

// The  
gallery/artist  
relationship  
is dynamic  
and evolves  
as work  
unfolds and  
changes

## Interview: Peter Rae Galleries, Dunedin

Galleries still play a critical role in the careers of artists. Peter Rae operates two galleries in Dunedin, one at Highgate, Roslyn, the other in Upper Stuart Street, representing a variety of contemporary New Zealand artists. His main stable includes:

Claire Beynon (see interview p.7), Gary McMillan, Ruth Cleland, David Shennan, Inge Doesburg, Dorothy Helyer, Michael Greaves but he also carries work by Jeffery Harris, Jo Ogier, Mary Horn, Olav Neilson, Simon Kann, Irene Ferguson among others.

Peter Rae got involved in the art scene over 25 years ago, as a specialist framer with Govett Brewster in New Plymouth. He worked as a conservation framer for over 15 years before being offered a position in Dunedin. In 1998 he opened an exhibition and framing space in Roslyn. The duality worked, but this growth necessitated the opening of a dedicated exhibition space in Upper Stuart Street where Peter Rae exhibits an established stable of artists as well as emerging talent.

Recent shows included *new drawings and paintings* by Inge Doesburg and the critically acclaimed *Music and Brail*, graphite and paint on board works by Irene Ferguson and Dorothy Helyer. Part of Peter's commercial approach is to move with the times and be open to new things, tangents and exploration by exhibiting artists. "The Gallery relationship with artists is a mixed bag. Each connection is unique and new," Peter says. "Some understand the commercial imperatives of an exhibition space, particularly those who have been practising for a while. Emerging artists grow into it."

**JS: Have you noticed any changes in the art/gallery/artist scene in Dunedin over recent years?**

"There is a prolific emergence of really good young artists, much more than before. More gallery spaces are opening, of a varied kind. Some are just temporary spaces for the duration of a show. It's all good, really. Dunedin has a high awareness of the arts and a high percentage of the community want to experience what is going on in the fine arts scene. That goes for the other arts disciplines as well: music, theatre, literature..."

**What role do you feel galleries fulfil today?**

"Galleries have a much better profile today than they have had for sometime. Some people still view them as 'dinosaurs' - particularly the dealer galleries - in terms of the widespread change in communication techniques these days (use of the internet, etc). However, I think there is still a lot of life left in the old 'dinosaur' yet. People still like to go and see work. Galleries play more of an educational role now, hand-in-hand with their business side. There is more competition, but I find that enhancing. In cases there is a benefit to us all working together."

**Do you have any comments about the power galleries have? Is it like it used to be, in terms of making/breaking arts careers?**

"The relationship of power is changing. In terms of making and breaking arts careers, commercial imperatives have to be ascendant if a business is to remain viable and therefore offer the opportunities artists seek. Personally, I really want to support artists' work, support change, and growth, as work and techniques alter. I never say, 'No, we can't do that!' I like to follow what an artist is feeling and support what their creativity is saying."

J.S.



Recently opened, Peter Rae Gallery on Stuart Street is just a stones throw from the Dunedin Octagon.