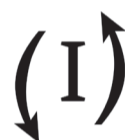


# (Un)conditional

Ayesha Green,  
Cushla Donaldson,  
Eve Armstrong,  
Gabby O'Connor,  
John Vea,  
Mike Hewson,  
and Rob Hood

1 – 31 March 2018

**THE PHYSICS ROOM**  
CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

 The Physics Room  
The Suter Art Gallery  
Ashburton Art Gallery

## (Un)conditional I

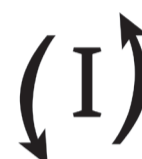
Ayesha Green, Cushla Donaldson, Eve Armstrong, Gabby O'Connor, John Vea, Mike Hewson, & Rob Hood with work from the collections of The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson and Ashburton Art Gallery

1 – 31 March 2018

This exhibition is a partnership between The Physics Room, The Suter Art Gallery, and Ashburton Art Gallery.

(Un)conditional I frames The Physics Room's itinerant exhibition programme in 2018 by combining works by artists from our upcoming programme with works from the collections of The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson and Ashburton Art Gallery.

## (Un)conditional

 The Physics Room  
The Suter Art Gallery  
Ashburton Art Gallery

THE SUTER ART GALLERY  
TE ARATOI O WHAKATŪ

ASHBURTON  
GALLERY

Christchurch  
City Council

Resene  
the paint the professionals use

signtech  
the signmasters

THE CRATER RIM

three boys

creative  
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

Printing: Jane Maloney, M/K Press

## (Un)conditional I

This year, The Physics Room is changing the way it operates. Eschewing a relatively static model, we are partnering with a number of public galleries across Te Waipounamu, the South Island to create collaborative exhibitions. By doing this we hope to draw on shared strengths and resources and embrace the flexibility and urgency that comes from working alongside, and within, other institutions and contexts.

The (Un)conditional series of exhibitions has been developed alongside this operational shift. Most simply, the idea of something being unconditional can be thought of in the context of love; of the unrestricted and unlimited gesture of giving affection without expectation. Outside of this particular—and relatively rare—occurrence, a myriad of overlapping conditions dictate how and why we give and receive on a day-to-day basis. The (Un)conditional series explores the concepts of hosting, being a guest, trade, exchange, reciprocity, utu, and manaakitanga. The artists involved examine the conditions that shape cultural, legal, commercial, familial, and educational relationships, whether these are explicit, implicit, above board, or sub rosa.

(Un)conditional I takes place at The Physics Room (Christchurch) and combines borrowed collection items from The Suter Art Gallery (Nelson) and The Ashburton Art gallery chosen by the artists showing in those spaces later this year, as well as new and existing work by those artists. This process has allowed the artists to delve into the local contexts in which they will be showing and extend their practices by engaging with interests and concerns of other artists that may or may not be their contemporaries.

Ayesha Green's diptych *Transit* depicts the two figures from the New Zealand coat of arms. Performing a similar role to the one they do on a citizenship document, these figures welcome visitors into The Physics Room's gallery space. The crucial difference in Green's representation of this iconic image is that instead of facing one another, they face away, backs turned. This bicultural entanglement, and its legal representation in Te Tiriti O Waitangi, built on a host of slippery conditions and deceptions, was, and remains, the most important relationship in Aotearoa, New Zealand. One of the fundamental concerns of this relationship is the idea of access; to land, to resources, to self-determination. John Vea's work explores the ways in which access is controlled by traditional customs in Tonga, where women are unable to own land or fonua. *She sows this āina with her younger siblings, yet she cannot inherit that same āina* uses an ostensibly playful cipher—the childhood game, 'Eggs in a basket', which involves stealing as many rocks as possible from opponents within a certain amount of time—to retell a personal story of conflict. Vea's mother is the eldest of three female siblings; however, as the eldest son, Vea legally owns his mother's land now that his grandfather has passed away. This Tongan tradition has provoked legal battles between his immediate family and his grandfather's distant relatives.<sup>1</sup>

Existing at the crossroads of two opposing systems of ritual—function and aesthetics— and the conditions they invoke, Rob Hood's *Rocket Stove* draws on the histories of modernism and the employment of non-art objects as artworks. In recent years, rocket stoves—which heat and cook with “hyperefficiency” and with relative

safety—have been touted as important objects in charitable aid work where they are delivered by NGOs into developing countries as potential solutions to deforestation, energy sustainability, and premature death from smoke inhalation. The work also hints at recent urban survivalist, and neo-masculine trends to 'get back to nature' and the value that commercial entities see in such a discourse. Hood's stove, however, is futile in these senses—utterly unportable; its monumentality is self-defeating. Mike Hewson's *Bunnings Painting Tiles* delves into the labour involved in mass production and artistic production. Bunnings is the centre of making and installation retailers for contemporary artists: their selection is massive and wide-ranging and their prices cannot be beaten. They are also one of the corporations that enforces Zero Hour contracts and are exponents of ruthless commercial expansion. The predicament then, for an artist, often paid a minimal fee and production costs to create new work, is whether to perpetuate a damaging market system, or suffer themselves. Is it, like so many memes suggest, impossible to have any kind of ethical consumption under capitalism?

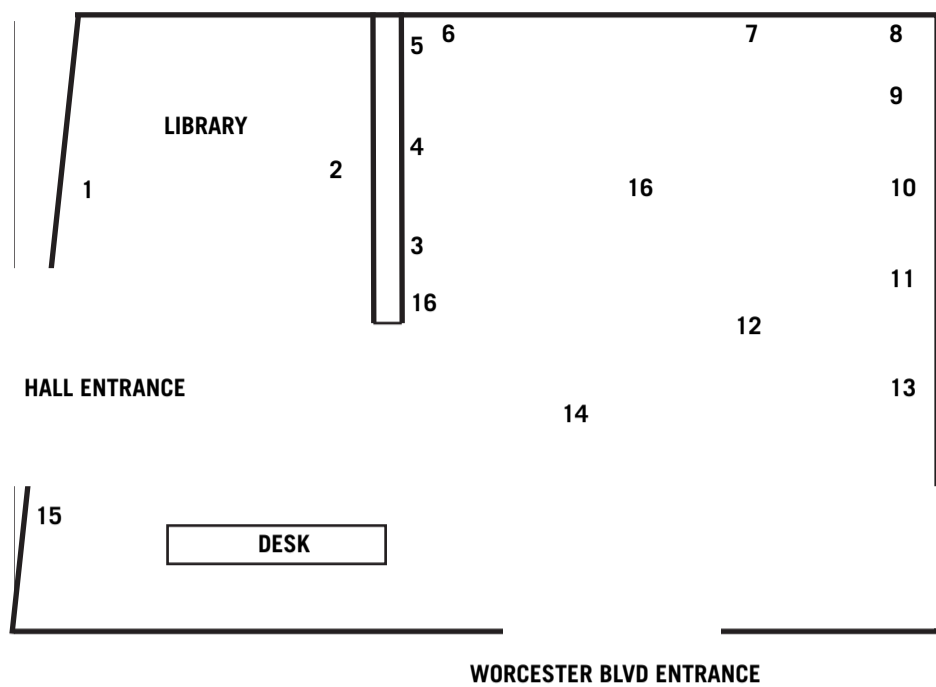
For (Un)conditional I Cushla Donaldson has contributed two works that were part of a larger exhibition titled *Supergroup* presented at the Audio Foundation in Auckland in 2014. *Becks Beer* and *Supergroup*— the video—were created as part of a feminist re-imagining of Led Zeppelin's launch party for their label, Swan Song, featuring the all-female group Las Tetras and a swag of sponsored excess including bottles of Beck's Beer and slices of Sal's Pizza. Through these works, and the negotiations with the corporate sponsors preceding their creation, Donaldson seeks to reveal the workings of sponsorship as an often invisible but necessary ancillary funding route for artists and arts organisations, and, in doing so, questions the sometimes prickly conditions that come with accepting such offers of support. Suggesting a similar alternative economy of exchange, Eve Armstrong's *Trading Table* (an ongoing project that began in 2003) deals in multiple currencies including ideas, information, skills, services, and items. Occurring over three days in Christchurch (7-9 March), Armstrong will host the table and solicit exchanges of “almost anything” from participants. Embodying a kind of currency converter, Armstrong eschews market value for a more intimate and vernacular manifestation of worth. Also based on personal exchange, Gabby O'Connor's *The Unseen* is a result of a collaborative making workshop delivered by O'Connor and Dr Carolyn Lundquist that took place on 28 February with sculpture students from the Ilam School of Fine Arts alongside other participants. Working at the nexus of art and science research, O'Connor provides an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge—the time given by the participants to learn about ecological threats to waterways up and down Aotearoa is, in a way, traded for new making skills. This exchange can be seen as mutually beneficial; and is a chance to foster new ways of confronting the issues facing local and global ecologies.

(Un)conditional II is co-curated by Sarah McClintock and opens in Nelson at The Suter Art Gallery, Saturday 17 March and features work by Ayesha Green, Cushla Donaldson, Eve Armstrong, Gabby O'Connor, and Rob Hood. (Un)conditional III opens at Ashburton Art Gallery in August and includes work by Eve Armstrong, John Vea, and Mike Hewson.

Jamie Hanton

<sup>1</sup> Ngahiraka Mason on *She sows this āina with her younger siblings, yet she cannot inherit that same āina* for 2017 Honolulu Biennial.

## List of Works



1. **John Ve**, *she cultivates this 'aina along with her younger siblings, yet she cannot inherit that same 'aina*, 2017, HD video, 3 min 48 sec.
2. **Eve Armstrong**, *Trading Table*, 2003–ongoing. Taking place at The Physics Room 7-9 March 2018.
3. **Jacquelyn Greenbank**, *Springlands Rd–Dad's house*, 2012, embroidery, collection of The Ashburton Art Gallery. Selected by John Ve.
4. **Toss Woollaston**, *Day Model, Wellington*, 1969, watercolour on paper, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: Gifted by the artist in 1979. Selected by Eve Armstrong.
5. **Ralph Hotere**, *Ka ngaro reoreo tangata kiki e manu. No human voice – Only the voice of birds. From the 'Te Whiti' series*, 1972, acrylic and ink on paper, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: Gifted by the Botting family in 2012. Selected by Rob Hood.
6. **after Sydney Parkinson**, *Three illustrations*, 1780, engraving, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: Gifted by Peter and Ann Newton in 2002. Selected by Ayesha Green.
7. **Ayesha Green**, *Transit*, 2018, acrylic on plywood.
8. **Mike Hewson**, *Bunnings Tile Paintings*, 2018, enamel on board, various dimensions.
9. **Guy Ngan**, *Series Six*, 1973, screeprint, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: Purchased in 1973. Selected by Gabby O'Connor.
10. **David Elliot**, *The Boots; The Butcher, The Broker, The Bandersnatch; The Jub Jub Bird; The Barrister, The Baker, The Banker*, all 2006, all solar etchings, all works are collection of The Ashburton Art Gallery. Selected by Mike Hewson.
11. **Cushla Donaldson**, *Supergroup*, 2014, HD video, 14min 39sec.
12. **Cushla Donaldson**, *Becks*, 2014, cornice bond, polystyrene, acrylic paint, paper. Both *Supergroup* and *Becks* were part of the *Supergroup* at Audio Foundation 2014.
13. **Sally Burton**, *Lady Clown*, 1982, acrylic on particle board, collection of The Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū: Purchased in 1982. Selected by Cushla Donaldson.
14. **Rob Hood**, *Rocket Stove*, 2018, concrete, PVC pipe, reinforcing steel.
15. **Rob Hood**, *Bucket Ashtray*, 2018, steel, sand, and club cigarettes.
16. **Gabby O'Connor**, *The Unseen*, 2016–ongoing, rope and cable ties, dimensions variable, this work will travel to Nelson following the exhibition in Christchurch.

## Artist Biographies

**Ayesha Green** (Ngāti Kahungunu, Kai Tahu) is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau. She graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from Elam in 2013 and completed a Graduate Diploma in Museums and Cultural Heritage in 2016. Recent exhibitions include *Alma Venus*, Corbans Estate Art Centre (2018), *Summa Pete*, Papakura Art Gallery (2017), *2. Spirit of the Thing Given (Māori)*, RM Gallery (2017), *Biographies of Transition, To Busy to Think*, ARTSPACE (2017).

**Cushla Donaldson** is an artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau. Her practice seeks to identify, expose, and act upon schisms in the heated environment of late capitalism. Her writing has come to include fiction alongside essays on art, politics and film theory. She graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts before gaining her MFA from Goldsmiths College, University of London, as a recipient of the Anne Reid Scholarship. She has exhibited in New Zealand, Europe and Japan. She has participated in residencies in Estonia and in the Manawatū, New Zealand and has taught Art and Film Theory at Auckland University and Unitech, Auckland.

**Eve Armstrong** holds a BFA from Elam School of Fine Arts (2003), and in 2006 was an inaugural recipient of the Arts Foundation of New Zealand New Generation Award. In 2017 Armstrong was the Dunedin Public Art Gallery Visiting Artist. She has exhibited widely throughout NZ including major solo exhibitions at Dunedin Public Art Gallery (2017), The Physics Room, Christchurch (2010), City Gallery Wellington (2007) and Artspace, Auckland (2005-6). She has also presented solo projects in international exhibitions including: *The woods that see and hear*, NL (2010), 3rd Auckland Triennial (2007), Busan Biennale (2006) and SCAPE (2006). Her ongoing project *Trading Table* (2003 -) was presented at Spring 1883, Sydney (2017) and at the Auckland Art Fair (2016). Armstrong is represented by Michael Lett, Auckland.

**Gabby O'Connor** is an artist, interdisciplinary researcher, Antarctic, science communicator, and educator based in Wellington. Her practice operates across multiple disciplines and audiences – between contemporary art, science communication and community action and looks at the different entry point to conversations around our changing climate. O'Connor studied sculpture in Melbourne at the Victorian College of the Arts, has a Masters in Fine arts at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales in Sydney and is currently a PhD candidate at Auckland University supported by the Sustainable Seas NZ National Science Challenge.

**John Ve** is a Tāmaki Makaurau based artist who works with sculpture, video, and performance art. Ve works with tropes of migration and gentrification within Moana Nui a Kiwa. By enacting stories that have been collected through everyday interactions with people, both in his home community and abroad with a journalistic sensibility he offers a sometimes humorous and always powerfully symbolic emic viewpoint to the Western meta narrative. He gained a Master of Art and Design at Auckland University of Technology in 2015, where he is currently undertaking his Ph.D. candidature.

**Mike Hewson** alters civic sites to highlight pressing issues concerning that community. This involves transposing images or materials to cause hesitation and reflection on the path ahead. He received a Bachelors of [Civil] Engineering with First Class Honours from University of Canterbury, New Zealand and lives and works between New York and Sydney.

**Rob Hood** lives and works in Christchurch, New Zealand. He graduated with a BFA in Sculpture (1999) and an MFA (2011) from Ilam School of Fine Arts, Canterbury University. Exhibitions include: *Precarious Balance*, COCA, NZ, 2016; *Tricksters*, Christchurch Art Gallery, NZ, 2012; *Prospect Contemporary Art Now*, Wellington City Art Gallery, 2011; *From a City Forsaken by its Gods*, First Draft Gallery, Sydney, 2011; *Last Ride in a Hot Air Balloon*, Auckland Triennial, Auckland Art Gallery, 2010. Hood was the Olivia Spencer Bower fellow in 2007. His work is held in the collections of Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tāmaki, Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetū, and the University of Canterbury.

**(Un)conditional**

**(I)** The Physics Room  
The Suter Art Gallery  
Ashburton Art Gallery