

FOREWORD

Rebecca Boswell, Chloe Geoghegan & Balamohan Shingade

Part One of The Physics Room Blue Oyster Emerging Curators Programme consisted of a workshop retreat held at the foot of Aoraki Mount Cook in November 2015. It ended with a collective resolve: we agreed that Part Two of the Programme would become ‘a year of conscious practice’. This has resulted in three major projects undertaken in 2016: an exhibition at The Physics Room, a curatorial collective focused on conversational research via independent collaboration and the online journal committed to supporting criticality among emergent curators of contemporary art in Aotearoa.

Dedicated to the practitioners in our field who are at the beginning of their careers, *A Year of Conscious Practice* represents twelve opportunities; twelve spaces for dialogue or reflection—borrowing the basic format of the twelve-month calendar year. We propose this second alternative ‘calendar’ as a space for reflective, alert and purposeful dialogue that responds to the experiences and challenges of the outcomes-driven, time-poor curator. As most curatorial learning takes place ‘on the job’ in Aotearoa, we have encouraged contributors to draw on recent experiences in the sector and look at ways one can sustain criticality along what can be a difficult career pathway. With contributions from peers as well as more experienced practitioners, speaking from diverse cultural positions and geographical locations, we have sought discussions on a variety of methods and motivations for working in or alongside the field of curating.

Contributors Danny Butt and Vera Mey look at the relationship of practice to theory in essays about curatorial responsibility and hospitality, whereas former Artspace-Tautai education interns Ioana Gordon-Smith and Louisa Afoa discuss and critique accessibility. Taking a close look at the responsibility of the curator and the institution towards artists, art practice and cultural production in Aotearoa, Tendai John Mutambu and Robyn Maree Pickens discuss their exhibitions at Artspace during their respective curatorial internships. Editor Rebecca Boswell’s essay looks at the meaningful social relationships that support our work and a similar ethos is captured in the email correspondence of Laura Preston and Alex Davidson—who, over one working week, embed curatorial discursivity within a daily practice of personal exchange.

New York-based curator Tim Gentles addresses new methods for curating via a critique of the exhibition as the primary mechanism for generating cultural value, whereas editor Balamohan Shingade critically discusses the role of community and community

art from his position as a curator working in an arts centre in Howick, Auckland. Editor Chloe Geoghegan interviews Scottish curator Chloe Reith about the fast-paced nature of curatorial practice and possibilities for disruption by employing altered timescales, indeterminacy and ambiguity as new tools for exhibition-making.

This publication, with its vision to foster curatorial practice in Aotearoa, functions as an opportunity both to commission new texts from a range of peers and colleagues and to engage with the community that took part in the three core Programme outcomes. For us, it has been important to archive these recent experiences of the Programme alongside new essays about curating as our way of contributing fresh discourse to a profession that is evolving as a new generation of practitioners and methodologies develop.

Writer and curator Andrea Bell travelled to Christchurch to review *Passionate Instincts*, a group exhibition curated by four participants in the Programme, featuring new work by six artists and centred on Alexis Hunter's highly regarded painting of the same title: *Passionate Instincts XIII* (1984–85). Taarati Taiaroa's series of principles on conversational research refers to her time working in collaboration with four fellow Programme participants to produce independent collaborations as well as a final workshop/hui titled *Reflections and Directions* that took place at The Physics Room on 12 November 2016. Concluding this publication, Bridget Riggir-Cuddy writes an epilogue titled *On Nonlinear Growth* that reflects on the Programme as well as how an engaged emergent curatorial practice can lead to a constellation of possibilities, meanings and outcomes.

As this publication is a one-off of sorts, created as an outcome of a specific Programme and to address a moment in time for curating in Aotearoa, it has come with a great deal of privilege that we wish to acknowledge in the final words of this foreword. To have the opportunity as an editorial group to freely think through our positions with our fellow thirteen contributors has been immensely valuable. With generous funding and a wide project scope, we have also been able to commission an elegant, innovative and responsive web platform to accommodate this publication, which crafts an experience for you, our reader.

We would like to thank the following people who have made this publication possible: designers Dexter Edwards and Son La Pham, copyeditor Melinda Johnston, Charlotte Huddleston for her guidance and Melanie Oliver and Fiona Simpson for their support. This publication would not have been made without a generous grant from Creative New Zealand's Sector Development Incentive Fund through Blue Oyster and The Physics Room, or the support and interest of our fellow Programme participants, presenters and contributors.