

The Tomorrow People have been a long time coming. This exhibition owes its final form to the persistence of managers at the Physics Room in Christchurch, New Zealand and the Lord Mori Gallery in Los Angeles, California, and to the generosity of Creative New Zealand, whose support for this exhibition indicates a broader interest in disseminating the work of New Zealand artists abroad.

The show has its origins in a series of conversations between myself and Anthony Bedard, a San Francisco-based musician and filmmaker, back in 1997. At that time, Anthony and I found ourselves caught in a distended commute between California, USA, and Auckland, New Zealand, both of us fledgling participants in a Trans-Pacific cultural community in which visual artists and musicians cohabited and collaborated, and of which our friendship was a product. We envisioned an exhibition that would bring the fruits of the New Zealand art community to an American audience, already highly receptive to the work of contemporary New Zealand musicians.

Our motivations for initiating an exhibition of contemporary New Zealand art in California were both personal and professional. Anthony was astonished by the energy, humor and irreverence of the visual art he encountered in New Zealand. From my island home I had imagined a world awash with an immense and insurmountably evolved body of contemporary art, an impression fueled by an obligatory diet of *October* and *Artforum*. My move to the US in 1997 had left me newly sensitized to our small community's exceptional productivity and sophisticated critical consciousness.

It was clear that the radical asymmetry of Trans-Pacific cultural exchange had everything to do with the structure of art world distribution systems and absolutely nothing to do with the quality, quantity, or critical resolve of the art produced at either pole. While a healthy underground infrastructure funneled contemporary New Zealand music to a small but deeply committed American public, no such conduit existed to carry contemporary New Zealand visual art across a massive geographic divide. Meanwhile, that which Los Angeles, New York, London, Berlin, Venice and Tokyo transmitted unrelentingly through the international art media, those of us nominally delegated to the cultural periphery consumed and reconstituted with remarkable ingenuity.

We knew that both poles would be enriched if this monologue could be converted into a conversation. We were equally aware that regional surveys are difficult to translate when encountered in an alien location, riveted as they are to the arcane interpersonal logic of their originating art communities. It seemed important that this exhibition be driven largely by the merit of its artist participants, and not by the over-arching logic of a curatorium. What's more, we missed our friends and wanted to join us here, in California as artists rather than tourists.

The Tomorrow People has taken several years to materialize. That it has finally fulfilled its mandate is largely the result of the last minute induction of Tessa Laird, who has also recently repatriated from Auckland to Los Angeles. As a former editor of *LOG Illustrated*, New Zealand's premiere alternative arts publication, Tessa has brought her experience to bear on this publication, which provides a crucial critical context for work largely unfamiliar to a Californian audience. Tessa and I both hope that the audience, whether in New Zealand or the United States, will find the works in this show as rewarding and engaging as we two have.

Joyce Campbell, Los Angeles, September 2001