

20 September 2016

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## Exhibition a “homecoming” for ambitious contemporary artist

The work of one of New Zealand’s most ambitious contemporary artists will be exhibited at Adam Art Gallery’s final exhibition for the year, *Bad Visual Systems*, which opens on Saturday 1 October.

*Bad Visual Systems* centres on the work of New Zealand artist Ruth Buchanan who conceptualised and designed the exhibition in response to the interior spaces of Victoria University of Wellington’s on-site art gallery.

The exhibition represents a homecoming for Berlin-based Buchanan, who grew up in Wellington and has been gaining attention in Europe in recent years for her distinctive work that combines text, video, sculpture and architecturally-scaled display systems.



Installation view of Marianne Wex, *Let's Take Back Our Space: 'Female' and 'Male' Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures* (1977-79), Badischer Kunstverein, Germany, 2012. Exhibition design: Ruth Buchanan. Photo: Stephen Baumann bild\_raum

Originally invited to present a solo show, Buchanan developed a full-gallery exhibition that includes works by acclaimed German artists, Marianne Wex and Judith Hopf. The exhibition presents three generations of women artists who explore social and representational systems from their gendered perspectives.

A key feature of the exhibition is a two-level presentation of Wex’s ground-breaking photographic project, *Let's Take Back Our Space, 1977-79*, in which she compiles a compendium of images that capture differences between male and female body language through history.

Hopf also interrogates gender differences and the social norms that determine behaviour, but does so in an oblique manner through her films, drawings and sculptures, which poke fun at institutional systems and histories of representation.

This is the first time both Hopf and Wex’s influential body of work will be exhibited in New Zealand.

Buchanan's contribution consists of discrete works and also specially-designed elements that interact with the architecture and orchestrate the viewer's experience of all three artists.

Along with room dividers and screens, listening posts and sensor-activated video works, she has invited her brother, Wellington-based artist Ben Buchanan, to help her paint a mural directly on the Gallery's wall. The mural references the infamous mural French modernist architect Le Corbusier created for designer Eileen Gray.

Gallery curator Stephen Cleland says the artworks' various layers "create a highly textured experience for the audience".

"These elements incite a number of sensory responses that require visitors to engage with the works on more than just a visual level.

"Buchanan is an ambitious artist. Through her expansive approach to exhibition-making, and her decision to include collaborators, she has created a striking and highly responsive exhibition that will transform the gallery."

Gallery director Christina Barton says the exhibition brings into play three successive generations of responses to feminist issues.

"There is an underlying agenda to the exhibition. We are excited to showcase these artists' social and political insights, which they deliver by such fresh and original means. It will be an opportunity to reconnect with the long history of women's struggles against dominant power structures and visual regimes, as well as to celebrate a major undertaking by one of our brightest and most intriguing artists."

*Bad Visual Systems* will be launched at a free, public opening 5.30pm, Saturday 1 October at the Adam Art Gallery and will run until 22 December.

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[www.adamartgallery.org.nz](http://www.adamartgallery.org.nz)

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