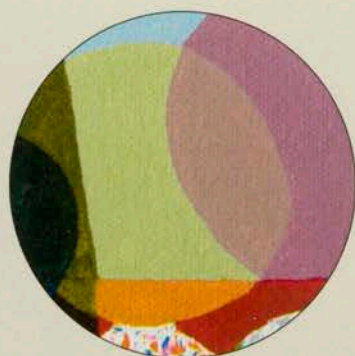
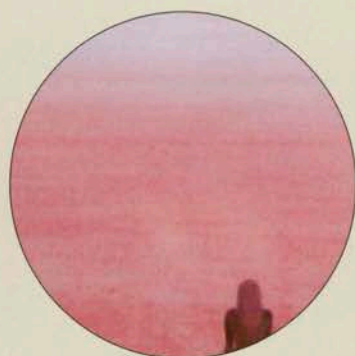
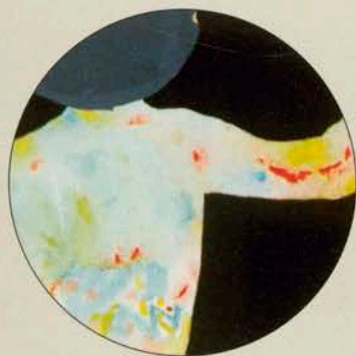
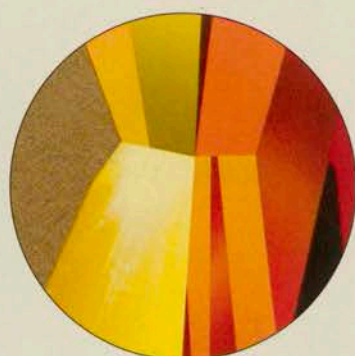




# MAKEOVER

PAINTINGS BY SEVEN PACIFIC RIM ARTISTS



Dave Deany (USA)  
Kim Fisher (USA)  
Diena Georgetti (Aus)  
Michael Harrison (NZ)  
Peter McDonald (Japan)  
John Spiteri (Aus)  
Isobel Thom (NZ)



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The artists in *MAKEOVER* display an awareness of the history of painting and the self consciousness that Modernism delivered to all art making. However, the strict adherence to oppositional positions within painting, such as abstraction and representation, as demarcated by modernism is no longer necessary. The artists in *MAKEOVER* demonstrate this by sliding between genres with ease, while making over both art historical and pop-cultural visual languages. The works hold references to Romanticism, Cubism, Surrealism and Abstraction as well as to cinema, the legacy of Conceptual Art and installation practices. There is also a presence of and an interest in illustration, animation, fashion and consumer culture.

The interests and approaches of these artists are diverse, yet they share a sensibility that responds to a contemporary condition of painting. The artists paint using traditional methods; they don't hire others to make their paintings or generate digital images. They also return to former periods in the history of painting yet with the knowingness of recent

developments in visual culture. Such aspects give their work a period feel and yet a curious vitality.

There are no obviously radical gestures on the part of the artists and they seem to eschew the perennial debates over the continuing relevance of painting. However, by ignoring the argument they seem to effortlessly rejuvenate the act of painting.

In presenting *MAKEOVER* the Govett-Brewster continues to uphold the Gallery's strategic focus on artists from the Pacific Rim. The exhibition also reflects our policy of bringing new international art to our audiences and providing exhibitions that locate the practice of New Zealand artists alongside their international peers. *MAKEOVER* includes work by artists from New Zealand, Australia, Japan and the United States.

As curator, I would like to thank all those who have helped to realise this exhibition: Ivan Anthony, Hany Armanious, Errol Clark, Mark Dickenson, Cynthia and Eliot Fried, Judith Gifford, Steven Hanson, Robert Heald, Darren Knight, Kate MacGarry, Hamish McKay, Stuart McKenzie and Miranda Harcourt, Anna Miles, Julian Miles QC, Alan Power, John Quilter, Erica Redling, Amanda Rowell, Anna Schwartz, Sam and Shani Schwartz, Andrew Thomas, Alex Tuttle and of course the artists themselves, without whom the exhibition would not be possible.

Gregory Burke

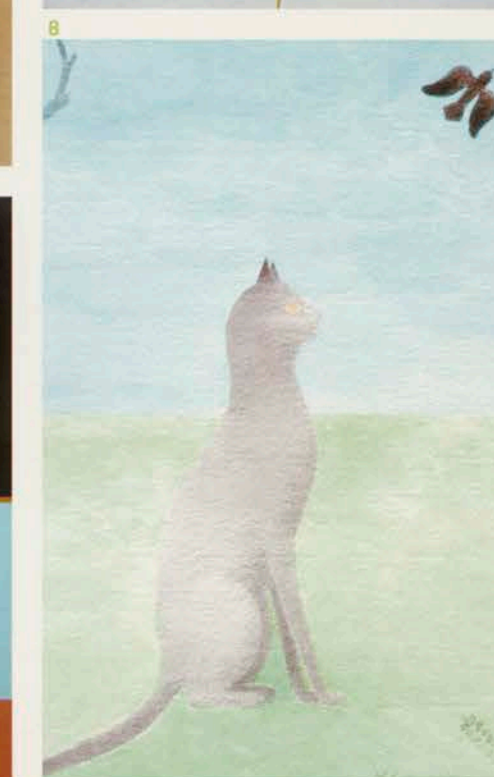
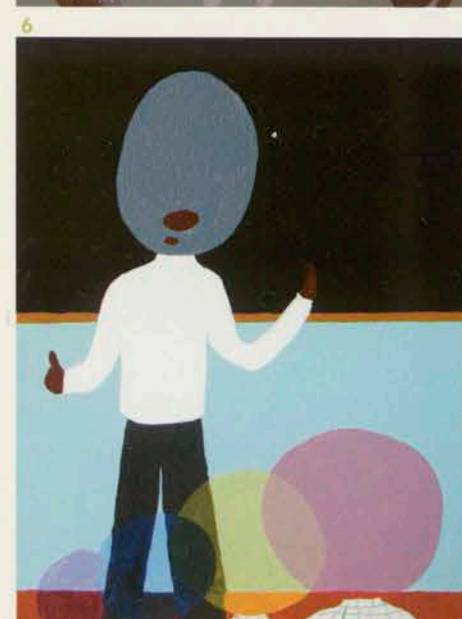
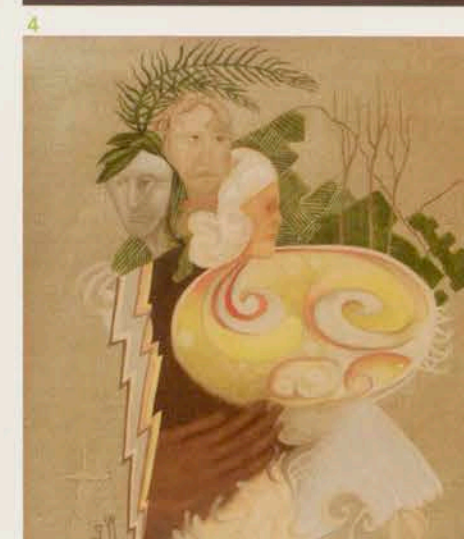
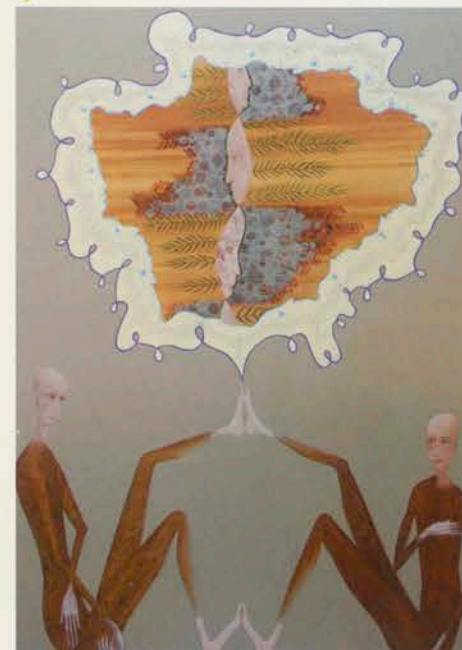
## THE ARTISTS:

Like most of the artists in the exhibition **Diana Georgetti's** work is pulled between abstraction and representation; her works blend the figurative and the abstract creating a space that is made up of flat planes of colour. The paintings combine stylistic aspects of abstraction, Cubism and Surrealism to create undefined spaces rich in symbolism and allegory.

Georgetti's paintings, often reminiscent of Georges Braque (1882-1963), are made up of fragments of images drawn from her interior and exterior world. Her careful balance of representation and abstraction produces imagery that hovers between worlds, creating dreamlike compositions at once familiar and fantastic. Georgetti's lyrical titles add to the suggestion of a narrative contained in the ambiguous imagery and provide an introduction to the world contained in the paintings. It appears to be a world oriented towards metaphysics as Georgetti poses descriptive yet enigmatic titles like *You, me and everything until we've passed away* 2004 and *If I show you how, could you let me down* 2001. Other works combine illusion and art historical references, such as the two works in this exhibition titled *The humanity of abstract painting* (2002 & 2005) which were surely named with an awareness of Meyer Schapiro's essay from 1960 *Mondrian: on the humanity of abstract painting*.

Georgetti's groundless spaces hover between the physical and psychological. They provide a location for the playing out of metaphysical dilemmas with a stage like quality that is enhanced by the artist's use of curtain forms and circular framing within the work.

- 1 Diana Georgetti *Olien peat* 2004
- 2 Diana Georgetti *You, me and everything until we've passed away* 2004
- 3 John Spiteri *Riviera* 2004
- 4 John Spiteri *Three of a kind* 2004
- 5 Dave Deany *Untitled (light flowers)* 2004
- 6 Peter McDonald *Small teaching* 2005
- 7 Peter McDonald *Teaching painting* 2005
- 8 Michael Harrison *Stay awhile* 2005





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**Michael Harrison** is also concerned with the metaphysical; his work is loaded with symbols which are at once highly personal and widely accessible. Harrison draws on pictorial symbolism to form a dreamlike visual language. He creates balanced compositions reminiscent of Tarot cards infusing the work with an element of divination. Harrison's paintings come from an inner world tinged with gentle longing which gives his work an intuitive aspect, creating a feeling of intimacy with the viewer.

Animals commonly appear in Harrison's paintings forging a link to an existence based on instinctive response which holds an aura of mysticism. The artist's suggestive titles and use of thinned down semi-opaque acrylic paint also gives the work an enigmatic temporality.

Harrison's visionary images indicate a practice that is meditative, engaging the hand and freeing the mind, which implies an introverted approach reached through the contemplation of the sublime. Harrison's use of a palette light in colour is also meditative. At times he restricts himself to a limited colour range in order to simplify the works further. This reduction brings an even more meditative feeling to the work, particularly as his works are often painted and exhibited in groups, implying a continuous stream of thought.

The symbolic, metaphorical and instinctive are also contained in the works of **John Spiteri** and in this way they are comparable to the work of Diana Georgetti and Michael Harrison. However, Spiteri's works seem to be recalling a dreamtime out of which grew a communal cultural tradition, creating a collective rather than personal mythology.

Spiteri's paintings in *MAKEOVER* have a craft-like aspect which is evident in his use of materials. Areas of unbleached linen canvas are left unpainted and simple shapes and lines of colour contrast with patterned areas. All this contributes to an earthy primitivism feeding an impressive and complex mythology.

Spiteri's figures inhabit landscapes which also hover between the abstract and the representational. This ambiguous and careful balancing helps to load the works with symbolism. Looking at the works it is easy to believe that they are artefacts of a culture whose location in time is indeterminate. This indistinctness does not render the mythology unconvincing, but provides an emblematic and timeless mystique. It is difficult to determine whether Spiteri's figures are early primitives or future primitives returning to a simpler way of life. Either way it is a wiser human race that he depicts.

Although the graphically simple people in **Peter McDonald's** work appear to have little in common with John Spiteri's figures, they do share a sense of wisdom. Spiteri's and McDonald's protagonists seem to have discovered a simple yet advanced way of living. McDonald achieves this by condensing the world into its basic shapes, creating a high colour world of easy optimism. His works in *MAKEOVER* have a characteristic questing for knowledge; many of them depict groups of people in situations such as classrooms and committee rooms. Their heads are often nebulous shapes which merge with each other, implying a highly evolved method of communication achieved by a merging of minds.

By reducing the world to its basic shapes, often repeated within a painting, McDonald introduces the possibilities of both abstraction and figuration. Like all of the artists in *MAKEOVER* McDonald has developed his own highly evolved visual language, a language refined to the most basic forms to communicate action and narrative. The high colour and simple forms in the paintings combined with their sense of community imply the possibility of a utopic world of colour and light. McDonald's paintings are hopeful and humorous, possessing a fluidity of form and mind which offers another model for living instinctively.

**Dave Deany** is a painter, sculptor and member of Los Angeles multi-media musical and entertainment collective Dude Dogg. Deany's multifarious artistic interests lend a light touch to the works in *MAKEOVER*. The paintings have a quirky romanticism, enhanced by Deany's use of watercolour and ink. Their semi-opaque quality allows the works fluidity and immediacy. Watercolour as a medium is associated with the outdoor land and seascape sketches of the 'Sunday painter'. The artist loses no credibility through his choice of a humble medium however. On the contrary, Deany reclaims watercolour from the wilderness, updating and revitalising the medium. The ease with which Deany revives watercolour shows the characteristic fluency with media and technique common to all the artists in *MAKEOVER*.

There is an element of optimism in Deany's work which seems to playfully acknowledge the resurrection of the watercolour sketch from the low art connotations it has acquired. Deany's work is consciously naïve. The spots of colour and the floral and outdoor compositions are at first glance simple, yet alongside this optimism Deany's work contains an undercurrent of the awry. The spots of high colour swimming around the surface of the paintings, the grinning skull in *Untitled (skull)* 2004 and even the gnarled tree bark in *Untitled (tree)* 2004 give the appearance of a world in the grip of mild delirium.

At first glance abstraction seems to be the basis of **Kim Fisher's** painting. However, like most of the artists in the exhibition, Fisher balances abstraction and representation. Her apparently abstract shapes frequently draw from images found in high end fashion and jewellery catalogues. The vibrant colours speak of a luscious and extravagant world, while also referring to fundamentals of abstract painting such as light and dark and tonal scales. In *MAKEOVER*, Fisher's paintings deal most directly with the subject of painting through the investigation of the surfaces and formal boundaries of both their subject matter and their physical aspect.

The flat planes defy depth, communicating only the facets of the gems on the surface of the canvas. Fisher considers symbols of luxury and power drawn from the surface focused world of high fashion, successfully marrying this opulence with the austerity of Minimalist painting. Furthermore, Fisher's depiction of simultaneous aspects of an object recalls the investigatory breakthrough of multiple viewpoints made by the Cubists.

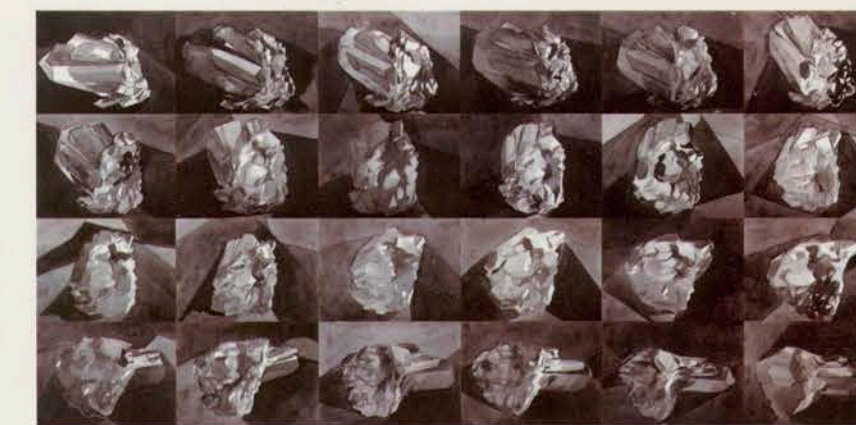
In their physical aspect Fisher's paintings resist formal boundaries by breaking away from the rectangle of the canvas. In several works Fisher has left the edges of the canvas free after it wraps over the stretcher. The raw edges of the canvases extend the jewels outside the boundaries of their cut, creating a contrast with the flat planes of the painted shapes and the face of the canvas and playing with the physical and perceptual boundaries of the painting.

**Isobel Thom's** work shares with Kim Fisher's a sense of abstraction derived from the material appearance of the subject. Thom paints panoramic views of quartz crystals, covering every angle in a frame by frame cinematic progression around the object. This gives her work qualities of abstraction derived from multifaceted viewpoints as found in Cubism and in particular the paintings of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). Like Fisher, Thom has chosen to paint her subject representationally. This literalism has been present in Thom's practice since the early 1990s when she sought to deliberately pare down her paintings; the reduction of subject to form enabled her to focus on the process of painting.

A number of comparisons can be drawn between Thom's paintings and both historical and contemporary visual representation. The crystal paintings possess a pseudo scientific aspect that is evocative of 18th and 19th century studies of the natural world; the investigative nature of the studies extends to a consideration of the connection between abstraction and representation as played out in Cubism. And, in addition, Thom's study of the crystals from every angle creates a progressive movement around the object which touches on concerns of space that are central to installation art.

Like Diana Georgetti and Michael Harrison, Thom's titles such as *What am I doing and where am I going* 2005 also introduce a sense of the existential, implying a metaphysical journey to match the physical journeys she charts around the objects in her paintings. Other titles such as *Once more again II* 2004 suggest playfulness on the part of the artist, while also acknowledging the repetition and progression contained in her work.

Charlotte Huddleston



left: Kim Fisher *Study for gemstone (padparadscha, 40)* 2004

above: Isobel Thom *Once more again II* 2004



## LIST OF WORKS:

### Dave Deany

Lives and works in Los Angeles

#### *Untitled (flowers '05) 2005*

watercolour and ink on paper  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Untitled (hills) 2004*

watercolour and ink on canvas  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Untitled (light flowers) 2004*

acrylic, oil and marker on canvas  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Untitled (skull) 2004*

watercolour and ink on paper  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Untitled (spotscape) 2004*

watercolour and ink on paper  
courtesy Daniel Hug, Los Angeles

#### *Untitled (tree) 2004*

ink on paper  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

### Kim Fisher

Lives and works in Los Angeles

#### *Beryl, 15 2003*

oil on linen  
courtesy Alan Power, Los Angeles

#### *Study for gemstone #003 (grey scale)*

2001  
oil on linen  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Study for gemstone (corundum, 17 with grey scale) 2002*

oil on linen  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Study for gemstone (golden beryl) 2004*

oil on linen  
courtesy the artist and China Art Objects Galleries, Los Angeles

#### *Study for gemstone (labradorite, 31) 2003*

oil on linen  
courtesy Cynthia and Eliot Fried, New York

#### *Study for gemstone (padparadscha, 40)*

2004  
oil on linen  
courtesy Sam and Shantit Schwartz, Los Angeles

### Michael Harrison

Lives and works in Auckland

#### *Adversaries 2005*

acrylic on paper  
courtesy the artist and Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch

#### *Best hoof 2005*

acrylic on paper  
courtesy the artist and Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch

#### *Comeback 2005*

acrylic on paper  
courtesy Clark collection, Wellington

#### *Dog outside 2000*

acrylic on canvas  
courtesy the artist and Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland

#### *Stay awhile 2005*

acrylic on paper  
courtesy the artist and Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch

#### *Theatre of the infinite 2005*

acrylic on canvas  
courtesy private collection, Auckland

### Diana Georgetti

Lives and works in Brisbane

#### *Olien peat 2004*

acrylic on canvas  
courtesy the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington

#### *So far I remember who you are but I wonder who you will be 2004*

acrylic on canvas  
courtesy Stuart McKenzie and Miranda Harcourt Collection

#### *The humanity of abstract painting 2002*

acrylic on canvas  
courtesy private collection, Wellington

#### *The humanity of abstract painting 2005*

acrylic on board  
courtesy the artist and Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

#### *You, me and everything until we've passed away 2004*

acrylic on canvas  
courtesy the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington

### Peter McDonald

Lives and works in London

#### *Café 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas

#### *Committee meeting 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas

#### *Floating 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas

#### *Guru teacher 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas

#### *Small teaching 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas

#### *Teaching painting 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas

#### *Yoga head 2005*

acrylic gouache on canvas  
all works courtesy the artist and Kate MacGarry Gallery, London

### John Spiteri

Lives and works in Sydney

#### *A chance lost 2004*

oil on linen

#### *Backstabbers 2004*

oil on linen

#### *Die another day 2003*

oil on linen

#### *Riviera 2004*

oil on linen

#### *Three of a kind 2004*

oil on linen  
all works courtesy the artist and Vilma Gold Gallery, London

### Isobel Thom

Lives and works in Auckland

#### *Once more again 2004*

watercolour on paper  
courtesy the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington

#### *Once more again II 2004*

watercolour on paper  
courtesy the artist and Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington

#### *Where am I going and what am I doing 2005*

acrylic on canvas board  
courtesy the artist and Anna Miles Gallery, Auckland

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### 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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DISTRICT COUNCIL  
newplymouthnz.com

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