

other echoes

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.

– Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias*, (1967)

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable

...
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

...
Other echoes
Inhabit the garden, Shall we follow?

– TS Eliot, from “Burnt Norton” (1935)

IN HIS INFLUENTIAL TEXT, *OF OTHER SPACES, HETEROTOPIAS*, FRENCH Philosopher Michel Foucault discusses the garden as an exemplary case study of the concept of heterotopia, a site that ‘is capable of juxtaposing in a single real space several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.’¹ The map of the Dunedin Botanic Garden embodies Foucault’s theory of Heterotopias via the diverse nature of the sites contained within the garden as a whole. The artists in **OTHER ECHOES** seek to build on this notion by highlighting the heterotopic nature of the garden itself. The works add a further dimension to the garden space, heightening the juxtaposition of the elements of the separate sites and leading to new readings and renewed appreciation of the garden.

The Western history of the purpose of botanic gardens can be traced from medicinal gardens in the Renaissance to fulfilling a growing interest in exotic and foreign species in the 17th century. This adoption of encyclopedic and anthropological objectives is consistent with other public institutions during the enlightenment and continued into the modern era. In aspiring to show and give access to botanic specimens from around the world within one site, the modern botanic garden becomes a lush heterotopia. Indeed, as Foucault states, ‘The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.’² **OTHER ECHOES** responds to Foucault’s assertion and celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the Dunedin Botanic Garden by examining the wider connections between the spaces and histories present at specific sites inside and outside the garden.

Cath Cocker’s rusting and ramshackle *Watershed* looks as if it has endured years in the open. It bares the marks of kinship with its rural brothers and sisters, and pays homage to its primary construction component: corrugated iron—a colonial material if ever there was one. The juxtaposition of the shed, a vernacular structure, amongst the order and formality of the gardens creates a momentary disconnection of hierarchy. A hierarchy that has been influenced by historical ideals, yet while the Botanic Garden exists as a structure of order it is a relatively flat and inclusive power structure, where species are treated with equivalence – living side by side.

Clare Fleming’s *Many trees from other lands are already with us* is situated amongst the Eucalyptus trees in the Arboretum. Working with trees that are not valued symbolically or aesthetically in New Zealand, but which are nonetheless part of the

collection, Fleming has chosen to reflect on personal connections with immigration and settlement. She has made her own networks within the garden space: her history becomes interwoven with the history of the planted Eucalyptus and, more broadly, the colonial history of the Botanic Garden and the European settlement of New Zealand. Just as Cocker’s corrugated iron signifies a colonial material that has acquired new meaning on the other side of the world from which it was created, so too does Fleming rope her own story to these imported trees, to create new personal and social meanings. Echoes of these political, social, and geographical ‘footfalls’ reverberate through the garden, and these artworks emphasise the notion of the garden as a ‘totality of the world’, a place where traces and echoes of many places exist.

Professor Ebakat von Hochstetter & The Fabricarus Society superimposes a certain history of the Nelson area onto the Otago region and creates a museum inside the Botanic Garden’s Information Centre. Artist Nina van der Voorn questions the existence of true knowledge and its unscrutinised transmission from source to source, an idea succinctly summed up by science fiction and fantasy author Ursula Le Guin: ‘What everybody knows is true turns out to be what some people used to think.’³ Exhibiting objects pertaining to the existence of the Fabricarus bird in the same style, and with the same precision, that museum curators employ situates the information as authentic, an aura enhanced by its presence inside the Information Centre. By increasing the viewer’s awareness of the power of authoritative context, this playful intervention asks its audience to examine their own processes of truth-making.

Marion Wassenaar’s midden—traditionally an area for the disposal of domestic waste—is situated next to the Herb Garden, and complicates ancient cultural mores by placing a waste site next to a site of harvest. *Midden life crisis* emphasises the cyclic nature of harvest, of use and re-use. That this particular midden contains seeds from pine trees, lemons, and poppies (to name but a few), speaks to the side-by-side and the seemingly incompatible elements of the garden: plants that thrive in warmer climates exist in proximity to the water garden, plants for display growing alongside plants with more pragmatic qualities. The artist suggests that this heterogeneity will fade over time. Once prized for their differences, these plants will become valuable for their fundamental composition: the seeds will become a mass of homogenised biochar, their nutrients feeding the soil, their traces decomposing and nurturing the chosen site for years to come.

Charlotte Parallel also examines the cultivation of biological forms in the Rock Garden running along the East bank of the Leith. While *Saturated Solutions* could be seen to explore the botanic processes of transplantation and diversification, it has more in common with industrial agricultural experimentation. By working on an intentionally small scale, but by continually adding to the collection of strangely unnatural forms, Parallel foregrounds the increasing homogenisation of land use in rural New Zealand. In this context, the Botanic Garden becomes a place of hope and refuge for those landscapes that are unable to turn a profit. It is a controlled public environment governed by tolerant ideologies of science and preservation, standing in opposition to private environments that are often managed with less beneficent motivations.

The Dunedin Botanic Garden offers a stunning diversity of spaces and fulfills a range of important needs for contemporary society. The artists in **OTHER ECHOES** contribute to this ongoing process of space-making by creating sites to reflect on the echoes embedded across the garden. Fleming attempts to anchor her home of Australia in Dunedin, while Cocker recreates the fluidity of a dreamscape imbued with colonial traces. Both Wassenaar and Parallel’s installations focus on the way in which we actively develop our relationship with the land and its resources. In the only indoor space of **OTHER ECHOES**, van der Voorn contemplates how differing modes of display affect our apprehension of information. This challenge to look harder and more keenly is felt across the exhibition; we should follow the footsteps and listen to the echoes—for how often can one experience the totality of the world in one remarkable location?

1. Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias*, 1967, <http://www.foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html>
2. Ibid.
3. Ursula Le Guin, *Tales from Earthsea*, Foreword, p. xv, 2001.



Thanks to: Alan Matchett, Barbara Wheeler,
Clare Fraser, Stephen Bishop, Robyn Abernethy,
and the Friends of the Dunedin Botanic Garden.

Design: Daniel Blackball
Illustration: Clare Fleming
Printing: Gilbert May
Text: Jamie Hanton

guide / other echoes

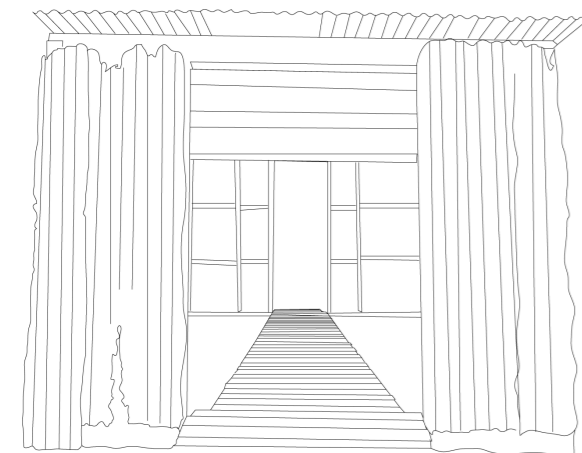
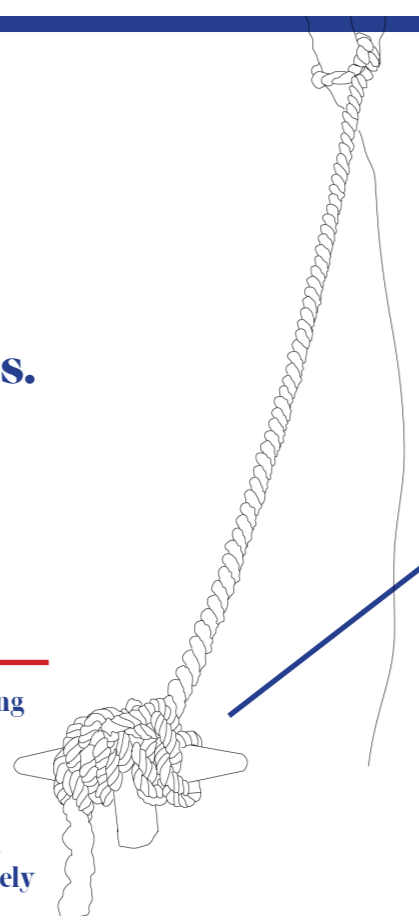
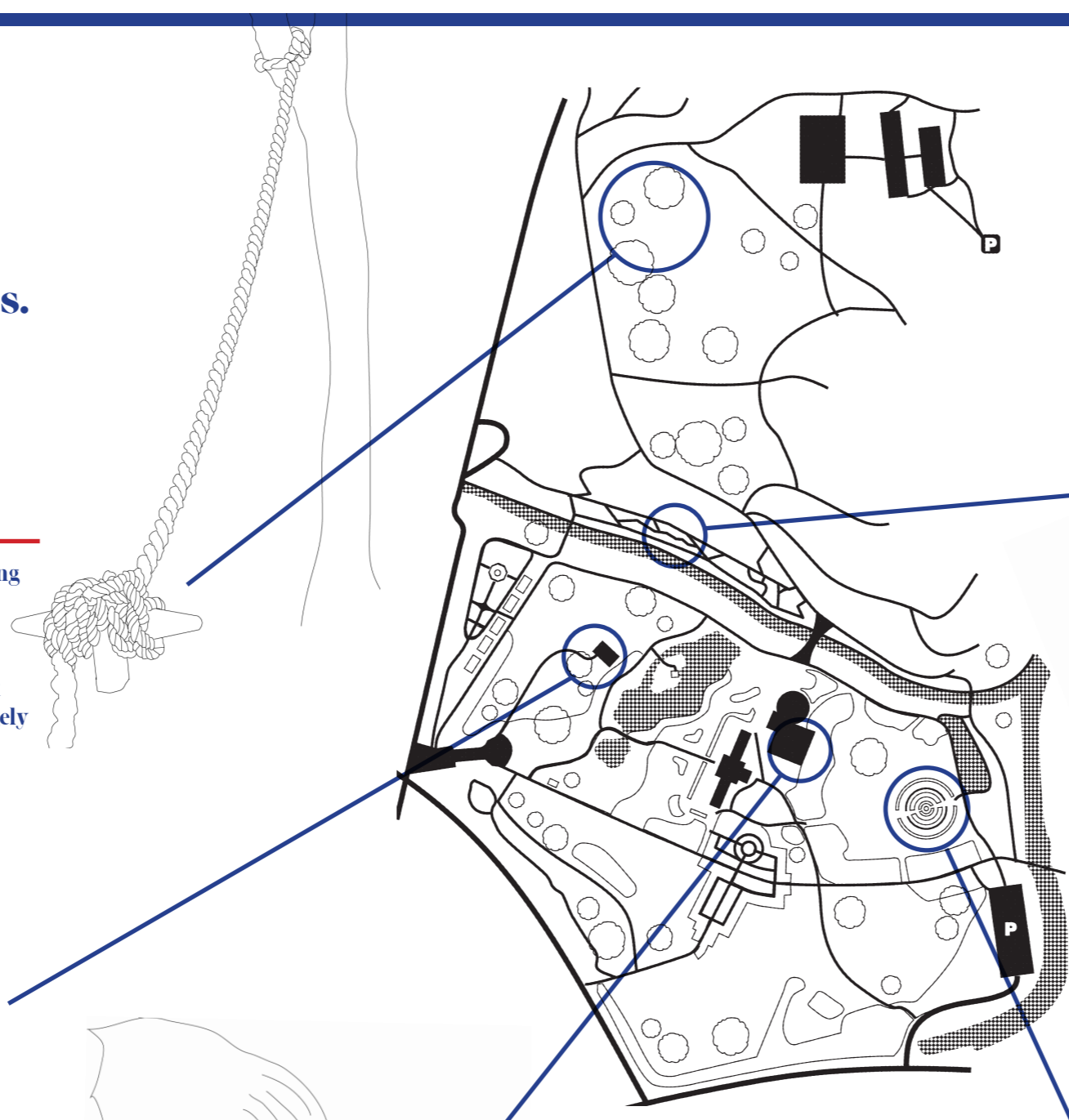
Many trees from other lands are already with us.

Clare Fleming

Ropes made from vintage woollen blankets, pine, enamel paint, 2013.

Located amongst the Eucalyptus trees, below the Aviary, Upper Garden.

Tying trees to the ground is a method for securing saplings or protecting aged trees in vulnerable positions. However, the scraggly, hardy exotics in the Eucalyptus grove seem to be far past the need for protection. As a symbol of the complex push and pull of settler experience, these strangely anchored trees suggest both the comfort of a homeland, and a sense of impermanence.



Watershed Cath Cocker

Corrugated iron, timber, PVC, galvanized steel spouting, pumping mechanisms, 2010 – 2012.

Located behind the Bandstand, Lower Garden.

The origins of Cath Cocker's *Watershed* can be traced to a vivid and moving dream the artist once experienced. Entering the shed, with its walls and floor of water, is like being submerged into a dream-like state where the fluidity of the events and the memories flow freely around the visitor.

Professor Ehakat von Hochstetter & The Fabricarus Society Nina van der Voorn

Mixed media, 2012 – 2013.

Located in the Botanic Garden Information Centre, Lower Garden.

An informative exhibition on a little known bird, the Fabricarius, Pahewahewa Pohehetias seen only in the South Island of New Zealand. Various objects, artifacts, and texts are presented including images of the creature, eyewitness accounts, a sound recording and physical evidence such as gizzard stones.

Saturated solutions Charlotte Parallel

Sponge, wire, pumice, egg shell, gravel, cotton buds, alum potash, salt, borax, copper sulphate, sugar, soda, vinegar and food colouring, 2013.

Located in the northern end of the Rock Garden, Upper Garden.

Charlotte Parallel's miniature rock garden is created from agricultural and domestic chemical compounds. By simulating forms that occur in nature, but tinkering with them in a way that renders them unnatural, *Saturated Solutions* reflects on the environmental implications of potentially harmful horticultural experimentation and modification.

Midden life crisis Marion Wassenaar

Charcoal seeds, 2013.

Located in the border of the Herb Garden, Lower Garden.

Midden life crisis uses the ancient form of the midden - a dumping area for domestic waste - to draw attention to issues of waste in a world of depleting resources. The delicate organic charcoal seeds within the midden communicate the impermanence of life and the fragility of human existence, while referring to the historical and ongoing importance of charcoal in artistic practice.

