

# GILL GATFIELD

# UNITY

VENICE ART BIENNALE



## HARMONY

Palazzo Bembo, Rialto

## NATIVE TONGUE XR

Giardini della Marinaressa

EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTRE  
Personal Structures 2022



**At once totem and monument, Gill Gatfield's UNITY probes the symbols for which it stands.**

Beside the sinuous waters of Venice, its two specifically sited I-structures materialise – the precious miniature *Harmony* in Palazzo Bembo on the Canal Grande, and the virtual monument *Native Tongue XR* with the maritime pines fronting the Venetian lagoon.

In *Harmony*, three micro figures carved from Kahurangi pounamu, 24ct. river gold and Tākaka marble – ancient materials from Aotearoa New Zealand – hold the wairua, spiritual essence and connection to ancestors and to whenua, their origins and land. Niched in a square of black velvet as a glass-guarded jewel, the whole is framed in a gold laurel crown, a stately symbol of victory and peace. Fitting in the palm of a child's hand but untouchable, *Harmony* is both close and out of reach.





On the Venetian waterfront, *Native Tongue XR* is manifested through the metaverse, a 3m high alter ego summoned at will from a hand-held mobile device. In extended reality, it projects the digital twin of an ancient kauri sculpture, carved from the heartwood of a tree buried in Aotearoa during the last Ice Age, over 50,000 years ago. A vestige of its histories, the enduring I-column bears witness to the Island-city's fragility as the waters of Venice rise and fall.

Enigmatic yet intelligible, both structures speak through their evocative I-forms, traversing cultures and knowledge systems, expressing a signified presence – a first-form, recalling the shape of a human body and a spirit figure, an object of belief. Deeply personal and collective, otherworldly and of the Earth, in *UNITY*, monument and totem become one.

**Roxane Latrèche**  
MA. Courtauld Institute of Art  
BA. Princeton University

**UNITY Essay**



## **Aotearoa New Zealand Artist**

### **Gill Gatfield** (LLB. MFA Hons)

transforms ancient and unique materials into expressive abstract forms, engaging sensory realms and sparking connections between nature, time, humanity and place. Her work has won international awards and public art commissions, and is held in public and private collections worldwide. Exhibitions include Kunstverein am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz Berlin 2021-2022, Conversations on Shadow Architecture Sydney/Brisbane 2021-2022, Venice Architecture Biennale 2018, A18 New York, Sculpture by Sea Denmark 2015, Chicago Sculpture International 2014. Gatfield held artist residencies at KØN Museum Denmark and Vermont Studio Centre USA, and is a VSC Sculpture Fellow, NZ Woman of Influence, and CODAworx Creative Revolutionary.

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