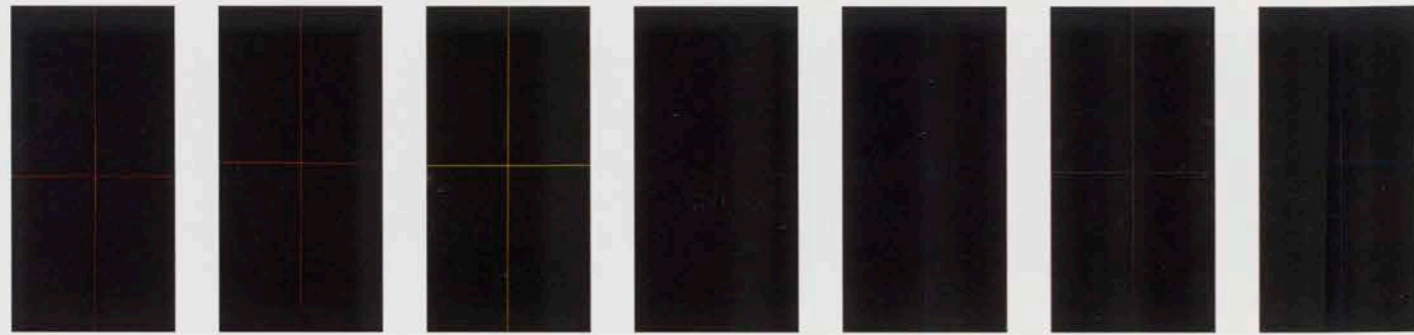




R A L P H
22 February 27 April 2003
H O T E R E

U L T I M A T E
G R O U N D

RALPH HOTERE: ULTIMATE GROUND



Ralph Hotere is one of New Zealand/Aotearoa's most respected painters and sculptors. *Ralph Hotere: ultimate ground* is a meditation on the artist's use of a restricted, nearly monochromatic palette spanning a period over thirty years, from the *Black Paintings* of 1968 to *Round Midnight II* of 2000.

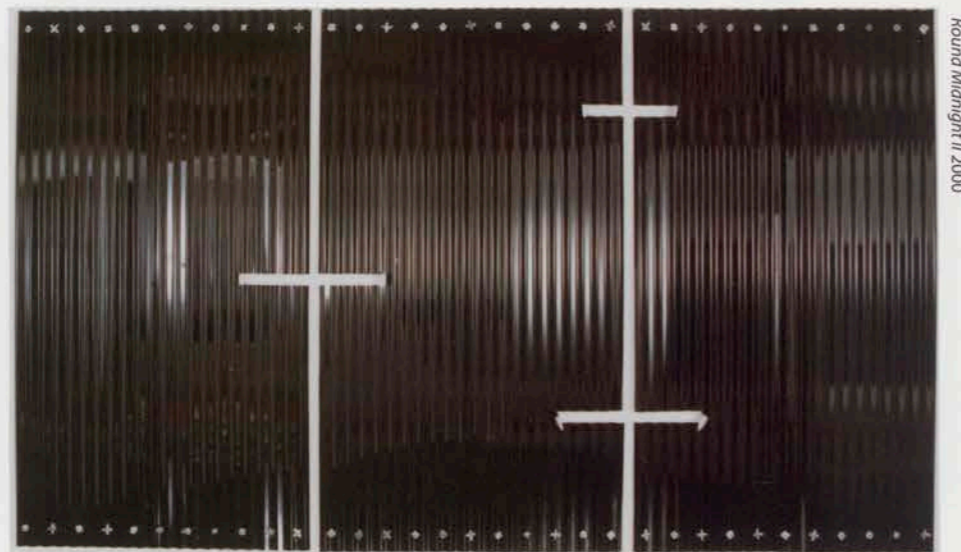
In 1968, the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery purchased a suite of seven works, known as the *Black Paintings*, thereby becoming the first public art institution to include works by Hotere in its permanent collection. The *Black Paintings* are considered to be some of Hotere's finest work and are one of the Gallery's most significant acquisitions.

The *Black Paintings* were informed by a series of work from the American Modernist painter Ad Reinhardt and signaled the future path of Hotere's artistic practice. Hotere's work can be placed within the international context of Modernism given his deliberate departure from traditions of painting and pictorial representation, paramount characteristics of the movement. Modernism requires viewers to observe an artwork in a different way, contemplating information external to the work in order to form a judgment and understand its meaning.

The exhibition title, *Ultimate ground*, refers to the sort of purity sought by Modernist painters. Ground is the surface to which paint is applied, traditionally a layer of white pigment to prepare the surface, however Hotere uses black symbolising Modernism's reversal of the norm.

The paintings and sculptures could also be discussed in regard to minimalist art, manifested through the extreme reduction of elements in the work. Hotere's highly saturated black works may seem to be about nothing other than the colour itself however the glossy surfaces do reflect back and capture the viewer in their infinite depth.

Whilst some viewers read a deep, religious aspect into Hotere's work, with his serial use of cruciforms, or the use of the colour black as symbolic of his Maori-ness, Hotere himself prefers that the works remain open to interpretation.



"No object, and certainly no painting is seen in the same way by everyone, yet most people want an unmistakable meaning which is accessible to all in a work of art. It is the spectator which provokes the change and a meaning in these works."

Ralph Hotere, c. 1973

Collaborations with Bill Culbert

Ralph Hotere and Bill Culbert met while studying in London in the 1960s. Their friendship has endured over the years and resulted in a number of joint works. Light is both the subject and medium of Culbert's artistic practice and when combined with Hotere's monochromatic palette, the artists' collaborations become a powerful metaphor about the opposing forces of light and dark.

Works in the exhibition

Black Painting 1967/68
enamel on 4 metal panels with Perspex
1750 x 1260 mm
Collection of the Jenny Gibbs Trust

Black Painting (Green/Blue 4) 1968
lacquer on panel
1210 x 600 mm
Collection of the Jenny Gibbs Trust

Black Paintings 1969
brolite lacquer on hardboard
1230 x 623 mm (each panel)
Collection of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

Black Sculptures 1969
brolite lacquer on steel
1065 x 304 x 304 (each)
Collection of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

Blue IV 1969
acrylic and brolite lacquer on hardboard
1200 x 595 mm
Collection of Hamish Morrison & Matthias Seidenstücker,
long-term loan Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

Post Black 5 1992 (with Bill Culbert)
lacquer and fluorescent tubes on board
1030 x 610 mm
Courtesy of Sue Crockford Gallery

P.R.O.P. 1991 (with Bill Culbert)
lacquer on corrugated iron, fluorescent tubes
3000 x 12000 mm
Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Round Midnight II 2000
lacquer on corrugated iron
3000 x 5500 mm
Collection of Hamish Morrison & Matthias Seidenstücker,
long-term loan Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

Yellow IV 1968
lacquer on panel
1235 x 635 mm
Collection of the Jenny Gibbs Trust

Biography

Ralph Hotere
born in Mitimiti in 1931, lives and works in Port Chalmers

1994 LLD (honorary), University of Otago, Dunedin
1969 Frances Hodgkins Fellowship, University of Otago, Dunedin
1962 Karolyi International Fellowship
1961 New Zealand Art Societies Fellowship (studied at Central Art School, London, United Kingdom)
1952 Dunedin School of Art
1950 Auckland Teachers' College

Selected exhibitions

* solo exhibition

2002 *Asia-Pacific Triennale* Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
2000 *Ralph Hotere: Black Light: Major Works Including Collaborations with Bill Culbert* Dunedin Public Art Gallery*
1999 *Toi Toi Toi: Three Generations of Artists from New Zealand* Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany
1997 *Hotere: Out the Black Window* City Gallery, Wellington*
1994 *Fault* (with Bill Culbert) City Gallery, Wellington (public commission)
1992 *Headlands: Thinking Through New Zealand* Art Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
1991 *Two Installations by Ralph Hotere and Bill Culbert* Dunedin Public Art Gallery

1990 *Three from New Zealand: Philippa Blair, Christine Hellyar, Ralph Hotere* Long Beach Museum, Los Angeles, United States
1988 *Taki Toru* Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1984 *Private Symbol: Social Metaphor* 5th Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
1982 *10 Maori Artists* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
1980 *Song Cycle Banners* New Zealand Embassy, Washington DC, United States*
Three Contemporary Maori Artists National Art Gallery, Wellington
1976 *Contemporary New Zealand Painting* Auckland City Art Gallery
1971 *11th São Paulo Biennale* São Paulo, Brazil
1970 *Black Paintings* Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth*
Expo '70, Tokyo Japan
1969 *International Biennale* Tokyo, Japan
Contemporary Painting in New Zealand: Twelve Painters Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC, United States
1964 *Young Commonwealth Artists* Whitechapel Gallery, London, United Kingdom

Selected readings

1999 Gregory O'Brien "Ink-black, gold & grey matter: a sculpture by Ralph Hotere & Mary McFarlane" *Art New Zealand* #91 pp. 52-5

1997 Gregory O'Brien *Out the black window: Ralph Hotere's work with New Zealand poets* Godwit Publishing, Auckland
1996 David Eggleton "Ralph Hotere: shadowing the sublime" *Art New Zealand* #81 pp.68-73
James Ross (ed) *New Zealand Modernism—In Context: painting from the Gibbs Collection* The Gibbs Collection, Auckland
1992 Kate Darrow "No 8: Ralph Hotere at RKS Art" *Art New Zealand* #63 pp.46-7
Mary Barr (ed.) *Headlands: thinking through New Zealand art* Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
1991 Charles C. Eldridge with Jim Barr and Mary Barr *Pacific Parallels: artists and the landscape in New Zealand* New Zealand-United States Art Foundation, Washington DC
1986 Elva Bett *New Zealand art: a modern perspective* Reed/Metheun, Auckland
1985 Bill Manhire *Fault by Bill Culbert and Ralph Hotere* Wellington City Council
Gordon H. Brown "Ralph Hotere" *Art New Zealand* #34 pp.28-31, 63
Francis Pound *Forty Modern New Zealand Paintings* Penguin, Auckland
1975 Patrick Hutchings "Eight New Zealand Painters" *Art International* vol. 19 no. 11
1971 Gil Docking *200 Years of New Zealand Painting* Reed, Wellington
1969 Gordon H. Brown and Hamish Keith *New Zealand Painting: an introduction* Collins, Auckland

Ralph Hotere: ultimate ground was organised by Gregory Burke, Kate Roberts and Chris Doerr. The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery would like to thank Ralph Hotere, Mary McFarlane, Sue Crockford, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Jenny Gibbs, Hamish Morrison & Matthias Seidenstücker and Isha Welsh for their cooperation in developing the exhibition.

Front image:

P.R.O.P. 1991 (with Bill Culbert), lacquer on corrugated iron, fluorescent tubes 3000 x 5500 mm, collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

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GOVETT- ART GALLERY BREWSTER

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is a museum that fosters the development and interpretation of contemporary art.



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