

Dead Reckoning

Megan Brady
Oliver Perkins

17 January – 17 February 2019

**THE
PHYSICS
ROOM** CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

Artist Biographies

Megan Brady is a Dunedin-based artist working across multidisciplinary fields. Newly graduated (2017), she holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts (First Class Honours) from the Dunedin School of Art, and recently exhibited her first solo show *A quiet corner where we can talk* (2018) at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Within the creative community of Ōtepoti she is a board member of the Blue Oyster Arts Trust and facilitates creative practices at Studio2/Margaret Freeman Gallery – a small, all-inclusive art studio for local artists with disabilities.

Christchurch-based **Oliver Perkins** received his MA from Chelsea School of Art, London, and is well represented between London and New Zealand. Perkins has developed a register of material processes that both promote and disrupt the physical confines of painting. Perkins' diverse and energetic works range from large-scale austere line paintings, to small, dense, three-dimensional constructions. Recent exhibitions include *Bleeding Edge* (2018), Hopkinson Mossman, Wellington, *Japanese Laurel* (2017), Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland, *Painting: A Transitive Space*, St. Paul St Gallery, AUT, Auckland, *Necessary Distraction: A Painting Show* (2015), Auckland Art Gallery.



Image: Megan Brady, *The prime number few* (detail), Dunlop memory foam, 2018/19.

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In *Dead Reckoning*, Megan Brady and Oliver Perkins directly address the site of The Physics Room's temporary home within the Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna O Waiwhetū via two large-scale interventions.

In the terminology of navigation, 'dead reckoning' is a process of orienting oneself using the visual signs of the immediate surroundings without a compass or other wayfinding device. How does this occur in The Physics Room's current site: a gallery within a gallery? The artists consider this space as both a destination and as a thoroughfare for a potentially more obvious destination—especially in these tourist-heavy summer months—two quite distinct environments to negotiate.

Perkins' *Painting for the Clarification of Internal Architecture and Institutional Identity (PCIAII)* borrows from the language of the public mural. Painting directly onto the hallway windows between the Worcester Boulevard entrance and the Christchurch Art Gallery's Design Store, Perkins has reversed the original architectural intention; transforming transparency to opacity. His intervention is a distant cousin of the whitewashed shop front, though the sentiment is still murmured by the visible marks of the roller.

Frequently seduced by the subtleties of our surroundings, Megan Brady's practice explores ideas around intention, interaction, and navigation. Through contemplating the transitory nature of our public spaces, she collects and celebrates the soft details of these environments. Looking for ways to distract those whose presence within The Physics Room is somewhat accidental, Brady proposes an alternative route employing soft sculpture and sound to slow navigation and induce contemplation—not only of the work inhabiting the gallery, but of the space itself.

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Exhibition Preview: Wednesday 16 January, 5.30pm
Exhibition Runs: 17 January–17 February 2019

Wednesday 16 January, 12.30pm: Exhibition talk with Megan Brady, Oliver Perkins, and Jamie Hanton

Special thanks to Dunlop Foam and Resene Paints for their generous material support of this exhibition.

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Oliver Perkins

Painting for the Clarification of Internal Architecture and Institutional Identity (PCIAII)

2018

In calling the work *Painting for the Clarification of Internal Architecture and Institutional Identity (PCIAII)* I am stressing the painting being the verb or action, the gesture. The act of painting a window is to reverse the material property, from transparent to opaque. It is both an act of concealment and generosity. It is a distant cousin of the whitewashed shop front, though the sentiment is still murmured by the visible marks of the roller. The colour palette is shared: Yellow (California) and Blue (Pantone) are paints moved from the old Tuam St space and used in previous projects there. The red and green are colours I used from a work *Who's afraid of walking Frida* (2015) and Green (Goblin) used in works made on the McCahon residency.

When I think of this wall, this window, this boundary, this hallway, this seam, it has so many physical evidences towards a transparency, a projected ideal of contemporary architecture. A glasshouse in a garden, an environment for the more sensitive hybrids, hard to grow but rewarding. Also as a necessity for an active, inclusive arts community that needs stimulus through a range of exhibitions and events that provide what programme directors might call content. The mix of metaphors is intentional for the contrast of institutional frameworks (Christchurch Art Gallery, Te Puna o Waiwhetū and The Physics Room) which draw on such disparate models. The Physics Room has its own history and is not an annex of Christchurch Art Gallery: it, like many other institutions, has made sacrifices to continue. It is a parasite, and CAG is a host, in a cycle of incubated recalibration before striking out again. It is a thankful parasite, a good neighbour. But a neighbour that attracts distracted, bemused visitors looking for the main entrance, see the bookshop through the glass wall and disappear to safer waters. This glass wall illustrates the alienation of ideas over objects. The smooth apathy of ideas with no footholds of normative perceptual reasoning. Where is something to stand in front of and conjure thought? This is not to be dismissive of the art going visitor or indeed objects. The *PCIAII* intervention is to delineate a walkway while providing an aesthetic experience- an enactment of a mural with heightened self reflection and on the inside a painted wall that makes the transparent planar architecture more contained.



Image: Oliver Perkins, *Study for TPR Mural*, acrylic on pre-primed canvas, 2018.

Architecture often sites nature as inspiration, the Buchan group website (the architects that designed Christchurch Art Gallery) states,

The building's design connects to the surrounding natural environment, as well as to the town after which it's named. The shimmering, undulating glass façade is reminiscent of the ripples in the winding River Avon which is a symbol of the old, as well as the new settlements.¹

My interest in the built landscape is that it holds an equivalent physical value to painting only flattened. Painting is a language and action. It holds the capacity for gesture. The idea of the work was conceived in part to manufacture some seclusion but I was drawn to the secession of housed glass panels as a site for a work. I felt the hallway entrance was both a captive but often passive audience. A corridor is a place that connects one space to another, a pragmatic architectural feature. Hallways are an element of what Marc Augé might call a 'non-place'. In his ethnological study of supermodernity he makes the distinction between places that are anthropologically active or presumed 'in-active' (non-place). The galleries of CAG are active sites and hallways are not.²

¹ Buchan Group, *Celebrating Art*, Christchurch Art Gallery, <https://buchangroup.com.au/project/christchurch-art-gallery/>.

² Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Verso, 2009, p 118.

**A conversation between Megan Brady and Jamie Hanton
15 January 2019**

Jamie Hanton: Can you describe the process you went through in thinking through the work?

Megan Brady: Well, upon being invited to come here all I was thinking about was the new location. I spent the day around the space and watching the movement of people in and out of it and very quickly came to learn that it was a destination for less and a thoroughfare for more. I think my practice heavily relies on synchronicity which is a term coined by Carl Jung and it describes, for lack of a better work, meaningful coincidences. I was thinking about pathways that are almost orchestrated or designed by pedestrians. So that's the first thing, the second thing is a spark or a moment where you get really excited because of something and at the time you had said that Oliver's work had this porous quality and then the third thing, and my most reliable source, is the... it's like my bible: the newly anticipated colour trends forecasting magazine by Resene.

JH: So where did your interests around public spaces and transitory spaces come from?

MB: I really enjoy observing how places like airports or waiting rooms are designed so specifically for people to move through, not for people to linger in and what they look like and how they accommodate for movement and how they just keep everyone relatively comfortable. I'm interested in the furnishings but more specifically the floors of those public spaces and how they have this stripped back visual aesthetic to, essentially, offend nobody, therefore please nobody. I started paying attention to elevator music and came to this conclusion that elevator music and background music exist in that same opacity, it's music to be heard but not actively listened to. You'd notice the absence more than you're aware of the presence.

JH: I think airports are the non-site par excellence—the airport is the site of nothing but there are so many signifiers and so many signs at the airport, the information that you have to consume to know where you're going or what's around you...

MB: To get to the right place, to behave accordingly...

JH: So how does that manifest in this work? How does the use of colour sit with the floor work? Do they operate separately?

MB: I think it's more a methodology of finding those synchronicities, essentially it gives value to whatever colour it directs me to and the names of the colours are also incredible: the colour for this show is called influential. The magazine says that these warmer colours "carry the promise of global exploration with porous borders" which sounded to me like the filtering from one space to another...

JH: And do you agree? Does this speak to porous borders or the warmth of global exploration?

MB: How a warm colour can carry the promise of anything, I don't know? And how a dirty mustard possibly talk about immigration, I don't know but...

JH: Tell me about the memory foam: what does it do for you as a material?

MB: I love those images where there's a hand pressed into it and then a hand that's just hovering. And then there's no reference to the body but there's that impression, I loved that impression because I was automatically thinking about desire paths areas where foot traffic forms those pathways.

JH: Can you describe this musical composition?

MB: Because of where this space is situated: it's right next to cafe that plays party tunes and just down the hall from the Design Store that is playing commercial music, there's all these noises that fill the space. Looking at the space was the intention of the project, the physical boundaries of the space so it was really important to draw from them when making the music.

JH: So what are the correlations between the space and the composition?

MB: The measurements of the space have been used as rules to write the music: the space is 63m sq so the bpm is 63 a tranquil kind of pace. It runs for 63 bars which works out as 16 minutes and 43 seconds, which is a shame because it's almost 17 minutes and all the bricks are cut at 17cms and it's intended to be a 17 step path.