



16 June 2021

Timely new thematic group exhibition opens at Adam Art Gallery

The latest exhibition at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington’s Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi is a thematic group show sparked by recent events and developed since Aotearoa New Zealand’s COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020.

Crossings draws on the period of the lockdowns, and its heightened awareness of intimacies and distances, as a collective pause that enabled us to envisage the existential complexities of being.

Curated by the Gallery’s director, Associate Professor Christina Barton, curatorial assistant Millie Riddell, and collection officer Sophie Thorn, the exhibition opens to the public on Saturday 19 June and runs until Sunday 22 August.

“The lockdowns were a moment to reflect, to turn inwards, to become aware of the interior worlds of our minds, our bodies, our homes, our country; when the churn of modern living was momentarily paused,” says Associate Professor Barton.

“It was also a time of anxious awareness of an external and invisible threat, where illness and death were reported daily and the pandemic’s deep causes were presented as a sign of the dangers yet to come as we face the negative effects of human impact on nature on a global scale.”

The 12 artists and collectives selected for the exhibition have been filtered through this thematic lens. They work in a variety of media, are of different generations, and have different life experiences and cultural backgrounds.

From a year spent in a grandmother’s unit in Rotorua to a dinghy of 13 refugees adrift in the Mediterranean sea, the works grapple with various conditions of being, drawing attention to



polarities between domesticity and uprootedness, illness and health, closeness and distance, and interiority and alienation.

“The show explores how objects, images, and materials carry meanings that are opaque, at the edge of conscious thought, that suggest rather than proclaim. They niggle at the edge of knowing, to articulate the promise and fear of a threshold state,” says Ms Riddell.

Included is current Walters Prize finalist Sonya Lacey’s footage of public swimming pools in Wellington shot during lockdown—usually thriving hubs of activity closed to the public to prevent the spread of disease.

This meditation on a closed space sits alongside photographs from *Here and Now*, 2010–2020—a series by Auckland-based Allan McDonald focusing on shop windows covered with newspaper, a familiar marker of passing time and changing fortunes—and a large-scale fabric installation by Turumeke Harrington that physically defines the Gallery space.

Crossings also features a new version of a work by James Tapsell-Kururangi, who, in 2019, lived for a year at his recently deceased grandmother’s house in Rotorua. Reflecting on the 12 months spent in the intimacies of her home among his beloved kuia’s personal possessions, he could not help but ask: “Can a year living at my grandmother’s house be an artwork?” This question is tested in a PDF only available on [the Gallery’s website](#).

The exhibition includes a project by Next Spring that features the first New Zealand screening of German filmmakers Philip Scheffner and Merle Kröger’s *Havarie*, 2016, which extends a 3.36 minute YouTube clip documenting the sighting of refugees adrift in the Mediterranean into a 90-minute film overlaid with a soundtrack of human stories that meet and overlap to bring attention to our fraught geopolitical moment. This is next to works by Rozana Lee, who creates textile pieces that draw on her Indonesian–Chinese heritage and address her own history of displacement.

Historical works are also included. The show features *Swan song*, 1995–96, an installation exploring domesticity, illness, and identity, which was the final work by Grant Lingard before he died of an Aids-related illness in 1995. Vivian Lynn’s *Threshold*, 1983/1996, is a book consisting of skin-like pages recalling her notion of the ‘epidermal self’. These are paired with recent works by Yolunda Hickman and Emma McIntyre, who likewise see the surfaces of their ‘paintings’ as the ground for extended and intensive investigation.

Layla Rudneva-Mackay’s small-scale variations on still life paintings evoke a sinister take on this traditional genre, darkly conjuring the artist’s own experience of illness and its impact on her life as a parent and a painter. Richard Shepherd’s photographic series, *Crisis Meeting*, likewise draws out loaded meanings embedded in ordinary objects: items he documents that were removed from a Women’s Refuge safehouse.

Image: Sonya Lacey, *Obstructions*, 2020, two-channel digital video from 16mm film, silent, 10 mins, courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald, Wellington.

Crossings (a group show about intimacies and distances)

Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi

19 June–22 August 2021

Tuesday–Sunday 11 am–5 pm

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington

Gate 3

Kelburn Parade

Wellington 6140

For more information, high resolution images or to arrange an interview with the artists/curators, contact Millie Riddell at millie.riddell@vuw.ac.nz, (04) 463 6835 or 021 059 4117, or Associate Professor Christina Barton at christina.barton@vuw.ac.nz, (04) 463 5254 or 027 563 5254.

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