

New Dane Mitchell public artwork of epic proportion for SCAPE in Ōtautahi Christchurch

A mount to hold up the elephant in the room is enclosed in the pre-quake Court Theatre for the SCAPE Public Art Season 2020 which opens on Saturday, 3 October.

A new public artwork by Dane Mitchell, which looks set to hold an object in a museum, is a giant steel apparatus constructed to hold the invisible contours of a missing object on a mammoth scale.

In *Lacuna*, Dane Mitchell continues to explore ideas of absence, disappearance, and obsolescence that have become central to his practice over the last two decades. Mitchell works to make the intangible tangible and the invisible visible; telling stories that highlight blind spots in our collective memory. His work tests the limits of our institutions and the enlightenment values they were built on, often looking beyond what can be measured or defined to the poetics of the infinitesimal or inexplicable. Mitchell's projects are not intended as a whole-hearted critique, there is, in fact, an underlying interest and homage to the precision and rigour of the work undertaken by experts of all kinds.

Regarding the inclusion of Mitchell in this year's selection of artists, Executive Director of SCAPE Deborah McCormick said, "Dane's response will push the boundaries of what's expected. We are hugely delighted to produce his work, along with seven other Aotearoa New Zealand artists for the Season continuing SCAPE's twenty-two-year history of reinventing the spaces of Ōtautahi Christchurch."

Viewed it at a distance, perhaps as though protected from it (or the building) *Lacuna* might have the feeling of a zoo enclosure, as the viewer peers through a large glass internal viewing window. The work will also have the watchful eyes of four surveillance cameras on it. These will not be recording but they will provide a live feed at the Canterbury Museum.

In a year that has had its challenges, Cath Cardiff, Creative New Zealand Senior Manager for Arts Development Services commented, "We're looking forward to this year's SCAPE Season, where the work of several accomplished contemporary New Zealand artists will be presented, front and centre, as testament to the resilience of the arts in the face of adversity."

"Our support of SCAPE is an acknowledgement of the organisation's ability to regroup and reimagine the festival in light of COVID-19, and making the most of the opportunity to focus on New Zealand art and artists. A highlight will be the reveal of artist Dane Mitchell's latest work, *Lacuna*, continuing the theme of his *Post hoc* presentation at the 2019 Venice Biennale which challenged us to think deeply about vanished and withdrawn 'things'."

It is at the intersection of imagination, highly refined craft, and museology that *Lacuna* exists. Referring to a gap or a missing part, lacuna also refers to a process of critical thinking where gaps can be logically "filled" by understanding what comes before and after. A giant steel apparatus occupies the space, yet it also signifies an absence.

In relation to SCAPE Public Art Season 2020, *Secrets and Lies, Lacuna* brings the back of the museum—the store, the workshop, the things we are not usually privy to—into the foreground. It suggests that the front-facing work of the museum, creating environments and manipulating material in order to convince audiences of a certain point of view is built on the shifting and subjective values and beliefs of the people who occupy them and therefore, like its cousins the art gallery and the library, is an open book, rather than a concrete monolith.

Situated in the former engineering school of the University of Canterbury—which then became the pre-quake Court Theatre - *Lacuna* and its environment will be surveilled and transmitted into the Canterbury Museum creating a closed museological feedback loop that visitors inside the museum can use to look out into other more uncertain spaces.

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About the artist

Dane Mitchell (1976, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland) was Aotearoa New Zealand's representative for the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019. He has presented solo exhibitions both nationally and internationally in Germany, France, Japan, Brazil, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Australia, United States and New Zealand.

He has participated in a number of biennales, including Bangkok Biennale 2020, Thailand; Biennale of Sydney 2016, Australia; Gwangju Biennale 2012, South Korea; Liverpool Biennial 2012, United Kingdom; Singapore Biennale 2011; Ljubljana Biennale 2011, Slovenia; Busan Biennale 2010, South Korea and the Tarrawara Biennial 2008, Australia.

Recent exhibitions include: *Iris, Iris, Iris*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland (2017/2018); OTIUM #3, Institut d'art Contemporain, Lyon (2018); Thailand Biennale, Karbi; Play Kortrijk, Belgium (2018); *Communicating Vessels*, Galeria Bunkier Sztuki, Kraków (2017); *Occulture: The Dark Arts*, City Gallery, Wellington (2017); *Aeromancy*, Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland (2017); Biennale of Sydney: *The future is already here—it's just not evenly distributed*, Sydney (2016); *Art and the City*: Zurich Kunst festival, Zurich (2016) amongst many others.

About the SCAPE Public Art Season 2020

SCAPE will present a strong Ōtautahi Christchurch and Aotearoa New Zealand focused artists' programme with seven new temporary artworks for presentation over an extended season. The programme will be linked to an in-depth Art, Learning, and Wellbeing offering promoted on-line with a base at Tūranga, our central city library.

Jamie Hanton will curate three SCAPE Seasons, 2020-2022, his overarching theme is *Fictions*. *Fictions* uses the privileged position that public art holds to confront and challenge our lived realities. Our daily engagements and encounters, which make up the fullness of our lives, can provide small openings to harness the power of imagination and think through alternatives to the status quo.

Taking the city as its starting point, *Secrets and Lies* provides moments of surprise and revelation as it excavates and explores site-specific histories around the city. Audiences will have the opportunity to learn about local stories and encounter creative interventions in the built environment.

The invited artists are: Jacquelyn Greenbank, Martin Awa Clarke Langdon, Melissa Macleod, Natasha Matila-Smith, Dane Mitchell, Kate Newby, Louise Palmer and Sorawit Songsataya.

The selection seeks to deliver a wide and diverse range of stories, viewpoints and perspectives from different backgrounds as the title *Secrets and Lies* suggests

About the SCAPE Public Art Trust

SCAPE Public Art installs public art in Christchurch all year round, with a focus on the annual public art festival Seasons. SCAPE is the Christchurch expert in the installation of public art, and the SCAPE Public Art Seasons are New Zealand's premier public art events.

Held in Christchurch's central city public spaces and supported through a range of partnerships, the Seasons showcase leading national and international contemporary artists, and provide a springboard for emerging local talent. Artworks in the Seasons are created as a result of close collaboration between art and business. This is a highly regarded model world-wide.

Our Seasons provide an opportunity to focus on the introduction of new artworks, while maintaining focus on the impressive base of legacy pieces www.scapepublicart.org.nz

For media comment please contact:

Deborah McCormick

Executive Director

SCAPE Public Art

Tel: +64 (0)3 365 7990

Mobile: +64 (0)27 280 9557

Email: deborah@scapepublicart.org.nz

Carolyn Grant

Philanthropy & Communications Manager

SCAPE Public Art

Tel: +64 (0)3 365 7990

Mobile: +64 (0)21 660 715

Email: carolyn@scapepublicart.org.nz