

ENTERTAINMENT

TJ McNamara: Artspace functions at its best with richly varied show of new work

8 Oct, 2016 5:00am

5 minutes to read



Flowers of the Field is a collaborative piece by Yllwbro, described as an anonymous sibling duo.

NZ Herald

By: T.J. McNamara

What: New Perspectives - an annual New Artist Show

Where and when: Artspace, 1/300 Karangahape Rd, to October 21

TJ says: The renaissance of activity and style at Artspace continues with a big and very varied show of work by young artists full of interest but do not expect much painting.

New Perspectives

is an exhibition of the work of young artists selected in collaboration with artist Simon Denny. It fills every nook and cranny of Artspace beginning with the entrance stair, where Quishile Charan shows a huge length of fabric looped from the ceiling, dyed with mud and printed with Hindu patterns. The work and the spice spread on the floor underneath refer to indentured labour and Indo-Fijian conflict over identity.

In the gallery itself, much of the work is video and makes a social comment. This genre is mostly accompanied by explanatory written text. Faith Wilson's *Wing and Tail* is just inside the gallery entrance. A young woman enters a body of water that reaches across to a far shore. She slowly walks in until only her head shows as a spot in the wide expanse of water. Then she turns and after a time emerges on the shore and she had been wearing directly to the viewer. It suggests decision making: whether to reach for a distant goal or return to ordinary life. The dilemma is again reflected in a long letter to Simon Denny about selection and her identity. It frames the screen and reaches to the floor.

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In Louise Afoa's video, a Polynesian woman floats in water, this time a swimming pool. She sinks for a time and slowly emerges again. Her sinking and rising to the surface is clearly symbolic by an accompanying pamphlet. The writer was living in her boyfriend's mother's house in an opulent suburb and using the pool while she was overseas. Neighbours, who often swam there became reluctant to do so and telephoned the absent mother to say the pool was dirty. Sinking beneath the water is being involved in a world of prejudice where you might drown but emerging from it is freedom. Video and writing are needed together to make an impact.

The same is true of an unusual work made by a collaboration called Yllwbro. A cross, crowned with a Don Binney-like painting of a bird, is formed by versions of the Maori division of the world into three realms and flanked by a closely printed framed myth about the discovery of fire and of honey. The insects, birds and trees involved in the myth act partly as in Maori lore and partly with European vocabulary such as "King of the Mountains", or references to the riddle posed by Sampson in the Old Testament about honey and a lion. The myth itself is eloquent and complex in contrast to the bold simplicity of its setting.

Charlotte Drayton's work is partly abstract architecture: three graceful arches appear to be solidly sealed off by a blue wall within them. The wall is completely illusionary.

Moving through it you are made aware of a domestic space by the use of decorative light sconces. It contributes to the rich variety of a show that is Artspace functioning at its best.



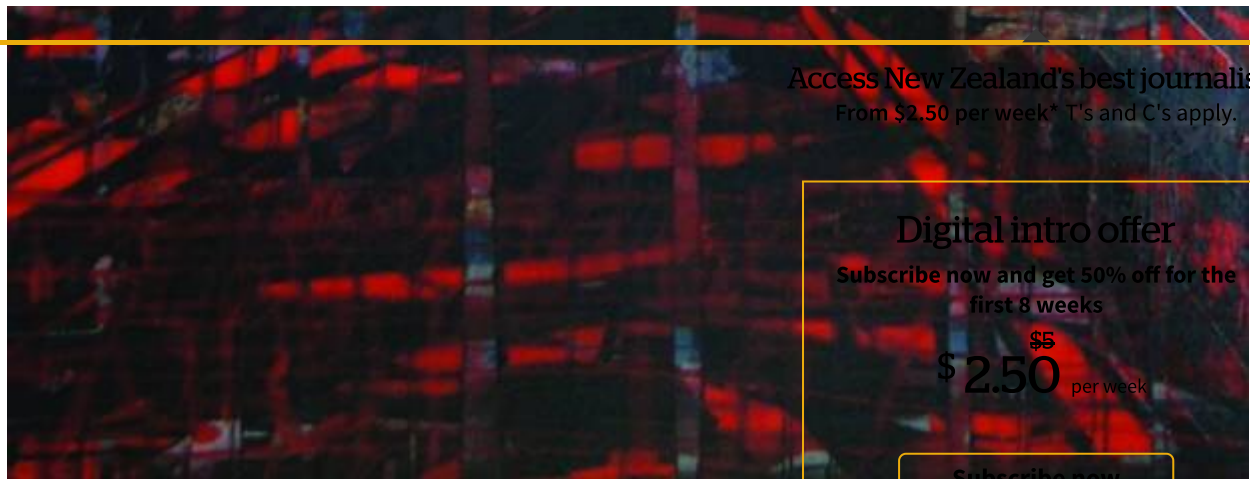
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What: New Paintings by Glen Wolfgramm

Where and when: Orexart, 1/15 Putiki St, Arch Hill, to October 15

TJ says: Wolfgramm does not use traditional Pacific motifs but a unique style that captures the impact of the city on someone with Tongan origins.

When Glen Wolfgramm first appeared on the scene, his work was striking for its unusual technique and the sense of the impact of the city on a young man with a Tongan background. His work was abstract maze of intersecting lines giving the feeling both of the rush of busy traffic, power and construction.

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His latest work stays with his unique technique and has added levels of experience. The paintings are still amazingly complex and reflect the bustle of the city but the use colour in the background conveys a variety of moods.

The prevailing colour is red but not so much for danger or alert but as a light effect like sunset over the intricate evocation of the metropolis. The complex lines not only sweep across the canvas but also sometimes drive upward and the effect retains the element of amazement at the inescapable complexity of the city.

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Graham Fletcher: Dear Stranger

What: Dear Stranger by Graham Fletcher

Where and when: Gow Langsford Gallery, cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Sts. To October 22

TJ says: Modern suburban settings, cleverly observed and painted though devoid of people, are the scene for encounters between Western and non-Western art objects shown in moody colour and with shrewd wit.

Graham Fletcher's paintings depict a haunted suburbia. He paints rooms like a stage set where something weird will happen or has already taken place. This is done with clear, decisive drawing and lively perspective. Each interior of these suburban dwellings, with their exposed beams and plain modern furniture, shows no people but always there is primitive idol on the wall or crouched on the mantelpiece.

The work is filled with astringent colour and a pungent wit exemplified by one special painting where three fetish objects are running away through a tidy garden under a dark sky.

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