



9 February 2021

Artist reworks Adam Art Gallery building for new show

Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington’s Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi is the latest recipient of one of acclaimed Aotearoa New Zealand artist [Kate Newby](#)’s internationally sought-after architectural ‘interventions’.

[Kate Newby: YES TOMORROW](#), 20 February–30 May, is the United States-based artist’s most substantial New Zealand exhibition to date and as for previous shows in the US, Canada, France, Austria, Portugal, and Australia she has radically transformed the very fabric of the gallery building itself.

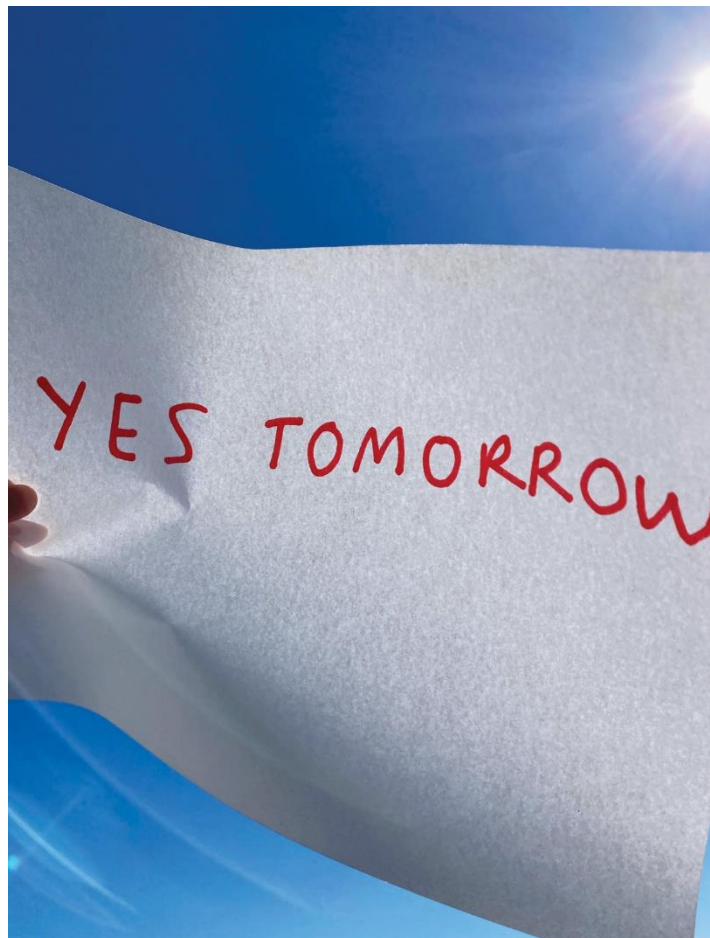
This includes new window panes, carving into and building over floors, and extending the exhibition space to encompass outside areas and even a small city park within the gallery’s sightline. There are works where you wouldn’t expect to find them inside the gallery too.

Newby, a past recipient of New Zealand’s most prestigious contemporary art award, the Walters Prize, and a recent recipient of a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant in the US, does not have a permanent studio and travels light, responding to locations where she is invited to exhibit and working with local suppliers, manufacturers, craftspeople, and helpers.

Her exhibition at the Kunsthalle Wien in Vienna, Austria, involved 6,000 bricks weighing 27 tons, and 300 kilograms of clay.

As well as clay, Newby’s Adam show incorporates other materials she has made her own such as glass, rope, and concrete.

After arriving in New Zealand at the beginning of December, Newby spent her two weeks in managed isolation in Manukau working on items for the exhibition. She even had 40



kilograms of clay delivered, but in the end didn't work on it in her room because its dust added to the feeling of claustrophobia.

Within hours of leaving isolation, Newby was near Warkworth at the Middle Earth Tiles factory carving unfired terracotta tiles made from local clay. During the Christmas break, she had relatives and friends folding clay over their thighs to make 80 half-pipes for the exhibition, and she staged public workshops in Wellington to achieve her target of 200.

Being back in New Zealand has enabled Newby to spend time at Te Henga, Auckland, and the home where she grew up. The exhibition includes early artworks stored in the garage there, such as the very first set of ceramic rocks she made in 2010.

“Although COVID-19 hasn't impacted New Zealand as hard as other parts of the world, everyone's really rinsed out, so why not make as generous a show as possible?” says Newby.

Her work has always been about making simple and unexpected transformations to the gallery space and sometimes escaping it altogether.

“I always do works outside and they're never proper public artworks but they're always about giving over energy to these less-seen spaces. They are about pulling down any kind of hierarchy people might put on to contemporary art.”

The stories behind Newby's exhibitions—with their “necessary reliance on situations and people and materials”—are also important to her, as well as countering traditional viewing habits.

“My work wants to fight the classic ways of looking at art. So with my work you can touch it, you can walk over it, you're invited to view it, but only if you're walking down to the end and back. You can't just stand and look at it. I'm against passive observation. I like active observation.”

Newby graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2001, a Master of Fine Arts in 2007, and a Doctor of Fine Arts in 2015. She was raised on a property where her father, Stuart Newby (co-author of *Playing with Fire: Auckland Studio Potters Society Turns 50*), was a potter.

“When I was at art school and I was writing on a cup and then glazing it, he was like: ‘Kate, you're being so lazy. Learn about the clay!’”

Newby came early to architectural interventions, using wooden pallets as space dividers in an apartment she shared in Auckland's Karangahape Road.

Her Adam exhibition follows major solo shows at the gallery by contemporary New Zealand artists Simon Denny (2014), Kim Pieters (2014), Ruth Buchanan (2016), Luke Willis Thompson (2018), and Edith Amituanai (2019).

Gallery director Associate Professor Christina Barton says of the exhibition: “We have been talking to Kate since late 2019 and were so pleased that, despite the impacts of COVID, we were able to commit to a show last year and Kate could come to New Zealand to create it.

“Her installations invite close attention and lead to new appreciations of the qualities, uses, and meanings of locations and materials. We see this as a gift to audiences to experience art in ‘real life’.”

Image: Kate Newby, *Yes Tomorrow*, 2021, colour photograph, courtesy of the artist.

Kate Newby: YES TOMORROW
13 February–31 May
Tuesday–Sunday 11 am–5 pm
Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington
Gate 3
Kelburn Parade
Wellington 6140

For more information or to arrange an interview with Kate Newby, contact Associate Professor Christina Barton on christina.barton@vuw.ac.nz or 04 463 5254 or 027 563 5254.

Issued by Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington Principal Adviser—Media Content: guy.somerset@vuw.ac.nz, +64-22-563 6589.

Follow the University on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#)

University name: The University's full name is Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. Where space constraints require our name to be abbreviated, please retain the word 'Wellington' to ensure our location is clear to readers.

**CAPITAL THINKING.
GLOBALLY MINDED.**
MAI I TE IHO KI TE PAE