

AGE
OF
FISHES

RICHARD KILLEEN

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FISHER GALLERY

Riverbank Road, Pakaranga, Mairangi Bay
Auckland/New Zealand



Regeneration is an early painting in the chronology of cut out paintings. The shapes in these paintings include images of insects, animals, artifacts, plants and geometry. Other titles from the time are *Refascination* and *Seeds Across the Land*. This group of paintings have a lot to do with searching through the historical resources available for powerful archetypal images to do with death, rebirth and growth.



This *Dreamtime*, of which there are three different versions, was painted in July 1980. At the time I had painted *George Forster, Naturalist* and I was interested in all kinds of collections. These included zoological and archeological collections, Captain Cooks collections from the South Pacific and driftwood from Manapouri. Dreamtime is the Aboriginal dreaming, the songlines, history and rythms of their culture. This is my dreamtime.



Fish Years as a title comes from the title of a book by Gunter Grass called *Dog Years* that I read and used in the early 70's for such titles as *Across the Vistula and Area of Feeding*. *Fish Years* comes much later and is an example of the history of references that happen throughout my work. *Dog Years* as a book has a wonderful sense of the sweep of history and I wanted to apply that to my own situation in New Zealand and build something using images that have a feeling of timelessness and strength.



The images in *Age of Fishes* were generated through the use of The Auckland Institute and Museum Library. Most of the images are from Egyptian archeological sources including stone fish, turtles, mummy clamps and earthen pots. There are also some natural images in the shape of a squid and a seahorse. I like the idea of stone and fish as artifact made by the Egyptians and fossil fishes made stone by the pressure of the earth. Also, I like the mummy clamps, articles of ritualised death, and the containers, utensils for the living.



Chance and Inevitability was painted for the Auckland City Art Gallery Project No 1 and hung by the public in August 1982 on the opening night. The title comes from a book by Jacques Monod entitled *Chance and Necessity. An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology*. It's a theory about how chance plays an important part in the complexity of biological systems. I found this theory interesting at the time because of the work I was doing with images and their controlled or uncontrolled relationships with each other and the meaning this had for art. I changed the title to *Chance and Inevitability* because of the inevitability that becomes the work once it has been hung in a particular situation.



In *Pooled Memory and Some Empty Fish* the pool is a form of amalgamation or combination. It is also a place where fish swim. I was thinking about how we as a social group are interconnected by our gene pools and by our collective cultures. Other paintings from this period revolve around issues of evolution and feminism. Titles include *Natural Selection*, *The Politics of Difference*, *Language is not Neutral* and *Theory of Variation*.



Italo's Fish Painting grew out of work I was doing on *Joaquin's Fish* and also from Italo Calvino's use of imagery in his last book entitled, *Six Memos for the next Millennium*. The book is a series of lectures called *Lightness, Quickness, Exactitude, Visibility and Multiplicity*. (He died before completing the sixth.) There is also Italy and it's weight of history, art, Catholicism, the patriarchy, Giorgio Morandi, Philip Guston's paintings of Rome and the story of the fish as a symbol of Christianity adopted from the earlier Goddess religions.



Joaquin's *Fish* is named after the South American artist Joaquín Torres-García who was born in Uruguay in 1874. He lived most of his life in Barcelona and Paris and died in 1949. I have always liked his work. He uses many images often combining them with modernist grid patterns. He was an 'impure' modernist in that he originated from a provincial place and used subject matter from that place in conjunction with modernist ideals. This is something I identify with, living in New Zealand. I have overlaid a grid pattern with images that the ideals of modernism by their very nature had to exclude.

CATALOGUE

1. *Regeneration*, November 1978, acrylic lacquer on aluminium, 4 pieces
2. *Dreamtime*, July 1980, acrylic lacquer on aluminium, 50 pieces
3. *Fish Years*, November 1980, acrylic lacquer on aluminium, 26 pieces
4. *Age of Fishes*, December 1980, acrylic lacquer on aluminium, 32 pieces
5. *Chance and Inevitability*, July 1982, alkyd on aluminium, 85 pieces
6. *Pooled Memory and Some Empty Fish*, April 1984, alkyd on aluminium, 20 pieces
7. *Italo's Fish Painting*, May 1989, acrylic and collage on customwood, 10 pieces
8. *Joaquin's Fish*, August 1989, acrylic and collage on aluminium 28 pieces

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Auckland New Zealand in 1948. Diploma of Fine Arts Auckland University School of Fine Arts 1964-1966. Worked as a parttime signwriter until 1980 and then as a fulltime artist. Has exhibited in numerous group and one person shows in New Zealand since 1967, and exhibited overseas from 1984. Lives in Auckland with Margreta and their two children Samuel and Zahra.

Notes by Richard Killen

