

## FROM THE CURATOR

### We're Not Too Big to Care

APRIL 6TH – JUNE 15TH 2019



Cao Fei, *Asia One*, 2018, inkjet print, image courtesy of the artist and Creative Vitamin Space

*We're Not Too Big to Care* is a response to the de-humanising nature of mass production and its impact on the individual. The exhibition title is a slogan from a 1984 television commercial by the iconic New Zealand grocery store Four Square. Open to interpretation, the phrase *We're Not Too Big to Care* may be applied to an organisation or individual and questions that whatever the scale, hierarchies of power and influence are inherent at every level.

Exploring themes of labour, consumerism and technology, the exhibition features sixteen exceptional artists from New Zealand, China and the United States, and uses Cao Fei's landmark new film *Asia One* as a starting point to consider corporate effects on the individual.

Filmed in the world's first fully automated sorting centre in Kunshan, *Asia One* examines the impact of automation and robotics on human relationships. Fei's surreal tale of cyclical ecstasy and despair occurs in the warehouses of JD.com, China's equivalent of Amazon, which completed 1.6 billion orders in 2016. Caught between the need to earn money for one's family and the time pressures of a factory job, Fei's nuanced installation is a timely take on what it means to exist in a world dominated by commercial desire, where technology threatens to overcome human skill to nullifying effect.

Cycles of repetition and labour are explored in sculpture by James R Ford and film by Miranda Bellamy. The title of Ford's work, *back and forth and round and round* calls to mind the myth of Sisyphus, a man condemned to continually push a rock up a mountain and watch it roll back down. This tale of cyclical motion is enacted in Miranda Bellamy's work *Meme* where the endless loop of whirring cars at a McDonalds drive through shows the wheels of commerce in action.

A text work by John Baldessari called *Learn to Dream* connects to the power slogans used by corporations to instil dedication in its workers and are akin to those used in the real warehouses of *Asia One*. As a direct retort to Four Square's logo, new work by Billy Apple addresses the slipperiness of corporate branding whose messages are often far from what they seem. Exhibited in parallel to Apple's pre-existing series of transaction artworks displayed on the 20th floor of the nearby Lumley Centre,

visitors are invited to make the journey from gallery grounds to corporate mecca as part of the exhibition's experience. Aroha Novak's newly commissioned artwork *The right to be unequal* uses the economic glass ceiling for income and its impact on individuals as a subject for artistic response. Carved from wood and glistening with gold leaf, the ladder rises upwards, its base encircled by velveteen rope barriers that open for no-one. As another reminder to the gallery's locale, site-specific installation by Hikalū Clarke uses materials of corporate culture in the gallery's entranceway to address the mechanisms at place in our surroundings as always strategic and intentional.

New work by Northland-based, Elam graduate Carole Prentice takes inspiration from her Uncle Ralph who in 1950s New Zealand was the first to sell 'McDonalds French Fried Hot Chips' to go. Pre-dating the insidious and all pervasive American multi-national company, Prentice's new series of hand-drawn images combine individual aspiration with the paradoxes of a global company ubiquitous as a symbol of capitalism. Encapsulating the continued struggle of the individual is *Little Boy Blue* by Gabrielle Amodeo. Animating the motif of Cerebos Iodised table salt and its invitation to "see how it runs", Amodeo's resulting work is a timely reminder of the fragility of the individual amongst the masses. Addressing similar concerns is Deborah Rundle's *Revised Payload* which looks at changes in the working day under global capitalism where relentless pressure and eroded rights negate both individual and collective wellbeing.

Divisions of labour and exchange form the basis of Cushla Donaldson's *composite for a happiness that forgets nothing*. Using the cruise ship as a symbol of the microcosm of the global economy, Donaldson presents a multi-faceted view of the influence of capitalist desire. Newly conceived installation by Emily Hartley-Skudder draws on the capacity of lifestyle affirming products to sell a dream to an individual. Titled after a slogan from a popular product called Sunlight soap, Hartley-Skudder's work echoes the products seen in Cao Fei's *Asia One* and presents an active dialogue with the former function of Gallery Two as the site of the building's original female bathroom.

LEARN TO DREAM

John Baldessari, *Learn to Dream*, 2011, screenprint, © the artist, image courtesy Chartwell Collection and Auckland Art Gallery

Symbolising the disintegration of a social order, Angela Tiatia's dual screen film *The Fall* is a visually nuanced snapshot of a society in chaos. As the film pans across people manically raiding their surrounds, Tiatia's film proposes a line of connectivity between the futuristic setting of *Asia One* and the footage of Thatcherite Britain in the video *Blue Monday* to ask - what, if anything, has changed? Both realised in 1984, the unlikely pairing of Four Square's slogan *We're Not Too Big to Care* and the inimitable *Blue Monday* by The Duvet Brothers coalesce in this exhibition for the first time.

Collectively, *We're Not Too Big to Care* explores what it might mean to rise above society's structures to enable us to all regain a sense of humanity. Filling the gallery's interior with the synthesised reverberations of New Order's *Blue Monday*, the cycle of capitalist greed flows between artworks, sounds, objects and people. As Cao Fei's work illustrates, we can buy the whole world sitting at home. Whether we choose to or not is our decision to make but our place within the capitalist cycle indelibly remains.

Lisa Beauchamp  
Curator of Contemporary Art

Duvet Brothers, *Blue Monday*, 1984, (image still from video), © the artists, image courtesy the artists and LUX



Our sincere thanks goes to the participating artists and lending institutions:

Angela Tiatia  
(Aotearoa New Zealand /  
Australia / Samoa)

Aroha Novak  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Billy Apple  
(America / Aotearoa New  
Zealand)

Cao Fei  
(China)

Carole Prentice  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Cushla Donaldson  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Deborah Rundle  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Duvet Brothers  
(United Kingdom)

Emily Hartley-  
Skudder  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Gabrielle Amodeo  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Hikalū Clarke  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

John Baldessari  
(America)

James R Ford  
(United Kingdom /  
Aotearoa New Zealand)

Julian Dashper  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Mervyn Williams  
(Aotearoa New Zealand)

Miranda Bellamy  
(Canada / Aotearoa  
New Zealand)

Auckland Art  
Gallery

The University  
of Auckland Art  
Collection

Graphic design by  
Gabi Lardies:  
gabi-lardies.com

GUS FISHER  
GALLERY

FREE ENTRY

# Art can be Fun

TUE – FRI: 10am – 5pm  
SAT: 10am – 4pm

The Kenneth Myers Centre  
74 Shortland St  
Auckland Central 1010  
New Zealand

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@gusfishergallery

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GALLERY



OUR PROGRAMME FOR 2019

At the new Gus Fisher Gallery, our inaugural programme as an aspiring centre for contemporary art begins by addressing the gallery's locale in order to understand what our role can be in an ever-changing context.

The first exhibition is called *We're Not Too Big to Care* and explores the gallery's location on Shortland Street; the first commercial street in Auckland and now home to the city's central business district. Titled after a slogan from a Four Square advertisement, the phrase feels particularly resonant in 2019. Perhaps a retort to the current climate, a plea to individuals or a lesson for the future, the slogan marks a standpoint for the gallery and its kaupapa.

This will follow with *The Slipping Away*, an exhibition that acknowledges the whenua on which the gallery stands as the site of Auckland's original shoreline. At a time when plastic pollution has reached the deepest points of the ocean, we call for a restorative look at the value that te moana brings to our lives.

Keep up to date through our social media:  
@gusfishergallery

EXHIBITIONS IN 2019	<b>We're Not Too Big to Care</b> APRIL 6 <sup>TH</sup> – JUNE 15 <sup>TH</sup>
	<b>The Slipping Away</b> JULY 6 <sup>TH</sup> – SEPTEMBER 7 <sup>TH</sup>
	<b>The Shouting Valley</b> SEPTEMBER 28 <sup>TH</sup> – DECEMBER 14 <sup>TH</sup>

Our last show of 2019 is *The Shouting Valley* featuring an intimate grouping of artists in dynamic dialogue whose politically motivated and activating work asks us to engage in urgent discussions of injustice in order to effect change.

Taking the form of group shows that fuse different genres, cross-generational artists and non-linear narratives, we hope that we can bring a fresh stimulus to Auckland's cultural offer that you will enjoy experiencing with us.

Ngā mihi nui,  
The Gus Fisher Gallery team,  
Lisa, Julia & Hannah.

Browse past exhibitions on our website:  
[gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz](http://gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz)

WHAT'S ON

For more information and to view our full list of events, visit our website:  
[gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz](http://gusfishergallery.auckland.ac.nz)

**Curator's tour of  
*We're Not Too Big to Care***  
FRI 12 APRIL, 12.30PM - 1.30PM

Join Curator of Contemporary Art, Lisa Beauchamp, as she elaborates on the exhibition's themes and exhibited artworks in this informative and relaxed talk and tour.

**Are we too big to care? A panel discussion on gentrification in Tāmaki Makaurau**  
WED 17 APRIL, 6.00PM – 7.30PM  
*Refreshments provided*

Join our panellists, writers Anthony Byrt, David Hall, and Jade Kake as they tackle this confronting question in what promises to be an illuminating kōrero on gentrification and culture.

**The Watercooler**  
THU 16 MAY, 8.30PM – 10.00PM  
*Refreshments provided*

For one night only, The Watercooler comes to the Gus Fisher Gallery for a story-telling event like no other. Inspired by the themes in the exhibition, expect captivating stories and brilliant commentary for a fun evening.

Coffee thanks to: **kōkako**

**The Feminised Labour of Care:  
A consciousness-raising session with  
Cait Johnson & Ruby Alexander**  
WED 29 MAY, 6.00PM – 8.00PM  
*Materials and refreshments provided*

Why do we expect women to do certain kinds of work and not men? Join Cait and Ruby for a stimulating discussion on the relations between capitalism, women and wage labour.

**Special Anniversary Heritage Tour of the former 1YA Building**  
SAT 1 JUNE, 2.00PM – 3.00PM

The Gus Fisher Gallery was originally the premises of New Zealand's first ever television broadcast in 1960. Join us on the anniversary of this broadcast for a special tour of the building's heritage.

**Lumley Centre Tours**  
*Available on request / Self-guided*

To the right of the Gus Fisher Gallery stands the towering Lumley Centre, and on its twentieth floor Billy Apple's *\$100,000 Credit Held* is displayed in his lawyer's offices. Take a tour up to view the work and discover how it connects to the exhibition *We're Not Too Big to Care*.

Keep up to date through our social media:  
@gusfishergallery

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JUNE 15<sup>TH</sup>

FREE ENTRY

# We're Not too Big to Care!



ANGELA TIATIA, THE FALL, 2017, VIDEO STILL, IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND SULLIVAN+STRUMPF, SYDNEY | SINGAPORE

GUS FISHER GALLERY  
74 SHORTLAND ST,  
AUCKLAND CENTRAL