aug
Rex Industries
Douglas Rex Kelaher

20 Aug–9 Sep
Fedex
Stella Brennan

12–23 Sep
Shimidsu Sakura
Caroline McCaw, Kim Pieters

26 Sep–7 Oct
White Boards: new work by Bing Dawe
Bing Dawe

10–21 Oct (Picnic event Sat 14 Oct)
The Picnic (Dunedin/Port Chalmers/Christchurch/Wellington/Online)
Layla Rudneva-Mackay, Christina Houghton, nerv/ habibi, Douglas Kelaher and Emily Barr, The Winkers

with David Muir, Martin Kean, Sandra Bell and Brett d'Squirm, Rob Linkhorn, Filo, Seagull Monkey Horse, Regan Gentry and Bekah Carran, Pipi and Mae, Teresa Andrews and Ruby O'Connor, Libby Paulin and friends, Cathy Helps, Roger Palmer, Jenny Powell-Chambers, Larry Matthews, Sarah Jones, Glen Ross, Matt Frost, Prue Edge and Cathy Tane, Russell Chambers, Steve Carr, Nick Duval-Smith, Virginia Fay, Osi BSY, Robert Landreth, The Lunam Mushroom Pot Luckers, Jo Thorrenson, Jane Venis, James Curran, Elaine, Bob Scott, Francisca, Johannes Contag, Three Phase Goddess, Aveida da Liberdade, Sulcus, Empress and Loop, Aaron Frater, Teresa Andrews, Simon Morrison-Deaker, Jason Holland, The Logan Sisley Collective, Izzy Biscotti, S*W*A*B, Anastasia Straponoviski+SCAR, Emma Kitson, Demarnia Lloyd, Shay Dewey, Sarah Jones, Matthew Frost, Tim Gibson, Paula Brand and Penny Hagen, Kim Pieters, Into the Void, Rob Linkhorn and participants.
Curated by Caroline McCaw

24 Oct–4 Nov
Atomic
David Haines

7–18 Nov
Display
Seraphine Pick

21 Nov–2 Dec
The Adventures of DJ Clock
Steve Carr featuring Jim Speers

5–16 Dec
The last solo exhibition in the world
Julian Dashper

19–30 Dec
The last group exhibition in the world
Eidia (Paul Lamarre and Melissa Wolf), John Nixon. Marie Shannon, Jan van der Ploeg...
Curated by Julian Dashper

2001

23 Jan–3 Feb
Summer Lovin
Anon, Su Ballard, Ciaran Begley and Rachel, Jon Bywater, Duncan Bruce, Lee Devenish, Cathy Helps, Paul Johns, David Hatcher, Sandra Kellian, Caroline McCaw, Sophie Mellor, Georgiana Morrison, Shaun Oughton, Seraphine Pick, Tania Robinson, Nick Spratt, Nathan Thompson, Angela Singer and Lauren Winstone
Curated by Steve Carr and Bryony Allan

6–17 Feb
The Impossibility of Comfortable Living
Phil Murray

20 Feb–3 Mar
A night of performance
Teresa Andrew, Ali Bramwell, Steve Carr, Anthony Deaker, Karen Fensom, Farina Lim and Sleep

6 Mar–17 Mar
Office Space
Dan Arps, Hannah Beehre, Emma Bugden, Edward Clemens, Paul Johns, Douglas Rex Kelaher, Sean Kerr, Isaac Leuchs, Layla Rudneva McKay, Daniel Malone, Michael Morley, Jonathon Nicol, Warren Olds, Julaine Stepehson, Peter Robinson and Ben Webb
Curated by Douglas Rex Kelaher and Dan Arps

20–31 Mar
Pedestrian
Fiona Amundsen

3–14 Apr
Travel Stories VI
Ina Johann

17–28 Apr
Auto-skinning: Passive Abduction No 1
Jan van der Ploeg

1–12 May
Platform
Owen Kahl

May 12
Grip
Jan van der Ploeg

15–26 May
Hannah Beehre

29 May–9 Jun
Three Points of Tension
Ali Bramwell

12–23 Jun
Blue Oyster 2nd Birthday–The Cotton Show
Teresa Andrew, Bryony Allan, Su Ballard, Venessa Crave, Nicola Farquhar, Sophie Hartnell, Clair Havell, Cathy Helps, Ina Johann, Douglas Kelahar, Justin Kerr, Katy Lyon and Jane Venis, Tatyanna Meharry, Rainy McMaster, Emma Milburn, Warren Olds, Kim Pieters, Angela Singer, Sharee South, Grant Thompson, Nathan Thompson and Jan Wilson.

26 Jun–7 Jul
Winter Garden
Emma Kitson

10–21 Jul
Images from the Rotting Archive
Nathan Thompson

14 Jul–4 Aug
Ghost Sheep
Anglea Singer

7–18 Aug
Les Objets du Desir
Ilse Marie Erl

21 Aug–1 Sep
Storage D
Annie Bradley

4–15 Sep
dis-tress
Teresa Andrews

18–29 Sep
FUGUE
Georgiana Morison

2–13 Oct
Pastel Prick
Geoff Heath

16–27 Oct
Modular
Alex Gawronski and Lisa Kelly

30 Oct–10 Nov
Unoccupied
Simon Robinson

13–24 Nov
Grant Thompson
Grant Thompson

27 Nov–8 Dec
Untitled
Phil Frost and Peter Wheeler

11–23 Dec
The Chrisp and Smooth and Lively Hopped Lucky Dipping Xmas Show
Bryony Allan, Di Halstead, Cathy Helps, Aiden Howse, Douglas Rex Kalaher, Greg Lewis, Kim Pieters...

2002

22 Jan–2 Feb
The Graduate Show
Kate Belton, Stephanie Chalmers, Vanessa Crow, Katy Lyon, Rainy McMaster, Hayden Prujean, Fiona Short, Jane Venis and Susan Wilson

5–16 Feb
03 Art Show
James Bell, Philip James Frost and Emma Milburn

19 Feb–2 Mar
Fox Rox
A.D. Schierning

5–16 Mar
Travel Log
Adam Douglass

19–30 Mar
Home Structure
Vanessa Crowe

2–13 Apr
Artist at Blue Oyster
Ciaran Begley

16–27 Apr
Transitional Places (Moving From, Moving Towards)
Ali Bramwell

30 Apr–11 May
Works on Paper
David Hatcher

14–25 May
The Blue Oyster's Third Anniversary Leather Show
Bryony Allan, Lisa Benson, Alannah Brown, Bekah Carran, Ranitar Charitkul, Iain Cheesman, Nicola Farquhar, Lloyd Godman, Aidan Howse, Di Halstead, Caroline McCaw, Rainy McMaster, James Robinson, Angela Singer, Ana Terry and Sonja Van Kerkhoff

28 May–8 Jun
Nocturnal Emissions
Jane Venis

11–22 Jun
Chance Encounters
Georgiana Morison

25 Jun–6 Jul
Noughts, Crosses or Tiddlywinks?
Paul Johns

9–20 July
From Holland
Douglas Kelaher and Warren Olds

24 Jul–3 Aug
The Monkey Lovers
Nathan Thompson

7–17 Aug
N.A.F.T.A...
Fred Lonidier

20–31 Aug
Harris Hill Road
Janelle Lynch

4–14 Sep
Suburban Dreams
Cathy Helps

17–28 Sep
Don't Leave Me This Way
Susan Jowsey and Marcus Williams

1–12 Oct
Signs
Scott Eady

15–26 Oct
Theme Parks
Hannah Beehre, Bekah Carran, Philip James Frost, Fiona Jack and Sean Kerr

29 Oct–9 Nov
Drink II
Pauline Rhodes

12–23 Nov
@ the speed of light
Lloyd Godman and Trevor Coleman

26 Nov–7 Dec
a sort of wing ...
Sarah Pink and Susan Ballard

10–21 Dec
Dreamweaver
Judy Darragh

2003

21 Jan–1 Feb
Graduate Show 2003
Annika Dawkins, Julia Davies, Tim Eddy, Hannah Howes, Emily Pauling, Tania Stevens and Sian van Dyke

4–15 Feb
Landscapes
Mitch Robertson

18 Feb – 1 Mar
Stuck in the intro...
Violet Faigan

4–15 Mar
The Shape of Things
Stephen Belsten

18–29 Mar
Humiliation IQ
Michael Morley

1–12 Apr
Painter's Block
Willum Geerts

5–26 Apr
Installed and Live
Adrian Hall

29 Apr–10 May
Matthew 12, 12: "And surely man is worth far more than a sheep!"
Gregor Kregar and Glen Spencer

13–24 May
BLOY05.03
Hannah and Aaron Beehre

27 May–7 Jun
Blue Oyster 4th Anniversary Birthday Show: Fruit and Flowers
Liz Bryce, Vanessa Crowe, Nicola Farquhar, Don Hunter, Caroline McCaw, Jason Secto, Angela Singer, Kate Springford, Ana Terry and Cathy Tuato'o Ross

10–21 Jun
The Blathering
Jane Venis

24 Jun–5 Jul
Animality
Angela Singer

8–19 Jul
World of Pain
Nicholas Spratt

22 Jul–2 Aug
Post-Areas; A leap of fake
Iain Cheesman, Gala Kirke and Ana Terry

5–16 Aug
Unearthed
Tracey Cockburn

19–30 Aug
Mulatto
Di Halstead

2–13 Sep
Hone Wiremu Heke Pokai agrees, I'm a country hick.
Scott Flanagan

16–27 Sep
Enjoy Presents
Ciaran Begley, Ryan Chadfield, Matt Couper, Eugene Hansen, Mike Heynes, Johan Lake, Louise Tulett and Tao Wells
Curated by and also shown at Enjoy Public Art Gallery

30 Sep–11 Oct
Strange Things Might Work
Ali Bramwell, Paul Cullen and Peter Nicholls

14–24 Oct
Pink Slip
Rainy McMaster

28 Oct–8 Nov
Brick City
Daniel Malone

11–22 Nov
A Town Called Lawrence
Nathan Pohio

25 Nov–6 Dec
Excesskin
Cameron Bishop

9–20 Dec
Portable: The Blue Oyster Import/Export Company
Teresa Andrew, Ali Bramwell, Iain Cheesman, Cathy Helps, Douglas Rex Kelaher, Michael Morley, Mike O'Kane, Emily Pauling and Nathan Thompson

2004

27 Jan–14 Feb
Graduate Show 2004
Stephen Belsten, Glynn Berland, Emily Harris, Hamish Jones, Ruo Yun Kao, Reiko Kunimatsu, Jody Yawa McMillan, Anna Muirhead and Rachel Taylor (Entire Gallery)

17 Feb–6 Mar
Mr and Mrs Pink's Fabulous Collection
Helen Calder, Samuel Craig, Lynton Denovan, Aaron Eastwick, Sam Eng, Scott Flanagan, Emma Fitts, Emily Gardener, Jacquelyn Greenbank, Coral Harnett, Julia Holderness, Robert Hood, Paul Johns, Jayne Joyce, Joanna Langford, Simon Lawrence, Emma Mettrick, Amanda Newall, Clare Noonan, James Oram, Miranda Parkes, Oli Perkins, Jamie Richardson, Ben Shoal, Zina Swanson, and Ri Williamson
Curated by High Street Project (Entire Gallery)

9–27 Mar
Sampler
Joanna Langford (East Side)

Del suo fratello
Ian Balch (West Side)

30 Mar–17 Apr
Contact
Iain Cheesman (East Side)

Alice
Belinda Grace Curran (West Side)

20 Apr–May 8
The Winter Garden: An Engram
Cathy Tuato'o Ross (East Side)

Labor L'amour
Kah Bee Chow, Catherine Garet and Nurhan Qehaja (West Side)

11–30 May
Flexi
Karin Van Roosmalen (East Side)

From the Black Bag Series
Lisa Benson (West Side)

1–19 Jun
The Blue Oyster International Art Fair and Cake Stall
Fiona Amundsen, Teresa Andrew, Dan Arps, Hannah and Aaron Beehre, Lisa Benson, Michelle Beevors, Mladin Bizumic, Ali Bramwell, Liz Bryce, Bekah Carran, Iain Cheesman, Ruth Cleland, Jim Cooper, Scott Eady, Violet Fagan, Amanda Floyd, Phillip James Frost, Lloyd Godman, Di Halstead, Cathy Helps, Don Hunter, Paul Johns, Douglas Kelaher, Gregor Kregar, Bridie Lonie, Rainy Mc Master, Gary McMillan, Michael Morley, Gala Mydlova'-Kirke, Karin van Roosmalen, Warren Olds and Nicola Farquar, Seraphine Pick, Ana Terry, Erin Templeton, Fleur Yorston and Jane Venis (Entire Gallery)

22 Jun–10 Jul
Euclide 2003/04
Amanda Floyd (East Side)

Involved in an affair, the duty of memory
Elizabeth Bryce (West Side)

13–31 Jul
Room
Ruth Cleland, Emily Pauling, Hayden Prujean and Gary McMillan (East Side)

Sea / Soar
Chris Hargreaves and Dave Stewart (West Side)

3–21 Aug
Juggernaut
Don Hunter (East Side)

Untitled (pornography)
Richard Reddaway (West Side)

24 Aug–11 Sep
Rant
Nick Dewar (East Side)

CWS (Celebrity Worship Syndrome)
Gala Kirk (West Side)

14 Sep–2 Oct
Political Landscapes
Jennifer French, Gregor Kregar and Jim Searle
Curated by Blue Oyster Arts Trust (Entire Gallery)

26 Oct – 13 Nov
following the sun
Cathy Helps (East Side)

Mobile
Kah-Bee Chow, Scott Flanagan, Daniel Malone, Richard Maloy, Sriwhana Spong and Yuk King Tan
Curated by Tessa Giblin (West Side)

16 Nov–4 Dec
272 Willis St and Foostcray Avenue
Emma Bugden and Colin Hodson (East Side)

The Gift and the Proper–Frothing the Synaptic Bath
Jan Wilson (West Side)

7–18 Dec
B-Grade
Katrina Burton, Ryan Cockburn, Jim Cooper, Violet Fagan, Martin Kean, Adrian Hall, Amy-Jo Jory, Caroline McCaw, Michael Morley and Anna Muirhead (Entire Gallery)

2005

24 Jan–11 Feb
Class of 2004: The Graduate Show
Kushana Bush, Mike Cooke, Nick Dewar, Mark Hansen, Amy Jo Jory, Kara Luskie, John McCafferty, Tomi Vsehla and Gemma Webb (Entire Gallery)

14 Feb–3 Mar
Clubmeet
Gary Bridle, Sandy Gibbs, Geoff Newman and Kim Paton (East Side)

{Nothing =Something}
Mario and Sylvia (West Side)

6–24 Mar
The Hawthorne Experiment
Anonymous (East Side)

Kurt Adams
Kurt Adams (West Side)

29 Mar–16 Apr
Art Emergency
Lisa Benson, Ali Bramwell, Julie Callow, Sophie Canaday, Boon Cartel, Iain Cheesman, Lynda Cullen, Blair Cunningham, Nick Dewar, e.i.kapai, Amanda Floyd, Shane Harvey, Jay Hutchinson, Don Hunter, Leah Houghton, Craig McNab, Anna Muirhead, Brendon Philip, James Robinson, Jim Searle, Kim Swanson, Ana Terry and Alan Tansley (Entire Gallery)

19 Apr–7 May
Who will teach me to paint the wind
Emily Harris (East Side)

morph OBSERVATIONS IN THE FIELD
Monica Peters (West Side)

10–28 May
House Work
Regan Gentry, Emma Smith, Ros Cameron and Louise Tulett
Curated by Danae Mossman (Entire Gallery)

Blue Oyster moved from 137 High St to Moray Place

21 Jun–9 Jul
Hood
Kim Swanson (Upper Gallery)

Husk
Chris Baldwin (Darkside Gallery)

Natura Stupet
Fiona Lascelles (Lower Gallery)

12 Jul–30 Jul
Proposition
Simon McIntyre and Monique Redmond (Upper Gallery)

Wishes lies and dreams II
Sarawut Chutiwongpeti (Darkside Gallery)

Tenderhooks
Angela Lyon (Lower Gallery)

2–20 Aug
(Untitled)
Ryan Moore (Upper Gallery)

Lil'Jiffy
Scott Eady (Darkside Gallery)

Rivals
Mark Hanson (Lower Gallery)

23 Aug–10 Sep
Canned Heat
Teresa Andrew, Julie Callow, Steve Carr, Judy Darragh, Cathy Helps, Hayden Fowler and Sarah Jane Parton
Curated by the Blue Oyster Trust (Entire Gallery)

13 Sep–1 Oct
Trans
Ina Johann (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Terminal Eden
Ana Terry (Lower Gallery)

4–22 Oct
BODY/SPACE/RITUAL/TEXT
Rodney Browne, Kushana Bush and Lynn Plummer (Upper Gallery)

ND 4 TV
Nick Dewar (Darkside Gallery)

Robin Neate
Robin Neate (Lower Gallery)

25 Oct–12 Nov
August Moon
Jenny Gillam (Upper Gallery)

The Fluoro Rider
Rohan Weallans (Darkside Gallery)

Green for New Zealand: watching the sea
Andreas Pytlik
Curated by Ali Bramwell (Lower Gallery)

15 Nov–3 Dec
Island (s)hopping
Di Halstead, Don Hunter, Lee Houlihan, e.i.Kapai, Ana Terry and Monika Theng (Upper Gallery)

Animal Suite
Catherine Bagnall and Julian Bishop (Darkside Gallery)

Second Problem
Paul Cullen (Lower Gallery)

6–23 Dec
Bells and Whistles
Michele Beevors, Darcy Gladwin, Cameron Grant, Gala Kirke, Michael Morley and Peter Stapleton (Entire Gallery)

2006

24 Jan–11 Feb
Grad Show
Esther Curnow, Leah Doesburg, Rachael Easting, Dyana Gray, Wendy Keynon, Tina Lim, Jemma Poole, Katrina Thomposon and Nerina Ward (Entire Gallery)

14 Feb–4 Mar
Plan B
Leah Houghton (Upper Gallery)

Drifting Observatories
Fiona Connor and Margot Didsbury (Darkside Gallery)

Sunny Days
Ruth Cleland (Lower Gallery)

7–25 Mar
the heart hath ears
Victoria Edwards (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Housekeeping
Kat Taiaroa (Lower Gallery)

28 Mar–15 Apr
Video Garden
Jenny Gillam and VJReX (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

from textile to concrete
Jay Hutchinson (Lower Gallery)

18 Apr–16 May
360°: Sound Art
Su Ballard, Richard Francis, Antony Milton, Rosy Parlane, Bruce Russell and Lovely Midget
Curated by Peter Stapleton (Entire Gallery)

9–27 May
Some Morphology
Miranda Playfair and Jane Zusters (Upper Gallery)

Draft
Kathryn Mitchell (Darkside Gallery)

Return
John Borley - Resident Artist (Lower Gallery)

30 May–17 Jun
The Vinyl Frontier
Anna Muirhead (Upper Gallery)

Faking It
Cathy Helps (Darkside Gallery)

Return
John Borley - Resident Artist (Lower Gallery)

20 Jun–8 Jul
Play
Rebecca Agnew, Jacqueline Greenbank, Morgan Oliver, Simon Lawrence and Jamie Richardson
Curated by Ali Bramwell and Charlotte Dick (Entire Gallery)

11–29 Jul
Gathering Intensities
Pauline Rhodes (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Brickwork
Ros Cameron (Lower Gallery)

1–19 Aug
Things and Stuff
Kirsten Koch (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

New
Victoria Bell (Lower Gallery)

22 Aug–9 Sep
Inventory
Kannika Ou (Upper Gallery)

Holding Still
Rebecca Stewart (Darkside Gallery)

Second Nature
Angela Singer (Lower Gallery)

12–30 Sep
Pool
Katharina Jaeger in collaboration with Kim Pieters and Peter Stapleton (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Ducks–Series 2004–2005
Nicole Page-Smith (Lower Gallery)

3–21 Oct
Performance Series
Avatar Body Collision, Vivien Atkinson, Lisa Benson, John Borley, Ali Bramwell, Steve Carr and Sean Kerr, Mark Harvey, Naomi Lamb, Sally J. Morgan and No Mad Nomad
Curated by Charlotte Dick (Entire Gallery and Offsite)

24 Oct–11 Nov
Some Symptoms of Painting
Iain Cheesman, Jay Hutchinson, Doug Kelaher, Michael Morley, Jema Poole, Katrina Thomson and Nathan Thompson
Curated by Cathy Helps (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Darren Glass: Historiography
Darren Glass
Curated by Bernard Hamlin (Lower Gallery)

14 Nov–2 Dec
Wee Hiccup
Teresa Andrew, Andrew Last, Emily Pauling, Kim Pieters and Rebecca Pilcher
Curated by Ana Terry (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Newmediayouth
Jason Secto (Lower Gallery)

5–16 Dec
R.S.A.
Ali Bramwell, Bekah Carran, Iain Cheeseman, Linda Cullen, Cathy Helps and Douglas Kelaher
Curated by Anna Muirhead and Emily Pauling (Entire Gallery)

2007

23 Jan–10 Feb
Graduate Show
David Good, Matt Gillies, Chris Schmelz and Gemma Tweedie. Curated by Amy-Jo Jory (Entire Gallery)

13 Feb–3 Mar
Want or Need
Belinda Harrow (Upper Gallery)

Myspace
Jenna Todd (Darkside Gallery)

Surface Revisited
Sarah Munro (Lower Gallery)

6–24 Mar
Made at the Sweatshop
Jay Hutchinson (Upper Gallery)

Drawing on Dreams
Ailie Rutherford (Darkside Gallery)

Blue Movies: Blue Oyster Video Archive
Various Artists (Lower Gallery)

27 Mar–14 Apr
Gallery Spaceships
James Robinson (Upper Gallery)

Equipotential Bonding
Charlotte Dick (Darkside Gallery)

Warcraft
Kristen Perrett (Lower Gallery)

17 Apr–5 May
Are We There Yet...?
Neil Emmerson (Entire Gallery)

8–26 May
Double
Carolyn Casey, Jim Cooper, Kirsten Ferguson, Rachel Gillies, Angela Lyon, Craig McNab, Jamie Oliphant, Rebecca Pilcher and Justine Walker
Curated by Ana Terry (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Lost in Space
Alex Kennedy (Lower Gallery)

29 May–16 Jun
A/V Senario
Alex Monteith (Upper Gallery)

Renown (Salad Days)
Sharna Osborne (Darkside Gallery)

Threadbare
Jessica Douglas (Lower Gallery)

26 Jun–7 Jul
New Zealand Landscapes
Ian Robbins (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Looking Awry
Hector Hazard
Text by Adrian Hall (Lower Gallery)

10–28 Jul
420 Project: Life the Universe and the 420 Centre

Over 200 artists
Curated by Adam Douglass (Entire Gallery)

31 Jul–18 Aug
Waveform
Campbell Kneale, Michael Morley, Kim Pieters and Nathan Thompson
Curated by Nathan Thompson (Entire Gallery)

21 Aug–8 Sep
Elsewhere
Brydee Rood (Upper and Lower Galleries)

Constellation
Peter Trevelyan (Darkside Gallery)

11–29 Sep
Drawn
Michele Beevors, Tony Bond, Vanessa Crowe, Adrian Hall, Jonathan Otley and Mark-Antony Smith
Curated by Emily Pauling (Upper Gallery)

Flipside to the Darkside
Cat Simpson (Darkside Gallery)

Joan: God's Own
Lynda Cullen (Lower Gallery)

2–20 Oct
Monumental Ignorance
Katrina Thomson (Upper Gallery)

Blueprint for Inertia
Christopher Baldwin (Darkside Gallery)

Sub Division
Amy-Jo Jory (Lower Gallery)

23 Oct–10 Nov
Project Nature Fig 20b. {maps of the world Vol.1}
Rotoplus (Upper Gallery)

Sighing: just out of earshot
Viel Bjerkeset Andersen, Lisa Benson, Neil Berecry-Brown and Jieon Lee, Thom Vink and Saara Ekstrom and Gordana Andjelic Galic
Curated by Ali Bramwell (Darkside and Lower Galleries)

13 Nov–1 Dec
Monuments Dreaming of Me
Richard Bryant, Richard Frater and Patrick Lundberg (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

The Back Boot Project
Victoria Bell, Michele Beevors, Bekah Carran, Scott Eady, Michael Morley, Emily Pauling and Benjamin Smith
Curated by Anna Muirhead (Lower Gallery)

4–22 Dec
Rap
Ali Bramwell, Matt Gillies, Steve Godman, Reuben Moss, Kannika Ou, Holly Russell, Angela Singer, Gemma Tweedie and Steve Walsh
Curated by Michelle Armistead (Entire Gallery)



2008

22 Jan–5 Feb
On and On: The Rotating Video Collection
Karin Hofko (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Drink your Medicine
Alannah Brown (Lower Gallery)

12 Feb–8 Mar
Graduate Show
Alisthia Holzer, Aliko Boufis, Aroha Novak and Jenna Todd (Entire Gallery)

11 Mar–5 Apr
Little Lost Boys
Victoria Chidley, Kirsty Cameron and Daisy Jackson (Upper and Darkside Galleries)
International Residency
Katarina Weishaeupl (Lower Gallery)

31 Mar–5 Apr
Performance Art Series
Sach Catts, David Cross, Gill Gately, Brent Harris, Kristy Lilico and Pippa Sanderson, Cellulite Rose and Joyoti Whylie
Curated by Jenna Todd (Upper and Darkside Galleries and Offsite)

8 Apr–3 May
MEN
Max Oettli (Entire Gallery)

6 May–31 Mar
Postmodern T-shirt Clearance Sale
Craig Hilton (Upper Gallery)

How to Draw Trees
Magbh McIntyre (Darkside Gallery)

BANG! BANG! BANG!
Hayley Williams (Lower Gallery)

3–28 Jun
Ghost Moth
Aidan Howse (Upper Gallery)

Untitled (Past)
C. Scott (Darkside Gallery)

MODERNLOVE
Jason Secto (Lower Gallery)

1–26 Jul
Uninvited
Carmel Cosgrove (Upper Gallery)

Down the Gurgler
Sue Marshall (Darkside Gallery)

WORKSHOP 'Zeigeist Becomes Form
Emily Cannan, Mark Currie, Emily Hlavac-Green, Julia Johnstone, Michelle Krause, Alex Lovell-Smith and Jess Lousley
Curated by Max Oettli (Lower Gallery)

Tomahawk
Adam Douglas (Offsite)

29 Jul–23 Aug
The Barge and the Bear
Christina Read (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Trouble Everyday
Kate Woods (Lower Gallery)

26 Aug–20 Sep
Ducters and Muses
Margaret Dawson (Entire Gallery)

23 Sep–18 Oct
We Hold Back the Night
Caroline McQuarrie (Upper Gallery)

The Orator Vs. The Warrior
Vicky Browne (Darkside and Lower Galleries)

21 Oct–Nov 15
The Blue Room: 13 Artists Respond in a Psychic Way
Bekah Carran, e l. august and l. a. clifton, Andrea du Chatenier, Violet Faigan, Lonnie Hutchinson, Saskia Leek, Louise Menzies, Dane Mitchell, Rebecca Pilcher, Johanna Sanders, Pippa Sanderson and Stuart Shepherd
Curated by Pippa Sanderson (Entire Gallery)

18 Nov–13 Dec
Thunder Head and Rainbow Face
Mike Cooke (Entire Gallery)

20 Dec
One Day Sculpture: Intertidal
Douglas Bagnall, Adam Hyde and Walker and Bromwich
Curated by Rachel Gillies and Caro McCaw (Offsite)

2009

27 Jan–21 Feb
Hello Lamb: Perspectives of Elsewhere
Ichiro Endo, Keng Pin Hsu, Kimita Hattori, Koshi Kawachi, Tessa Laird, Ryuzo Nishida, Kennyyu Oku, Brydee Rood, Kakuro Sugimoto, Go Watabe, Daisuke Watanabe and Genda Yoshinaga
Curated by Michelle Armistead (Entire Gallery)

24 Feb–21 Mar
Grad Show
Max Bellamy, Emily Cannan, Reuben Moss,

Natasha Nicolson, Sally-Anne Shephard, Tom Mackie, Jampa Stuart and Steve Walsh (Entire Gallery)

24 Mar–18 Apr
They paved paradise, put up a parking lot
Sylvia Schwenk (Upper and Darkside Galleries)
(X Performance 27 March)

"Devloution #1" and "Thus I spoke Silence"
Sudhir Kumar Duppati (Lower Gallery)
(Performances 27 March)

WISH – About Spaces
Sarah Forgan and Irvine Forgan (Lower Gallery)
(Performance on 4 April)

21 Apr–16 May
Instructional Models
Melbourne: Sally Mannall, Open Spatial Workshop, Raafat Ishak and Tom Nicolson, Terri Bird, Julie Davies, Alex Rizkalla, Nikos Pantazis, Sean Lougherey, Johathan Luker, Spiros Panigirakis, Fleur Summers. Dunedin: Bibiana Guevara-Hunter, Christine Kellar, Alex Lovell-Smith and Karen Tiaroa-Smithies, Anna Muirhead, Ali Bramwell and Lars Preisser, Inge Flint and Max Oettli, Victoria Bell and Lee Houlihan, Clare Fleming and Rohana Weaver, Max Bellamy, Sophie Black and Peter Gorman
Curated by Ocular Lab and Clubs/Open Spatial Workshop (Entire Gallery)

19 May–13 Jun
Aural Histeric
Emma Morgan (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Onward!
Kate Boocock (Lower Gallery)

16 Jun–11 Jul
Future Girl and Tales of Interior Logic
Anya Sinclair, Alan Ibell (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

Islands: You and Me – A Second and a Lifetime
Markus Hofko (Lower Gallery)

14 Jul–8 Aug
Is this Enough?
Justine Walker (Upper Gallery)

Paviljon Marinum
Boris Dornbusch (Darkside Gallery)

Interface
Cathy Helps (Lower Gallery)

11 Aug–2 Sep
Samuel Georgia Oscar / Turning back and forth
Martyn Reynolds (Upper and Darkside Galleries)

replace
Eva Wuerdinger (Lower Gallery)

8 Sep–3 Oct
Unstable institutional memory: 10 years at the Blue Oyster
Anonymous, Hannah Beehre, Steve Carr, Richard Crow and Michael Morley, Julian Dashper and Margaret Roberts
Curated by Ali Bramwell (Entire Gallery)

Trustees

Steve Carr: (founding member) 1999–2001
Douglas Rex Kelaher: (founding member) 1999–2004
Kate Plaisted: (founding member) 1999–2000
Wallace Chapman: (founding member) 1999–2001
Emily Barr: (founding member) 1999–2001
Teresa Andrew: 2001–2004
Ali Bramwell: 2001–2004
Cathy Helps: 2001–2006
Nathan Thompson: 2002
Terrence Wood: 2002
Bekah Carran: 2002–2006
Claire McClintock: 2003–2004
Iain Cheesman: 2003–2005
Lynda Cullen: 2004–2005
Nick Dewar: 2004–2005
Don Hunter: 2005–2006
Ana Terry: 2005–2007
Jay Hutchinson: 2005–2007
Anna Muirhead: 2006–2007
Emma Bugden: 2006–2008
Amy Jo Jory: 2006–2007
Emily Pauling: 2006–2008
Rachel Gillies: 2006–2008
Michael Morley: 2006–2008
Jenna Todd: 2007–2008
Sue Marshall: 2007–2009
Julia Davies: 2008–2009
D'Arcy Dalzell: 2008–2009
Peter Gorman: 2009
Bernard Hamlin: 2007–
Jo Campbell: 2008–
Max Oettli: 2008–
Dr. Erika Wolf: 2008–
Anya Sinclair: 2008–
Maddie Grady: 2009–
Aroha Novak: 2009–
Jonathan Marshall: 2009–

Directors

Kate Plaisted: 1999
Steve Carr: 2000
Byrony Allen: 2001
Peter Wheeler: 2001
Melanie Hogg: 2002–2003
Robyn Dold: 2003
Ali Bramwell: 2004–2006
Charlotte Dick: 2006–2007
Benjamin Smith: 2007
Michelle Armistead: 2007–2008
Jenna Todd: 2008
Jaenine Parkinson 2009–

Administrators

Charlotte Dick: 2005–2006
Karyn Taylor: 2008
Deidre O'Malley 2009–

Contributors

Ali Bramwell is an artist and independent curator based in Dunedin. In recent years, a lively interest in public exhibition projects has taken her work to Australia, Bosnia, Germany, Korea, and Sweden. Long affiliated with the Blue Oyster in diverse roles, most of which entailed cleaning the toilet, Ali can still be found on occasion leaning on a wall during an opening.

Bekah Carran is a sculptor with a BFA from Otago School of Art. Her recently commissioned work *I Remember Golden Light*, was part of the nationwide One Day Sculpture project. A Blue Oyster Trustee from 2002 to 2006, she lives and works in Dunedin.

Jo Campbell is a current Trustee of the Blue Oyster Gallery and a PhD student in Art History and Theory at the University of Otago. She has lectured in contemporary New Zealand art and her current research is on the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship.

Rachel Gillies is a Senior Lecturer and researcher at Otago Polytechnic. As part of her research practice, she regularly engages in collaborative projects linked to digital communication and technologies, whilst working as an artist, writer, or curator. Originally from the UK, Rachel has been in New Zealand for four years and is a former Trustee of the Blue Oyster.

Douglas Kelaher was a founding trustee of the Blue Oyster Gallery and is currently an itinerant artist traveling and working overseas. His practice exploits sculpture, photography, and video; looking at the public's interaction with art, while critiquing the phrase *'carpe diem'*.

Caroline Mccaw is a Senior Design Lecturer at Otago Polytechnic and Academic Leader of the Bachelor of Communication Design degree. She is also an artist, designer, and curator with a history and particular interest in working with public art and digital interfaces.

Anna Muirhead is a former Blue Oyster Trustee and received an MFA from the Otago Polytechnic School of Art in 2008. She is the recipient of the Margaret Stoddart Award (2007) and William Hodges Residency (2008). Her curatorial work includes the on-going Back Boot Project. Her art practice shows a fondness toward crappy and everyday materials and investigates constructed landscapes, monuments, gardens and public spaces.

Melanie Oliver is a curator based in Wellington. She has managed a range of contemporary art spaces, including artist-run initiatives Enjoy Public Art Gallery and Blue Oyster. As Assistant Curator at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery from 2007 to 2009, Oliver curated Francis Uprichard's *rainwob i*, *Break: Towards a Public Realm*, the *Open Window* series, and Liz Allan's One Day Sculpture project.

Sarah Wilson is a student at the University of Otago, where she is completing a Bachelor of Arts with combined honours in Art History & Theory and History. Hailing from Wellington, she is presently writing her honours dissertation, an institutional history of the Blue Oyster and plans to pursue further post-graduate study related to art.

Erika Wolf is a current Trustee of the Blue Oyster Gallery and a Senior Lecturer in Art History and Theory at the University of Otago. Originally from New York City, she is continually amazed by Dunedin's depth of engagement with contemporary art and the wealth of creative talent in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this document, the Blue Oyster would like to be informed of any errors so future documentation is correct.

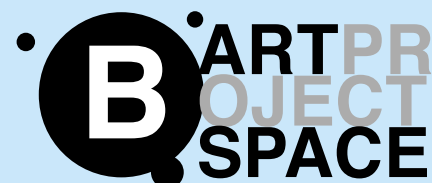
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Cover Image

Max Oettli, Blue Oyster Alleyway, 2009



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