

Interview: Grant Banbury Campbell Grant Galleries, Christchurch

JS: What is the history of the Campbell Grant Galleries?

Campbell is actually my first name, the majority of dealer galleries use the owner's name to convey a clear identity. It's a direct and sensible thing to do. The gallery first opened in February 1997 on the corner of Lichfield and Madras Streets and moved to this current site (191 Tuam St) in March 2002. The move was necessitated by a need for a larger facility (we can now run two shows concurrently), to increase storage and be slightly more central.

University to do a post-graduate diploma in art curation. It was something for myself and helped lead me into other things. When I returned to Christchurch in 1995 I was involved in co-curating a major exhibition on Doris Lusk at the Robert McDougall Gallery. Campbell Grant Galleries emerged after that.

What impact has the emergence of dealer galleries had on the Christchurch and NZ arts scenes?

The first dealer gallery in Christchurch was Gallery 91 which opened in the 1950s and sadly lasted only a brief while. The Brooke Gifford opened in 1975. The emergence of dealer galleries was a reaction to the constraints of arts societies with narrowly-focussed selection panels. It's important to the overall infrastructure of any art scene to have a variety of galleries and the consequent emergence of solo shows has been a welcome development. With an art school here we have clusters of arts students needing outlets to exhibit in. Dealer galleries are another step toward professionalism. Obviously art comes first but display and distribution are crucial to developing artists' reputations. As a dealer with a background as an arts practitioner (some see that as a plus others as a minus) I'm generous with my time because I understand the process from an artist's perspective, having presented my own portfolio to various dealers.

Do you perceive a distinctive Canterbury arts practice?

Thinking beyond landscape and Bill Sutton, Canterbury has not generated a lot of landscape painters. A sense of place is a more subconscious thing. Painting landscape at the School of Fine Art, Ilam, was considered a strange thing to do in the seventies because so much had been done; how were we going to say something new? Other perspectives emerged in the seventies, for example Abstract Expressionism was one of the big influences of my generation.

How do you think Canterbury compares with other regions in terms of the vitality of its arts practice, output and industry?

Christchurch is quite small but having Ilam highlights the visual arts which is very important. Good things are happening in Christchurch for its size, but it's frustrating that a broader education of the public about art has not occurred despite having an art school here for over 120 years. There are also not many dealer galleries because of the scale of our city and it being such a tough business.

What do you think is the social role and responsibility of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu in the context of the dealer gallery community, the artists, the arts patrons?

It's fantastic to finally have the Christchurch Art Gallery, but why it took so long to arrive is a major social essay in itself. It fosters a huge



From an early age, even before I went to art school, I was interested in art. In my late teens I bought my first art work, a Ralph Hotere. At the School of Fine Art, Ilam, I was taught by artists like Don Peebles, Bill Sutton, Doris Lusk and I was always aware and inspired by what artists were doing. After graduating with a Diploma in Fine Arts (Hons in Painting) I exhibited between 1979-1991 and held 16 solo shows nationally. I exhibited at the Brooke Gifford and my last solo show was at the Louise Beale Gallery in Wellington. I stopped practising art for a number of reasons and in 1994 went to Melbourne

amount of awareness about the gallery's permanent collection as well as the possibility of international shows coming here for us to see. The relationship between dealer and public galleries is important. Artists have all sorts of perceptions about public art galleries and it's not easy to please everyone. Reputations are often greatly assisted because of what happens in public institutions and it is difficult to balance the variety of voices all expressing different needs about what is displayed. Individual artists often have strong opinions about what does or does not happen. Galleries have to think about broader considerations and that is a complex task involving a lot of skill and awareness about acquisitions.

If you had a free hand, what singular thing, or group of things, would you do in Christchurch to enhance the visual arts here?

More public sculpture! It's a real way of breaking down arts boundaries and building a connection with an audience outside a facility like a gallery. People accept public sculptures. There are always different factions, such as elitist groups, and we need a range of things. Why, for example, did it take so long for Neil Dawson to have a major public sculpture in his own city while gracing various other capitals?

John Stringer

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Things that go "click" in the night

Interview : photographer, Stefan Roberts

stefan roberts beyond, 10-28 February 2004, Campbell Grant Galleries

Bible College and Anthony Harper collections 2003, Kauri Trust

The beguiling thing about Stefan Roberts' work is , people think his photographs are computer graphics, such is his talent with the camera. Overhearing several conversations at the opening of his most recent show, it became apparent several people simply did not believe it was straight photographs they were seeing, such is the surreal and 'other world' quality of his talent for capturing the extraordinary from the ordinary (fence posts at night, an abandoned grain silo, a rotting swamp log).

Roberts' recent work exhibits a continued dedication to traipsing around New Zealand landscapes in the dead of night and freezing in all weathers while his camera takes extremely

long night exposures (the curved lines you see in some of his night skies are actually the track of fixed stars as the earth revolves). During the exposure, the artist moves into frame and 'paints' his main subject with torches and light sticks, and it is this that gives the final product the eerie, surreal signature. The artist describes his work as, "not snapshots in time, rather the folding of time into a visual space. I want to reveal what is hidden, what is unseen by the human eye. The long exposure can often reveal what is not normally apparent." He successfully captures environmental imagery and scenes in a way not conventionally recorded by photography (a ploughed field in *Forgotten Harvest*, 2002, a moonlit track, *Journeys Beyond*, 2003). His works evoke loneliness and isolation; *Untitled 2001* (490 x 320 mm BCNZ) recalls a windswept Antarctic wilderness, *Untitled 2001* (320 x 490 mm BCNZ) resembles rocks or alien life forms on a lunar plain. The choice of subject, framing, and capture of colour in unusual light (moonlight, overcast night light, street lamps, vehicle light) further isolates his material from the everyday.

"For several years I have been exploring the darkness of night; discovering and revealing a world beyond the shadows, a world that



In Rememberance, Stefan Roberts, 2002, giclee photographic print (1 of 5), 1056 x 703 mm, *Beyond* exhibition, Campbell Grant Galleries, February 2004.