

# INTERIOR HORIZONS

art on the verge of architecture and design

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Interior horizons: art on the verge of architecture and design

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## CONTEMPORARY DIMENSIONS

If there is a frame, what's framed begins to be art. If the frame is a duration or a lighting rig, no matter, as long as the thing distinguishes itself. Aestheticised, professionalised, commodified, art in the West divided studio and gallery, production and distribution, a division that made it possible, gave it autonomy by defining its border. Daniel Buren in 1977: 'The work in progress has the ambition, not of fitting in more or less adequately with the game, nor even of contradicting it, but of abolishing its rules by playing with them, and playing another game, on another or the same ground, as a dissident'.<sup>1</sup> But even then, dissent is defined by what it opposes, and the task of contemporary transnational art, to define by transgression art's boundaries, is framed by the concept of art.

Architecture and design work otherwise, the one constructing, the other immersing itself in a world, framelessly. The de-hierarchising of art, architecture and design among the Russians, in De Stijl and at the Bauhaus was part of the historical avant gardes' effort to reinsert art into the world from which the aesthetic of Western art always sublimates and abstracts itself. Their revolutions have formed architecture and design far more than art. More, design's proximity to media – to magazines, posters, to the unique industrial object and now the permeation of digital networks – has suffused the everyday on every hand. So much so that, where once it yearned for the status of art, today architecture aspires to the condition of design: its mobility, its ephemerality.<sup>2</sup>

And these – buildings, objects, graphics – are occupations of space, where that discipline we know as art is an art of time. What makes a LeWitt wall-drawing other than interior design is not its ephemerality but its fixed duration, just as Cage's 4'33" is music because it defines a duration – even 0'00" defines itself as what occurs in that frame of a duration determined by the time it takes to occur. In a culture where space and the negation of space have toppled the nightmare of history, art undertakes its reconstruction of time, the time it takes to become.

The Kantian aesthetic grounding transnational Western art, the aesthetic of disinterest and autonomy and the distinction between taste and the sublime of the *Critique of Judgment* is half the story, and the less important half. Its own ground is the transcendental aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,<sup>3</sup> the distinction of space from time enacted there. Architecture as placed, design as ubiquitous, are geographical arts. The portability of artworks has always been a fundamental critique of space's claim to permanence, a reordering of place around the object that, however long it stays, is always a stranger, always packed and ready to leave.

Radically undercut in European art and science by Einstein, Braque and Picasso around 1905, that severance of temporal and spatial still determines the European genres of sculpture and painting over against architecture, design and the time-based arts which, because they require technical supports, are also geographically local to their technologies. The unique hereness of the auratic work still testifies to presence for a society where things are diminishingly themselves, increasingly exchange-values, sign-values, spectacular and depthless surfaces.

Consider Schwitters' *Merzbau*, unshakable Dada nightmare architecture. All too swiftly his resistance to boundary markers becomes *L'esprit nouveau*, the journal in which the artist Jeanneret abandoning painting and his given name to become Le Corbusier, so enraptured by the triumph of machine elegance that he offers art as a sacrificial immolation on the altar of bureaucratic reason. Despite all appearances, it is a baroque gesture of monumentalism: placing a frame around a whole building, a whole suburb, a city, a "machine for living in" abstracted not for contemplation but for marvel.<sup>4</sup>

Art's contrary modesty is its strength. Its ambition is too intense for monumentalism. It builds temporary places and self-negating concepts, which achieve by querying the grounds of their own being. The visible, tangible, audible phenomena, the sensations of the visitor to the exhibition in whom the art accumulates, are not meanings but questions, and questions that function at the transcendental basis of being and sensation: in what sense does this work exist in space, occupy time? The works in this exhibition asks us over again to consider where and when we are, by working on the relationships between a sound and a space, between a wall and the drawing on the wall, or the drawing on the wall and the furniture placed in front of it, or the passage and the blockage to the passage. As soon as you have to ask, as you do have to ask, where the art is, then the frame has begun to dissolve.

No longer figures relieved of ground, the normal experience of viewing paintings while ignoring the walls; these are grounds relieved of figure, walls, air, light, the soundtrack of the frame being meticulously and carefully taken away. After traditions' omnipresent and modernity's fading worlds, the world of the contemporary is a horizon that is always becoming.

If art still has a purpose, which is a question all contemporary art must ask or it is not contemporary, then it is to speak to what is unimaginable, unthinkable, unacceptable and strange. In the age of the integral spectacle, of the hypercommodity, of architectures of light and designer drugs, neither is it enough to be negative: negation is now the official aesthetic of the postmodern. From deconstruction to new metal, the lack in being permeates the landscapes of the contemporary. Heidegger's fading presence, his cult of death, are no longer critical: they are the hegemony. The strangest, least imaginable thing of all is existence.

To make or be an object requires a subject, one for whom the object is. And that too is challenging, for perception is not natural to us who have grown up in the mediated world. Meanings demand a social field where they can be discussed, but that is rare, fragmentary, cliquy and always elsewhere, there in some imaginary other place where it is always now. The true subject of art is free – of the demand to be contemporary, of

fashionable prejudice, but also, at root, free of the work it contemplates, discusses and makes meaningful.

If the subject of this art is free, then and only then will the artwork be free. Either freedom is an always illusory apology, inevitably inadequate to its referent. Or, as Nancy argues, existence is indeterminate, indeterminable, with neither governance nor foundation, because its radical freedom is "the infinite inessentiality of its being-finite, which delivers it to the singularity wherein it is "itself".<sup>5</sup> Anything that is free, as the art work is free or strives to be, has no essence, and cannot claim universality, only the unique and finite materiality in which it is purely and only what it is: free of the determinations of the a priori, free of the categories of space and time, posing questions prior to sensation or meaning about the possible conditions of either. The frame is a horizon: the conditions of possibility of perceiving. Art as ontology reposes the question of being at the level of the relationship between thoughts about and sensations of things. Such border art succeeds to the extent that it poses the question of existence at the moment of coming to being, by the indefinite puzzle of its own existence.

Sean Cubitt in collaboration with Elizabeth Leydon

1. Quoted in Lyotard, Jean-François (1979), 'Preliminary Notes on the Pragmatic of Works: Daniel Buren' trans Thomas Repensek, *October* 20, Fall, 59–67.

2. cf for example the design-inflected architecture of Daniel Libeskind, [www.ooo.nl/libeskind/home.htm](http://www.ooo.nl/libeskind/home.htm)

3. The argument is made in the context of an attack on cultural relativism by Thierry de Duve in "Postmodernism, Ethics and Aesthetics in the Age of Global Markets" in Jody Berland and Shelley Hornstein (eds) (2000), *Capital Culture: A Reader on Modernist Legacies, State Institutions, and the Value(s) of Art*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 60–64.

4. Marvel: that slack-jawed boca abierta of an audience assembled as if for dialogue but without the possibility of interruption, a culture of persuasion which the Brazilian critic Costa Lima identified in the 'auditive' transition from oral to literate culture (1981:16) Costa Lima, Luiz (1981) *Dispersa Demanda: Ensaio Sobre Literatura e Teoria*.

5. Nancy, Jean-Luc (1993), *The Experience of Freedom*, trans Bridget McDonald, foreword Peter Fenves, Stanford University Press; Stanford.

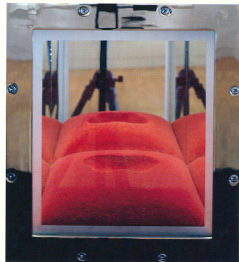
## ARTWORKS AND ARTISTS' STATEMENTS

**Pool Suite, mixed media, 2001**

For a few precarious seconds, the chaplain tingled with a weird, occult sensation of having experienced the identical situation before in some prior time or existence. He endeavoured to trap and nourish the impression in order to predict, and perhaps even control, what incident would occur next, but the afflatus melted away unproductively, as he had known before-hand it would. *Deja vu*. The subtle, recurring confusion between illusion and reality that was characteristic of paramnesia fascinated the chaplain and he knew a number of things about it. He knew, for example, that it was called paramnesia, and he was interested as well in such corollary optical phenomena as *jamais vu*, never seen, and *presque vu*, almost seen. There were terrifying, sudden moments when objects, concepts and even people that the chaplain had lived with almost all his life inexplicably took on an unfamiliar and irregular aspect that he had never seen before and which made them totally strange: *Jamais vu*. And there were other moments when he almost saw absolute truth in brilliant flashes of clarity that almost came to him: *presque vu*.

– Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*

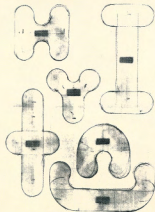
HANNAH BEEHRE



CHRISTOPHER BRADDOCK

*Repository, vitrine, 2001 (above)*

Artist's drawing (below)



**Trojan Square, mixed media, 2001**

Someone else lives here. This familiar environment with its co-ordinated fittings is not mine. Sneaking in undercover I try to conceal myself – blend in with the wallpaper, match the carpet, tread only where others have. I am not hiding though – you know I am here. I want you to know.

The silver clouds hover overhead. You would see yourself distorted in the reflection were you not obscured by the aesthetic of authorship.

Squares within squares.

These are inflated forms – hollow bags that were you to sit on them, would let you down. They are inflated with the branding that gives substance to image. The appearance of form is to just satisfy your expectations, to match your décor and nothing more.

Supported by Cavalier Bremworth Ltd



**Twin Nets, tufted wool rug, stencilled wallpaper, 2001**

Gavin Chilcott's brilliantly coloured and patterned wallpapers and carpets are a welcome anachronism in the currently fashionable interior world of neutrals and strategic accents. While other artists rail against becoming part of the décor, Gavin Chilcott returns to painting's historical roots, and employs the power of décor to fully colonise, rather than merely adorn, interior spaces.

For Gavin Chilcott by Claire Ragnaut

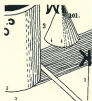
Supported by Dilane Rugs

### Blue furniture (f.).

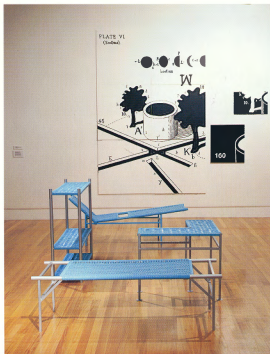
Three episodes in the landscape for furniture

'In Aristotle's *Poetics*, the episode is an important concept. Aristotle did not like episodes. According to him, an episode, from the point of view of poetry, is the worst possible type of event. It is neither an unavoidable consequence of preceding action nor the cause of what is to follow: it is outside the chain of causal events that is the story....Life is as stuffed with episodes as a mattress is with horsehair, but a poet (according to Aristotle) is not an upholsterer and must remove all stuffing from his story, even though real life consists of nothing but precisely such stuffing.'

– Milan Kundera, *Immortality*. Harper Collins 1990



*Magnetic (K) Two Parts*, woven plastic coated cane on steelframe, walldrawings, 2001 (below)



*Urban Navigator Series 'Dangerous Curves II'*, aluminium panel, reflective vinyl, 2001

These works have been made utilising modern systems of navigation (e.g. road signs) to draw parallels between the great ancient Pacific traditions of navigation and 21st century urban Polynesians' travels—both physical and metaphorical.

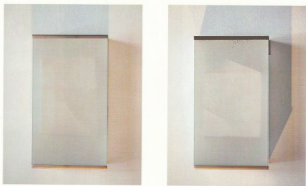
By recreating these road signs and placing them in multiple repetitive patterns they echo tapa, tattoo or weaving patterns, combining urban Aotearoa and the ancient Pacific.

The reflective road sign vinyls have fingerprints on them which look as though they should be wiped clean. However these fingerprints are actually trapped between the layers of film and vinyl which go to make up the finished product. They are a result of the human element that enters the manufacture of this material and are an integral part of its makeup.

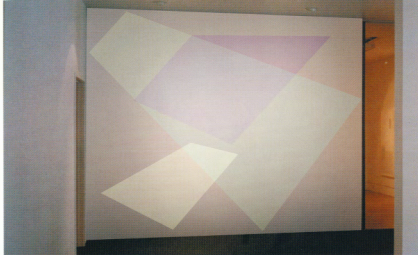
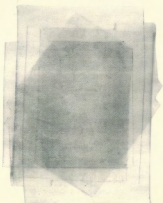
The individual panels can be combined in a variety of different configurations. Like their Pacific counterparts they are slightly out of true and although at first glance there is an overall geometric impression, a closer look will reveal visual irregularities.

In referencing the ancient traditions and material culture of the Pacific, analogies can perhaps be drawn with contemporary humankind's attempt to weave together the strands of the genealogical/historical past, constructing some kind of stability from which to navigate the present and proffer gestures toward the future.





*Chime, glass, 2001 (above)*  
 Artist's drawing (below)



*Close-ups of the Horizon I, wall installation, 2001*

There is still a connection between *Close-ups of the Horizon* and much of my previous canvas based works, in the application of predetermined bands or planes (letritone textures), that are employed by graphic designers and architects. These 'textures' are tools for visually constructing representations that reference actual existing spaces or environments, or for constructing graphic 'models' of proposed spaces and environments.

With *Close-ups of the Horizon* I do not wish to limit the readings of these graphic planes, or the employment of specific formal or technical strategies, to a discussion of autonomy, but to incorporate an element of referentiality which is produced not only by the architectural nature of the space in which the work is placed but via personal or collective associations that viewer(s) bring to the work.

By altering the relationship that the viewer will conventionally form with the gallery space I wish to alter, subvert or even satirise, our sense of a fake intimacy which defines contemporary interiors and the atmospheres they intend to convey.

Supported by Dulux NZ Ltd

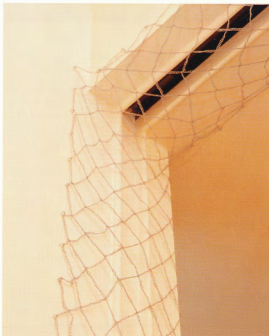
#### **Architectonic, crochet wool installation, 2001**

The white room is a world in which windows and doors take you through to new places in your mind. Perhaps these places are familiar, yet perhaps they are familiar only in your imagination.

You see my mind was still reflective and fearful after a recent trip to Los Angeles where I experienced a small earthquake, and then a few days later, whilst still in the United States, the collapse of the Twin Towers.

With this in mind I put up a net, in the interest of safety in the doorway leading into the gallery space. It resembled a section of 'hurricane fencing', designed to hold up the building, albeit in a lacy kind of way.

It was not my objective to inspire fear in the viewer but rather reaffirm the integrity of ingenuity, no matter how humble. But I don't think anyone felt any safer under the netted doorway, except perhaps myself.



#### ***The Consolation of Philosophy*, photographic installation, 2001**

Piko nei te matenga: when our heads are bowed with woe.<sup>1</sup>

The titles of these works all refer to places in France and Flanders where the Pioneer Maori Battalion made a contribution in World War I. During the Great War most Maori soldiers were not conscripted into the army but 'volunteered' for military service. The right to take up arms and fight for God, for King and for country, was regarded by many both as a sacred obligation and as an opportunity for adventure. Death on the killing fields of Western Europe was believed to be a 'just price' which would secure for Maori the same privileges and recognition that Pakeha already enjoyed at home.

The use of flower symbolism, however, in this work memorialises much more than just the war exploits of our glorious dead. It is also about re-claiming a pre-Pakeha Maori appreciation of the floral as an authentic badge of masculinity. Our family name 'Pare-kowhai' literally means 'Garland of yellow' (kowhai of course) and was won for us by a great warrior, who was as much a conqueror in the field of love, as he was a conqueror in the field of war. In this work the ability to express sensitivity to, and a respect for, 'flowers', is seen as a staunch affirmation of manliness made only by true sons and grandsons of 'real' men.

Cushla Parekowhai

1. Lament sung by the men of the Pioneer Maori Battalion on the occasion of the burial of their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel George King 'killed by British supporting artillery fire' during the battle of Passchendaele, 12 October 1917. Pugsley, Christopher, *Te Hōkōwhiri a Te: the Maori Pioneer Battalion in the First World War*, Reed, Auckland, 1995, p.67.

*Jamb, plastics, metal, 2001*

Fly,  
 On the road -one piece -on a roll you be the judge  
 Doors,  
 killer on the road (marker)  
 squirming like a toad

/strip/stripe/strip/stripes  
 Waterfall  
 don't mention mccahon not even Morris Louis

Liquorice fly frequency  
 Orange red black  
 White frame  
 silver screen  
 Black hole  
 Disney occular spectacular

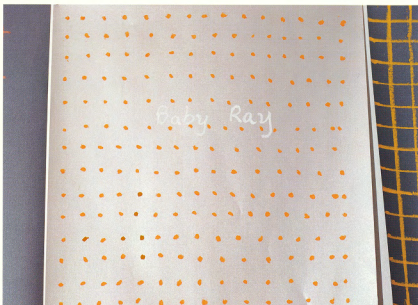
Tarkovsky solaris  
 Rodchenko stanislav lem  
 Not victor passmore, pelevin  
 six toes and hermit

Fast food nation  
 chickenshit conveyor  
 loading dock rubber crash  
 exclude vermin pallet trucks and personnel

bronchia uvula  
 boy in the bubble  
 maintenance minimal  
 Human fly strip  
 heeeelp meeeeee heeeeeeelp meeeeee

Simon Cuming





*Untitled*, (detail), drawings on paper, 2001

"To be infatuated with lost causes, leads one to suppose that they are all just that, and one is not entirely mistaken."

— EM Kiran, *Drawn and Quartered*

*Everything is the Other and None is Himself* (below, left)

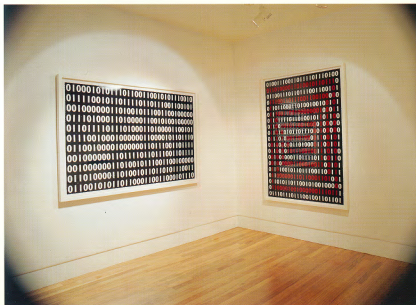
Courtesy Christopher G. Swasbrook Collection

*Sartre's Worm* (below, right)

Courtesy TMB Private Collection

"Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate"

— Dante Alighieri, *Inferno Canto III*



**Creeper, vinyl installation, 2002**

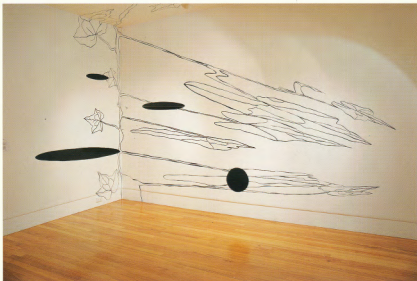
Courtesy Sue Croxford Gallery

'Underneath the surface of increasing systemic rationalisation, on an unconscious 'dream' level, the new urban-industrial world has become fully re-enchanted. In the modern city, as in the un-forests of another era, the threatening and alluring face of myth is alive and everywhere ...'

From Susan Buck-Moriss, *The Dialectic of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*

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CAROLINE ROTHWELL



ANN SHELTON

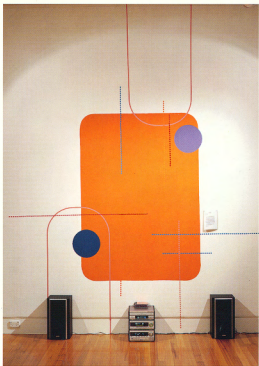
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**0900 #1, C type print, 1999 (above)**

Courtesy Ivan Anthony Gallery

**Detail (yellow pages) 2002 (left)**



*Jingle*, wall based installation, 2001

Modern, Classic, Ambient, Techno – these are the descriptions an advertising company gave to the different versions of a Jingle created especially for this art project. Each variation of the track was made to appeal to a different market sector, selling the product 'Art' or at least their interpretation of the artistic practice. What occurred from this lush synthesised Jingle was a self-perpetuating loop. A marketing company hired to create this Jingle about art, breaking down with analysis the 'markets' of the art world – so that finally one of their 'creatives' could pen the perfect multiple enticement track. The Jingle plays continually in the gallery selling actually the concept of itself. This head-to-head between the worlds of advertising and art, creativity and construction, communication and manipulation, is exactly the basis for the project. Where the work pushes past its conceptual framework is that moment where the music creates a new psychological language, in the ear of the beholder.



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