

RAMP GALLERY

Nebula

Diane Prince / Layne Waerea / Amanda Watson

11 - 25 Oct, 2017

Opening preview: Wed 11 Oct, 12 - 1pm

Curators: Ahsin Ahsin, Lucy Coombes, Alana Cooper, Jarom Gudgeon, Jonathon Hagan, Ed Hanfling, Vicky Lin, Jodi McBride, Heather Olesen, Lesley Payne, Haana Pratt-Rink, Shan Rahman

Nebula examines the significance of amorphous forces and relationships in the work of Amanda Watson, Diane Prince and Layne Waerea. It is curated for RAMP Gallery by Ed Hanfling and Wintec students enrolled in the Media Arts contextual elective "After Post-modernism".

The artists each show how their *tūranga-waewae*, their attachment to, or foothold on, the land, is bound up with a range of intangibles – feeling, *wairua* or spirit, *kaitiakitanga* or guardianship. Tensions emerge between affective and proprietary attachments to places and spaces, between the legal system and cultural rights and beliefs, and between perception and responsibility, aesthetics and activism. These are weighty issues, perhaps, yet the overriding effect of the artworks is one of lightness. *Nebula* mixes playfulness with politics and takes delight in clouds and fog, abstract and ethereal forms.

The exhibition in part takes its title from an alien supervillain character featured in Marvel comics and in the recent *Guardians of the Galaxy* superhero films. *Nebula* is a smart and powerful cyborg mercenary, driven by past traumas inflicted by her father. The artists in *Nebula* the exhibition are similarly inspired to action – by historical injustices, the inadequacies of the law, or simply by their commitment to the environmental and social conditions of Aotearoa New Zealand. They are not content to record detached views of places or people, but rather find methods and materials to represent their direct involvement with the landscape. Diane Prince (Ngā Puhi, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Kahu) has a strong background in political activism going back to the 1977-78 Bastion Point occupation, while Layne Waerea (Te Arawa, Ngāti Kahungunu) records videos of herself carrying out enterprising, irreverent acts on public and

private property. Amanda Watson's paintings are also, though less explicitly, concerned with action, in their vigorous paint-handling but also in the sense that they register her actual experience of the outdoors environments of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The three artists each make work about things they care deeply about – things that are real but elusive, unaccounted for by conventional Pākehā systems, and feelings that are difficult to explain or verbalise. They could be opening up what feminist theorist Donna Haraway has called "borderlands": "trying to understand what matters to you personally, as a historical person, as a political person, as an emotional person. All the ways that oneself is not just oneself." For the audience, there is an opportunity to share in these various ways of coming to grips with the ungraspable, through attending to the materiality of the artworks themselves. Absorb the texts and textures of Diane's finely woven judges' wigs tottering on their stands; explore Amanda's crumpled canvas and paper abstractions of geological formations; and take up Layne's invitation to join the chasing fog club (Est. 2014), and receive a complimentary club t-shirt. Let the artists lead you into these vast and vital nebulae. For as the English art critic John Ruskin wrote in 1856: "Our whole happiness and power of energetic action depend upon our being able to breathe and live in cloud."

Nebula

By Heather Olesen

Search for Nebula on Google and you'll find an array of synopsis meanings, all with differing references, ranging from a Marvel Comic character to an interstellar cloud of dust and other ionized gases. I thought the idea of investigating an intergalactic Marvel Comic character named Nebula and how this could relate to the exhibition, had more vitality than writing about clouds, space and gas.

Symbolising perpetual voyaging of the solar system, the character of Nebula is described as a six foot one inch blue-skinned female. Highly skilled in the operation of advanced alien technology and with using her astro-navigation, strength and military leadership ability, she gained renown as a space pirate, mercenary and conqueror of intergalactic empires. Essentially, Nebula is a product of combining science with technology, making you wonder just what are the ratios of each?

Donna Haraway's 1984 essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto", takes a critical look at the scientific approach of biotechnology, its effect on our human make-up and the ethical implications of genetic engineering. Haraway calls herself a cyborg, as she sees herself as a product of science and technology, where the relationships between humans and technology are so intimate that it is no longer possible to tell where we end and machines begin. Cyberfeminism has also developed a long-standing relationship between information technology and women's liberation, based on the idea that technology can help you to construct your identity, sexuality and gender.

Nebula's character also indicates an enhanced durability, and she fights for the liberation of her people. Perhaps, ultimately, this is the feature that is most strongly related to the exhibition and the three women artists. Over the past three decades, Diane Prince has developed a substantial body of visual works as a symbolic platform to express

her strong stand on Māori women's issues, political rights and land struggles. Layne Waerea's performance-based interventions challenge the legal ambiguities in public and social spaces. Amanda Watson's landscapes are an interpretation of the environment, spatial awareness and an appreciation of our natural surroundings.

However you decide on interpreting the exhibition, for me it has been a wonderful experience to collaboratively curate, to meet, learn and present all three very talented women artists.

Lift off

By Ed Hanfling

“New Zealand joins the space race”, said the news headlines. On 24 May 2017, The Rocket Lab corporation completed the first test launch of their Electron Rocket from land owned by Tawapata South Māori Incorporation on the Mahia Peninsula, east coast of the North Island. Cue patriotic fervour.

Rocket Lab is a United States company founded in 2006 by CEO Peter Beck, a New Zealander. With launch sites at Cape Canaveral and Alaska, as well as New Zealand, the company is based on the premise that size matters – specifically, that small launch vehicles will make commercial space launches more economically viable. The aim is to provide a service to companies that want to send satellites into orbit to monitor the weather, for example, or track ships. The Electron rocket is powered by a Rutherford oxygen/kerosene engine, the main components of which are made by 3D printing.

Despite the headlines, the first Electron test launch was something of a cock-up in the sense that the rocket did not reach orbit.

The term “space race” is generally used to refer to the theatrical battle for control of space between the capitalist United States and communist Soviet Union during the Cold War, beginning in 1955 and ending in the late 1980s or early 1990s. New Zealand has territorial waters and a national airspace, and even the Ross Dependency in Antarctica, but it does not have dibs on outer space.

In 2010, Rocket Lab was awarded a contract by the Operationally Responsive Space Office (ORS) run by the United States Department of Defence.

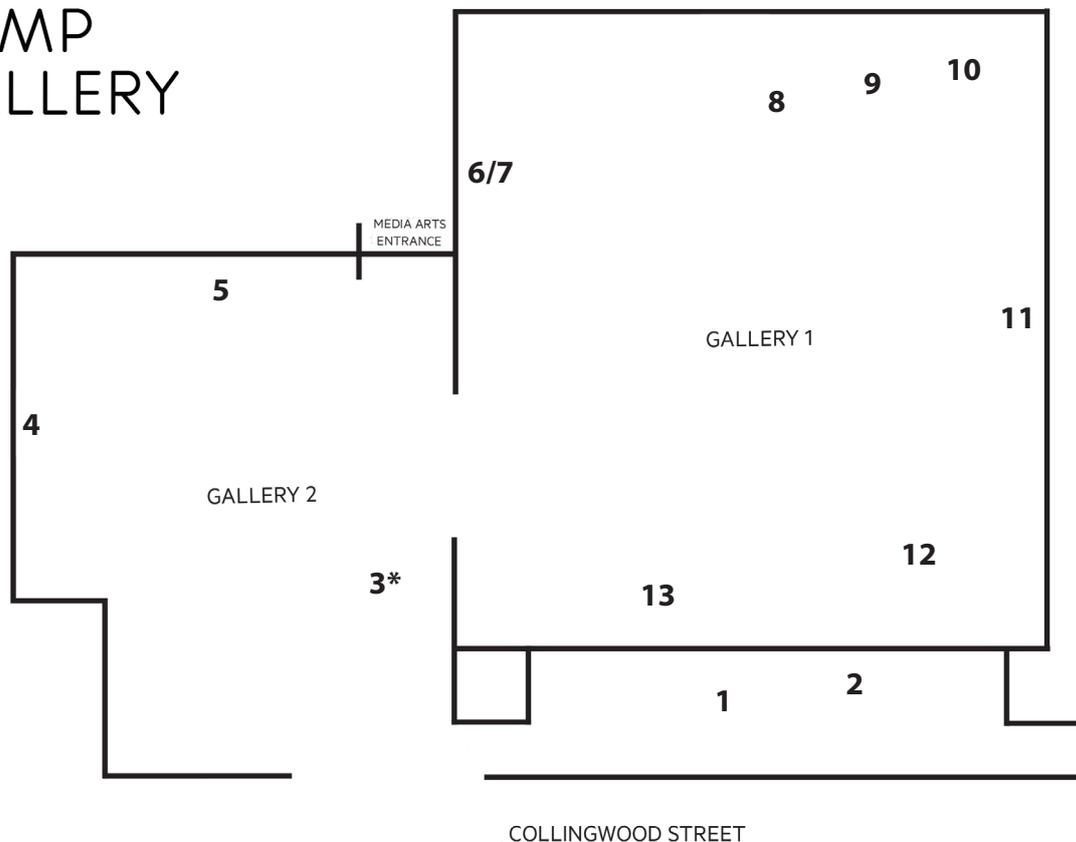
Earlier this year, the New Zealand government drafted a clause in the new, impressively titled Outer Space and High-altitude Activities Bill that would prevent anyone from photographing debris from a crashed rocket. Rocket Lab made a submission in support of the clause, arguing that the company

needed to protect its engineering secrets from competitors, particularly those who might use the technology with malign intent (not thinking about the US Department of Defence at all).

The Rocket Lab website is a snazzy affair designed by Little Giant. It includes a “shop” where you can buy Rocket Lab merchandise, including t-shirts commemorating the first test launch carrying a design by Kyle Lockwood. Lockwood was the chap who designed the fern flags for former Prime Minister John Key’s failed campaign to change the New Zealand flag. Lockwood’s fern also features on the side of the Electron rocket, just under the Stars and Stripes.

On 2 November 1995, Diane Prince’s artwork, *Flagging the Future: Te Kiritangata – The Last Palisade*, featuring a New Zealand flag placed on the floor of the gallery and carrying the words “please walk on me”, was removed from the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki after police threatened to prosecute citing the Flags, Emblems and Names Protection Act. Prince challenged the flag, with its prominent Union Jack, because it symbolised ongoing colonial oppression and the government’s refusal to recognise Tino Rangatiratanga.

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Works List:

1. Amanda Watson, *Untitled 2017*, ink, gesso on canvas, approx. 1200 x 800 x 350 mm.
2. Amanda Watson, *Cloud Puffs 2017*, acrylic pigment, ink, oil on card, each approx. 350 x 300 x 250 mm.
3. Layne Waerea, *The chasing fog club (Est. 2014)*,* interactive installation – website on computer and t-shirts on clothes rack.
4. Amanda Watson, *Refraction 2017*, oil on 300gsm Britannia card, 1200 x 2650 mm.
5. Diane Prince, *A Legal Fabrication 2008*, Indian ink on paper, 1355 x 1415 mm.
6. Layne Waerea, (*Waiting for*) *Free rain 2014*, video loop, duration: 2 minutes 57 seconds.
7. Layne Waerea, *Free instructional video: How to catch air 2014*, video loop, duration: 1 minute 20 seconds.
8. Diane Prince, *Crown v Māori v Iwi 2017*, Muka, Hoheria, embroidery thread, fabric veil, 1300 x 300 x 360 mm.
9. Diane Prince, *All Swarmed Behind The Lofty New Order But As It Advanced A Darkness Covered Te Whenua 2017*, Hoheria, cotton, embroidery thread, fabric veil, 1350 x 400 x 350 mm.
10. Diane Prince, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou 2017*, Muka, Hoheria, Kuta, embroidery thread, fabric veil, 1400 x 280 x 350 mm.
11. Layne Waerea, *Chasing fog (Bruce Pulman park) 2015*, video loop, duration: 10 minutes 9 seconds.
12. Diane Prince, *The New Order Called Them Patriots As They Lusted After Te Whenua 2017*, Hoheria, cotton, embroidery thread, fabric veil, 1350 x 350 x 400 mm.
13. Diane Prince, *When a comet fell on my head, I became an alien 2015*, ink on paper, 1240 x 1240 mm.

* Founded in Auckland, New Zealand in 2014, the chasing fog club (Est. 2014) invites individuals to do no less than chase fog ... anywhere ... anytime. Selected documentation of your efforts will be posted as they occur. Membership is free, so use your phone or computer to email chasingfog@gmail.com with your attempt at chasing fog (still or video link), show the email to the RAMP Gallery attendant, and you will receive a chasing fog club t-shirt for free (while stocks last)