

WILDE PROJECTS

bttming_trees (tree meditation) 2019

Audio

Courtesy of the artists

OTAGO DAILY TIMES

Octagon 1975

Digitised copy photograph

Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

Together, Wilde Projects' *bttming_trees (tree mediation)* and the photograph taken by the Otago Daily Times, provide a moment of reflection, to think about connecting to that special tree in your life.

WILDE PROJECTS

bttm methodology for the hybrid plane 2019

Silk-screen print, permaset ink, cotton paper, plywood
Courtesy of the artists

Wilde Projects uses a range of different methodologies to explore the layered histories that are encapsulated within public spaces. *bttm methodology for the hybrid plane* is part of a wider collaborative, open-sourced project initiated by val smith and Richard Orjis, that considers environmental relationships through a queer/ecological lens. This particular work probes the history of the Octagon, and the Plane trees through this methodology and collective approach.

bttm methodology for the hybrid plane traverses the history of the Octagon; the underground toilets, old WWII trenches, the protests that have happened underneath the leafy canopy, the fungal communication networks underground, through to the conception story of the Plane trees themselves. These histories are presented by Wilde Projects as a series of sandwich boards, produced in collaboration between Rebecca Steedman and Richard Orjis, featuring Christina Houghton and hand-printed by Struan Hamilton. Their lists of provocations and actions draw our attention to the relationship between the social and physical ecologies of the Octagon. *bttm methodology for the hybrid plane* asks how can we, as living beings, create our own arboreal intimacies with the Plane trees outside the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

CROYDON PATON

Six Vessels 2015–2016

London Plane tree

Courtesy of the artist and private collection of Graham McKerracher

Croydon Paton is a Dunedin-based woodturner, part of the Otago Woodturners in South Dunedin. These six bowls are crafted by Paton out of the felled London Plane trees from the Octagon. In 2015, two trees were removed by the Dunedin City Council after they died following years of declining health. Paton extends the life of the trees by turning the wood, gifted to the Otago Woodturners, into bowls that continue to function.

The trees in the Octagon were planted by the Dunedin Amenities Society in the early 1890s with the assistance from profits made from the 1889-1890 *New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition*. The pieces Paton has made then operate as precious vessels carrying with them a mnemonic function; of the trees and their cohabitation with the public in the Octagon since the 1890s.

JOHN GULLY

After Rain, Te Anau 1887

Watercolour on paper

Collection of Dunedin Public Art Gallery

This work was made by John Gully (1819-1888) during a sketching trip with J.C. Richmond to Te Anau and Lake Manapouri in 1887. Gully was a self-taught artist and worked as a draughtsman for the Department of Lands and Survey. At the 1865 *New Zealand Exhibition*, Gully exhibited his works in the context of his job as a surveyor. Gully died before the *New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition* opened in 1889, but this work *After Rain, Te Anau* was displayed in the exhibition alongside a number of his works, and hung opposite 'old master engravings' to emphasise his status within the space.

The shift in the display of Gully's works from the context of colonial expansion to aesthetic appreciation complicates the work. It marks 'the realisation that the colonial was on the verge of no longer being contemporary but something of the past.' *After Rain, Te Anau* provided visitors to the *New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition* with a picturesque view of the landscape, pinpointing a particular moment in history – of British dominion.

WALTER LESLIE

New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition 1889-1890. To be opened in Dunedin on November 26 1889. Birds eye view of the exhibition 1889

Lithograph on paper

Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

Walter Leslie (1855-1915) emigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in 1878 and practiced as a caricature artist, reporter and briefly, as the sub-editor of the *New Zealand Times*. This view of the 1889-1890 *New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition* was distributed as a supplement to advertise the exhibition in Invercargill's *The Weekly Times*. It demonstrates the expansiveness of the exhibition buildings that were built beside the old shoreline before it was reclaimed. The exhibition halls were designed by Dunedin-based designer James Hislop using mainly wood and corrugated iron. The imitation Eiffel tower was constructed out of wood, and looked remarkably different to the Parisian version. Leslie's supplement slightly embellishes details, but it does demonstrate the massive undertaking it would have been.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

[Copy print photographs of the Octagon, from Photographs Collection Reader Access File, Hocken Library] Various dates

Copy photographs

Hocken Collections Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

The photographs that line the walls create an informal photo album that chronicles the life of the Octagon, and with this that of the London Plane trees over time. These photographs show the Octagon early in its establishment, during public celebrations, as the gardens are beginning to take shape, when monuments are being erected, as a site to protest, or as a place of pleasure. Time can be measured and assessed by looking at the Plane trees; how much they have grown, the developments that have taken place around them or the seasonal changes in appearance. These images demonstrate the shifting functions that public spaces occupy within our lives, and importantly as part of our shared memories of place as it has evolved.

OTAGO DAILY TIMES

Octagon 1975

Copy photograph

Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

REBECCA STEEDMAN

London Plane tree ash glazed jugs 2019

Ceramics, London Plane tree ash

Courtesy of the artist
