



First Floor
Dunedin Railway Station
22 Anzac Avenue
DUNEDIN

Open daily 10am to 4pm

P.O. Box 5174, Moray Place,
Dunedin 9058, New Zealand

Phone: 03 477 9465

Administrator: Ngaire Kitt

otagoartsociety@xtra.co.nz

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National Cleveland Awards

At the opening night on 7th May, Auckland artist **Gavin Chai** was successful in winning three awards with his painting 'Howick':

- EXCELLENCE AWARD (Category 1)
- YOUNG ARTIST AWARD
- SUPREME AWARD



Judge's comment by Jenna Packer: This is the most difficult painting to speak about, and that is maybe why it ended up with my choice for excellence. I find this work intriguing, frustrating almost, unique, and very skilfully painted.

It has many of the elements which can make a representational painting, or an abstract painting, work; it is formally balanced but full of points of tension and uses a range of means to engage our interest right across the picture plane – the geometry of the buildings, the clustering of the small squares right behind the head to lead our focus, the tipped perspective of the patterned tiles, the play of colours and tones, the choice of brushwork and its mastery within that very controlled, precise approach... There are so many reasons why this painting works well, but it has something so much more, and that is the thing! I was continually drawn back to it, and in the end it is still as enigmatic for me, I'm still asking why, and what, and how did the artist through his skill, make me care about the why and what! It almost feels like a riddle set for us, in the hope that eventually we will get it and just quietly be.

That this artist is still so young, and already so distinctive in his style and brave in his storytelling is very exciting, and I'm looking forward to being bewildered and satisfied - both at the same time, by more work by Gavin Chai in the future.

CHEQUES

As from the end of this financial year, 31st May 2021, the Otago Art Society will no longer issue or accept cheques.

Please note our bank account number:
02-0929-0274457-000.

Members' Meeting

(Critique session 6.00-7.00pm)

Thursday 20th May
at 7.00 pm

Bridget Riley, optical artist. Presenter: Doug Hart.

What's happening at Olveston these days?

Jan Davies, manager of Olveston, will give an overview of current activities at the Historic Home; Kay McKenzie will give some insights to the Art Collection and the garden; and Jenny Longstaff will share stories from her experiences working as a housekeeper and tour guide.



President:
Doug Hart

Phone 0211346252



Facebook:
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www.otagoartsociety.co.nz

Back Issues of the newsletter are available on the website.

President's Message

Doug Hart

Kia Ora.

This month we saw the launch of the prestigious National Cleveland Awards—a snapshot of New Zealand art incorporating painting, mixed media, photography, digital work and three-dimensional objects. It's a selective exhibition which means that many people did not make it through the first assessment by the three judges. This doesn't necessarily mean that the deselected work was not up to standard, but it reflects the judges' thoughts, choices and ideas of a wide slice of national artworks. If artists didn't put themselves forward in any award competition, then no exhibitions would ever take place. I personally thank everyone who entered; this has contributed to an eclectic and surprising mix of genres, subjects and styles. If your piece didn't make it through, then we have the upcoming 145th Annual and Edinburgh Realty Exhibitions coming soon.

The impact of art.

Throughout different points in our lives, there are certain moments when we feel captivated by a particular work of art. It might be at the very moment when we walk into an art gallery and see something that immediately catches our attention. It could be that moment when we feel magically awed by a beautifully carved statue, or perhaps when we see the swaying sculptural forms of Len Lye. Whatever it is, some forms of art can be so powerful that they leave lasting impressions that create a swirl of emotions inside our hearts and permeate our consciousness.

In our rapidly evolving technological world, art can transport our experience beyond space and time. Art has the power to reinterpret the meaning of life through new experiences. By creating a new understanding of life and existence, art can be a social vehicle that shifts perceptions and produces changes politically and socially.

Art can become a catalyst that inspires significant impacts in our everyday lives.

As one example, in the early 1930s, a diverse group of black Americans from all realms of the arts formed the 'Harlem Renaissance Movement' which had its base in New York. It set about proclaiming and enhancing the status of writers, dancers, musicians, actors and painters. It spawned the careers of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Fats Waller who performed at the Cotton Club and other city venues.

As more and more black Americans became literate, and more and more migrated from the south to join businesses and factories, this movement spread out from New York. Through this Renaissance black people had an increasingly influential voice.

Artists such as sculptor Augusta Savage began to make significant impact on the fine art scene, once the preserve of the male white elite. She still faced the ingrained prejudice that permeated American Society. Many art galleries across the world did not display women artists' work. But new ideas, perspectives, injustices, triumphs and cultural differences helped push the world of art forward.

Today we have the likes of Banksy whose graffiti work is confrontational and thought provoking. He projects his craft as a reflection of society and political corruption, from Israeli-Palestinian conflicts to environmental negligence, with his own way of visual communication.

Art continues to help the audience address social issues and to rethink what actually matters in life. It encourages people to experience another side of reality they have not yet understood.

Engaging with art not only affects people in many ways but also opens new possibilities for what needs to change in our world and society as a whole.

Kind regards,
Doug



Cleveland Awards helpers: There are many tasks requiring attention in staging exhibitions, especially one on the scale of this prestigious show, so the hard work of our team of volunteer helpers is much appreciated. Thank you to all those who contributed time and effort in so many ways. Pictured from left to right: Pauline Bellamy and Anne Baldock (the 'heavy lifters'), Erelene Milne and Jocelyn Mann (glass cleaning), and some of the hanging crew taking a well-earned break.



Awards judges Rachel Allan, Stella Lange, and Jenna Packer spent considerable time making their selections.

Award Winners

(Sponsors' names in brackets)

Supreme Award (Cleveland Charitable Foundation)
Gavin Chai, 'Howick'

Young Artist (Crew Recruitment)
Gavin Chai, 'Howick'

Category 1 – Painting / 2D Media

Excellence Award (Gallery De Novo; Taut Art)
Gavin Chai, 'Howick'

Merit Award (Sharon Stark Lont)
Judy Woods, 'Blue Baths'

Special Mentions

Lesley Knight, 'Picnic at the Playground'
Anita De Soto, 'Suffragettes'
Justine Ottey, 'Lake Hawea'
Kirsten Ferguson, 'Blue Vase in Window'
Tracey Coakley, 'In Your Arms'

Category 2 – Printmaking / Photography / Digital Graphics

Excellence Award (Alex Campbell Menswear)
David Browne, 'Warren Unmasked'

Merit Award (Crew Recruitment)
Natalie Carpenter, 'Awakening'

Special Mention

Thomas Lord, 'Hedge, June 2020'

Category 3 – 3D Media / Sculpture / Jewellery / Homeware / Textile

Excellence Award (Adams Plumbing & Drainage)
Lisa Bate, 'The Pack II'

Merit Award (Adams Plumbing & Drainage)
Hayley Landreth, 'Stitch in Time'

Special Mentions

Fiona Garlick, 'Talismans, Lost Charm Bracelet'
Kari Morseth, 'Study for Awhiowhio'

People's Choice Award (sponsored by Moray Gallery),
will be determined at conclusion of exhibition.
Cast your vote!



THE CLEVELAND CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



Margaret Cleveland
at the opening function.

Pauline Bellamy was guest curator for the main decision-making in the presentation of the exhibition, successfully arranging the many entries. Her expertise has resulted in many favourable comments about 'the look' of the exhibition. With such a variety of media, ranging from delicate ceramics to heavy pieces, small images to large works, it was a challenging mission for the hanging team.

Some statistics:

185 artworks selected for the exhibition, from 163 different artists, with 21 having two or more entries selected.

National Cleveland Awards – Judges' Comments

Category 1 (Painting / 2D Media) **Judge: Jenna Packer**

EXCELLENCE AWARD Cat. 1 • YOUNG ARTIST AWARD • SUPREME AWARD

Gavin Chai, 'Howick'

(see front page for image and judge's comments.)



MERIT AWARD Cat. 1 Judy Woods, 'Blue Baths'

This is another work which draws you in close and sends you back to look at it from a distance, but either view is as rewarding. This reminds me of a time, and a feeling, but is quite unique. The totally confident, joyful use of colour which still does its job, to activate the whole surface of this work, gives the eye so many gorgeous areas to wander around in. You never get stuck though, as the connections between colours, repeated shapes, the sharp little tonal contrasts, the fragile sgraffito'd lines, are all pulling the eye from one area, or conversation or taste even (where you are happy to stay around and savour the complexity) and on to the next. This works in a serious, formal abstract way but also feels so disrespectful and cheeky and alive with restless energy and rhythm.

SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 1 Lesley Knight, 'Picnic at the Playground'

I found this painting so curious, I kept returning to it. It is so perfectly the sum of its parts; part narrative story-telling and part formally balanced, across the picture plane in a way which means your eye continually travels the whole surface, through the brush marks, the decorative elements, the gorgeous negative shapes and the angles. These things all combine with the actual story to fill this little work with a sense of present calm and potential chaos. I really like this work.



SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 1 Anita de Soto, 'Suffragettes'

This painting inhabits two very different worlds at once: one of Victorian restraint and demure propriety, dress codes clearly representing social codes – and another world which feels as if it's tearing itself from the surface of the canvas! This terrible beautiful destruction, or this transformation poses so many questions – about Anita's subject, and about the practice of painting in itself. We don't know, even though we step up close and then step back, trying to take in the tiny details and the sweep of huge brushstrokes, whether this is an image in the process of creation or disintegration, and it is tantalising.



SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 1 Justine Ottey, 'Lake Hawea'

This exhibition contains many beautiful Landscape paintings, and many that show incredible skill and individuality. Justine has chosen to work in that space where representation of a physical space – Lake Hawea – is almost, but not quite lost in the transmission of a feeling, a state, wild, agitated, incredibly windswept, or this could be a personal wild energy. But the artist has managed to put that down so deftly, so perfectly I would say, weighting the most opaque brushstrokes where you can sense the solidity of the mountains and letting the white of the paper underneath almost sparkle through those scumbled dry brush areas in the water and air, all done with both intensity and lightness of touch. This is so hard to do and she has made it look effortless.



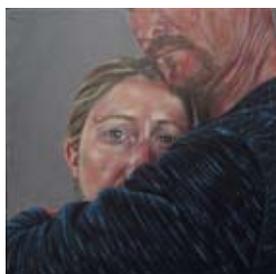
SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 1 Kirsten Ferguson, 'Blue Vase in Window'

Before I read the title of this piece I was already drawn into the energy and viscosity of the paintwork. It is almost the opposite to my work and maybe that's why I found it so delicious, so tactile that I really wanted to walk up and sneak a touch, half imagining it might still be wet! It sits so balanced between chaos and control, where in some areas the colours are manipulated and mixed just to the point where they might start to dull, and no further, and in others they are a riot of freshness. For me the title just helps explain why certain marks are where they are, but they work on an abstract level already. So, like the previous work it's the fine balancing acts within the work that make it something I kept returning to.



SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 1 Tracey Coakley, 'In Your Arms'

It is very difficult to paint scenes which deal with tender or painful emotions, and to do this without falling into sentimentality or cliché, but Tracey Coakley has done this so beautifully in her small, unassuming work. It is undoubtedly an emotionally charged piece. It feels almost raw, but the cropping of both the faces is what makes it something which allows us to get close to the subject without feeling uncomfortable that we're stepping in on something too private, or that the artist is trying to play on our emotions. This is a really strong and intelligent work.



Category 2

(Printmaking / Photography / Digital Graphics)

Judge: Rachel Allan

EXCELLENCE AWARD Cat. 2

David Milton Browne
'Warren Unmasked'

I was not instantly drawn to this portrait; maybe because we all know someone who looks like Warren. Portraits of Warren should be common; art doesn't usually reward ubiquity. But it is a confident photograph that quietly demands attention. The precise focus, scale of print and chosen format, permits the viewer to inspect every fibre of lint and fold in his jacket. I am pulled in by his eyes, his slight smile, his unlit cigarette. And am reminded of my 'Warren' and the smell of whiskey on his breath.



MERIT AWARD Cat. 2 Natalie Carpenter, 'Awakening'

There is a self-assured playfulness in this work. With confidently bold colour choices, under and overpainting, collage and printmaking techniques, 'Awakening' is visually complex but not over-cooked.

SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 2 Thomas Lord, 'Hedge, June 2020'

A beautifully composed, quiet work that exposes the geometric similarity of the hedge, the pavement and the hard dirt. The conservativeness of its size and framing speaks to the history of photography and forces the viewer to focus their look on the minute details contained within this elegant gelatin silver print.



Category 3

(3D Media / Sculpture / Jewellery / Homeware / Textile)

Judge: Stella Lange

EXCELLENCE AWARD Cat. 3

Lisa Bate, 'The Pack II'

This small, translucent form sneaked up on me, in person. When caught by the light the richness of the material becomes known; it is one of those rare pieces that is complex and different every time you look at it. There is depth, mastery and interest – in a small intelligent work.



MERIT AWARD Cat. 3 Hayley Landreth, 'Stitch in Time'

This textile work presents a freshness, being mere lines and folds, simple materials, and yet it felt complete. The interaction between traditions of stitch, and of figurative and flat representation are complex, and highly developed. Many textile pieces rely overtly on texture/variety and colour; what this work does is reveal a sophisticated mastery from previous developments.

SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 3 Fiona Garlick, 'Talismans: Lost Charm Bracelet'

This work made me smile, it is instantly recognisable, and yet holds a surprise in the deliberate scale and the investment in materials.

The way in which the piece anchors to the ground, and emerges from the resting surface reinforces the foreignness of the charms in this place Aotearoa – suggesting a sad redundancy of these forms here.



SPECIAL MENTION Cat. 3 Kari Morseth, 'Study for Awhiowhio'

This mahi is rich in local materials and toi knowledge, so holds a significant place in this exhibition. Few artists work with materials that they themselves harvest that are local and traditional. It is that commitment to the material and the form that make this work strong. The texture is interesting, just the right amount of texture and edge is revealed to delineate the structure.



Events Calendar

Featured Artist: Holly Bettis

Now that all the galleries are being used for the Cleveland show, Holly was the last (and youngest) of our featured artists until we resume the programme later in the year.

Holly is a 16-year-old artist attending Logan Park High School. She studies photography, art history, painting, theatre and film stop motion animation in her subjects and is passionate about pursuing these in her career. Her youth and fresh perspective made her a popular hit with young families visiting the gallery.

Enthusiastic about mental health, Holly uses her cartoon character, Lenny, to raise awareness as well as money for different charities, such as Life Matters Suicide Prevention Trust and Youthline NZ.

She has painted murals about New Zealand nature, plants, animals, and the environment on local bus shelters and recycling hubs for the DCC and Keep Dunedin Beautiful.

Holly's first illustration job with a children's book called 'Will You Fly With Me?' about native birds, mental health and making friends is being published soon.



Left: Jennifer Belt's creative expression through photography and painting was much admired during her week as featured artist in April.

Donation from MEOW!

Cat Rescue Dunedin received \$732 in donations from our Meow event at OAS – that translates into 8 male cats being desexed or 5 females – plus they got several boxes and bins filled with cat food, kitty litter and cat toys. They were very grateful to OAS for involving them in the event.

We had extremely high visitor numbers for this Fringe Festival event (6800 according to door counter). They weren't big spenders, but it certainly got new visitors in who didn't know about our space. It was great seeing lots of families with young children being exposed to art.



Gemma Baldock was a cheerful helper in the kitchen with the OAS catering crew for the Cleveland opening night. Here she whips up an 'oil painting' – olive oil on a pizza base. Many thanks also to Tash and Peter Hurst for their assistance with the exhibition and serving the refreshments.

Current exhibition: National Cleveland Awards

Open to the public
until 12th June.

May Members' Meeting

Thursday 20th May

6.00-7.00pm: Critique session.
(Bring along a work you'd like some non-judgmental advice about, for supportive feedback.)

7.00pm:

Doug Hart presents
optical artist **Bridget Riley**,
followed by

Activities at Olveston:
with manager Jan Davies, and
tour guides Kay McKenzie
and Jenny Longstaff.

Forthcoming exhibitions:

145th Annual Exhibition

Receiving day: Sun. 13th June
Opening night: Fri. 18th June

*Details of various prizes
on entry form.*

Edinburgh Realty Premier Art Awards

Entry form and fee due by
4pm Friday 23rd July.

Pick up your entry forms now!



Jackie Ryder and Denise Benwell place their votes for the Cleveland Exhibition People's Choice Award (sponsored by Moray Gallery).

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**57 HANOVER STREET,
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EMAIL andii@art-zone.co.nz

PH/FAX (03) 477 0211

www.art-zone.co.nz

Editorial comment: Unless otherwise attributed, all items in the OAS monthly newsletters are compiled by the editor, Jenny Longstaff (past President 2013–16). The newsletter is approved by OAS Council before printing and distribution.

Contributions are welcome: stories, photos, news, exhibitions, tuition etc.

Please email Jenny to discuss: j.a.longstaff@gmail.com or phone her on 021 1326 053. **Deadline:** information must arrive a week before end of month to appear in following month's issue. *The OAS Newsletter is printed by Hope and Sons.*