

**Local artist breathes sea air into the central city**

A new Melissa Macleod public artwork provides a vault of fresh air in the Ōtautahi Christchurch CBD



Melissa Macleod *on an east wind* 2020  
Sea Air (New Brighton coastline), dunnage bags, aluminium

In a new public artwork, *on an east wind* sees artist Melissa Macleod capturing the fresh sea air from around the New Brighton coastline, in 144 enormous bags installed in the Awly Building on the corner of Durham and Armagh Streets. The bags are carefully held in large aluminium structures constructed specifically to secure them and their stories.

Based in New Brighton, Macleod takes the coast, and particularly the Eastern Christchurch community, as the focal point for her practice; addressing the marginalisation of the area, which, in recent years, has been exacerbated by local and global environmental impacts including the Canterbury earthquake sequence of 2010-11 and the ongoing and increasing effects of climate change.

Deborah McCormick, Executive Director of SCAPE Public Art commented, “We are thrilled to bring a public artwork with an element of escapism and fantasy to the city at the beginning of summer. It is an immersive installation that specifically responds to New Brighton, an area the artist is passionate about and calls home. In that sense it is somewhat romantic. Once encountered it is impossible to resist wanting to see and know more, and in the process of doing so, finding yourself challenged and seeking answers to the social, environmental and political context of the work.”

With its uniformly organised aisles, *on an east wind* resembles a vault; a place for safe keeping. There is an uncanny feeling of fullness within the space, even though the surrounding bulk is filled only with air. And in contrast to the unruly and somewhat mysterious material inside the bags, the structures themselves are precise and suggest a great deal of care for the inflated vessels they carry. These large dunnage bags are usually employed inside shipping containers to buffer and protect freight during oceanic journeys. Using an air compressor to fill bag after bag, Macleod has literally carried the oft-ignored area into the centre of the city—displacing the regnant air—and bringing with it all the associations and stories that this sea air holds for us.

This transition from mere tools to items of precious cargo encourages an alternative perspective on the intangible environmental forces around us and the way in which we attribute value to them

Situated within the Awly Building on the corner of Durham and Armagh Streets the artwork is always visible through glass and open to explore each weekend from 11am – 3pm on Saturdays and Sundays, entry through the doors on Gloucester Street.

ENDS

### **About the artist**

Melissa Macleod (b.1973) lives in Ōtautahi Christchurch. An interdisciplinary artist, she has exhibited in numerous public galleries and artist run spaces in New Zealand, as well as in Japan while on a Creative New Zealand Emergent Artist Grant. She received an MFA (Sculpture) with Distinction from Ilam School of Fine Arts in 2016 and has been the recipient of numerous accolades over recent years including the Zonta Ashburton Female Art Award, Ashburton Art Gallery (2019) and the Olivia Spencer Bower Award (2021). Her most recent work was commissioned for Te Wheke, at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū. Melissa is represented by Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch.

### **About the SCAPE Public Art Season 2020**

SCAPE presents a strong Ōtautahi Christchurch and Aotearoa New Zealand focused artists' programme with seven new temporary artworks over an extended season. The programme is 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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:carolyn@scapepublicart.org.nz)