



SUSS

A VISUAL INVESTIGATION
INTO GENDERED SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTS

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WALLACE GALLERY
Marrinsville

Contents

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Cover Image

Donna Dinsdale & Anne Shirley. *Paradise, Today you will be with me in paradise.* 2022.

Page 9 Image

Nicol Sanders-O'Shea. *Suss Intuition (Set of 8)*, 2022.

Installation Photography

Anne Shirley.

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Nicol Sanders-O'Shea - Catalogue Essay	4
Suss: A visual investigation into gendered social constructs from an intergenerational multidisciplinary perspective.	
Artist Research Questions & Responses	6
Darcell Apelu	10
Would you date them?	
Heidi Douglas	12
After Now: Alone in the Woods of a Post-Colonial Land.	
Lynette Fisher	14
Social Orders.	
Donna Dinsdale & Anne Shirley	16
Paradise. Today you will be with me in paradise.	
Nicol Sanders-O'Shea	18
Suss Intuition (Set of 8) Suss Around (Set of 28).	
Anne Shirley	20
Peacock.	
Artist Biographies	22
Installation Documentation	23

Suss: A visual investigation into gendered social constructs from an intergenerational multidisciplinary perspective.

This research exhibition engages in creative research to produce creative outcomes that discuss and question concepts of gendered social constructs. Six women artists who encompass generational and cultural diversity have been selected to highlight a unique, challenging personal viewpoint through their creative art research practice. This engagement is also associated with the researcher/artist role in Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology and crosses generational and art disciplines.

The exhibition presents research discussions from each researcher/artist from a set of questions extending on the research question: What is the significance, consequence and/or extrapolation (an act or instance of inferring an unknown from something that is known) of gendered social constructs from an intergenerational multidisciplinary perspective?

The exhibition publication will present research discussions from each researcher/artist from a set of

questions extending on the research question: What is the significance, consequence and/or extrapolation (an act or instance of inferring an unknown from something that is known) of gendered social constructs from an intergenerational multidisciplinary perspective?

- How has gendered social constructs informed your creative work for this exhibition?
- What is the significance of this research to your main art/design practice?
- How has your generation and art practice/discipline impacted on the decisions and outcomes of this creative research?

The research in this exhibition seeks to explore a diversity of social constructs and study the development, structure, and functioning of human society (sociology) relevant to the development, creation and viewing of artworks. Artist are likely

to use images that are drawn or photographic for the symbiotic, connotative and denotative qualities; while the artist makes choices in order to first satisfy themselves as maker and viewer, the viewer engages with perception and memory to aid meaning. The artist sometimes inadvertently acts as a conduit, a way of enabling the construction of meaning through the systems of representation they deploy: such as mediated imagery can be understood within the context of family photographs as a way of reinforcing an existing system of social engineering. Professors Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright allude to this: "Language and systems of representation do not reflect an already existing reality so much as organise, construct and mediate our understanding of reality, emotion and imagination" (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 13).

The ability of the artist to construct imagery that may manipulate a perception and an understanding of

a gendered role (as members of a specific socio-cultural group). Sociology professor Pierre Bourdieu purports the photograph as a tool for reinforcing roles: "What is photographed and what is perceived by the reader of the photograph is not, properly speaking, individuals in their capacity as individuals, but social roles, the husband, first communicant, soldier, or social relationships, the American uncle or the aunt from Sauvignon" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 24).

Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2001) *Practices of looking: an introduction to visual culture*. New York: Oxford University Press

Bourdieu, P., & Boltanski, L. (1990) *Photography, a middle-brow art* (S. Whiteside, Trans.). California: Stanford University Press.

SUSS: Artist research questions & responses

How has gendered social constructs informed your creative work for this exhibition?

Darcell Apelu

As John Berger states in his series "Ways of seeing" "One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight." This philosophy of Berger's outlines the terrain that this creative work sets to expose. Though this philosophy was explored in 1972 the cultural expression of objectification is still prevalent.

Donna Dinsdale

Fashion trends and clothing styles, in particular, significantly aid the social construction of gender. There is increasingly no definite traditional role confirmation for males and females in contemporary society according to fashion apparel, with the ongoing formation and development of the concept of "neutral clothing".

Research suggests that the existence of this neutral garment phenomenon is not occasional and single, but a result influenced by social thinking, individual consciousness, social and cultural development. This "so called" appropriate attire sustains to successfully convince the audience that one's gender presentation is authentic, thus the dress we wear is layered with many meanings, such as culturally appropriate gender behaviour, gender socialization via dress, codes of dress and gender, historical perspectives of dress and gender, dressing parts of the self, social resistance, and gender markers.

Heidi Douglas

My work is a direct result from my experiences of being in an environment. As a research methodology, walking has a large impact in the outcome of my creative practice. This has changed throughout the years as my own social constructs have altered - that of mother,

wife, woman - and this body of work created for the SUSS exhibition is no different. The sensory experience of walking on the whenua has impacted not just in the work that I have created, but it is reciprocal in the way that it changes the way I view my own place in the world.

Lynette Fisher

The social construct of gender informs my practice in every aspect - visual communication depends on agreed roles of human interaction and this is described within the ideas I have looked at when developing the work for "SUSS".

Gender roles previously dictated by society change and evolve within reimagined environments, and with advancing forms of communication, niche subcultures are designed with their own language and social cues.

Nicol Sanders-O'Shea

I often use imagery appropriated from Girls and Boy's annuals, I am interested in how illustration conveys a sense of nostalgia and melancholy through the gendered roles portrayed. These images have fascinated and compelled me to create new narratives about the present. In this series of work, I started with creative processes that would both disrupt and structure imagery. This strategy was used to create new research and find new meaning with imagery that was familiar and unfamiliar. Through this exploration dominant gendered social constructs emerged (the dog and the cowboy).

Anne Shirley

Peacock is a nod to the number of years my mother co-existed with adolescent teenagers. At one stage there were ten adolescents ranging from around 11 to 18. The trace within the imagery leads the viewer back to a role and rite of passage rather than Barthe's 'referent' outside the photograph. There is a subtext at play with gendered roles, rites of passage and cultural norms.

What is the significance of this research to your main art/design practice?

Darcell Apelu

This work is a new direction I've started to investigate compared to previous works and my practice over all. I have previously examined concepts of being 'othered' as a pasifika women within a Eurocentric paradigm. Specifically in relations to ideas of 'class' & 'privilege' as well as the impacts of colonisation and late-capitalism have been recent explorations. This work in part does link to ideas of being 'othered' however this is directed more so to being othered and the objectification of the body. Previous research and outcomes of the artworks invite the viewer to consider their role in within a cultural paradigm. This research invites the viewer on a more intimate exchange, to consider the statements presented in the works and through the reflective materiality of the pieces.

Donna Dinsdale

This particular work is an extension of a previous project where the focus was on the garment as a conceptual static display. Although the original work highlighted and challenged discussion around gender as a social construct, Paradise takes this further with the garment becoming secondary to the act of physically dressing the garment on a body to play with the notions of gendered roles and rites of passage. As a collaboration between photography and fashion design, the research process underpinning Paradise, highlighted for me, the extension of valued ideas and shared practice.

Heidi Douglas

The selection of images is part of greater body of work which comprises my masters thesis being undertaken through AUT. I am exploring my immigrant status and the relationship that I have developed to my adopted whenua. This reportage combines my own experiences of my journey to understand the roots of colonial capitalism and it's effect on the whenua. As an immigrant, my learning journey has not always been straightforward, but this relational process with my surrounds has affected my relationship with my

perception of the past and future of our beautiful nation. This creative practice is ongoing and personal.

Lynette Fisher

Within my practice, I often take cues from language and reinterpret that into an image. It is interesting to try to express a thought directly to a viewer with access points and clues given within a painting. When given the title SUSS, I immediately picked up on the different interpretations of the shortened word within the Aotearoa New Zealand vernacular - Suss = suspect = suspicious. But it also means to become aware of something - to suss something out, to be on guard and to be shrewd. Much like the characters in my paintings - contemporary society is constantly on edge.

Nicol Sanders-O'Shea

The process of studio practice and starting over again, but using discarded and waste material left from previous exhibition work. I set myself a creative challenge to reuse imagery and found/waste material to create new work and new meaning. Discarded materials are often full of meaning sometimes through the absence of imagery. I used disruptive strategies of collage, and played on historical references in the imagery and printmaking discipline methods and approaches.

Anne Shirley

The significance of this work is located in the sociology of the family photograph album. It ranges from established dialogues between writers such as Roland Barthes and Geoffrey Batchen to Photographers such as Robert Frank, Enari Tsuneeo and Jose Manuel Fors and then the photographic imagery itself. The new knowledge lies within the performative gesture rather than the trace as an indexical sign.

How has your generation and art practice/discipline impacted on the decisions and outcomes of this creative research?

Darcell Apelu

The millennial generation I belong to has a direct correlation to the creative research, specially that the work records the trials of dating as a plus-size woman and that these experiences differ from previous generations. The work is of a personal nature and speaks only to being a cis-gendered woman within dating cis-gendered men. The ideas of courtship and expectations placed upon women in relation to gender roles and the 'rules' of dating with the use of online technology of instant messaging and dating apps.

References:

Berger, J. (2008). *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Adult.

Donna Dinsdale

Fashion design and textiles have always been part of my domestic and professional background. I have been gifted my knowledge throughout my lifetime from a series of significant mentors who have helped shape my practice. Historically, I was taught by the very best, my mum. More recently, there have been many friends, teachers, colleagues and whanau who have shared with me their advice, skills and cultural paradigms to enable me to create in a manner that encompasses sustainable practice and represents my own bi-cultural viewpoint. Paradise takes this past and present research; it acknowledges traditional reference but also allows for the expansion of fashion as a form of self-expression and exploration of gender roles in a contemporary context.

Heidi Douglas

Generationally I think there is a growing awareness of the failures of the past and how they need to be repaired and acknowledged - both on the ecological and indigenous level. More than a generation, I think that the line of research which sits along side my art practice is something that everyone should engage in. It is about understanding our roots - whether they be pakeha,

Maori, immigrant or something in between. We owe it to ourselves, if not as a culture, to understand the past so that we can be in the present to create a future that our descendants will thank us for.

Lynette Fisher

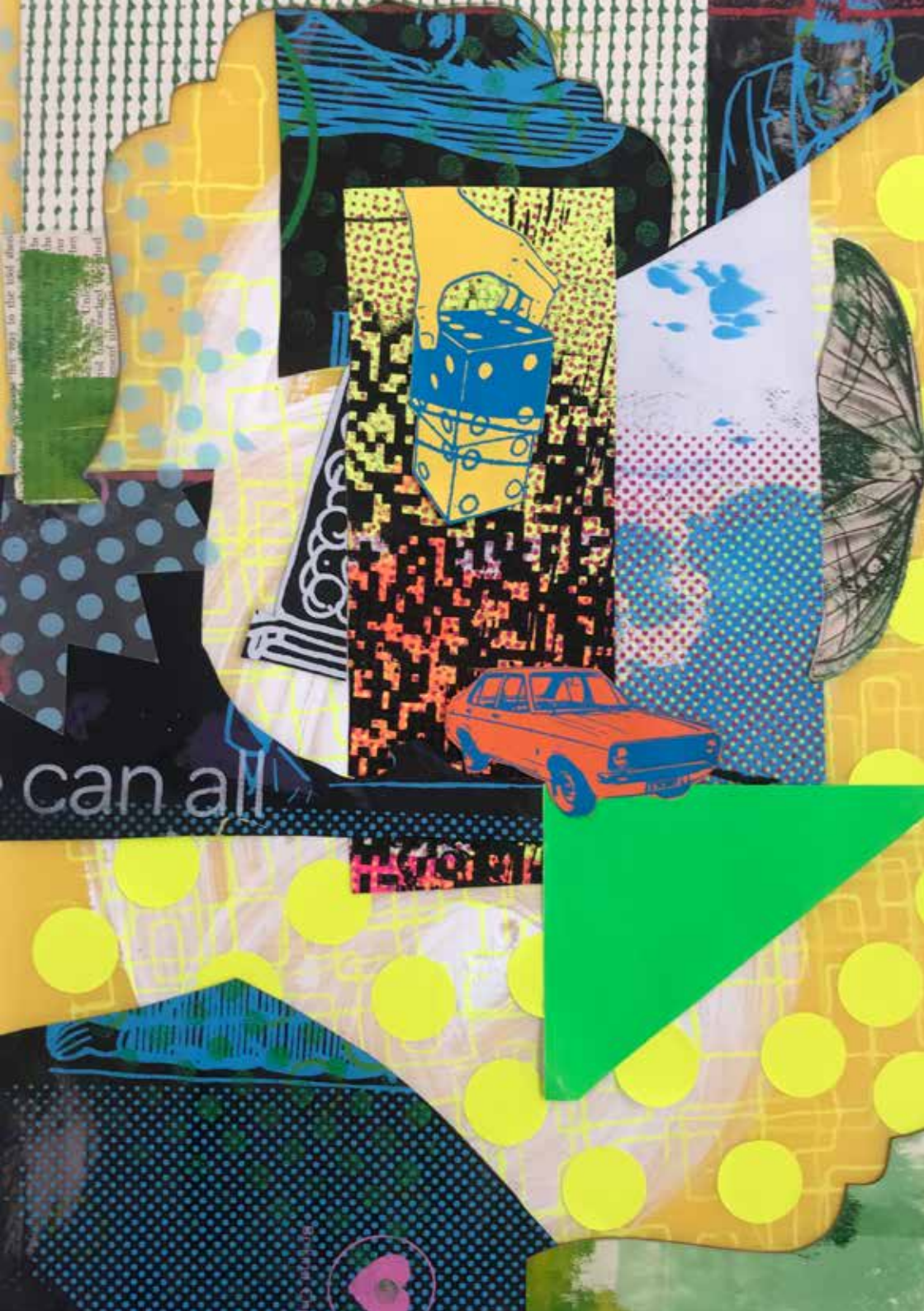
I chose to use my primary discipline of painting to unpack the ideas surrounding SUSS as a research topic. Deciding on hierarchical orders for the figures by composition and contrast and asking the viewer to make some of those decisions on social order themselves. Whether the paintings have a deeper meaning is up to a decision to read the wall texts or not, to strike up a conversation or not, or to give their own interpretation or not.

Nicol Sanders-O'Shea

I went to art school in the early 90's, appropriation was a strategy I have used ever since. Through this research I rediscovered my interest in collage and chine colle. I often refer to the discipline of printmaking seen in the dot references to Ben Day dots and moire patterns to signify commercial printing processes and mistakes in the process. Ben Day dots were developed by the late 19th century illustrator and printer Benjamin Henry Day, this also related to the concept of gendered social constructs and therefore gendered processes.

Anne Shirley

The work was formed around a complex dance between the reading/writings and the making. This was kept alive through a journal that held me to account and yet enabled me to push back and forward across the power of the image: the way it can act as an ideological imperative relating to social order and yet retain a kind of pathos - an intimacy bound in familial ties of a certain susceptibility and sustenance.



can all

THEORY

© 2000

Darcell



YOU'RE
BEAUTIFUL I
LOVE BBW



YOU'RE SO
FUCKING
CUTE BTW

Would You Date Them?

Gold Mirrored Perspex, 2022.

This project presents the unsolicited commentary of the artists body from a range of men the artist engaged in dating. The comments allude to a type of selfish intimacy where the body is objectified and the ego is manipulated via text messaging and the exchanges of images. From the artists experience contemporary dating is fraught with superficial and failed 'talking stages' where nothing eventuates beyond physical attraction. The overt statements made by these men reflect assumptions, desires and fantasies placed on women and in particular plus-sized women. The glazed material reflects back on to the viewer these intentional comments. How would you as the viewer respond to these audacious comments?

Apeluu



FUCK YOU'RE
HOT, SIT ON
ME ALREADY

Heidi

After Now: Alone in the Woods of a Post-Colonial Land.

Photographic Print on Aluminium,
2022.

This project is an ongoing photographic reportage of my relationship with the land. This iteration of the project looks explicitly at the effect of colonial capitalism on the whenua and the current reparation of the indigenous environments on Mauao/Mount Maunganui.

This practice-led project explores how photographically informed methods may launch and strengthen, for tauivi, a connection with the land and, specifically, Mauao/Mount Maunganui. My project explores how lens-based images can establish a deeper reflective relationship between humans and the maunga, thereby facilitating the decolonising processes in relation to the land. Within the context of the reparation of the damaged colonial landscape on Mauao/Mount Maunganui, this project aims to facilitate a more holistic view of the processes taking place within Aotearoa/New Zealand.

As an Immigrant to Aotearoa/
New Zealand, I have undertaken
a personal reconnection process
to my adopted land to reflect

on coming to terms with the dynamics of colonial capitalism and indigenous spaces. This image-making process reflects the reparation of past wrongs to envision a more inclusive future as a means to confront and delink from the colonial matrix of power. This project is directly interested in challenging the viewer as to their feelings about our whenua – both literally taken as the land we see and our collective mental attitudes – and what they look like going forward into the future.



Douglas



Lynette

Have no fear.

Acrylic and graphite on canvas
555 x 950mm, 2022.

Guarded figures interact - gesturing, beckoning, comforting; where the slightest movement can convey the most subtle meaning. Do we regard these juvenile protagonists with suspicion, or have they developed their own more sophisticated systems of communication? Non verbal forms of expression transcend the ordinary into the extraordinary - fusing into new dialects that suspend existing vernaculars.

How we communicate within contemporary culture has become base - text has become separate from human interaction where meaning, subtlety and nuance is lost behind a screen. We are forced to rely on hastily developed codes that as soon as they appear are overused, misunderstood and recontextualised.



Fisher



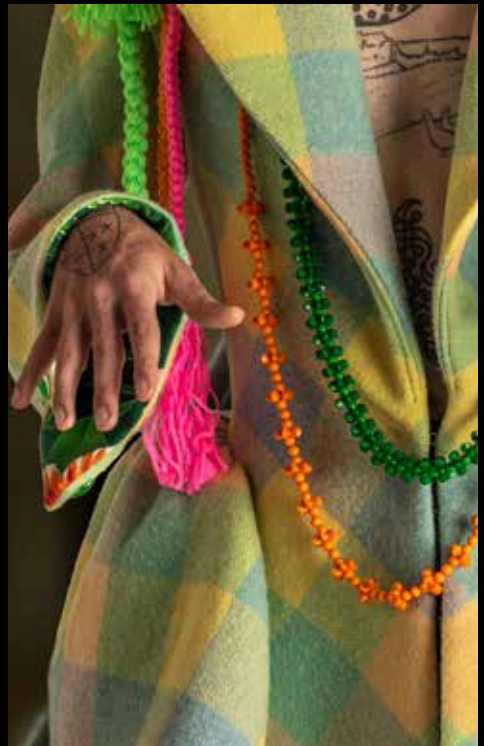
Donna Anne

Paradise.

*Today you will be with me in
paradise.*

Digital Prints, 600 x 1500 mm, 2022.

This work is an interface between photography and conceptual fashion design. Adornment is a form of self expression - albeit founded in an external sign. The sign evolves from replication and difference. Some items of clothing (a text) may be read as the original essence and others are romanticised. 'Paradise' is an investigation into mediated imagery. It plays with the notion of the trace leading the viewer back to a referent outside the photograph. Here, however, instead it leads us back to the social construct of binary opposition and difference. A photograph may sit between a moment of time and a cultural artifact brought back to life through the notions of gendered roles and rites of passage.



Dinsdale Shirley



Donna Dinsdale. *Forbidden Fruit*, 2022.

Nicol Sanders

Suss Intuition (Set of 8).
Suss Around (Set of 28).

Screen print and mixed media,
2022.

My work explores the disruptive creative strategy of collage and the organisational strategy of knolling (to arrange like objects in parallel or 90-degree angles. Historically collage was first used in Japan around 200 BC, but took off as a new approach to art making with Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso in the early 1900s. Papier collé (translated in French to mean 'to glue'), popular in Cubism, Constructivism and Suprematism, Dada, Surrealism, Pop Art and Postmodernism.

The term knolling was coined in the 80's by a janitor working at Frank Gehry's furniture making shop. His neatly arranged tools at right angles he called knolling as it reminded him of Florence Knoll's angular furniture. Tom Sachs popularised knolling in his video 10 Bullets with the phrase "always be knolling". In this series of work I used found and discarded printed material to create new work to question gendered social norms. Gendered insults have been explored through a visual experimentation. A bitch or betch, implies a female is

malicious, spiteful or mean, and cowboys are considered dishonest, but bold, daring, reckless and out of control. These two gendered social constructs are dominant girls and boys stories of the past. I am interested in how they do and don't fit our gendered social constructs today.

My intention was to loosely knoll and collage with mass produced imagery and materials to create often witty artworks that directly signify and mirror social changes. Fluro sticker dots reference Ben-Day dots to signifying the commercial printing process used in the screen-printed and photocopied imagery.



Suss Intuition (Set of 8), 2022.

O'Shea



Suss Intuition (Set of 8), 2022.



Suss Around (Set of 28), 2022.

ANNE

Peacock.

Digital image on archival paper and mixed media light box with additional framed images, 2022.

Peacock is a nod to the number of years my mother co existed with adolescent teenagers. At one stage there were ten adolescents ranging from around 11 to 18. As we would leave the house she would often tell us, "behave yourself and don't show off."

The trace within the imagery leads the viewer back to a role and rite of passage rather than Barthe's 'referent' outside the photograph. There is a subtext at play with gendered roles, rites of passage and cultural norms. The power of the image is in the way it can act as an ideological imperative relating to social order and yet retain a kind of pathos - an intimacy bound in familial ties of a certain susceptibility and sustenance.

This photographic work becomes a performative gesture: an event of its own inscription.



Shirley



Artist Biographies

Darcell Apelu

Born and raised in Mount Maunganui, Tauranga, of Niuean and Pakeha descent Darcell graduated with a Masters in Art and Design from Auckland University of Technology in 2013 and is now based in Tauranga. Her practice explores perceptions of the Pacific body through identification within the social climate of New Zealand and the Pacific. Her frequently autobiographical Moving Image and performative practice plays on a negotiation between cultures and experience of 'otherness'. The relationship between the viewer and the viewed is an important aspect and explored within her practice and negotiates the exchanges that occur.

Donna Dinsdale

Donna Dinsdale is an educator and practitioner specialising in fashion design, and in particular textiles and free-form draping. Her practice is driven by an interest in exploring how her individual bi-cultural sensibility can be expressed through textiles as cultural artefacts. Selecting ideas drawn from diverse cultural paradigms, there are numerous layers of exploration within her practice such as sustainability, personal identity, artistic authenticity and discussion around disruptive gender and social constructs.

Heidi Douglas

Originally from California, Heidi Douglas moved to New Zealand in 2004, settling in Mount Maunganui in 2005. Over the years, her creative practice has incorporated photography, moving image, documentary, and curation. She is the recipient of the 2018 Alf Rendall Photography Scholarship, is a tutor of photography and graphic design at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology and is currently in the final year of her MVA at Auckland University of Technology.

Lynette Fisher

Lynette Fisher is a Tauranga based artist, educator and art award coordinator. Her practice ranges from

printmaking, drawing, assemblage and painting. Themes of adoption, guardianship and appropriation are investigated, where elements of existing imagery are taken and replaced in awkward, misplaced and re-imagined worlds. Her work is held in public and private collections throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nicol Sanders-O'Shea

Nicol Sanders-O'Shea resides in Tauranga, New Zealand. She has a Master of Fine Art with first class honours from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. She is a screen-print specialist and has taught in several tertiary Art & Design programmes in New Zealand. She is currently the Academic Leader for Arts at Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology. She has won several art awards including the prestigious WSA New Zealand Painting and Printmaking Award 2015. In 2018 she participated in a printmaking installation residency in New York. Her work has been selected for public gallery exhibitions in New Zealand. Her works are held in both public and private collections in New Zealand.

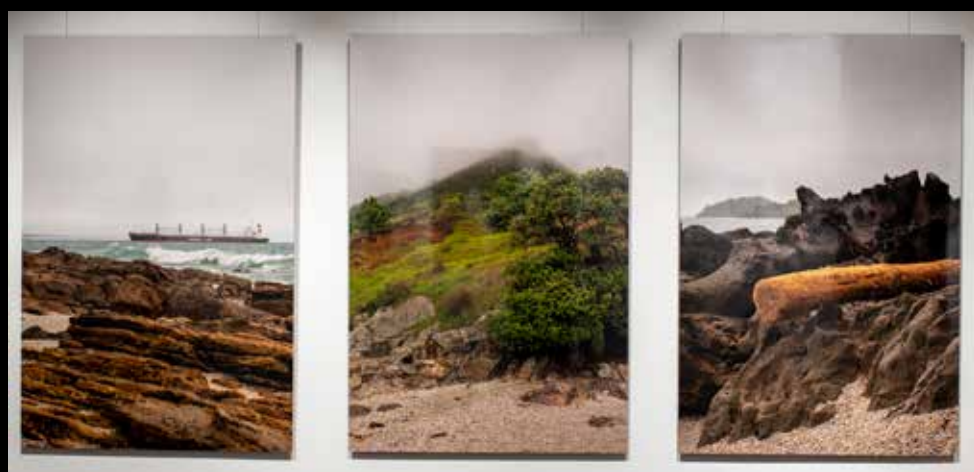
Anne Shirley

Anne Shirley is a photographer and Graphic Designer. Her visual practice demonstrates an interest in the sociology of the photographic image as a mediated image. Her work usually investigates the power of the image in the way it can act as an ideological imperative and yet retain a kind of pathos - an intimacy bound in familial ties. The state of flux lies in the notion of the trace leading back to the referent. In her work the trace leads back to a role, ritual, rite of passage - an ideology or a social construct: a subtext.

Installation Documentation











Participating artists;

Darcell Apelu
Donna Dinsdale
Heidi Douglas
Lynette Fisher
Nicol Sanders-O'Shea
Anne Shirley

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