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Gallery Four: Jacquelyn Greenbank, Jason Greig, David Hatcher & Cindy Bernard, Richard Killeen, Andrew McLeod

Invented realms, wild propositions, murky, passionate obsessions, heated debates and intense fascinations counterpoint the everyday grind of eating, working and socialising. We all have vivid imaginations. In this gallery four artists propose some augmented realities, and a collaboration between David Hatcher and Cindy Bernard draws on a humdinger of a fight between 'high' and 'low' culture c.1691.

In Andrew McLeod's paintings and drawings everything is delightfully and enchantingly out-of-whack. Figures, animals, birds, pieces of furniture, household objects, vehicles and sundry flora and fauna have been re-assembled, either free-floating or stacked against a flat background, or set within Tardis-like architecture that warps and expands unexpectedly. In *Grafton* a whole host of objects have burst into flame as if they hold a candle wick at their core, one figure is prone atop a flying towel or carpet in yellow bikini bottoms, while another slumps at the base of a bare tree-trunk. The lime green coffin-like box is populated only by vegetables. In *Green Rainbow* humans and critters mix uncomfortably: two naked women crouch and sit looking awkward, while the snake, birds, insects and cheeky squirrel seem more at ease. The style and colour palette of these works are reminiscent of story book illustrations and childhood encyclopaedias (before the ubiquity of photography as illustration). Elements of these works are strongly romantic, but what could be halcyon scenes are unsettled by the curious constellations of objects and beings.

Jacquelyn Greenbank conjures elaborate worlds out of wool by painstakingly knitting, crocheting and stitching around both found objects and forms of her own creation. The artist skilfully avoids her obsessiveness falling into the realms of gimmickry by her careful selection of scenarios to re-create. New Zealand culture, in particular our legacy as a post-colonial nation with dwindling affection for 'old blighty' (Britain), is what intrigues Greenbank most. *Her BBQ*, *Crate and Corgies* and *Touring Tandem* have an especially regal bent, festooned in woolly royal livery, and make up a paean of devotion. The works leave room for numerous potential narratives; perhaps 'Liz and Phil' have pedalled to a clearing and kicked back and enjoyed some good barbeque tucker. Having now left for further adventures, only the corgies remain, nestled in their carry crate. It is perhaps too easy to look back and sneer at the kitschness of the period surrounding the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and the much-awaited royal visits of yesteryear, however Greenbank's dedication, although playful, comes across as sincere rather than cynical.

Jason Greig's monoprints mine a much darker terrain. We are confronted by *Icebreaker*, an isolated figure lost in reverie. *Brother* and *Cleaner*, two well-attired gents in oval surrounds, on closer inspection could have some form of disfigurement or be in the throes of decomposition (a case of the flesh reflecting a poisoned soul?). Devil-like creatures are found in *Hellrider* and *Jailbreak*, while the hooded figure in *Eye of the Whale* keeps us guessing as to its internal form and purpose. Jason Greig has a strong fascination with the art and literature of times past, in particular with the Gothic sensibilities of the Victorian era. He draws inspiration from the work of past master printmakers such as Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Francisco de Goya, but his most important influence is French Symbolist artist Odilon Redon. These historical European influences merge with aspects of New Zealand's own Gothic legacy, particularly the idea of the man alone, battling inner demons and railing against an unforgiving rugged landscape. These influences are joined by a passion for and an exhaustive knowledge of doom metal music.

Richard Killeen has embraced the digital in the construction of his pictures, resulting in a new, incredibly rich and exciting body of work. *Fork and Spoon* and *Tool angel* present us with images of a sci-fi, retro-futuristic world where everything is graphically bold, smoothly rounded and evenly shadowed. Seemingly disparate objects are placed together in miniature vignettes. In both works we see primitive humanoid robots comprised of cutlery or everyday implements. Perspective and depth is knocked askew as they play off the flattening effects of rich and intricate patterning, layered upon layer. The prints' rich colours suggest a playfulness which belies some of the more sombre possible scenarios present in the works: a struggle between old and new technologies perhaps, or between nature and culture. An avid collector and classifier of images and motifs, these works possess a sense of the museum-after-dark where, in contrast to Killeen's earlier arbitrarily composed cut-outs, objects fight for dominance within the picture plane.

David Hatcher and Los Angeles-based artist Cindy Bernard's collaborative video work *The Inquisitive Musician: Screen Tests* uses a translation and adaptation of a seventeenth century German satire (attributed to Johann Kuhnau), *Musicus Curiosus, or Battalus, the Inquisitive Musician; the Struggle for Precedence between the Kunst Pfeifer and the Common Players*, which pits official court musicians against the 'beer fiddlers' in an argument over who is the better musician—those who play tunes by ear and memory or those who rely on printed music in order to perform. The text is read by visual artists in the manner of a screen test audition, some with a droll and deadpan delivery, some imbuing the text with much theatricality. The argument played out for us is poignant and pertinent comparisons can be drawn between this historical disagreement and contemporary discussions regarding elitist vs. populist forms of cultural expression. The video is part of an open-ended project that will take multiple forms.

For more information on these artists and to find out about events during 'Telecom Prospect 2007' go to: www.telecomprospect2007.org.nz

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