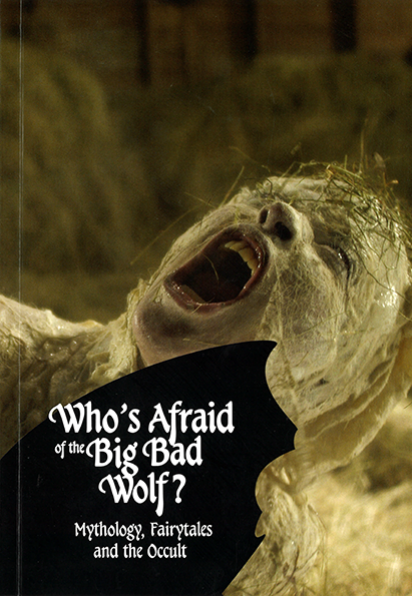
Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?
Mythology, Fairytales and the Occult

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Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts
PO Box 51 222, Pakuranga, Manukau City, Aotearoa New Zealand
www.tetuhi.org.nz

Clouds publishing
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Te Tuhi Curatorial Director: Emma Bugden
Exhibition curators: Emma Bugden and Pita Turei
Publication editor: Emma Bugden
Sub-editor: Gwynneth Porter
Editorial assistance: Stephen Cleland, Kirsty McMillan
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Cover: Gabriela Fridriksdóttir, *North*, from the series 'Tetralogia', 2005, still from DVD, courtesy of the artist, i8, Reykjavik and Spielhaus Morrison, Berlin.

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

Mythology, Fairytales and the Occult

Curated by Emma Bugden and Pita Turei

Cao Fei
Gabriela Fridriksdóttir
Peter Gossage
Star Gossage
Veli Granö
David Haines
Shigeyuki Kihara
Joanna Langford
Polixeni Papapetrou
Teresa Peters
Sriwhana Spong
John Walsh

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

Emma Bugden

BELIEVE

'There's no such thing as a psychic' my high school science teacher told me once. This was of course after I had mentioned that my father went to psychic healing meetings. The emphatic nature of her declaration has stayed with me, her utter surety. As a teacher she was known, of course, to place great faith in the rational knowledge of science and medicine—among other things encouraging us all to go onto the contraceptive pill with the clarion cry that she herself had 'been on the pill for thirty years!'.

She obviously missed the questioning which swept the western world in the wake of the philosopher Jung's caution that the contemporary western world relied too heavily on science and logic, and needed to develop spirituality and an appreciation of the unconscious realm. Although Jung himself died in 1961, his influence was stamped across the upheaval of the 1960s, from the rise of the psychedelic movement and interest in eastern

spirituality, to the emergence of mainstream psychoanalysis and the New Age movement.

Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation.[1]

Post the increasingly pervasive narrative of western, globalisation and economic rationalism, perhaps (worryingly) Jung's primary lasting influence is the corporate application of his ideas as the Myers-Briggs personality test, a favourite in personnel recruitment. Have we lost the ability to access the mystic, the fantastical and the uncanny? Certainly culturally-based mythologies and oral folklore (or my-theology, as my co-curator Pita Turei terms it), which in earlier times acted as broad-ranging conduits to the other-worldly, have often suffered the imperialist reduction to touristic trinkets.

In New Zealand the Tohunga Suppression Act was passed in 1907 to prohibit anyone 'who misleads or attempts to mislead any Maori by professing or pretending to possess supernatural powers in the treatment of cure of any disease, or in the foretelling of future events'.[2] One of a myriad of legislative and

social measures to subjugate Maori and complete the utter transformation of colonisation, the Tohunga Suppression Act 'was instrumental in forcing those communities to shift from a dependence on traditional methods and ideas about healing and knowledge to solely contemporary Western models'.[3] Not repealed until 1964, the Act offers a reminder of how readily we can be fearful of the unknown, and how complicit colonization has been in the process of replacing the lateral with the logical.

It's an all too familiar whipping boy—as I write this a frenzy develops in the national media about the deployment of a special Waikato police convoy working with Maori elders to undertake karakia and a ceremonial spraying of water along State Highways One and Two to assist in freeing the spirits of fatal accident victims and lifting the tapu. Tough talking local Member of Parliament Judith Collins expresses outrage at such goings on, and the lines of talkback radio burn red hot with disgust at (as one caller I heard said) 'the police paying any attention to this mumbo jumbo witchcraft nonsense'. Logic holds sway in mainstream culture, the alternatives the prerogative of the marginalised and the kooky.

Fairy tales, the reduction of folklore for children's

consumption, have long been high-jacked by the saccharine regime of Disney Inc. Far from exploring taboo or difficult subjects in an allegorical form, Disney offers us the watered down 'Snow White lite', cleaned up and accompanied by copious merchandise. The original intent of the tale is lost, replacing darkness and mystery with a nascent coyness. Narratives which evolved as open-ended structures are reduced to prescriptive tracts that reinforce patriarchal and ethnographical stereotypes, replacing interesting grey areas with a showdown between good and evil.

Disney's *Little Mermaid* takes Hans Christian Anderson's character and turns what was a somewhat dark moral exemplar of the dangers of lust (for life, for mortality, for a prince) which ends in loss, into a cute sassy romance where love wins out and the mermaid ultimately gets her man. Or consider J. R. R. Tolkien, in his book of the *Lord of the Rings*, who used as a primary source the *Kalevala*, a Finnish folklore epic, and reduced it down somewhat for English children, later to be even further reduced by the movie—a geographical journey from Finland to England, to Hollywood via New Zealand, and an emotional shift from darkness to gloss.

But alternative narratives still abound, if one knows where to look—mostly sideways, or off in dark

corners. The imaginative literature of science fiction and fantasy, the visceral terror of horror films, and the wild interactivity of video games offer us possible time capsules in which to encounter the uncanny, and thus, our deepest fears and anxieties. Outside of popular media exist other, more personal methods. And, as the Finnish artist Veli Granö has said: 'an artist can sometimes restore severed paths to the structures of our unconscious'.[4]

Artists, with the potential to subvert, transgress, contradict and resist, can leap boundaries from the literal to the lateral. André Breton's hope for the resolution of the two differing states of dream and reality into 'a kind of reality, a surreality' appears both as hopeful and as useful as it was when he first penned his *Manifesto of Surrealism* back in 1924.[5] The 'reign of logic' which Breton railed against is disrupted and challenged by Len Lye's 'old brain'. Lye, like the surrealists, used to practise a form of automatism, to tap into a more primal and subconscious way of working, once declaring that doodling was the most important exercise he ever did.

The exhibition 'Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?: mythology, fairytales and the occult' charts some of these alternative paths taken by contemporary artists, at times using existing narrative structures, or in other

cases creating their own access routes to the otherworldly. The artists chart gaps or passageways through to the uncanny and the unreal, explore the unconscious realms of our minds, and probe and challenge our attachment to the rational at the cost of the fantastical. Like any rupture from the stable to the unstable, there are gaps, overlaps and unruly contradictions.

IN THE BEGINNING

The twisting, elusive character of Māui is a central figure in Aotearoa's oral history. While other tales track crucial early lineage, charting the physical and spiritual emergence of this place and its peoples, the legends of Māui develop a complex series of social structures to abide by. Māui is the trickster, a clever character of cunning and guile, who rose from a lowly birth to become a heroic figure. Historian Ranginui Walker has noted 'Māui served as a model to all teina (junior children and in particular the last-born) that, provided they had the determination and qualities displayed by Māui, they too could succeed in life'.[6] Māui is one of many tricksters in folklore—the Greek god Hermes or, in Roman history Mercurius (the mercurial) being just one example, who like Māui himself: 'introduces fluidity,

Peter Gossage, illustration from *How Maui found his mother*, 1975, courtesy of the artist and Reed Children's Books, Auckland.

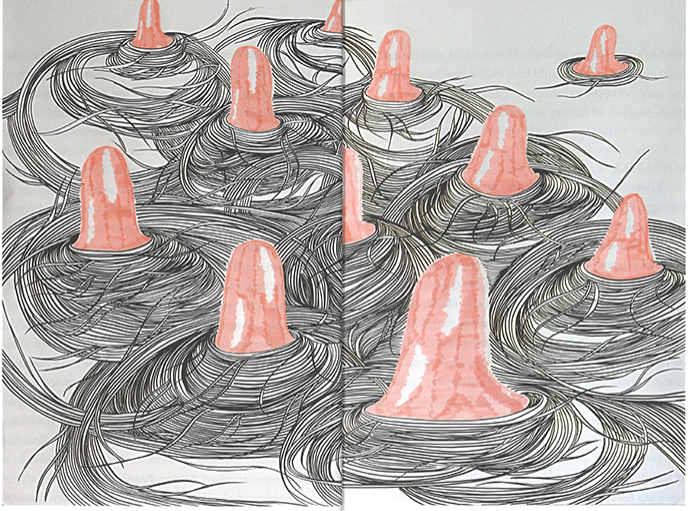
motion, new beginnings'.[7] Other tricksters include the Coyote in Ohlone (Native American) folklore, the Norse character Loki and the Slavic Veles.

New Zealand children's book illustrator Peter Gossage created in the 1970s and 1980s a series of seminal books about Māui's life and adventures. Drawn in a simple but graphically effective style, Gossage's *Tales of Māui* played a pivotal part in educating generations of children about cosmology, including myself. Reissued recent years, *The Tales of Māui* continue to play a vital role in sustaining the importance of Māui in a contemporary world. Of Pākehā descent, but with a Māori family, Gossage occupies a bicultural space between indigenous knowledge and an external desire to learn.

Peter Gossage's daughter Star Gossage is also an artist; a painter and filmmaker whose dreamy works have absorbed some of the magic of her father's illustrations, but take a more abstracted and ethereal route. The flattened-out figures which populate her work also refer back to the tradition of Mexican mural and folk painting, but, again, offer a certain feyness in place of such stark social realism. Her untitled painting made for 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?' reinterprets the story of the first woman, Hine ahu one, created by Tane-Mahuta, god of the forests and of nature, to be

his wife. To create her Tane-Mahuta fashioned a model of a woman from clay and 'put the breath of life into its mouth, nostrils and ears, and the act of creation was complete. The eyelids opened, the eyes lit, breath came from the nostrils, hot breath from the mouth and the living body sneezed. "Sneeze, living heart, to the world of light".[8] Like Hine ahu one herself, Gossage's painting quite literally springs from the earth, or from pigments prepared with powdered clay. Casting back into the past to connect to the present, Gossage has said: 'I believe in the spiritual realm and that there is more to this life than what we see and hear and do. Your beliefs go back through your whakapapa, through your ancestors.'[9]

The connection between past and present is also strongly located within the paintings of John Walsh, who is drawn to the freedom of movement he perceives in the work of the early Māori carvers and the expressive way in which they interpret ancestral knowledge. For Walsh there is no difference between using carving or painting to explore such traditions, and his paintings use the history of carving as 'a kick-off' to follow his own interpretations to 'animate those old stories in a contemporary way'.[10] *Pare o Tumataunga* is part of a new series of works by Walsh which draw on the architectural space of the pare. A boundary zone between the world



Teresa Peters, *Bestial vertigo: fable of the permanent wave*, 2007, (detail) mixed media installation, courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Stephen Cleland.

outside the meeting house and the world within, and marking the tapu threshold into the body of the house, the pare occupies a transitory space which reflects the fluid cooption of history into Walsh's paintings.

LOST GIRLS

Children's stories, like the earlier folklore they emerged from, primarily function as exemplars for how to behave. Folklore academic Marie-Louise Teneze has written 'fairy tales and children's literature were written with the purpose of socialising children to meet definite normative expectations at home and in the public sphere. They are historical prescriptions, internalised, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them.'[11] Getting lost is a staple of the cautionary tale—JM Barrie's *Lost Boys, Hansel and Gretel, Alice in Wonderland*—where we are always getting lost in order to be found, either to find ourselves, or to be rescued, sometimes even by a prince. Girls, it has to be said, tend to get lost more often than boys.

Rapunzel had magnificent long hair, fine as spun gold, and when she heard the voice of the enchantress she unfastened her braided tresses, wound them round one of the hooks of the window above, and then the hair fell twenty ells down, and the enchantress climbed up by it.[12]

Girls have long known the power of hair, at least since the days of Samson. The classic Grimm brother's fairytale Rapunzel tells of how the protagonist used her locks to secure a man, and thus, we are lead to believe, her freedom. Hair has mythic powers, often used to represent feminine control, both positive and negative. The New Zealand artist Vivian Lynn, who used human hair as a key element in her work for many years, once wrote 'when Milton in Paradise Lost writes of female hair as "wanton ringlets wav'd", and "the close embrace of those twining vines", he portrays a female power that may ensnare and destroy'.[13]

The hair depicted in Teresa Peters' drawings in the installation *Bestial vertigo: fable of the permanent wave* is stylized and exaggerated, strokes of thick black marker pen onto white paper. The accompanying DVD, made with longtime collaborator Florian Habicht, brings to flickering life an imaginary Victorian scene, where a group of young women poke their faces through a white sheet, their hair pinned above them into stiff black triangles as though beheaded. Their cheeky, giggling faces contrast with the macabre nature of the pose.

Polixeni Papapetrou, *I'm not myself you see*, from the series 'Wonderland', 2004, C type print, courtesy of the artist and Roger Williams Contemporary, Auckland.

In the Victorian era the 'putting up' of hair, symbolised a rite of passage, charting the decisive moment of shift from girl to womanhood, and a restraint from natural to artificial. The style, arrangement and most particularly the length of one's hair is a key signifier of one's obedience or otherwise to the norms of the day—from the social rebellion of the hippies to *Beauty and the Beast's* feral lead character, unruly hair represents, Peters suggests: "a shift from social etiquette to a more base form of being. It is the beast that beauty must learn to love'.[14] *Bestial vertigo: fable of the permanent wave* evokes a moment before innocence is lost or stolen.

A key pointer for Peters in making this work is the gruesome tale of Bluebeard's wives, who were beheaded by him in punishment for their transgressions of curiosity. For hair is also a symbol of fetish, horror and regression, and within *Bestial vertigo: fable of the permanent wave* hair is shown as both alluring and yet, says Peters, to have 'a kind of bestial recrudesce'.

'Curiouser and curiouser! cried Alice...'[13]

'There are fairy tales to be written for adults'[16] declared Andre Breton, but sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. Australian photographer's Polixeni

Papapetrou's series 'Wonderland' (2004) is the result of three years spent photographing her daughter Olympia, in a project initiated by Olympia herself. Reenacting scenes from Lewis Carroll's seminal children's book *Alice in Wonderland*, Olympia dresses up as the character of Alice, in the trademark blue dress, white apron and headband which make Alice such a recognizable icon. Olympia is posed against trompe l'oeil backdrops based on the original Sir John Tenniel book illustrations, but here the black and white wood engravings have come to life as luridly hand-colored, resembling the scenic stage sets of a theatre production and further highlighting the hallucinatory events of the story itself. Carroll's tale of the fantastical journey taken by Alice, after losing her way down a rabbit hole, winds its way through bizarre adventure after adventure, with Alice a bemused but willing participant.

The photographs also conjure up Charles Dodson's (Carroll's real identity) passion for photographing young women and girls in staged set-ups. Dodson's photography has been the subject of much debate, questioning the nature of those relationships—which have served to color our contemporary perception of both Dodson and the character of Alice herself. Papapetrou raises the question of agency in her use of

Olympia as her model, asking us, what is the difference between a man photographing young girls and a mother photographing her daughter?

Early tomorrow morning we will take the children out into the forest to where it is the thickest; there we will light a fire for them, and give each of them one more piece of bread, and then we will go to our work and leave them alone. They will not find the way home again, and we shall be rid of them.[17]

Australian artist David Haines has long had an interest in what he describes as 'sites of psychic disturbance'.[18] His is a world both Gothic and absurd, where the most ordinary environments are revealed to us as inherently unstable, where reality and fantasy collapse. One such arena is the woods; that favorite haunt of Gothic literature and horror movies alike, and where Haines has variously made individual trees levitate[19] and whole forests collapse in on themselves.[20]

Haines' audio-visual environment *The Door* offers the woods as a place rich with actions and events, but which willfully occur just beyond our view. As audience all we can see is the forest itself, but the soundtrack gives us uneasy hints of occupation—from gunshots far in the distance, distant logging trucks rumbling up a steep

gradient to a growling dog running past so close yet out of sight. The dark trees stretching out densely before us are beautiful yet foreboding; we can't tell what is really going on behind our line of vision. The tension is in what we can't see, as Haines has written 'the 3D surround-scape does all the spooking… things fly at the viewer through the room via sound and remain unseen'.[21]

…as they heard the strokes of the wood-axe they believed that their father was near. It was not the axe, however, but a branch which he had fastened to a withered tree which the wind was blowing backwards and forwards.[22]

A WRINKLE IN TIME

In the Hollywood film *Being John Malkovich* Craig Schwartz discovers that a small door behind a filing cabinet in his office is actually a portal into the consciousness of the Hollywood actor John Malkovich, and that the ignominious exit to this portal is a ditch at the New Jersey turnpike. Sometimes portals appear in the least likely of places.

New Zealand-born Sriwhana Spong has previously described her Balinese heritage as 'a glimmer of something fed to me through shadows and whispers'.[23]

Sriwhana Spong, *Twin Oak Drive*, 2006, (detail) mixed media installation at City Gallery Wellington, courtesy of the artist and Anna Miles Gallery, Auckland. Photograph courtesy of the Wellington City Council.

Spong draws on this rich tradition to which she is both an inheritor and a stranger, but equally she can be found drawing on the trashy filmic traditions of science fiction and horror films for her inspirations. Mixing it all up, Spong's work reverberates across the differing psycho-geographies of Eastern and Western, seeking out gaps between this world and the next, and between rational thought and irrational dreaming.

In *Goona Goona* (2007) she draws on the tradition of Banten, Balinese offerings to the gods. Spong's large floor assemblage of fruit, flowers and plants is based on the ritual of preparing daily offerings to maintain a spiritual balance—offered up to both good spirits in hopes of continued prosperity as well as to the evil spirits in appeasement. The assemblage must be replenished regularly by gallery staff to enable it to remain fresh, and thus still acceptable to the gods, meaning the work continually evolves as different produce becomes available.

Hundreds of cigarettes, a staple in both duty-free tourism, and in performing Banten, have been strung together to make a hanging beaded curtain through which viewers must push to pass through one gallery space to the next (*Blackmarket Cigarettes* 2007). The act of entering through the work, brushing up against it

and inhaling its pungent odour, Spong has suggested, symbolises the transition from one state to the next, or from the physical realm to a more spiritual one.

They have their own ships which travel to earth. The baby was taken to Sirius C. They put her inside an artificial womb. There she grew up to be a little girl.[24]

Finnish artist Veli Granö is a gentle documenter of some of life's less celebrated stars—people whose beliefs lead them to be marginalized and often ridiculed by the mainstream. His film *Meet You in Finland Angel* tells the story of Anne Pajuluoma, a woman who believes her miscarried daughter now lives on the planet Sirius, and her husband Jarmo Ylänen, who channels the spirit of van Gogh to paint reproductions of his paintings. For both Anne and Jarmo their psychic experiences allow them to transcend the material and emotional hardships of their physical world.

In the film Anne reenacts her first trip to Sirius to meet her daughter for the camera using a neighbour's child as a stand-in, wearing a handmade outer-space outfit. The emotional connection Anne has with Sirius as a means to connect with her lost child is palpable. However, the process of making the film itself was

David Haines, *The door*, 2006, high definition video, 5:1 surround sound, courtesy of the artist.

clearly cathartic for Anne, who has said; 'the photos and film will endure, they have made my Sirius real. Now I can be what one really ought to be on this Earth: an earthly creature, a human being'.[25]

TRANSFORMERS

The capacity to shape-shift is available to all, but only a few of us realise this power. Devices can help. Sometimes just the process of assuming a physical costume change, like Anne's shiny white suit, can allow for shapeshifting to occur for us in a more metaphorical sense.

Chinese artist Cao Fei's DVD *COSPlayers* showcases the Asian (and increasingly worldwide) phenomenon of 'cosplay'. A contraction of the words 'costume' and 'play', cosplayers are generally adolescents who dress as their favorite character from manga, anime and video games, shifting from the purely virtual realm to become flesh and blood avatars. Cao Fei's cosplayers are beautiful young creatures wearing ornate homemade costumes and performing stylized fight actions. Cao Fei says of the cosplayers: 'they expect their costumes will grant them true magical power, enabling the wearer to transcend reality and put themselves above all worldly

and mundane concerns'.[26]

Slowed down to a pace far removed from the 'shoot-em-up' speed of most videogames, the cosplayers pose in a series of dance-like tableaux, against the dense metropolis of China's Guangzhou and its surrounding rural areas. In one incongruous moment a herd of cattle pass by a fight scene, and by the time the final battle builds, it is a curious mixture of violence and play. Post-battle we find our heroes, somewhat incongruously, at home—eating dinner, cleaning their sword or texting friends, the glitz of their attire in contrast to the ordinary domestic details of family life.

Transformation is part of everyday life for Shigeyuki Kihara, whom the curator Jim Vivieaere once described as: 'born to defy categorisation, her very existence blurs and challenges the organisation of mainstream thought and practice'.[27] As a Fa'afafine, a uniquely Samoan form of transgender which can be best described as transsexual in Western terms, and of Samoan and Japanese ancestry, Kihara performs a cultural shape-shifting which questions the unstable construction of cultural and social identities. Her interest in western ethnographic readings of Polynesia leads her to re-perform historical narratives with herself as the central character.

The performance *Taualuga: the last dance* was originally performed by Kihara at the 4th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane. 'Taualuga', or the last dance, is a traditional Samoan performance which undertakes a journey to Pulotu, the underworld. A central dancing maiden enacts a series of graceful and stately movements, surrounded by a number of peripheral humourous 'clowning' dancers. Kihara explains that: 'the organization of the dance floor, together with the frictions which surface between the taupou (graceful dancer) and the aiuli (clowning dancers) reveals the hierarchical relationship of social order in Samoan culture with the value it places on power and respect.'

In Kihara's version the clowning dancers are replaced by the artist's own shadow, reflected on the wall behind her as she dances. Flesh and blood is layered against its elusive echo. Looming far larger than she herself, the shadow appears to take on a life of its own, a dark shapely figure which appears to respond to Kihara's own movements and add its own interpretations. Perhaps, like Plato's puppet shadows flickering in his cave, the additional dancer in Kihara's work describes or names what we cannot see or understand, what is just beyond our knowable grasp. Both ta, time, and va, space,

Shigeyuki Kihara, *Taualuga: the last dance*, 2006, DVD of performance, courtesy of the artist.

collapse in the process of *Tauaiuga*, a journey Kihara describes as visiting 'the future hidden in the past'.[28] She cites Kolokesa Mahina's analogy of Polynesia 'walking forward into the into the past and backward into the future' as a metaphor for this intangible journey.[29]

THE LAND OF GOO

I once read that fifty-three percent of Iceland's population believes in the existence of nature spirits; a statistic which may well not be true but is too pleasing to have debunked. The spirits that inhabit the work of Icelandic artist Gabríela Fridriksdóttir are whimsically surreal, with more than a nod to the vast history of Iceland's folklore, yet also imbued with their own unique characteristics. There may be medieval references within this work, but this is certainly no *Lord of the Rings*—instead a far darker and abject environment comprised of visceral textures and primordial slime. It's a mysterious carnival of sticks, hay, mud, fire, smoke and pus where a being in a puffy skin of bulbous sacks gives birth to an oozing creature, surrounded by a team of swaying spirits made from grass and twigs.

The four DVDs that make up *Versations Tetralogia*

(2005) each have a soundtrack produced by a different musician, using the same piano melody initially improvised by Fridriksdóttir. A 'tetralogy', in ancient Greek, refers to a series of four plays by one playwright, comprised of three tragedies and one satire, but here tragedy and satire are mixed throughout. 'Versations' is a condension of 'conversation', or, as Fridriksdóttir explains: 'conversation without the con. It is a monologue where the storyteller tries to seduce people into his fantasy. A versation is very Icelandic, the storyteller who is trying to impress. It sounds very opportunistic and it is, and greedy as well, for this kind of storyteller wants to own the word for his tongue alone'.[30]

Somewhat less gooey, the magical world of Joanna Langford's installation *At the violet hour* is redolent with subtle possibilities. A mountain range slowly billows and pulses as though breathing. A series of spidery trees creep up the walls while tiny ladders hang from them as though connecting the realms of land and sky for a population of unseen lilliputs. Created from the most basic of materials—taped together supermarket plastic bags, skewers, wire and domestic fans—it's at once ethereal and yet clumsy. This childlike construction operates in the same way that a hut at the back of the garden does—the work transforms before us only if we

Veli Granö, *Meet You in Finland Angel*, 2003, still from 35mm film transferred to DVD, courtesy of the artist.

are willing to suspend disbelief.

"Do you believe?" he cried.

And so we return again to the idea of belief. Belief, which saved Tinkerbell from certain death, is a transitory entity, at the whim of fashion and the dictates of taste, and prone to hi-jacking for moral grandstanding from both the right and left alike. To believe or not to believe? *What* to believe in?

"Oh dear, oh dear!" said the Rabbit. "I shall be too late!". And so, when the White Rabbit ran away, Alice wanted to see what would happen to it, so she ran after it, and she ran, and she ran, till she tumbled right down the rabbit-hole.[11]

In an even more absurd twist on Malkovich's New Jersey Turnpike, one Halloween night, when Homer Simpson goes behind the bookshelf in his lounge, which he's never noticed before, he falls into a black hole which lands him into a dumpster in downtown LA. In an attempt to understand the un-understandable he panics and declares: 'oh, there's so much I don't know about astrophysics. I wish I read that book by that wheelchair guy'.[12] Homer is no easy believer of the supernatural.

He fears both that he is 'going to be nothing' and the unknown destination he is hurtling towards; although, luckily, being Homer, his terror at such an unpredictable situation is easily mitigated when, on arriving in LA, he realizes there's a shop nearby which sells erotic cakes.

Most of us have to settle for transitory travels of the mind and spirit. Armchair travelers, we take imaginary journeys both through the mediated sources of others texts and images and our own personal fantasies. Homer's black hole, along with Alice's rabbit hole, John Malkovich's portal and the myriad other worm holes of both fiction and belief offer ready-made access points to physically leap-frog from this world to the next.

Emma Bugden is Curatorial Director of Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts.

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He fears both that he is 'going to be nothing' and the unknown destination he is hurtling towards; although, luckily, being Homer, his terror at such an unpredictable situation is easily mitigated when, on arriving in LA, he realizes there's a shop nearby which sells erotic cakes.

Most of us have to settle for transitory travels of the mind and spirit. Armchair travelers, we take imaginary journeys both through the mediated sources of others texts and images and our own personal fantasies. Homer's black hole, along with Alice's rabbit hole, John Malkovich's portal and the myriad other worm holes of both fiction and belief offer ready-made access points to physically leap-frog from this world to the next.

Emma Bugden is Curatorial Director of Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts.

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23 Were, V. (2005). 'When Night Falls'. *Art News*, summer 2005. p. 46.
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26 Davies, B. J. (undated). 'A short talk with Cao Fei', *Broken Pencil*, 28. http://www.caofei.com/caofei/Article/08.htm
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Cao Fei, *Golden Fighter's Despair* from the series 'COSPlayers', 2004, digital c-print, courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.

From Mythology to My-theology: Pita Turei in discussion with Emma Bugden

For the early settlers of Auckland, the big bad wolf was Ihaka Takanini. His name became a whispered parental threat for disobedient children: 'you'd better be good or Ihaka Takanini will get you'. Ihaka was a real man with a soldier's reputation after defeating the invading forces of Pomare, on the Waikato River, thirty years earlier. But, by then, as an old man living prosperously on the outskirts of Auckland he was no longer a threat to anyone; however, the mythology of Ihaka Takanini was promoted by parents to inspire fear and hatred—and as with the big bad wolf it worked. The lesson for Maori from this is simply 'be afraid'. Not of the wolf but of mythology itself. (Pita Turei, 2007)

Emma Bugden
Pita, lets start at the very beginning, or at least the beginning of this project—when I first asked you to become involved in this exhibition you initially had some reservations... Can you talk about why that was?

Pita Turei
I never want to be involved with the notion of mythology.

Joanna Langford, working drawing for *At the violet hour*, 2007, courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch.

As a people we've paid a price for the existence of mythology. Any bookshop in New Zealand will have in the Maori section all these books on 'mythology', which actually describe our 'theology' and in doing so they denigrate it to the point where it's no longer a theology.

It relegates our genealogies and lore to myth—to stories without substance—and presents them in such a way that we lose the original context of those stories, which have evolved from generations of observation, of the experiences of the land, its plants and living things. Out of those observations over thousands of years came narratives that helped us contextualize our own existence and our place. Everywhere on planet earth that process has happened. And those narratives aren't just interesting stories—they're the stories that provide for us a concrete understanding of what is unique about our particular slice of the world, what are the things we need to be responsible for, care for, and how to ensure that they survive.

So mythology as a concept is hugely destructive. And that's not accidental. From the 4th Century after the death of Christ, once the Roman Empire started to suffer

a bit and Christianity got a foothold in there, it worked to relegate the theology of other cultures to mythology and, in doing so, exalt Christianity as the only 'Truth'. And that's where mythology was born, out of the fabric of customary beliefs and practices, of all the different earth cultures of Europe.

Calling our theology 'mythology' is disempowering it. And when we go to the bookshelves that's exactly what we see—all of our theological narratives trivialised—often by people not of our culture, or our own people who haven't bothered to learn anything about our culture; trivialised for entertainment, with no cognisance of the purpose of the story or its place as an anchor in our comprehension of this world.

For me, the legacy of all this is that we need to actively dismantle the fabric of mythology, break it down as a notion, to reconstruct the integrity of our theology.

EB
Shigeyuki Kihara emphasizes the importance of using ancestral stories in her work in order to 'visit the future hidden in the past'. What does the past have to offer us now?

PT
Well, we're totally disassociated from it. Even Maori, we as a people think those stories are myths now and we've lost how they originally served us as cultural narratives. We're colonised.

EB
But they can still have a power or a usefulness?

PT
Not as long as we think of them as myths. But if we relate to them as our cultural narratives then they are still hugely powerful: they guide us and illustrate what's around us. They offer us an insight into the perception of those who have observed over millennia who are our ancestors. They are a potent reference to the world we live in, what it was, how it responds to the seasonal changes and how we can read those changes and perceive the portent of oracles.

That's my take on it anyway. And in the pursuit of this knowledge I have, for the last fifteen years or so, pursued, by myself, and through group observation, those references to our stories that I've been able to find, either in place names or historical references or records,

to deepen our understanding and our knowledge. Matariki is the historical reference that I've tried most to make more public and to make it more accessible to people, but those observations are necessarily all year round. And that's been quite fantastic, to witness the inspiration and perception of others, Māori and Pākehā, through the event of Matariki.

EB

You've talked in the past about the value of sharing stories. This is not always something every iwi wants to do, to make available their special knowledge, and that's understandable, because as you say, when that knowledge has been made public it's often been used in ways which is not appropriate.

PT

Yeah, but that's not the point of it, that we share it with anyone who's interested. The point is that these narratives *were* public, everybody knew them, otherwise the first settler who walked into the village wouldn't have written them down! They were common knowledge, for a reason: to help people understand.

They were stories which the telling of helped people

Gabriela Friðriksdóttir, *North*, from the series 'Tetralogia', 2005, still from DVD, courtesy of the artist, i8, Reykjavik and Spielhaus Morrison, Berlin.

remember, gave people a reason to tell someone else, be entertaining with their story, so that the knowledge was kept alive. And as they stayed alive, year by year, season by season, generation by generation, people compared the story of the place to the actual place itself, and enriched the story with that knowledge, reinforced the morality of the story, or the lesson the story had to give. So the reason for making this knowledge available to everyone is that who amongst us can dictate in whose heart the perception or understanding will come, of what these things mean to us? We're not going to find that out by keeping it a secret still: 'hey I know a story, it's a secret so I'm not going to tell it, so can we just sit around the campfire in silence now for five minutes while I think about my secret story that I would have told you if it wasn't secret.'

That's dumb! And the reason why that dumbness is so prevalent is either because we're too embarrassed to admit that we don't actually know the story ourselves, or we know the story and want to 'mana munch': 'oh, if you wanna know that story you might have to come see me later, yeah, I don't tell that to anyone. Maybe if you come and mow my lawns for six weeks, you can come and iron my shirts and then I might tell you a part of the

story, just over the next twelve years'. It's total bullshit.

Only if we all know the story can we protect the integrity of that story. At the moment we have no idea because we're overwhelmed with stories regurgitated by people not of our culture or colonised Māori, regurgitated for a Western audience in a language which is not the original language. So the integrity of that historical knowledge has had a hiding, it has suffered greatly.

EB
You've done a lot of work on tracking that ancient knowledge. How do you begin to do that?

PT
You go to Camelot. You go to the river. 'Well... I never saw a lady but I see what you mean, it's a freaky place'.

Go there at dawn. Go there, collectively, with old people and children, and talk through the stories. I guarantee, if we went to Camelot, to Shalott, wherever it is, and we camped overnight and got up at dawn, we did karakia and everything else, you know, (maybe Celtic ones or whatever), someone would be inspired to contribute something they didn't have before that experience.

John Walsh, *Pare o Tunatauenga*, 2006, oil on board. Collection of Ame Coney, courtesy of the artist and John Leech Gallery, Auckland.

And that's what happens. It happens everywhere in the world.

It's how we got the perceptions in the first place. So it's a human thing. Often we have this denial of perception, that people can perceive things who aren't scientists. Or if they can perceive things but can't prove them then it can't be real. And so we cripple ourselves a little bit by this.

But my very self-serving idea was to experience those things in the actual places myself, and I've discovered a greater value if I go through those experiences with groups of other people, not necessarily all Māori, and it doesn't matter if someone's Māori or Pākehā or Icelandic or whatever you can't dictate who to experience things with.

It's definitely different if you have a strong Māori presence, people who have some familiarity with tikanga, because our tikanga, our kawa, our customary practices are the ways that have evolved over millennia for how we conduct ourselves, to take our group into that emotional space. Tikanga guides us into that space where we give each other permission, where we can

perceive things that we wouldn't in the normal rush and shove of the day. So the tikanga is part of it too. Just going there, pulling out your Nikon camera, taking three hundred stills and going home doesn't do it quite the same. Going there, setting up the tent, the barbie, the genie, the lights, the table, the chairs doesn't do it either. I've found that it's a minimal process—take with us only what we can carry, leave nothing but footprints—that's generally the way we achieve and experience the knowledge of those places, taking the trappings of our colonised lives doesn't help us.

And it's not even that we have to totally abandon civilisation to do that. I remember going to the Tainui court case, which we took to the appeal court in Wellington, against the government selling off the coal assets. All of the elders of Tainui went down to Wellington for the hearing and every morning the old people would gather together to say our paimarie, our karakia. And then they'd all talk about the dreams they'd had the night before. It was still powerful for us even in the middle of the city.

And on the last day, at least half a dozen of the elders were visited by Te Puea during the night. So they each

Star Gossage, *Untitled*, 2007, clay, acrylic house-paint, oil, pigments and charcoal on board, courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Stephen Cleland.

related their experiences, and together it made a story, and it was pretty clear what we had to do. You could say it was all mystery, or whatever, but it didn't matter, the story that came out was a very clear affirmation of what we suspected was the right path. So we took that path and it was effective. So it's all of those things, which are real, and actual, which are disempowered by the notion of mythology. And that's the price of mythology.

Pita Turei is a filmmaker, historian and iwi advocate. He descends from the iwi of Tāmaki and the peace hostages of Taranaki, and was raised as a ward of the state.

CAO FEI

Cao Fei was born in 1978 in Guangzhou, China. In 2001 she completed a Bacholor of Fine Arts from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, Guangzhou. Since 1999 Fei has contributed to numerous group exhibitions including 'Zones of Contact', the 15th Sydney Biennale, Sydney (2005); 'BEYOND: an Extraordinary Space of Experimentation for Modernization', the 2nd Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou (2005); 'Parallel Realities', the 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial (2005); 'Dialectics of Hope', the 1st Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (2005); 'Water Event' (as a part of 'Yoko Ono: Horizontal Memories') Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo, Norway (2005); 'Techniques of the Visible', the 5th Shanghai Biennale, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai (2004); and 'Past in Reverse: Contemporary Art of East Asia', San Diego Museum of Art, California (2004). Her recent solo exhibitions include the Siemens 2006 Art Project: 'What Are You Doing Here?' (2006). She is represented by Lombard-Fried Projects, New York. Cao Fei is based in Guangzhou.

GABRIELA FRIDRIKSDÓTTIR

Gabriela Fridriksdóttir was born in 1971 in Reykjavík. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Sculpture at the Icelandic Academy of Art in 1997 and was the recipient of the Academie Vytvarnich Umenie Scholarship at the Academy of Fine Arts, Prague in 1998. Her recent solo exhibitions include 'Inside the Core', Migros Museum, Zurich (2006); 'Versations Tetralogica', Icelandic Pavilion, The 51st Venice Biennale, Venice (2005); 'Melankolía', Spielhaus Morrison Galerie, Berlin (2004); 'Katharsis' Gallery i8, Reykjavik (2004). Group exhibitions include: 'Remember who you are' , Mary Boone Gallery, New York (2006); Through the looking glass', Gallery Bob von Oursow, Zurich (2006); 'To Samekh', Astrup Fearnly Museum of Modern Art, Oslo (2005); 'Les Spectacles Vivants' Centre Pompidou, Paris (2004); 'Where do we go from here?', Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York (2004); 'Ice', Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens, Deurle (2003); and 'Sons and Dottirs', Tentplaza Center for Visual Art, Rotterdam (2003). She is represented by Gallery i8, Reykjavík and Spielhaus Morrison, and is based in Reykjavík.

PETER GOSSAGE

Peter Gossage was born in 1946 in Auckland. He is the author and illustrator of the six children's books in the 'Maui' series: *The Fish of Maui* (1981), *How Maui Found his Mother* (1975), *How Maui Found his Father* and *the Magic Jawbone (1980), How Maui Slowed the Sun (1982), How Maui Found the Secret of Fire* (1984) and *How Maui Defied the Goddess of Death* (1985), originally published by Lansdowne Press and reprinted by Reed Children's Books in 2005. In addition he is the author and illustrator of many other children's books including *Battle of the Mountains* (2005); *Puhi-Huia and Ponga* (2004); *Pania of the Reef* (2003) and *Hinemoa and Tutanekai* (2002), all published by Reed Children's Books. He lives in Auckland.

STAR GOSSAGE

Star Gossage was born in 1973 in Auckland. She completed a Diploma of Fine Arts from the Otago School of Fine Arts, Otago Polytechnic in 1995. Group exhibitions she has been a part of include: 'Te Hei Tiki', Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2005); '2004-2005 YMCA', Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui (2004); and 'Taiāwhio: conversations with contemporary Maori artists', Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (2002). She is represented by Tinakori Gallery, Wellington, and currently lives in Pakiri, Wellsford.

VELI GRANÖ

Veli Granö was born in 1960 in Kajaani. He graduated from the Pori Art School at the Lahti Design Institute in 1978 and in 1986 completed a Master of Fine Arts at the Lahti Design Institute, Lahti, Finland. His recent solo exhibitions include 'Masters', Hippolyte Photographic Gallery, Helsinki (2006); and 'KIRSTI guèrisseuse', Institut Finlandais, Paris (2005). The collaborative exhibition, with Tuovi Hippeläinen, 'RIEN—is it all?', toured the Pori Artmuseum, Pori (2004); The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2004) and BildMuseet, Universitet, Umeå (2005). Granö's group exhibitions include 'Reflecting Identities', European Patent Office, Munich (2006); 'Horse power, Hevosvoimaa', Helsinki City Art Museum, Helsinki (2006); 'Dreamlands burns', Mucsarnok / Kunsthalle Budapest, (2006); 'Under Your Skin', White Box, New York (2005); 'Habitat', Museum of Contemporary Art, Szczecin (2005); 'Breaking the Ice', Kunst Museum, Bonn (2006); 'The American Effect', Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2003); and 'Empathy', Artspace, Sydney (2003). Veli Granö is based in Helsinki.

DAVID HAINES

David Haines was born in 1966 in London. His selected solo exhibitions include 'Contemporary projects VI', Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide (2005); 'Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art' (2004); 'Biennale of Sydney: (the world may be) fantastic', Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2002); 'Atomic', The Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin (2000); 'Avatar', The Physics Room, Christchurch (1998); 'Medievalism: Musical & Non-Musical Kingdoms', Artspace, Sydney (1997); 'Palimpsest', Artspace, Sydney, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne and Canberra Contemporary Art Space (1996); and 'Eccentric orbit', Museum of Modern Art, New York (1995). He has also collaborated extensively with Joyce Hinterding. They were the Australian representatives at the 26th Bienal de Sao Paulo (2004), and other recent collaborative exhibitions include 'Two Works for William Reich', Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (2006); 'Hollow earth theory revived: field study 1& 2', 24 HR Art, Darwin (2005); and 'MAAP—Multimedia Art Asia Pacific', Art Museum of China, Beijing (2002). He lives and works in the Blue Mountains, Australia.

SHIGEYUKI KIHARA

Shigeyuki Kihara was born in 1975 in Samoa. Her solo exhibitions include 'Vavau; Tales of Ancient Samoa', The Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland (2006); 'Fa'a Fafine; In a Manner of a Woman', Artspace, Auckland (2006); and Sherman Galleries, Sydney (2005); and 'Vavau; Tales of Ancient Samoa', Bartley Nees Gallery, Wellington (2004). Her recent group exhibitions include 'Masquerade; Representation and the Self in Contemporary Art', Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney (2006); 'Pasifika Styles', Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (2006); 'Le Vasa; Sea Change', San Francisco Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Centre (2006); 'Bodies that were not ours', Linden St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne (2006); and 'L'art Urbain du Pacifique; Urban art from the Pacific', Chateau St Auvent, St Auvent (2005). She was included in the touring exhibition 'Asia Traffic' curated by Asia Australia Art Centre/Gallery 4A, Sydney, venues including the Today Art Museum, Beijing, Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art and the Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre.

JOANNA LANGFORD

Joanna Langford was born in 1978 in Gisborne. She completed a Bachelor of Media Arts at Wintec in 1999 and in 2004 completed a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury. Joanna was awarded the Olivia Spencer-Bower Fellowship in 2006. Group exhibitions include 'Out of Erewhon', Christchurch Art Gallery (2006); 'Remember New Zealand', Sao Paulo Bienal, Brazil (2004); 'Tea Party', COCA, Christchurch (2004); 'Hill', High Street Project, Christchurch and Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin (2004); and 'Follow the White Rabbit', Artspace, Auckland (2003). Langford has also been an active exhibitor in artist-run initiatives across New Zealand including the show 'Binoculars', Rm 103, Auckland (2004); 'Picnic', Platform 01, Hamilton (2003); and 'Cardboard Tales', High Street Project, Christchurch (2003). She is represented by Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch. Langford currently lives in Te Puke.

POLIXENI PAPAPETROU

Polixeni Papapetrou was born in 1960 in Melbourne. She completed a Master of Arts at RMIT University, Melbourne in 1997 and is currently completing a PhD in Fine Arts at Monash University, Melbourne. She has exhibited broadly since 1993 with solo exhibitions including 'Haunted country', touring Stills Gallery, Sydney, Johnston Gallery, Perth, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne and Foley Gallery, New York (2006 - 2007); 'A most curious adventure', Monash University Gallery, Melbourne (2006); 'Wonderland', Horsham Art Gallery, Victoria (2006); 'Le mois de la photo', 9th Montréal Photography Biennale, Montréal (2005); and 'Dreamchild', Bendigo Art Gallery, New York (2004). Group exhibitions include 'Tell me a story: narrative photography now', Museum of Photographic Art, San Diego (2007); 'On the wall', Aperture Gallery, New York (2007); 'Changeling', Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney (2006, touring exhibition); 'The plot thickens: narratives in Australian art', Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne (2004); 'Photographica Australis', Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei (2004); '11th Asian Art Biennale', Dhaka (2004); and 'Corpus of meaning: figures through the lens of female photographers', Museum of Fine Arts, Florida (2003). She lives in Melbourne.

TERESA PETERS

Teresa Peters was born in 1978 in Auckland. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland in 2001. Peters was the art director, designer and lead actress in 'Woodenhead', dir. Florian Habicht (feature film, 2003), and art director for 'Nothing Special', dir. Helena Brooks (short film, 2005), which was in the official Cannes selection 2005, and the dance performance 'Boxer', by Jackie Wilson (2004). Her solo exhibitions include 'Teresa Peters', Gallery St Agatha, Auckland (2001) and 'All the Better to Eat You With', Cite Gallery, Auckland (2001). She was a merit award winner at the Waikato Contemporary Art Awards in 2001, and a finalist in the Nokia Art Awards: Asia Pacific in 2000. Peters is currently based in Auckland.

SRIWHANA SPONG

Sriwhana Spong was born in 1979 in Auckland and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland in 2001. She has been included in a number of major exhibitions including 'A tale of two cities', Busan Biennale, Busan (2006); 'Happy Believers', Werkleitz Biennale, Halle (2006) and 'Don't Misbehave', SCAPE Biennale, Christchurch (2006). Other group exhibitions include '2x2 contemporary projects', City Gallery, Wellington (2006); 'Local Transit', Artspace, Auckland (2006); and 'Breakshift', Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. Spong was awarded the winner of the 2005 Waikato Contemporary Art Award and is represented by Anna Miles Gallery in Auckland. She currently lives and works in Auckland.

JOHN WALSH

John Walsh was born in 1954 in Tolaga Bay. His solo exhibitions include 'John Walsh', Gow Langsford Gallery, Sydney (2003) and 'New Works & Nanny Mango originals', Archill Gallery, Auckland (2000). He has been involved in numerous group exhibitions including 'Te Maunga Taranaki: views of the mountain', Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (2001); 'Purangiaho: a survey of contemporary Maori art', Auckland Art Gallery Toi a Tamaki (2001); and 'Parihaka, the Art of Passive Resistance', City Gallery, Wellington (2001). He is represented by John Leech Gallery, Auckland and Janne Land Art Gallery, Wellington. Walsh currently resides in Wellington.

List of Works

Cao Fei
COSPlayers, 2004, DVD. Courtesy of the artist and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.

Gabriela Fridriksdóttir
North, from the series 'Tetralogia', 2005, DVD.
East, from the series 'Tetralogia', 2005, DVD.
Courtesy of the artist, i8, Reykjavik and Spielhaus Morrison, Berlin.

Peter Gossage
Three illustrations from *How Maui found his mother*, 1975, digitally printed onto billboards. Courtesy of the artist and Reed Children's Books, Auckland.

Star Gossage
Untitled, 2007, clay, acrylic house-paint, oil, pigments and charcoal on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Veli Granö
Meet You in Finland Angel, 2003, 35mm film transferred to DVD, in installation with three untitled paintings by Jarmo Ylänen. Courtesy of the artists.

David Haines
The door, 2006, high definition video, 5:1 surround sound. Courtesy of the artist.

Shigeyuki Kihara
Tauaiuga: the last dance, 2006, DVD of performance. Courtesy of the artist.

Joanna Langford
At the violet hour, 2007, mixed media installation. Courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch.

Polixeni Papapetrou
Cheshire cat, from the series 'Wonderland', 2003, C type print.
Riddles that have no answers, from the series 'Wonderland', 2004, C type print.
I'm not myself you see, from the series 'Wonderland', 2004, C type print.
Drink me, from the series 'Wonderland', 2003, C type print.
All works courtesy of the artist and Roger Williams Contemporary, Auckland.

Teresa Peters
Bestial vertigo: fable of the permanent wave, 2007, mixed media installation. DVD component in collaboration with Florian Habicht. Courtesy of the artists.

Sriwhana Spong
Goona Goona, 2007, mixed media installation.
Blackmarket Cigarettes 2007, mixed media installation.
Courtesy of the artist and Anna Miles Gallery, Auckland.

John Walsh
Annunciation, 2006, oil on board. Collection of Mandy and Peter May.
Courtesy of the artist and John Leech Gallery, Auckland.
Pare o Tumatauenga, 2006, oil on board. Collection of Ame Coney.
Courtesy of the artist and John Leech Gallery, Auckland.
Wolf Territory, (series), 2007, oil on board. Courtesy of the artist.

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