

Media Release

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Four artists announced for the Walters Prize 2016

Four outstanding artists have been announced today by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki as the finalists in this year's Walters Prize.

The Walters Prize is dedicated to presenting the very best of New Zealand contemporary art and the exhibition is on at Auckland Art Gallery from Saturday 16 July to Sunday 30 October, 2016.

Created over the past two years, the artworks that formed the basis of the artists' selection for the award are as follows:

- **Joyce Campbell**, *Flightdream*, 2015, exhibited at: Two Rooms, Auckland, 24 September to 24 October 2015
- **Nathan Pohio**, *Raise the anchor, unfurl the sails, set course to the centre of an ever setting sun!*, 2015, exhibited at: SCAPE Public Art, SCAPE 8: *New Intimacies*, Christchurch, 3 October to 15 November 2015
- **Lisa Reihana**, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]*, 2015, exhibited at: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2 May to 30 August 2015
- **Shannon Te Ao**, *Two shoots that stretch far out*, 2013-14, exhibited at: 19th Biennale of Sydney: *You Imagine What You Desire*, 21 March to 9 June 2014.

The four New Zealand jury members who selected the artworks are:

- **Emma Bugden**, Editor, Small Bore Books and former Senior Curator at The Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
- **Peter Robinson**, former Walters Prize winner and Associate Professor at Elam School of Fine Arts, The University of Auckland
- **Dr Lara Strongman**, Senior Curator, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu
- **Nina Tonga**, Curator of Pacific Cultures at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

An internationally renowned art professional will select the winning work which will be announced at the Walters Prize 2016 Gala Dinner in September.



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 ELEVATION CAPITAL

Auckland Art Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says the Walters Prize 2016 will present four of today's most accomplished New Zealand artists.

'The Walters Prize is the Gallery's biennial opportunity to draw attention to the power and ingenuity of contemporary art practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through a rigorous selection process four artists have been nominated for exceptional artworks that pushed the boundaries of art making in 2014 and 2015. The Walters Prize 2016 is fascinating in its focus on lens-based and moving image works that will offer captivating experiences,' she says.

'For the Gallery, this group of artists once again reflects the importance of this foremost prize, where leading New Zealand artists are seen and discussed by a wide range of people through our programmes. It is also an occasion to reflect on what makes art reach its highest potential for young and old alike,' says Devenport.

Auckland Art Gallery Curator, Contemporary Art, Natasha Conland says the Walters Prize format offers artists a rare opportunity to be held up and applauded on the basis of their achievements.

'It's an opportunity to capture interest in the state of contemporary art now,' she says.

'With a selection of entirely photo and time-based media works, this year's prize shows the effects of digital culture on our visual lives. The selected artists work with moving image in diverse ways, however one thing becomes clear: historic events and materials are very much on the minds of these artists,' says Conland.

Walters Prize 2016 Jury Statement

The last two years in New Zealand contemporary art practice have been intensely productive. Over this period, we've observed art engaging in a variety of ways with our rapidly changing economic and environmental situation. Artists have challenged orthodox knowledge systems, and provided new ways of seeing and thinking about problems of contemporary life. Many significant new bodies of work have been exhibited over this period.

The four artworks we've selected as Walters Prize finalists in 2016 are all extraordinary and will continue to shape the course of art in years to come. Variously political, poetic, enigmatic, seductive and confrontational, each engages with New Zealand's history through strategies that question and re-imagine our present.

Conceived with a sophisticated awareness of art's own recent developments, these projects argue for art's autonomy at the same time as being embedded in the social and situational. Their impact has helped to advance the conversations of art throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Joyce Campbell

Born Wairoa, 1971

Lives and works in Auckland

Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury's Ilam School of Fine Arts

Masters of Fine Arts, First Class Honours, The University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts

UCSD School of Visual Arts MFA programme

Nominated for: *Flightdream*, 2015, Two Rooms, Auckland, 24 September – 24 October 2015

Jury statement:

Joyce Campbell's *Flightdream* is a 25-minute video loosely based on a short story by science fiction novelist Mark von Schlegell (USA/Germany), which is in itself a response to Campbell's earlier series of photographs, *Marianas*. In Campbell's immersive video, sculptural objects are subjected to corrosion through an electrochemical process: sheets, webs and traces of matter separate from one another, drift and entangle. The destruction begets new complex forms, which emerge and disappear. The viewer is placed in a situation of utter disorientation (the story has a nameless protagonist descending into the depths of the ocean in search of a monster and the protagonist's own inevitable destruction). Accompanied by an industrial soundscape by experimental noise guitarist Peter Kolovos, and with a near painterly use of light, *Flightdream* is a meditation on the relationship between projection and perception – how we make sense of what we see. It also reflects on people's interaction with volatile and hostile environments that are in the process of transformation.

Nathan Pohio, (Waitaha, Kāti Mamoe, Ngāi Tahu)

Born Christchurch, 1970

Lives and works in Christchurch, New Zealand

Masters of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury's Ilam School of Fine Arts

Nominated for: *Raise the anchor, unfurl the sails, set course to the centre of an ever setting sun!*, 2015, 3 October to 15 November 2015.

Jury statement:

Nathan Pohio's *Raise the anchor, unfurl the sails, set course to the centre of an ever setting sun!* is one of the most resonant and sharp works to come out of the highly-charged political and cultural situation of the Christchurch rebuild, following the devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011. Pohio has used an image by an unknown photographer from 1905, depicting Ngāi Tahu leaders in full ceremonial dress on horseback flanking the Crown's representatives of the time, Lord and Lady Plunket, in their motor car on their way to Tuahiwi – where a kete was presented to Lady Plunket and the Ngāi Tahu claim brought to vice-regal attention. Pohio presented the image on a monumental scale as an illuminated free-standing billboard on the riverbank, between a city block owned by Ngāi Tahu and the regenerating CBD controlled by the Crown. At a time when so much of the city is being rebuilt and new identities established, this work confronts and contests the histories that are embedded in the land. A quiet and powerful conceptual intervention that reasserts the cultural landscape of Otautahi Christchurch, Pohio's work is infused with the drawling grandeur of popular western film history.

Lisa Reihana, (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine, Ngāi Tū)

Born Auckland, 1964

Lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand

Bachelor of Fine Arts, The University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts

Masters in Design, School of Visual Art and Design, Unitec, Auckland

Nominated for: *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]*, 2015, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Sat 2 May 2015 – Sun 30 August 2015.

Jury statement:

In her second appearance among Walters Prize finalists, Lisa Reihana's ambitious multi-channel video work represents a major shift in her practice. The product of years of research and technical development, Reihana's *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* recreates *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, Joseph Dufour's scenic wallpaper from 1804, as the panoramic background for a restaging of encounters between Pacific and European peoples. The work is immersive, conceived on a

monumental scale. It is rich and sumptuous. It is exquisite. It lures you in, and then bites you with its violence. There are moments in this work that are politically and socially tough, even with the distance of time. The work challenges orthodox ideas and dispels stereotypes in historical representation, repurposing an artefact of the colonial period. Reihana imbues *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* with the great strength of the agency of Māori and Pacific people – reimagining and redefining the way global histories are understood.

Shannon Te Ao, (Ngati Tūwharetoa)

Born Sydney, 1978

Lives and works in Wellington, New Zealand

Bachelor of Fine Arts, First Class Honours, The University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts

Graduate Diploma in Teaching, University of Auckland

Master of Fine Arts from Whiti o Rehua The School of Art, Massey University Wellington

Nominated for: *Two shoots that stretch far out*, 2013-14 (video still), single-channel video, colour, sound. First exhibited Biennale of Sydney 2014

Jury statement:

In a deceptively simple video – beautiful, heartfelt and absurd – the artist declaims a traditional waiata (song) to a menagerie of animals, including geese, a swan, rabbit, chicken, a wallaby and a donkey. Here a woman's lament of personal loss is transformed into a more poetic and ambiguous yearning. The title of the work is drawn from a whakatauki (proverb), standing as an analogy for relationships that are potentially flawed and growing distant. The whakatauki is also used to describe people's search for their own sense of belonging. Te Ao's video traces the difficulty of meaningful connection with another being; it is not easily summed up, but provides a compelling emotional experience and engages critically with contemporary problems of communication. *Two shoots that stretch far out* promotes the continued use and relevance of traditional whakatauki/waiata as a means of processing and understanding the challenges of the present.

(ends)

Walters Prize information

The Walters Prize is New Zealand's most prestigious contemporary art prize and 2016 marks the eighth iteration of the biennial award at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. The Walters Prize awards the most outstanding contribution made to contemporary art in New Zealand by an artist in the period preceding the prize (known as the prize years).

The artist who produces the winning artwork receives \$50,000, while each finalist receives \$5,000 as recognition for being shortlisted.

The Walters Prize was initiated to help create a greater understanding of contemporary art in New Zealand and to make contemporary art a more widely recognised, debated and prominent feature of the country's cultural life.

History

The Walters Prize was established in 2002 by founding benefactors and principal donors Erika & Robin Congreve and Dame Jenny Gibbs working together with Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and (from 2004) major donor Dayle Mace, who provides a finalist award to each nominated artist. Founding sponsors were EY, who dedicated their support until 2010 and Saatchi & Saatchi, whose relationship with the Prize continued until the end of the 2014 prize. In 2014 the Auckland Contemporary Arts Trust provided support as a Principal Donor and Elevation Capital joined as a Major Sponsor.

Previous winners

2014: Luke Willis Thompson for *inthisholeonthisislandwhereiam*, 2012

2012: Kate Newby for *Crawl out your window*, 2010

2010: Dan Arps for *Explaining Things*, 2008

2008: Peter Robinson for *Ack*, 2006

2006: Francis Upritchard for *Doomed, Doomed, All Doomed*, 2005

2004: et al. for *restricted access from abnormal mass delusions?*, 2003

2002: Yvonne Todd for *Asthma & Eczema*, 2001

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