

The image features a solid teal background. On the left side, there is a white geometric line that starts as a vertical line, then turns 90 degrees to the right to become a horizontal line, and then turns 90 degrees to the left to become a vertical line again, creating a stepped or 'L' shape. The text 'ABSTRACT FIGURE GILL GATFIELD' is centered horizontally and positioned in the middle of the page. The words 'ABSTRACT FIGURE' are in white, and 'GILL GATFIELD' is in a dark teal color, matching the background.

ABSTRACT FIGURE GILL GATFIELD

In an inventive art practice that navigates the realms of visual art, philosophy, politics, language and science, New Zealand born artist Gill Gatfield explores human relations and the nature of being.

Across three connected bodies of work (Frames, Monochromes and Texts) her intention unfolds: 'to convey much, in the manner of less'. From singular media and minimal forms emerge layers of intriguing narrative and rich sensory experience. Gatfield's abstract artworks expand, contract, warm, cool, reflect, and absorb.

Abstract Figure: Gill Gatfield introduces the artist's conceptual-abstract practice and is illustrated with artworks from her series of permanent live grass paintings, freestanding float glass letters, woven disposable diaper walls, ancient kauri texts, and granite monuments.

The book describes key concepts which underpin this formal/fluid approach: the liminal, the political, the abstract figure, and the public eye. Gatfield's idea of 'Abstract Figure' translates into artworks that are challenging, contemplative, sensual, personal and universal.



'There needs to be something for the eye, the hand, the heart, and the head.' – Artist

Abstract Figure: Gill Gatfield



Half Glass (2009)

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The Pleasure Garden (2009)



Still Life (2007)

Preface

Gill Gatfield's art practice has often been commended for its ability to subvert familiar expectations about the viewer's experience of a work of art, with each series challenging critics and commentators to consider the evolving relationships between ideas, processes, materials and aesthetic traditions. She has been described as an artist who makes works in which 'indeterminate spaces are revealed between painting, sculpture and Conceptual Art, and the relationship between the art-object and art observer is rendered ambiguous.'¹

Characterised by a precision and minimalism that initially locates her practice within a history of Modernism, her work generously opens itself up for numerous conversations about – and beyond – familiar traditions. Her work simultaneously critiques the relationship that an art work can have with its audience, references art historical practice, and draws attention to the aesthetic qualities of materials and form. It raises questions about the making of an art work, touching upon the nature of human behaviour and our relationship with the universe – and furthermore – in the act of doing so, reveals a respect for the viewer's ability to engage and be inspired by the experience of seeing and considering a work of art.

Across the range of her practice, Gatfield consistently scrutinises fundamental perceptions about what a work of art may be, as both idea and object. In the conception, making and refining of materials and objects, and in the titles of her work, the artist warmly offers opportunities for all to share – to assemble and consider questions and answers to the certainties and conundrums of an arts practice that is as conceptual and precise as it is material and evocative, and as specific as it is universal in its implications.

Dr. Warren Feeney



Organic Abstraction (2009)



Babel (2009)

Introduction

An intriguing and ultimately satisfying paradox in Gill Gatfield's work is the way it can lure and mesmerise an audience despite form and material having been pared back to a minimum. One might assume that this reduction to essentials, coupled with a many-layered signification apparently distilled into a single speechless abstract form, would push the viewer away, obfuscate their desire for connection, for immediacy. However, the charm and sophistication of the work is seductive, giving up immediate sensual pleasures, as well as satisfying intellectually, yielding numerous thought possibilities.

There is a 'slow burn' in the intellectually giving nature of Gatfield's work. As layer after layer is prised away, there is simply more: no core, no essence; each layer the same as before, but different. The thought possibilities of Gatfield's works do not lie hidden within the work, or even hidden within the artist's thinking, but between the constitutive parts of the details of the material and form, the work's formal and conceptual situation, and the viewer's posture. Do they immediately stand close and, almost without looking to take in the whole, find their hand running across the honey-gold grain of ancient Kauri, or sliding across the morning-chilled mirrored surface of black granite? Or, having glimpsed the work from afar, do they circle towards the form, reflectively take in all the parts and begin to consciously as well as intuitively connect the elements they observe: the horizontal and vertical planes; the strident shadows and precise geometry; the landscape framed; and see themselves mirrored in the reflective surfaces?

The forms are dogmatic and the conceptual field is generous. This pairing creates a set of very productive possibilities in the public domain. Some of the best public art works achieve a sort of 'rightness' in their site, which is transformative, making of the site something new which would not have been possible any other way; but also conveying the sense that the work had always been there; possessing a durability which goes beyond fashion, period and style. Not impervious to the carbon dating methods of art history, but enduring alongside the vicissitudes of time. Gatfield's public art forms have this timeless quality; not only through their formal abstract minimalism, but also because they are rigorously site-specific. This site-specificity, their sensuality and their layers collude to create a generous conceptual field that audiences experience and participate in. For an artist who doesn't like endings, the duality of the work's conceptual layers and openness to the responses and thoughts that people bring to the encounter with her work is critical. Inviting touch, reflection, thought, personal realisation and intrigue, these works unfailingly stimulate conversations about form, material, idea and situation.

Rob Garrett



Fake (2003)



Kaitiaki (2003)



In/Out (2003) view 1



In/Out (2003) view 2



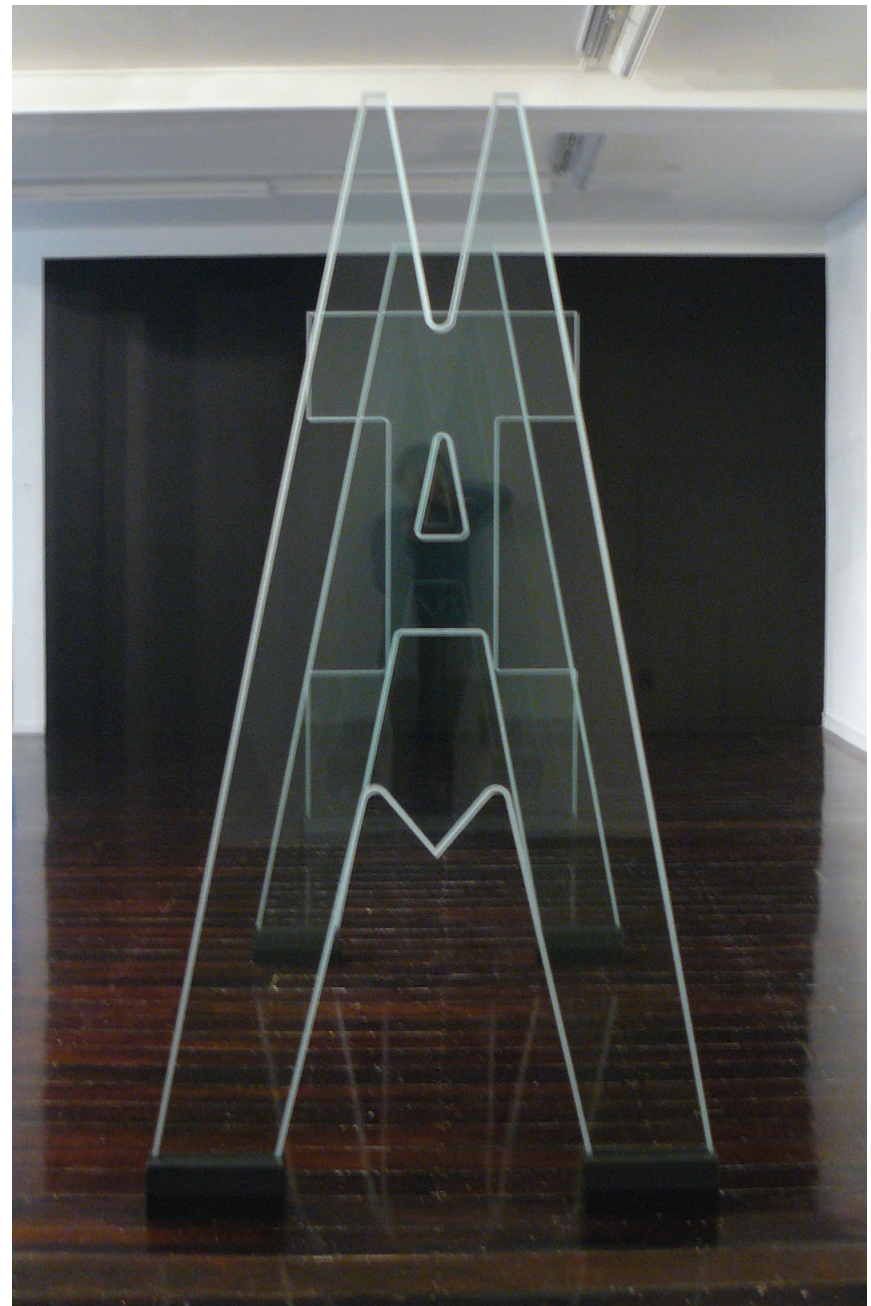
Mirror Image (2008)



Grass Roots (2006)



I AM/MAI (2008) view 1



I AM/MAI (2008) view 2



Native Tongue (2011)





Subdivision (2008)



Six Days (2008)

I. The Liminal

With a unique blend of intuition and logic, artist Gill Gatfield produces work that is inventive in both theory and practice. Pursuing a formal and linguistic agenda that expounds on cultural, political and philosophical questions, her artworks tackle historical and contemporary issues, and offer refreshing insights into multi-disciplinary discourse. A close analysis of individual pieces, series of works, and public installations, reveals consistent evidence of intellectual and formal clarity, internal critique, and generosity in the communication of content to the viewer. Though saturated with theory, Gatfield's practice remains accessible; it provides multiple levels for interaction as well as extensive pathways for conceptual thought, introspection, and art appreciation.

Since 2002, the artist has developed three distinct yet connected bodies of work: 1. Frames, 2. Monochromes, and 3. Texts. Each body of work approaches primary questions about art, humanity, and the world, using alternative means and forms. The Frames provide an outline and an insight into visible and ephemeral space; the Monochromes offer surfaces that generate and reproduce content; and the Texts explore philosophical, human and spiritual conditions. Within each body of work, distinct series explore these wider concepts and forms from unconventional angles. This structured and methodical approach becomes a collective grid of philosophical enterprise that is relentlessly analytical and persistently creative.

Minimal / Conceptual

Clearly focussed on the grammar of geometric forms and shapes, Gatfield embraces the tools of ancient Zen philosophy, Suprematism, Constructivism, and Minimalism, without being constrained by any of the theories behind them. In the manner of the Constructivists (1919-22) and Minimalists (1960s), she erases distinctions between painting and sculpture, mindfully disrupting presumptions and expectations, to create fresh prototypes that operate outside traditional media categories. Her materials mutate and transform – neither painting, nor sculpture – to become the 'specific object', once proposed by Donald Judd. Yet unlike the Minimalist credo which focused on form as content, Gatfield develops a formal baseline which enables the content of her works to expand beyond their materials and form. Her intention is:

To convey much, in the manner of less. – Artist

To imbue minimalist forms with multiple branches of conceptual thought, Gatfield's selection of materials and construction methodology is intuitive and precise, and directly connected to the intrinsic meaning of each work. For the Grass Works, each sward and plant species is chosen for particular qualities and nurtured to perform in specific ways. Steel pins for the Magnetic Fields are selected by metal quality, diameter of shaft, overall length and head shape, and differ according to the specific ideas for each work. Disposable diapers used in

the Nappy Works are gender neutral and have tiny coloured marine creatures tracking around the plastic edges – only visible on close inspection. Technical subtleties such as raw edges and silk-smooth faces, converging lines, internal curves and arris edgework, are all integral to the perception of the artwork.

Every detail counts. If not, it should be removed. – Artist

Formal / Fluid

Gatfield's artworks are not conceptual one-liners that can be rapidly absorbed and appreciated; nor do they end in obfuscation or paradox. The framework she provides offers ample room for formal investigations, and for personal and collective readings, reactions, and sensory responses. The process of unpacking the content, only serves to build more contextual meaning. The artworks – as individual pieces or as related series – retain a depth and complexity that encourages a slow, savouring experience for the viewer.

In this sense, they make possible a plurality of meaning; a notion which underscores the discourses of postmodernism, deconstruction and post-structuralism. Challenging earlier modernist theories which privileged form and convention, these theories, championed by Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Kristeva, among others, promote transparency and fluidity within objects and texts. Postmodernism – as a set of ideas, a style, a meta-theory – extends across many disciplines and is, in turn, being re-evaluated by theorists such as Noam Chomsky, Denis Dutton, Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster. Reflecting on a state of 'continuing modernism', these and other philosophers are promoting new angles for determining meaning and value.

Gatfield's practice can be seen in direct conversation with this debate. Her works have been said to:

spar with modernist ideas. ¹

The artist moulds and manipulates her extensive media – the form, materials, title, context, and associated texts – in order to express *and* critique a hypothetical separation of formalism and fluidity. Artworks and their contexts are used as vehicles to explore the veracity of convention and the equivocal status of the art object and its meanings. In so doing, a stage is developed for the communication of ideas; both for and between those the artist refers to as 'the actors':

The actors include artist, viewer, collector, curator, critic, historian, institution and market.
– Artist

The Stage

A staging of theory, philosophy and ideas is evident across all exhibitions and presentations of Gatfield's work, whether set indoors or outside: from her Masters of Fine Arts graduation exhibition *In/Out* (2003) at Auckland University, to the innovative outdoor tableau of *The Snake Charmer* (2012) at New Zealand Sculpture Onshore.

Kaitiaki (2004), a 30 square metre geometric grid of woven diapers, swaddled a public gallery space like a padded cell,

stripped of human presence, but still ... imbued with human drama. ²

The solo exhibition *Being-Made* (2007) activated a network of perpetuating relationships between artwork, environment, viewer, gallery and collector. *En Plein Air* (2008) revised the 19th century invention of painting outdoors by literally bringing the outdoors, inside. In a suite of live grass canvasses and magnetic steel pin fields, the gallery came alive with the slow, subtle performance of abstract 'painting'. *Current Work* (2009) developed a unique mise-en-scène of artworks and participants whereby the installation served to attract, focus, and then gently guide the audience to perform their roles as valued members of the 'cast'. An un-pressured and respectful inclusion of the viewer as a *free element* in the presentations of Gatfield's work enables a memorable and enriching interaction between audience and artwork.

Liminal Ground

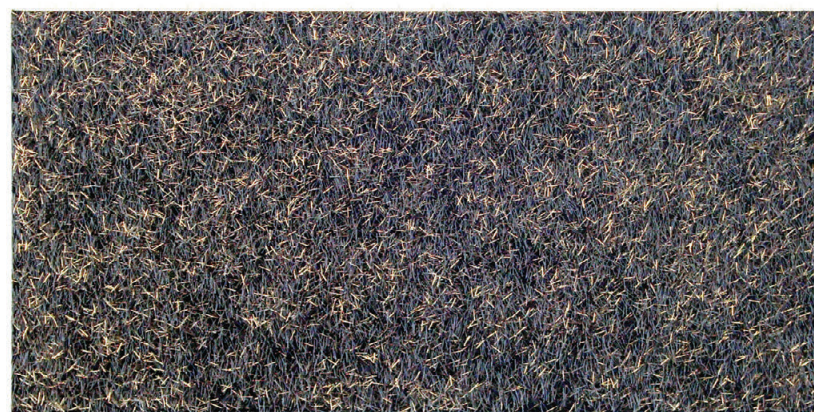
From the outset, Gatfield introduced the Liminal as a theoretical intention. Her work offers a malleable thinking space for the audience – a twilight zone, a slice of timelessness, a glimpse of immortality. Associated with ancient rites of passage, the liminal state is one of deep contemplation and personal realisations. There is a spiritual component to this transitional place; with no beginning and no end, it is a challenge to sustain. The viewer is invited to take up a new position in relation to the art object. One critic observed:

... her work undermines the notion of both supposedly autonomous and self-sufficient art-*objects* and observing, judging, ostensibly independent and impartial art-*subjects*. ³

The liminal ground enables the audience to observe the artworks and installations as they operate betwixt and between identifiable opposites. It allows and encourages the interrogation of presumptions and values, opens up new positions for critique, and invites alternative perspectives. As a theoretical approach inherent throughout Gatfield's oeuvre, liminality grants autonomy to content as presented to each viewer. Each work carries a sovereign circuit of relevance, a self-sufficiency, and a longevity of appreciation.



High Country (2009)



Black Cloud (2009)

Oppositional materials and conditions create liminal states of transition and impermanence within permanent artworks. Thus *Canvas* (2007), a white gallery wall wrapped in woven disposable diapers, presents as a softened architectural prop; *The Pleasure Garden* (2009), consists of a segment of live turf stitched to a rectangular canvas in landscape orientation. Framed and hung vertically from the gallery wall, it is a living, breathing ‘landscape painting’. And *Black Cloud* (2009), with its pelt of 15,000 steel pins, actively magnetised to form a dense and dangerous field of shimmering refracted light, mimics an Abstract Expressionist painting, sans paint. Observing the interchanging juxtaposition between concepts, materials and categories, a reviewer noted:

Gill Gatfield’s ‘fields’ of magnetised pins use chance and look like fields, literally. They are a stainless steel version of cut grass or spiky straw, and oddly creepy with their sense of chilling menace. A high industry version of Pollock perhaps. ⁴

As described in *Art New Zealand*, the artist’s use of everyday materials:

... take on a challenging complexity because of the way her works are conceived – both in terms of the intangible concepts that lie behind their making, and the tangible forms and the processes by which they have been made. The fact that these aspects may not be immediately obvious matters not at all – they are still a fundamental part of each work’s being. The invisible ideas and concealed constructions set up interactions between the ordinary and the extraordinary... ⁵

These works tackle our sense of norm and traditional values; they destabilise our expectations, but also offer glimpses of refreshing alternatives. Though abstract and essentially frugal in form, the combination of unusual materials and unexpected methods of display, trigger intrigue and anticipation, rather than distrust and insecurity. The effect of the work is not to shock the viewer, nor to superficially entertain through a novel diversion from the predictable and expected; but rather to generate a measured awareness of difference and to offer up new dynamic sets of possibilities.

Beingmades

In 2006, Gatfield formulated the concept of *beingmades* to describe completed works that remain constantly ‘in production’. Unlike Duchamp’s *readymades* (which were altered found-objects), Gatfield’s *beingmades* contain their own source of energy, interact with external factors/materials, and manifest in multiple unique versions. They are dynamic entities that integrate time, space and environmental context into the work, and are evident throughout her practice.

I don’t like endings ... these works have internal operating systems. – Artist

In the Monochromes, each series takes a unique approach to this concept. The Nappy Works absorb, swell, and defy conservation conventions; the Grass Works flourish and recede; the Magnetic Fields cling, hinge and hover; the Still Paintings grow in the sun, and the Concrete

Art transacts natural heat and cold, marking seasons and the passage of each day. In each series, Gatfield's abstract/geometric framework heightens the effect of the live artwork.

The organic adds warmth to the cool forms of pure abstraction. – Artist

In the Grass Works, the artist uses real, live turf carefully crafted and stitched inside the framework of inverted stretched canvases. Given ideal climatic circumstances, the grass will flourish and expand, intruding into neighbouring spaces beyond the initial geometric-defined boundaries. These landscapes are forever dependent on care – either nurtured for lush and healthy growth, or neglected and left to dry up. Though the grass appears to die, the rootstock within the canvas turf remains dormant – between life and death, it exists permanently in the liminal state of 'being'. The turf provides ecosystems for organic life forms, such as worms, fungi and insects. In turn, they contribute their own life-cycles, adding further complex patterns of performance to the artworks. Upon close inspection, a reviewer described the work as 'Living Abstraction', noting that:

As geometric abstractions, the works twist the tradition of using pure form and colour, devoid of reference to nature and objects as the mechanism to convey meaning, because here the medium is so closely connected to nature.⁶

The imperceptible progression of the natural growth and decay of living matter is representative of movement, time and space; the transient elements edified by the Futurists and Constructivists, and pursued in the ephemeral qualities of more recent land art, performance art and time-based art. In Gatfield's work, the object survives the process of performance. The *beingmade* does not expire; it maintains an independence and integrity, continuing to exist in a state of flux, or dormant, liminal potential.

In 2006, Gatfield presented the first live grass painting, *Lawn (Greener on the Other Side)*, in a National Contemporary Art Awards exhibition. Museum curators, concerned that insects or worms might migrate from Gatfield's painting and invade works of historical importance, asked the artist to douse the artwork with pesticide, effectively killing the internal operating system and undoing its conceptual premise. An alternative solution was devised using pheromones but curatorial and conservator presumptions created a rule-changing conundrum. In subsequent years, the rules of entry for the National Contemporary Art Award specifically excluded living art.

For the series *Still Painting* (2007-), Gatfield created paintings that *require* long-term exposure to ultraviolet light to develop the embedded image. Harnessing the harsh New Zealand light, revered by modernist painters but feared by art conservators, the artworks clash with conventions regarding the preservation of art and challenge the idea of 'original condition'. These, and Gatfield's other unconventional artworks, raise fundamental questions about art and life, and speculate on what might be, developed from a deep understanding of what is.



Lawn (2006-) view 2006



Lawn (2006-) view 2008

Monochromes

Liminality is both powerfully evident and under scrutiny in Gatfield's Monochromes, where repeating themes of singular colour and geometric forms link the language of abstraction with contemporary issues. Works such as *Frame* (2007), *All Black* (2008), *Black Fringe* (2011), *Black Tie* (2013), and *White Square* (2013), bring to the fore, individual parallel discourses of formal abstraction, sensory/material qualities, and current socio-political issues. The constant cross-referencing between the visual and verbal, symbols and abstract concepts, serves to suspend the meaning of the artwork in a tentative state of equilibrium.

All Black is a thermal painting rich in ambiguity and metaphors of objects and ideas. Carved in materials that mimic a concrete block wall, the artwork warms up during the day and cools at night. In a country where the colour black is celebrated as an emblem of nationhood, *All Black* can be viewed as an abstract representation of the building blocks of New Zealand nationalism; or the heated strength and synergy generated by the 15 all-male members of a nation's rugby team, with six half blocks as the benched reserves. At word-level, 'black' is firmly linked to aspects of race, moods, and also humour; a 'mock-wall' – a wall veneer, hung on a wall as art.

These 'walls' are deceptive, fabricated surfaces. They are satisfying, clever, and in keeping with the sense of clinical artifice that characterises Gill Gatfield's exhibition.⁷

Proclaiming *all* black, this monochromatic Concrete Art work re-invigorates the language of abstraction rooted in historical works such as Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) and Ad Reinhardt's *Abstract Painting, Black* (1960-66). For Malevich, his painting constituted the zero of form; an end to old art conventions and the origin of a new pictorial language. Decades later, Reinhardt created his works of monochromatic purity, hopeful that they could overcome the tyrannies of oppositional thinking. These precursory philosophies collectively gain a place on Gatfield's *All Black* conversation bench.

In positioning contemporary topics of nationalism and sport against the world history of black painting, Gatfield sites postmodern culture squarely within evolving theories on abstraction. It is in this vein that the artist weaves perpetual threads of philosophy and theory – both historical and current – throughout her practice. By linking a minimalist approach to a postmodern context, she develops a revitalised thematic and theoretical combination; yet refrains from providing set rules, a manifesto or an opinionated outcome. Through the presentation of artworks and a concept of liminality, Gatfield positions key aspects of formalism and classicism directly within a measured critique of current discourse.



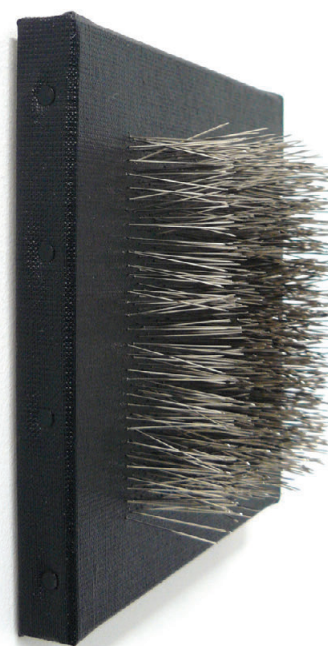
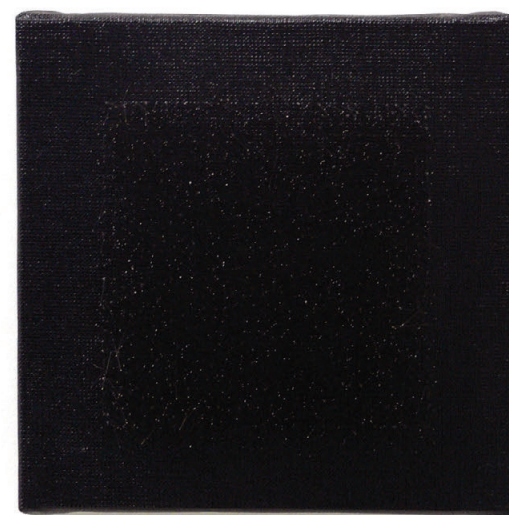
Being-Made (2007)



All Black (2008); *White Island* (2008)



All Black (2008)



Black Fringe (2011)
front/angle/profile



Prick (2007)



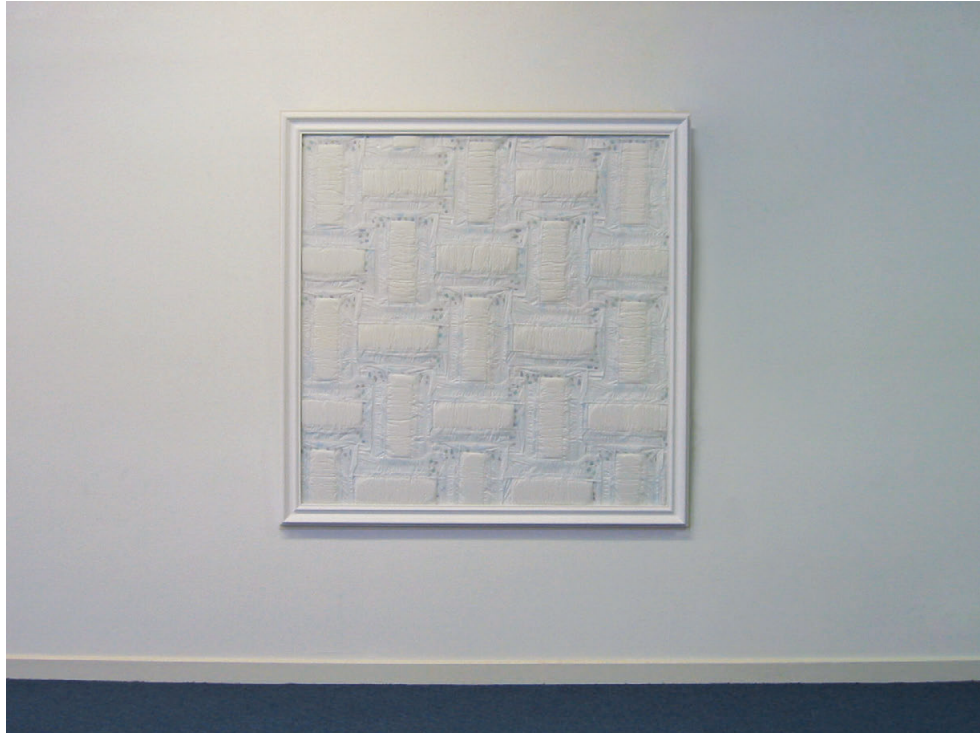
Prickle (2008)



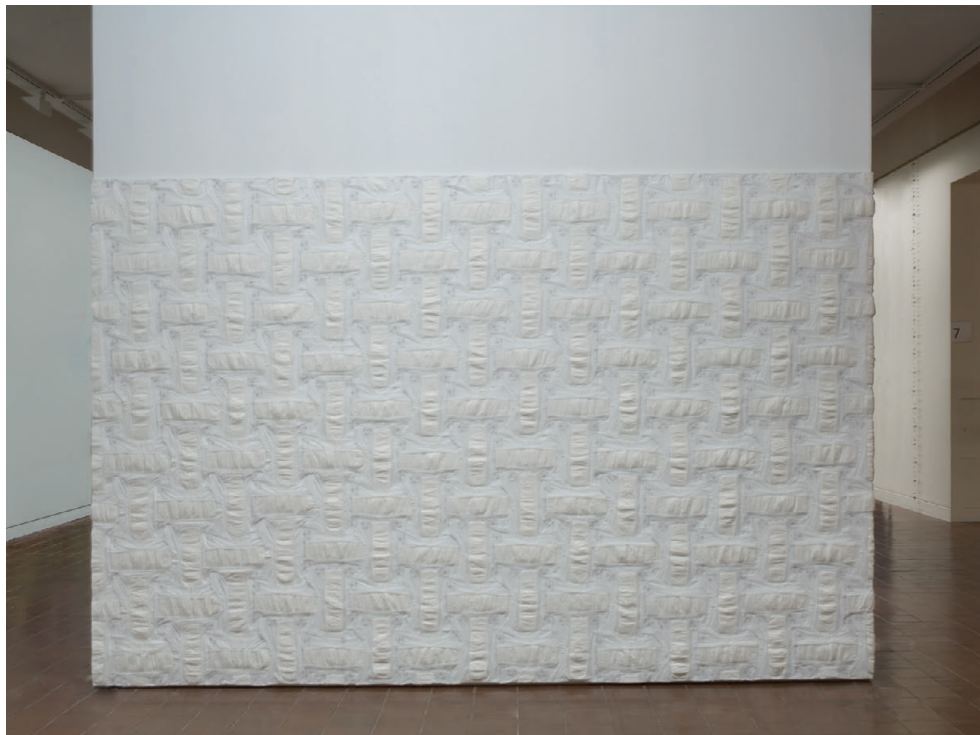
Bush (2009)



Black Tie (2013)



Untitled (2005)



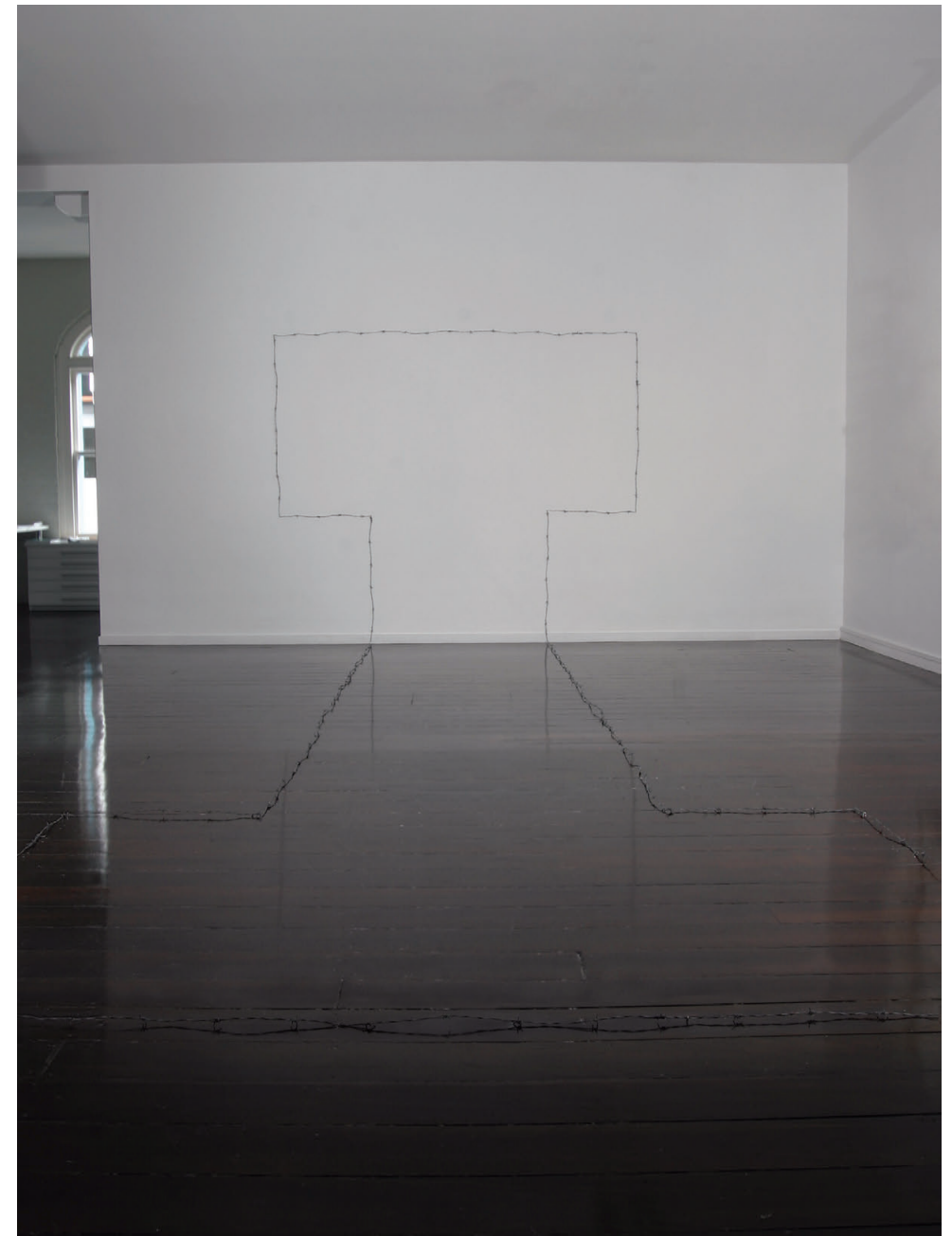
Canvas (2007)



Kaitiaki (2004)



First Person (2008)



Present Tense (2008)



Suspended Sentence (2009)

II. The Political

In Gatfield's practice, art theory acts as a placeholder for wider socio-political and cultural content. In her elastic and expansive approach to content, the work connects to multiple contexts, opening up questions about race, gender, culture, environment, human rights, nationalism and globalism. Gatfield reveals striking political insights yet avoids grandiose gestures, instead expressing the human scale of the issues through forms that assume a personal manner, regardless of the work's scale. Political substance is apparent in the sensory nature of her materials, the androgynous demeanour of the works, their contexts and titles.

Gatfield's I-works encapsulate the idea that 'the personal is political', and give shape to a classical Greek ideal of the individual as a political being. This political 'I' is not passive – it can be barbed (*Present Tense*, 2008), suspended beyond reach (*Postscript*, 2007), stretched high at the cliff edge (*Cliff Hanger*, 2009); and electrified (*Suspended Sentence*, 2009). *Present Tense* is sharply present as it treads a dangerous line; bending and adjusting its planar context into a right angle (90°). Held under tension, the jagged I-outline appears to simultaneously rise up from the ground in protest and slide off the wall in a state of despondent surrender.

Feminist Art

The artist's engagement in political content operating alongside the contestability of prevailing theory is directly evident in the feminist content of her work. Although Feminist Art is frequently positioned as an oppositional stance to Minimalism and Formalism, Gatfield's practice contradicts this. Pieces such as *Muses* (2007), *Prick* (2007), *Bush* (2009) and *Natural Selection* (2010), deftly blend these approaches. Avoiding the obvious clichés, the abstract forms have an implied eroticism giving an extra edge to familiar gender-concepts while providing an open platform for responses and interpretation.

In *Grass Roots* (2006), the artist carved a large square Frame in the earth, exposing the roots, insect life, and under-structure of a coastal promontory. The square contains and frames a circle of verdant green grass which grows and invades the framing square. The land-art sculpture was displayed at New Zealand Sculpture Onshore 2006, a fundraiser exhibition for New Zealand Women's Refuges (the volunteer organisation supporting victims of family violence). Located directly above an underground artillery store, originally built in anticipation of invasion during WWII when the area was used as a military training camp, *Grass Roots* connects the 'wars'. Context and artwork are deliberately linked. Like a scope or a lens, brimming with life, the circle directs focus at the WWII arms hidden below ground and the present day domestic wars, too frequently 'hidden' above.

The term 'grass roots' refers to a groundswell movement for change. On observing *Grass Roots*, a reviewer noted:

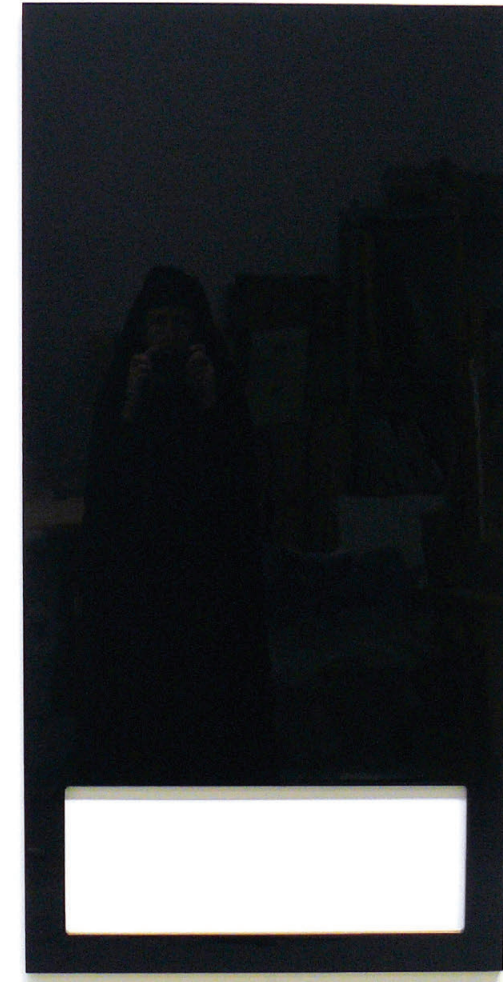
... the circle within the square is symbolic. The second word in the title, 'Roots', has a number of meanings – source or origin; or abbreviation in mathematics for square root, but also alludes to the sexual act in the way the word 'rooting' is used in New Zealand slang. The latter way of reading the work is reinforced by the use of organic materials.⁸

Left to their own devices, the forms deny their formal constraints, as the organic materials swell, merge and recede, responding to shifts in seasons and changes in climate. The uncut interior grows at the same rate as the grass and weeds outside the square, and slowly infiltrates the square. With time the exposed roots also revive and flourish in a show of new fresh shoots. Edges and lines blur, and the forms appear as one. In their slow, but determined transformations, these natural cycles act out domestic and political progressions of conflict, dominance and compliance.

In the black high-gloss surface of *13% Painting (Abstract Representation)* (2010), a small cut-out focuses attention on the exposed traditional white gallery wall behind it. On one level, this work presents as a well-executed, monochromatic, non-objective wall-piece. But the composition and the title shift our perceptions from the obvious pleasing aesthetic dualities of black/white, solid/void, matt/reflective, to questions of ratio and proportion, presence and absence, quantity and quality, with a glaring reality check. The viewer reflected in the black 'skin' of the work is without genitals; the white slot, hung at groin height, absorbs and excises the sex organs. The vacant slot, a symbol of female gender, is also a snapshot of representation. The proportion absent (13%) represents the percentage of women artists in stables of leading dealer galleries worldwide and on 'Art Power' lists; a disparity also mirrored in boardrooms and governments. Sexism and sexual innuendo unfold and become palpable; thus the work itself becomes a criticism of the condition it is trapped in.

The Body

The series of Monochromes known as Nappy Works provide a succinct example of the artist's use of abstraction as a medium for social and political meaning. Repeating units of fresh white newborn nappies/diapers are stretched and stapled open in a soft, absorbing monochromatic grid. Estimated to take more than half a century to decompose, the 'disposable work' both tests and exceeds art conservation conventions. The unused readymade units morph into the transactional *beingmade* which discretely absorbs moisture and ultra-violet light, while padding substrates and walls, dampening noise and loading space with potential meaning. Questions of vulnerability, nakedness and memory expand into wider issues of culture, conservation and universality.



13% Painting (Abstract Representation) (2010)

The long white nappy wall, *Kaitiaki* first presented at Auckland University in 2003, was developed in expanded form as a Cameo Project at the Manukau Public Gallery in 2004. Some artists and curators challenged the use of the term kaitiaki, which relates to Maori concepts of guardianship and caregiving, on the basis that the profane material was the antithesis to these sacred concepts. Referencing art as cultural taonga/treasure and also within the function of guardianship, *Kaitiaki* (2004) spanned from the gallery entrance to the curator's office door. Some viewers stroked sections of the 30m² wall and lay their bare faces against the artwork, finding the surface intensely appealing. Others reacted with distaste. The exhibition reviewer described the effect of the work:

What is immediately felt when viewing the wall of multiple disposable nappies is a simultaneous attraction and repulsion towards the notion of the body, in its widest interpretation, and its public exposure. On the one hand, there is the comforting process of the care and protection of precious treasures. On the other hand, there is a sense of vulnerability, personal invasion, potential abuse, insanity, disposable societies, ecological and environmental damage.⁹

From deep within the abstract, sanitized white wall of *Kaitiaki*, disturbing political and environmental implications seep out:

From many perspectives, disposable nappies are bad news. The statistics related to the environmental impact of dumping tonnes of disposable nappies filled with plastic, chemicals and little parcels of human excrement are horrifying. They can take an estimated 500 years to break down in landfills, ... while new research shows a potential connection between the chemical compounds found in disposables (take a whiff, you can detect a chemical smell in these clean nappies) and male infertility, asthma and hormone disruption. And yet, ninety per cent of New Zealand babies use disposable nappies, getting through 572 million a year.¹⁰

Bound by a white colonial frame, the symbolic square Nappy Work, *Untitled* (2005), was at first rejected by the selectors for the National Contemporary Art (2 Dimensional) Award that year on the basis it was neither painting nor printmaking. Later described as one of the works that attracted the most public interest, *Untitled* was judged: 'an abstract painting sans paint' and awarded a Merit Prize. *Canvas* (2007), a 12m² diaper weaving, encased a freestanding wall in the Auckland Art Gallery during a fundraising drive for the gallery redevelopment, as if wrapped ready for a move to temporary premises. *Canvas* enlarged the weft and warp of unprimed raw canvas; addressed the gallery wall as 'the canvas' – a support for painting; and presented the central question relating to the context of the exhibition in the open nature of the work, and the verb 'to canvas' – to seek patronage and support for a growing art institution.

Authorship / Authenticity

Exploring the political content and the liminal potential within authorship, the exhibition *Third Person* (2010) presented authorship and authenticity on new ground. By untangling the artist from the first person 'I', the viewer as the second person 'You', and opening up the possibility

of the artwork and its context as the third person – 'He, She, It', Gatfield invests the artworks with independence. Providing the sculptures with given names, *M. Le Blanc*, *Rrose Sélavy* and *Portia*, and with linguistic pronouns *Untitled* and *Je Suis*, the exhibition explores the idea that authenticity is ultimately embodied within, and expressed by the work. The viewer is invited to this stage as an active participant. According to the exhibition reviewer:

In viewing their reflected selves, spectators experience a sense of displacement and destabilisation of selfhood only amplified by the distinctive I-shape of the glass. Where, precisely, does the viewer stand in relation to the work? Does the work function as an assertion of the artist's unique identity – or of the art object?¹¹

Referring to the film-making technique of filming from a viewpoint outside any of the actors, *Third Person* develops an omniscient narrative, incorporating the perspectives of all actors and of the scene itself. Movement within and outside the gallery, the changing light and weather conditions, and the surrounding architectural space, all add to the qualities and character of the objects. While able to be appreciated for their intrinsic beauty, the overall composition leaves a lasting impression that the function of 'who' is speaking underpins the perception of authority.

Conceptual questions about authorship flow over into the artist's expressive use of advertising media. Making the process an integral part of the outcome, she presents a parallel conceptual narrative of the work alongside the creating of the physical work. The image used to advertise *Third Person* in *Art New Zealand* captures the artist in the process of making *Portia*. On hands and knees, bent over the mirror pool of an I-form (and foreshadowing a Caravaggio *Narcissus* reference), the viewer is left unsure as to whether the artist is bowing in homage, prayer or genuflection; or the complete opposite – exerting force to maintain dominance and subdue the 'I'. A second image published in *ArtNews* and reproduced as the exhibition invitation card, showed the upright *Portia* still in progress in the artist's studio with the artist/photographer mirrored back in the vertical I-form. Gatfield wrote at the time:

It is not accidental that it looks like an epitaph to me and/or the apparently overdone 'I' text art genre. Makes me think of Barthes' *Death of the Author*, birth of the reader... . For me, the image conveys how the pursuit of this body of work is a simultaneous artistic/authorial death and a clear authorial assertion, compounded by the presence of the author in the text. Both the camera, the artist, and the reflective 'I' are pointing at the viewer who becomes a party to the work and (an)other third person. – Artist

Model Women

A suite of three works, *M. Le Blanc*, *Rrose Sélavy* and *Portia*, collectively titled *The Maquettes* (2010), present the universal model as a repository for gender content conveyed through the blunt forms of minimalism. 'Maquette' in art terminology is the artist's model; a small work that conveys the sense of a work in scale; and 'the model' embodies contemporary ideas about women, beauty and style.

Using the masculine nom de plume adopted by the revolutionary C19th French mathematician and philosopher Sophie Germain, *M. Le Blanc* reconstructs her enterprise. Unable to attend lectures or present academic papers, Sophie Germain invented M. Le Blanc (translated as Mr White) as a means of defying the rules that prevented her from obtaining knowledge and competing with her male peers. Germain undertook pioneering work in number theory and elasticity theory, winning the 'prix extraordinaire' from the Paris Academy of Sciences, yet was unable to attend the Academy as women were excluded unless married to a member. Her name was also omitted from the list of scientists inscribed on the Eiffel Tower, whose work on the theory of elasticity made the engineering and construction of the Tower possible.

Like nerves of steel inside a fragile strategy, the artwork *M. Le Blanc* encases a polished steel grid in crystal clear glass. The grid, a mathematical tool and a cage, is cut into an I-form, a symbol of Sophie Germain's quest to have the status of 'a person'. Discretely clamped between two piers of rough white stone, the masculine/feminine sculpture displays the need for guile to achieve deception and the unrelenting focus required to confront convention.

Rose Sélavy, a nom de plume used by Marcel Duchamp from 1920, is an erotic pun based on the French phrase 'Eros, c'est la vie' (Eros, that's life). Works 'by' Rose Sélavy – Duchamp's female alter-ego – employed aphorisms and puns to critique art blind spots and establish turning points in both artists' oeuvres. Gatfield's *Rose Sélavy*, enters into this complex interplay of gender and authorship. The twin towers of raw block and single pane of two-faced glass – not the same front and back – suggest a split personality; an alter-ego inclined to self-critique. Depending on the angle of approach, the I-form offers an opaque surface, an outline or a translucent mirror. In profile, multiple features slide into one line held tight between two legs. In a conceptual twist relating to context, Gatfield first presented *Rose Sélavy* in Christchurch, New Zealand. When Duchamp's work was exhibited in that same city in 1967, two works – *Fountain* and *Please Touch* – were withdrawn from public viewing; banned on the grounds of immorality. Works by Rose Sélavy were exhibited.

Portia, the third *Maquette*, is named after the central character in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. In the original C16th drama, this complex character had multiple gender identities: a male actor plays the part of a female character who masquerades as a male lawyer. At a time when women were not allowed to act on stage or practice law, Portia is both the unlikely heroine and the masculine protagonist, using logic and cunning to argue for the freedom of her lover's friend. Like a court advocate, Gatfield's *Portia* is clad entirely in black. The muscular masonry base and polished jet-black glazing imbues the work with a sombre presence; equally powerful and beautiful.

The Maquettes present a timeless monument of contemporary relevance; the political and intellectual terrain covered, spans centuries. These 'Model Women' are stationed as iconoclasts, demonstrating aspiration and artistry, and directing the audience's attention



The Maquettes (2010)

towards universal human concerns. An empowering triptych of towers built of glass and masonry, the work combines classical forms and contemporary icons. Aligned, they make enduring and prescient connections between the ever-equivocal status of women and the role of gender and justice in the advancement of art, science and philosophy.

Preferring the minimalist approach of role model artists such as Olga Rozanova, Louise Nevelson, Eva Hesse and Anne Truitt, Gill Gatfield avoids the overt gestures of some contemporary feminist art. Her art objects are aesthetically powerful, carrying strong political and cultural messages through a balanced interplay of materials, outlines, context and title. Like scales of justice, this finely-tuned balance holds the tentative political ideal of equality in a liminal state. Each work remains impartial, sensuous and beautiful; embracing a diverse range of interpretations and responses.



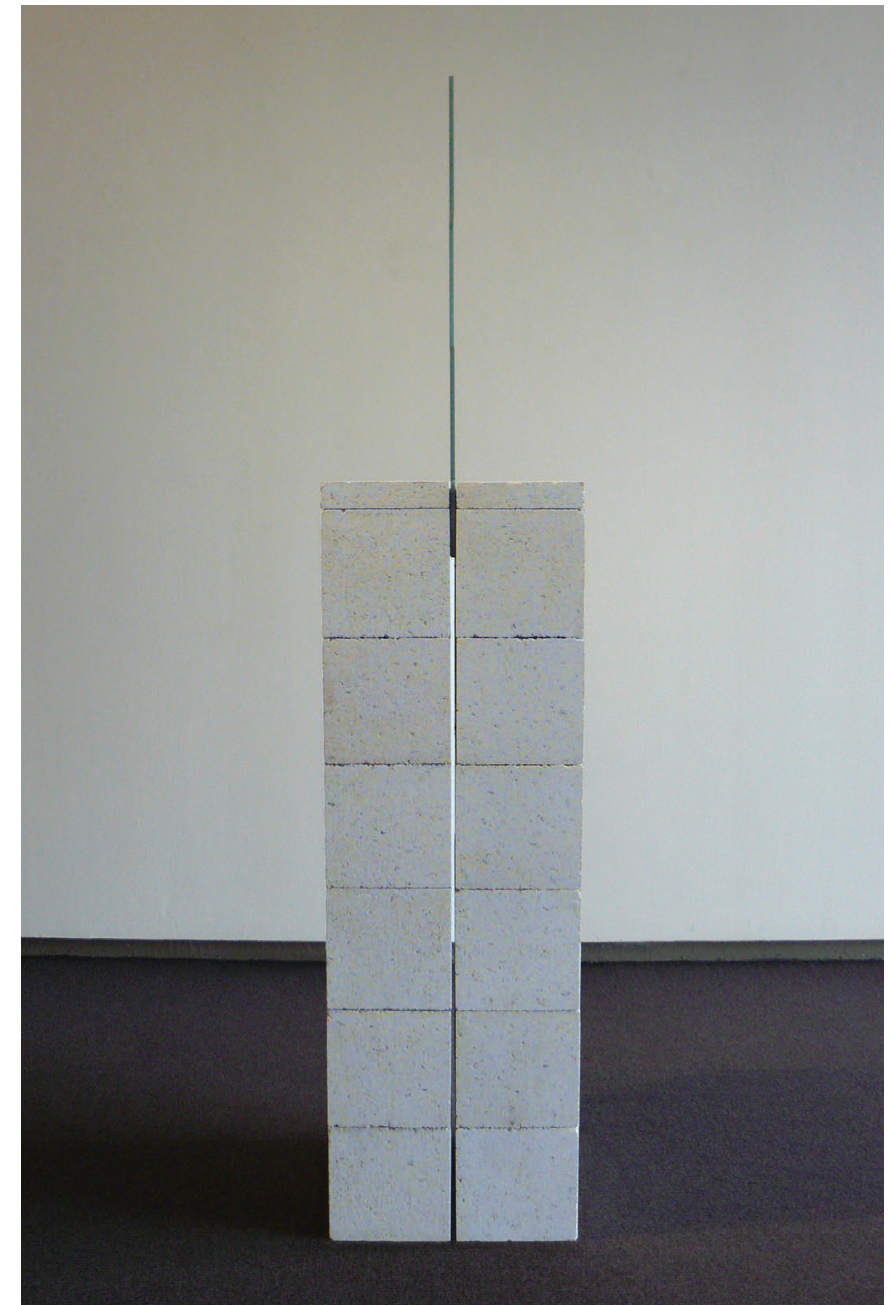
Art NZ Image (2010)



Third Person (2010) advert



M. Le Blanc (2010)



M. Le Blanc (2010) profile



Rose Sélavy (2010) view 1



Rose Sélavy (2010) view 2



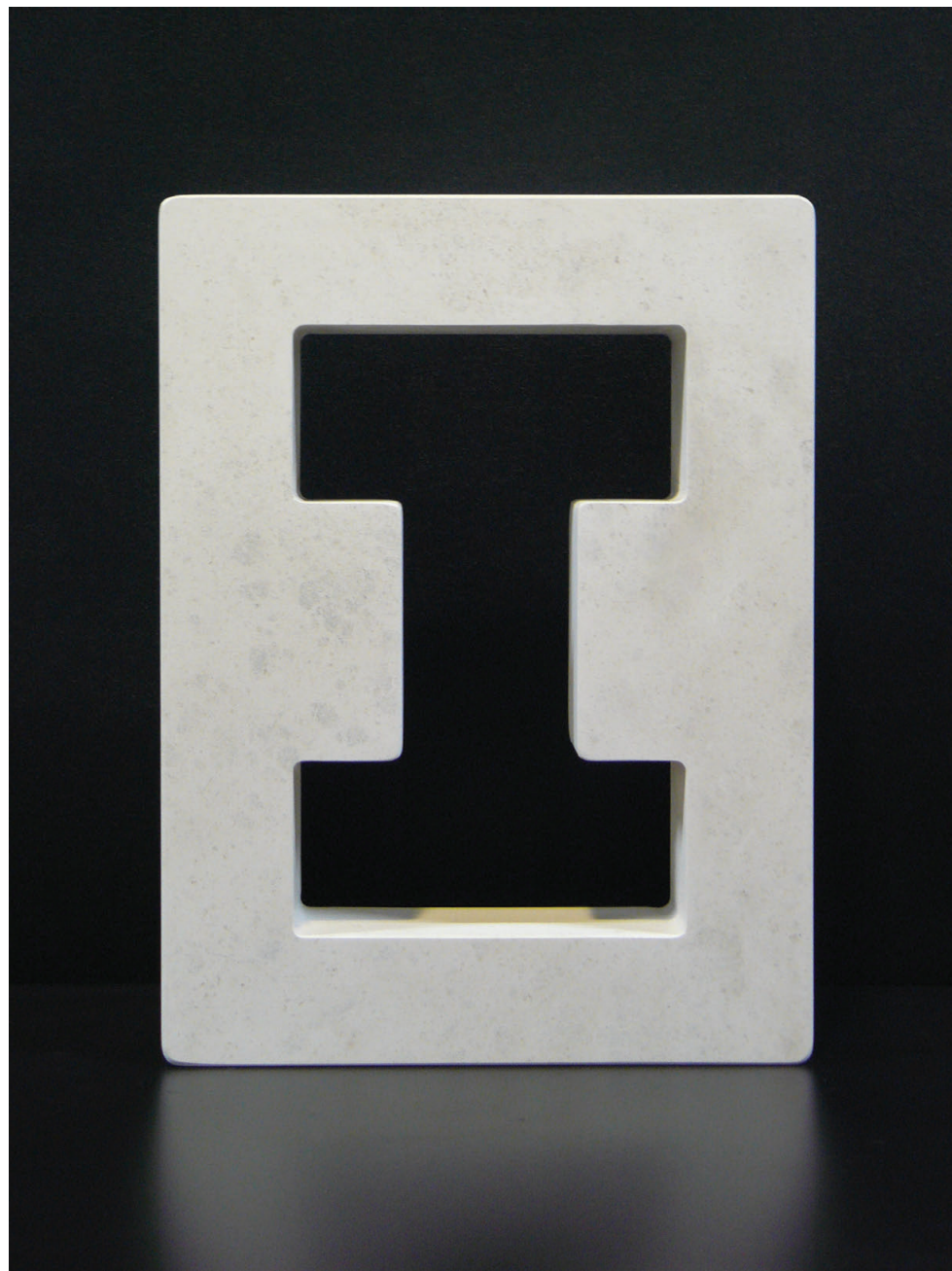
Muses (2007)



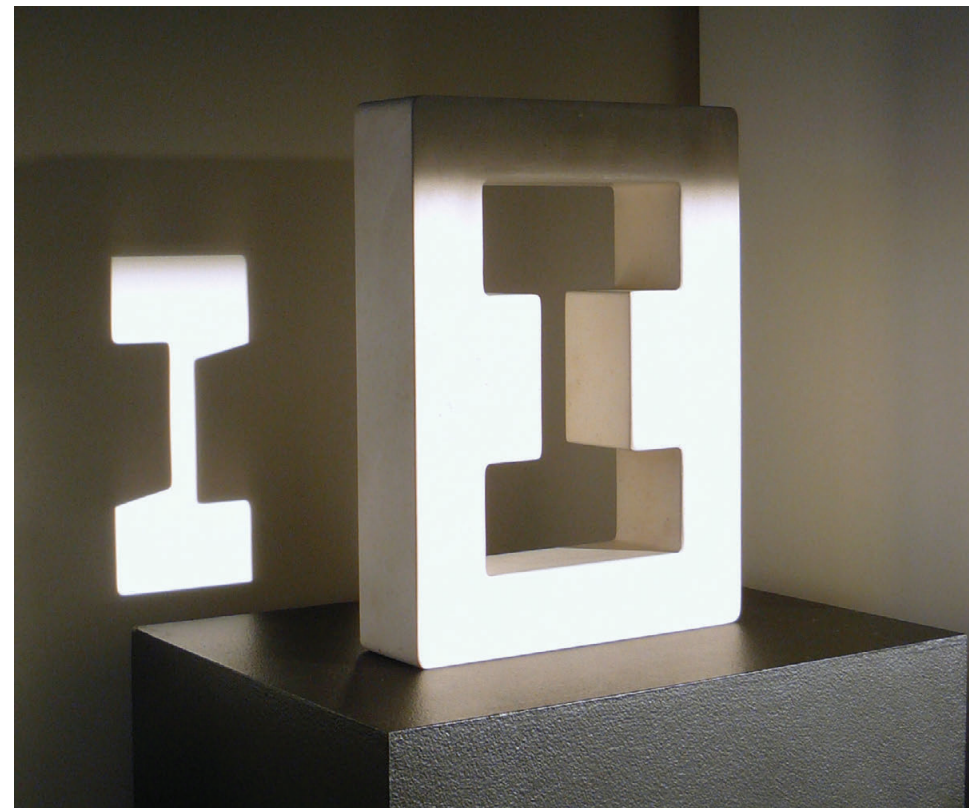
Muse I (2007) detail



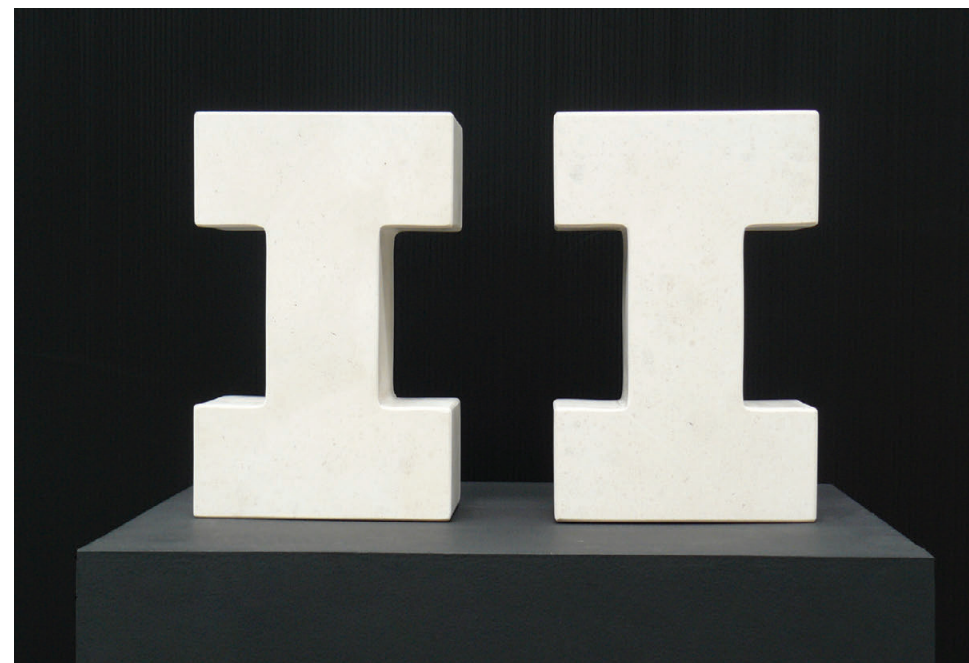
Chip (2012)



Not I (2011)



Not I (2011) sunset



// (2011)



Silhouette (2011)

III. Abstract Figure

Gill Gatfield's innovative approach to media, process and ideas, extends to her use of language and geometry as form. Her eye for typographical references and her precise use of words/text/ numbers/symbols as yet another material, skilfully incorporates wider fields of philosophical thought, semiotic references, and theory into the artworks.

Throughout the bodies of work that make up Gatfield's practice, a strong interconnection is seen between title, form, materials, presentation and meanings. Broad societal themes of politics, culture, science and relationships are selectively and simultaneously provoked, while lying latent within the forms themselves. *White Island* (2008) is a carved, imitation-concrete work that transacts heat and cold, and bears the name of a barren active volcanic island off the New Zealand coast. *Half Glass* (2009) physically manifests the proverb of optimism v. pessimism: a glass half empty or half full – a technically 'impossible' form, it is literally half glass. *Silhouette* (2011) is an impressive outdoor artwork, where the black, freestanding frame embodies the ancient technique of describing figure with light and shadow. *Native Tongue* (2011), a monolithic text, is an elemental symbol of speech in a prehistoric indigenous timber that alludes to the Mother Tongue and the ancestral family tree.

I prefer text as form and content. – Artist

Title-Figure

Gatfield's individually crafted titles create a linguistic or numerical framework in which the works are able to perform, or indeed remain suspended in meaning. Demonstrated with acumen across each series of works, they provide key portals through which the artworks can be further deciphered, interpreted and celebrated.

Pitted with puns, metaphors, ambiguity, humour and political punch, the titles are able to be enjoyed at face value by the most humble reader or unpacked and deconstructed by the cultural connoisseur. They signal the primary themes that may be found within the work. For example, *Untitled* (2010) triggers connections to anonymity and inclusion; *Babel* (2009) – to language and architecture; *White I.* (2011) – to land and culture; *I+I* (2012) – to mathematics and relationships; *Not I* (2011) – to philosophy and spirituality; and *Echo* (2013) – to repetition and the mythological personification of a lost voice.

The works are formally and semantically connected to the cryptic combinations of words, phrases, numbers and glyphs in the titles that accompany them. As powerful and succinct as the objects they label, the title-figure translates into tiers of multiple connotations, bringing more meaning to the work and adding further liminality and flux.

This readable framework operates across and between related works. Hence the emblematic one metre square *Prick* (2007) presents a mesmerising field of 30,000+ sharp short pins; it warns of the combined pleasures and dangers of touch and is an abstract representation of a colloquial ‘prick’. A counterpart work, *Bush* (2009) is a transparent circular cavity dense with layers of fine steel pins that intrigue and entice, a reference to impregnable lowland forests and female genitalia; and *Prickle* (2008) appears as an offspring in the shape and name of ‘the father’ but with a more intense coating of fine steel nerve endings.

The names of works surface in the conception and making of the work. I can’t do one without the other. – Artist

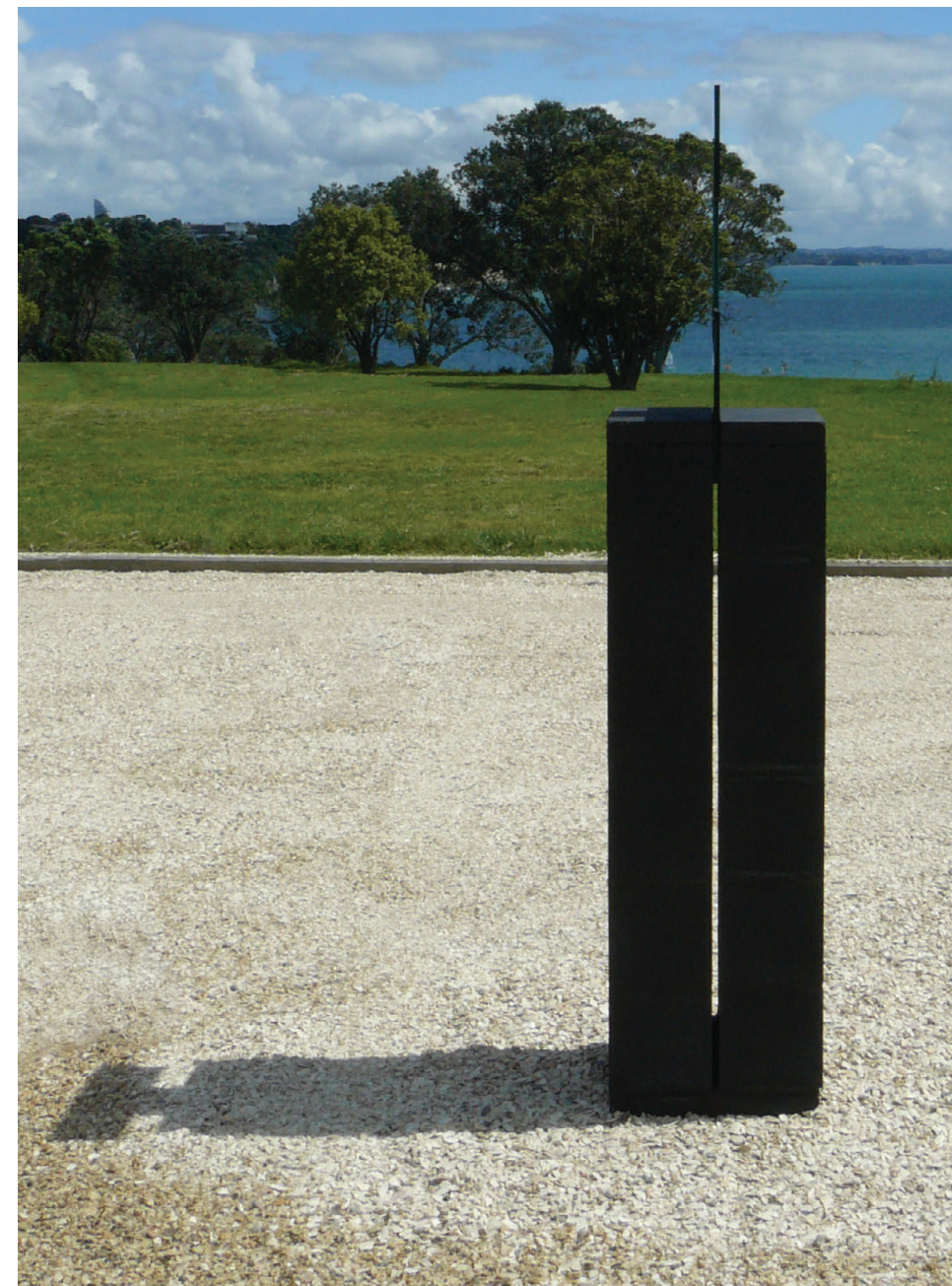
I-Works

Suspended between semiotics, numeracy and sculpture, the I-figure in the Text series operates as an achromatic hybrid form – part word, part number, part object. Though immediately identifiable as a group of formally related works, Gatfield’s approach is not to clone through repetition but to develop and maintain a separate identity and a state of flux in each individual piece. The subject (theme) resides within the object (entity), *and* the object takes the shape of the subject. Being neither one nor the other, or both simultaneously, creates a state of tension.

The artist’s use of the I-form is fluid. As a Roman numeral, the meanings of ‘I’ slide across to that of One, or First; indicating a starting point, the commencement of a sequence, or a series of thought. First also implies a heroic primacy. Used in conjunction with a name, it infers status and bloodlines. As a form in Gatfield’s practice, One/First reminds us of the primary importance of origins, authenticity and spirituality. The vertical columnar structure is a familiar monolithic form in ancient and ethnic histories, having been presented as menhirs, obelisks, totem poles or pou whenua, and still recognisable in the imposing form of the modern skyscraper. Shrouded in mysticism and steeped in the human psyche, Gatfield’s I-works connect with the histories of this form while grounding it in a contemporary context and within the range of human experience.

Even when viewed in profile, the vertical I-form is replicated as ‘I’ sans serif. The form cannot escape the ‘I’; it is ‘always I’. Replicated as a linear pictogram in our every-day culture, it is read as a vowel, a letter in the alphabet, a number, and the personal pronoun ‘I’. As the latter, it becomes a symbolic embodiment of the self, the psyche, the ego; invoking the intangible human ability to attain awareness, consciousness and introspection.

Ideas ricochet across the bodies of work yet they also offer space and distance from the usual daily clamour, to provide clarity and a place of calm. The Frames suggest an enclosing personal space, a sense of security; and the I-works offer a shrine to the Self – a minimalist monument commemorating the Individual and Identity. *Untitled* (2010), the large glazed ‘I’,



Portia (2010) profile

becomes a revealing self-portrait of Everyman. Its transparent and reflective asexual form is not solely a finite object of contemplation but also an energised conduit for deeper reflection.

I-Generation

Though the reading of signs and symbols has prehistoric roots, life in the information age has created an ‘i-generation’; self-absorbed and wired with a fast-tracked visual literacy. In a world of aggressive visual communications, interface occurs daily with a barrage of content and imagery – via television, iPad, iPhone, Internet and social media. Gatfield’s I-forms make ‘I/I’ connections. *Chip* (2012) is made from an off-cut of *Native Tongue* (2011). Carved from the 45,000+ year old kauri, it is literally a ‘chip off the old block’. The diminutive ‘I’ is mounted on a 100 year old colonial kauri pedestal. Linking the past to the present in a timeline of DNA, this ‘micro-chip’ proposes an organic I/One as a blueprint for future communication.

The artist’s use of reductive language and phonetic sound bites are effectively employed in works such as *Fake* (2003), *Curate* (2008) and *Remuera* (2010), where the economy of txt-language serves to augment the content of the work. *Curate* is a registered car licence plate containing the letters QR8. A curate is both a person providing spiritual leadership, and the act of mediating art. The former implying that this art object is a caretaker of deeper revelations, and the latter that the art curator is ‘in the driver’s seat’. Transitional qualities are vested in the reflective roadworthy car plate. Isolated and out of context in its own white cube gallery space, the spiritual and commercial nature of the artwork are under the spotlight. The artist offered only one of the two plates needed to register a car as the artwork for sale, thereby undoing the function of the object and dividing the locus of power, this time between artist and collector.

Epic Tales

Despite the apparent reduction of language, and the stillness of form and colour, Gatfield’s artworks do speak; indeed, some speak of epic tales. *Babel* (2009), the first of the Glazed I’s, takes its title from the ancient myth of the Tower of Babel and the dispersion of languages. Combining imagery related to the birth of language (and written text) with that of modernist architecture, the artist makes striking use of the contrasting characteristics of contemporary building materials and construction methods. The capital letter ‘I’ shaped in crystal clear glass suggests an existential statement of the fragile nature of our ‘being’ – translucent and reflective, solid yet transparent. The base of the glass sheet is held tentatively in tension between two towers of stacked concrete blocks. A void beneath the glass is visible only in profile; when all elements of this sculptural composition compress into an arrangement of pure vertical lines.

Towers tend to be erected as symbols of power, as landmarks or watchtowers. As a power structure, a tower asserts itself by creating a vertical ‘I’ statement against the horizontal surface of its base; an exclamation mark against the horizon. As a landmark, a tower provides

us with distinct bearings; it exclaims “Here I am” and “There you are”. Gatfield has used these ideas to invade the viewers’ subconscious – engagement is unavoidable. In *Babel*, the ever-watching, all-seeing ‘eye’ perched on the summit of the concrete watchtower, is ‘I’. Puns abound. Reminiscent of the multiplication of modules inherent in Brancusi’s *Endless Columns* and the elegant modernism of a Mies Van Der Rohe skyscraper, the artist has created a maquette for a universal art piece that speaks through its shapes, forms and materials: both literally and symbolically.

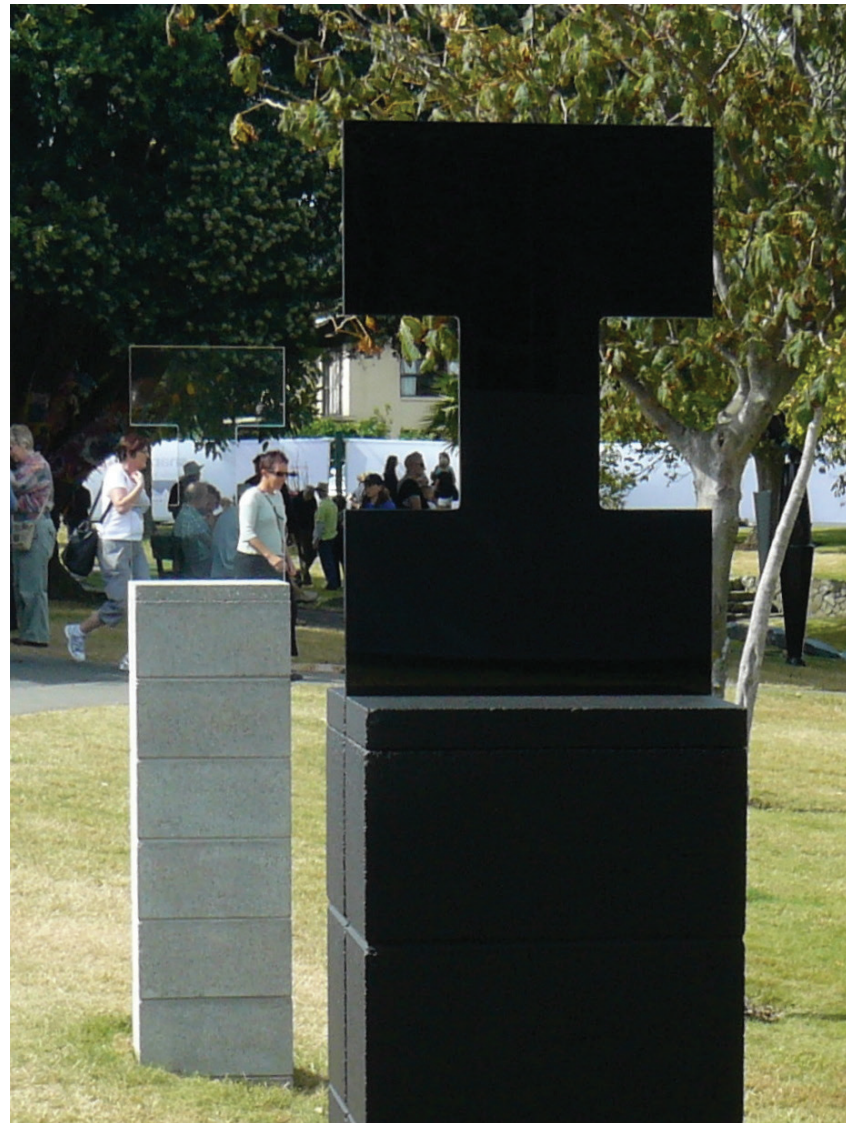
Figure-Sound

The word ‘figure’ extends to describe a music term, meaning a brief melodic or harmonic unit often constituting the basis of a larger phrase or structure. As we read the I-Works – visually, audibly and internally – a single implicit sound, “ai”, begins to repeat. This simple unit reverberates throughout the body of I-works. The presentation of this abstract form/figure in multiple I-works creates an inescapable repetitious sound; a stutter. Itself a liminal state, the stutter can be detected initially arising from one form with multiple functions: ‘I’ – letter, vowel, word, number and symbol; and gaining momentum in works with pairs of ‘I’s’, such as the limestone *II* (2011), the glass *I+I* (2012), and the drawing *Lean II* (2012). The figure-sound can also be perceived as a barely audible whisper, as in *Not I* (2011). At times, specific light conditions or viewing angles cause the works to fade or withdraw; dissipating the I-sound into an inaudible frequency.

Formal Debate

Although related in their geometric simplicity, each of the I-works remains unique. Precise choices and specific combinations relating to materials, technical construction and presentation, underline the distinct storylines and perspectives. When staged in combinations, the works build ever deepening narratives. At Shapeshifter (NZ International Arts Festival 2010), two separate pieces, *Babel* (2009) and *Portia* (2010), were positioned in a city park, face to face. Two glass ‘I’s’ on chest-high pedestals; one white, the other black; one transparent, the other opaque. Though identical in scale and proportion, their contrasting colour and material qualities brings to mind a binary discourse – a stand-off, where issues are taken as black or white, right or wrong, good or evil.

Amidst the constant movement of crowds of people, swaying trees, birds and water fountain, the two silent forms take centre stage in a dynamic tableau. Retaining a relentless focus on each other, the initial impression of two fixed-position adversaries shifts to that of an evolving relationship in which the spectator plays a central part. Depending on the light and the angle of view, the centre of power and status between the complementary pair, visibly shifts; it dissolves into a fluid, sliding scale – from dominance to reticent submission, and from imbalance to equivalence.



Portia & Babel, Shapeshifter 2010

Facing *Portia*, from either side, the body of the spectator is absorbed in the black masonry base while the jet-black glazing reflects the viewer's face, drawing them closer in. This effect creates a conspiracy of I/One, and blocks the companion-piece *Babel* from the conversation. Through both text and image, *Portia* becomes a personification and manifestation of the power of words: the idea that a bold argument may win through eloquence and technicalities, regardless of the moral question at hand. In this manner, *Portia* enacts the double-dealing traits of the lead character in Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*.

Standing outside the composition from the opposing end, spectators look straight through the clear *Babel* at the black 'I' of *Portia*, which in turn reflects back the viewer and the surroundings. Acting as a clear lens, *Babel* frames *Portia*, directing focus at the verbose advocate; framing the complex character within the mythical tale of self-destruction. The measured space between the two towers becomes both a ground for battle and for mutual admiration, and a two-way private conversation becomes a stage for public debate.

Figure-Ground

I+I is a black, highly reflective wall installation consisting of two planar, wall hung I-figures. These can read as a pair of Roman numerals (1+1) in a primary equation. The empty wall space carefully measured between the 1's creates a plus sign, the symbol for addition. Though physically absent (subtracted) from the work, this contrasting white shape suggests a connection between the glossed figures; a partnership, a union, a cross. Both figures are stabilised by two symmetrical crossbars. When read as twin personal pronouns or abstract torsos, ideas encapsulating origins, reproduction and duplication are inferred.

Operating as a tessellation, this hung work explores the intersections between abstraction and figuration, and makes an unexpected shift from mathematics into language. In Maori, this construct would read as the word *iti* – Maori for small; where the central gap becomes a lower case letter 't'. Though small, abstract and essentially two-dimensional, the inclusion of the wall surface (as the ground) enlarges and extends the work into the architecture of the display space. Alternatively, the figure actively utilises and absorbs the ground.

Devoid of back or front, top or bottom, *Not I* is carved in limestone sourced from a Portuguese quarry at the antipodes to New Zealand. Duchampian in its manipulation of visual and verbal content, the title begs the question of identity: 'If this is *not I* – no beginning, no presence, no-thing – then what is it?' In direct opposition to the staunch, spiritually loaded words 'I AM', the phrase *Not I* seems defiant, hesitant or in denial. Modernist and symmetrical in form, the extracted 'I' is described in the void and enclosed by a block of cold stone; hence the negative expression refers to absence of presence. With the addition of a light source, the absent figure becomes visually present as an alter-ego; an ephemeral self which 'sheds light' on its transient existence. The simple beauty of this illusive assertion is conferred also in close

view of the ancient stone outline which reveals traces of fossils and smooth internal curves; a cave-like space reconnecting I/One to primordial roots.

Human Figure

A compelling image of human form is expressed within the I-works. The human figure emerges as a primitive bust in the squat compact forms *Not I*, *II* and *I+I* – where serifs bracket a neck between head and shoulders, or a waist between breasts and hips. Strong torso traits become even more apparent when the form is elevated on a pedestal, bringing new insights of anthropomorphic symbolism into play.

Of adult human scale, the bipedal *Babel* and the three *Maquettes* offer an abstract I-head on two concrete legs, while the slender *Muses* and *Chip* take on more childlike proportions, and stand on three feet. Solitary upright I-forms, like *Untitled*, *Je Suis*, *Native Tongue* and *The Snake Charmer* are full figured emblems offering combinations of head and shoulders/ waist/legs and feet. These abstract human forms connect the work bodily to the viewer while rendering qualities that are unique to humans. Thus the concept of Gatfield's 'I' runs full circle; from pronoun, to number, to sound, to the human form – and back again to the Self.

Emotive Form

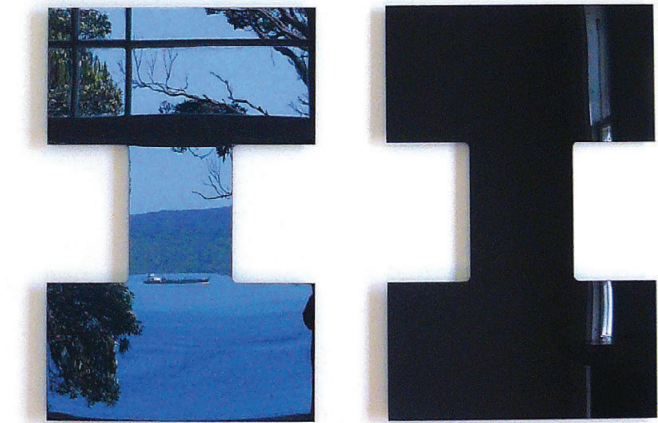
Through form, media and context, the I-works embody anthropomorphic traits that in turn express a range of emotions – contemplative, robust, fragile, determined, distressed, open and inquisitive. A clear example of text as poetic figure is seen in *Narcissus* and *Echo* (2013), a suite of two artworks that push the boundaries of technology in their curved abstract form, whilst depicting an emotive narrative through a metaphorical myth.

According to the myth, Echo is a talkative nymph who could repeat only the last words she heard. She falls in love with Narcissus but he rejects her love. Echo wastes away, until she exists only as a voice. Narcissus, tired from hunting and the heat, rests by a spring. While bowing to drink, he is captivated by his own reflection and falls deeply in love with it. He wastes away with love for himself, mimicking the manner in which Echo died.

Elements of self-absorption, fixations, longing and hope are embedded in Gatfield's arched companions. *Narcissus* bends forward 'on his knees' – a closed form, gazing downwards at his reflection on the black surface beneath. In turn, the glass form reflects the faces of his audience mirroring them back, and the 'I's' become 'us'. *Echo* reclines in fragile repose; an open form, a waiting receptacle, and captor of sounds. Her own 'voice' empty of content, she too repetitiously reflects back the images her audience offer her. In their opposing positions, this striking masculine/feminine duo mirror each other in perfect congruency, making their tale of lost love all the more tragic; yet remaining forever relevant.

In these related works, the clear glass I-forms are stretched and bent into heightened states of tension, alluding to the concaves and convexes of the reclining figure. Following in the abstract sculpture traditions of Naum Gabo, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, Gatfield's inanimate figures retain deep emotional content, captured within the expressive simplicity of the curve. Further human qualities manifest in the symmetrical proportions and the rendering of a fragile membrane. The method of creating stereometric constructions, by which form is achieved through the description of space rather than mass, gracefully transforms the text/ number/symbol 'I' into poignant mythological entities.

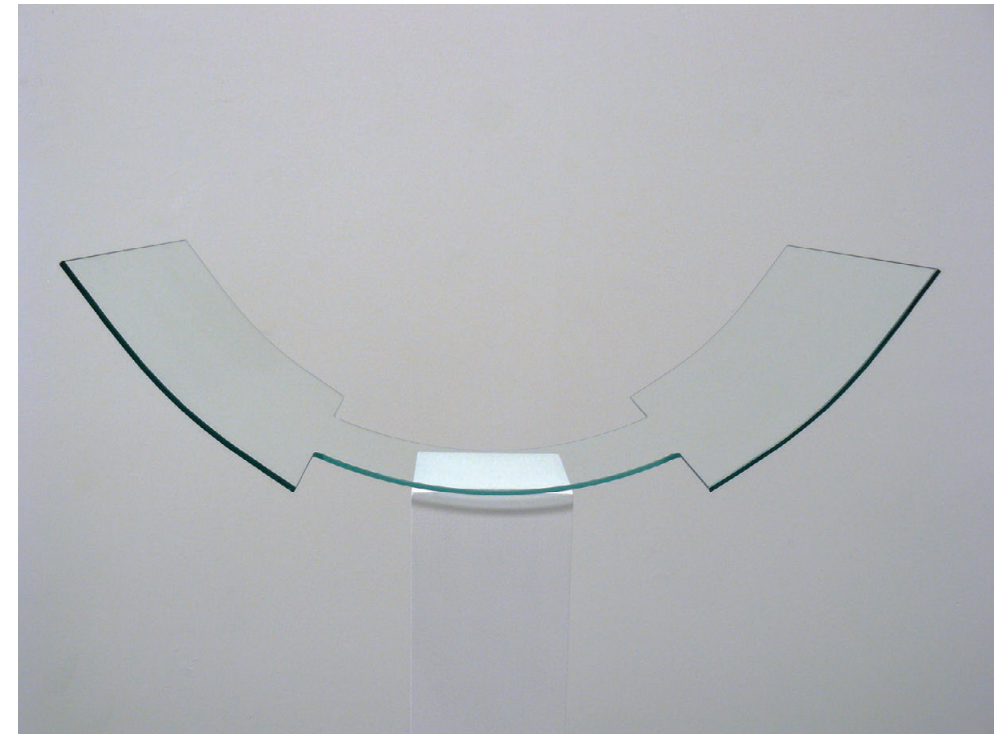
A complex blend of content – spiritual, philosophical, psychological, numeric and linguistic, resides within each choice Gatfield makes; creative choices that initiate further associations between sign/symbol, form, title, materials and construction. Through her considered content, and articulate use of language and form, she develops the *Abstract Figure*, evident across the bodies of work – Monochromes, Frames and Texts. It becomes the formal baseline which retains fluidity through poetic qualities; speaking clearly even when it is mutely abstract or barely present. Gatfield's finesse, consistent throughout her practice, is the manner in which the *Abstract Figure* can be subjective and personal to all who see the work; as well as collective – inclusive of different readings – *and* objective, as the works themselves actively review their subject.



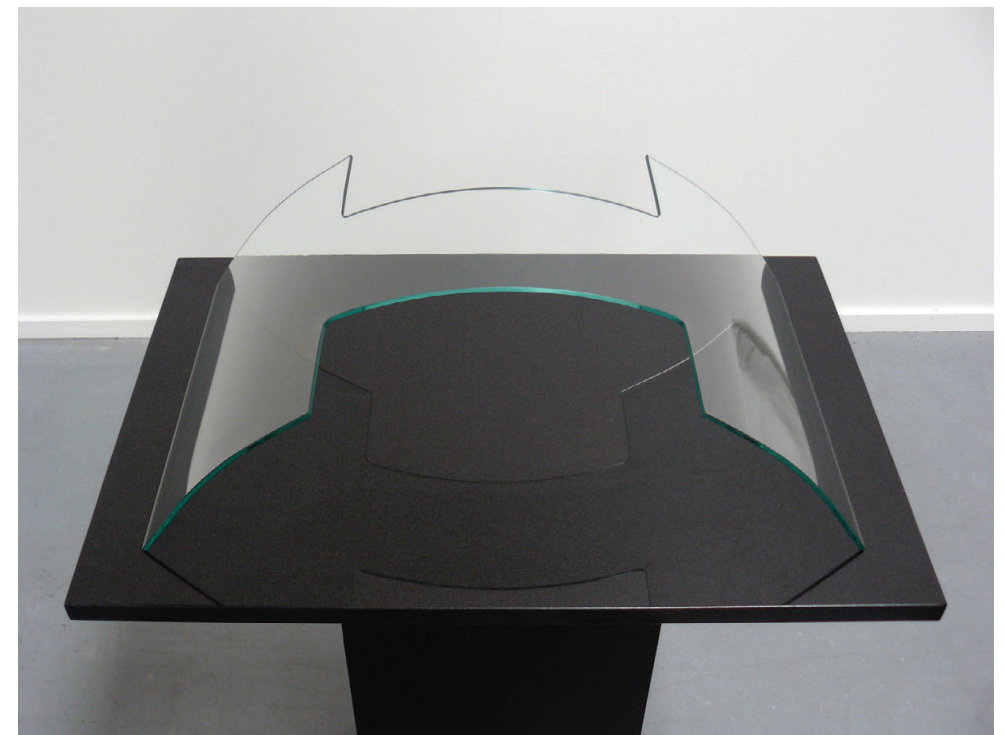
I+I (2012)



Echo (2013)



Echo (2013) detail



Narcissus (2013) detail



Narcissus (2013) view 1



Narcissus (2013) view 2



Half Glass (2009)



Half Glass (2009) profile



Native Tongue (2011)

IV. The Public Eye

Public art that has aesthetic integrity, conceptual strength, and connects with its site, is both memorable and powerful. Gill Gatfield's work achieves this complex balance in a manner that also invites and embraces the public encounter with the work. People are attracted to the simplicity of the abstract forms and are drawn to touch them. Viewers respond using descriptions such as: intriguing, strong, inspiring, elegant and beautiful. These 'connecting traits' as conveyed in Gatfield's work are pivotal for withstanding and sustaining the critical gaze of the public eye.

Whether temporary or permanent, Gatfield's work demonstrates the capacity for art to engage with people and to re-define urban and rural spaces. Parallel to the development of conceptual content, her intuitive work process imbeds elements of human psychology, spatial design, and atmosphere into the creation and construction of public installations. The space of the location itself – its history, geography and public use – plays a key role in the concept and planning process; the site becomes a participatory framework on which the reading of the artwork hinges.

The Tableau

Gatfield refers to the blend of elements in her public installations as the Tableau. By looking outside the discipline of art, the artist builds content and narrative from all related factors and conditions. Whether inside or outdoors, permanent or temporary, she approaches the installation as a multi-dimensional landscape with elements of foreground, mid-ground and distance; with a spherical idea of perspective, and articulated viewpoints fixed by a flattened perspective. Details derived from surrounding architecture, landscape, trees, weather patterns, and a site's history and purpose, are considered alongside the interactions and specific movements of people, birdlife, vehicles and shifts of light.

In addition to the permanent structures and physical conditions that affect the space for display, the artist incorporates the natural ebb and flow of life in the form of *free content*:

Air quality, temperature, clouds, rain, sun, moon, birds and insects, are *free content*. They come and go. Their patterns and cycles are material to the work. – Artist

In *The Snake Charmer* (2012) the artist introduced the notion of *absent content* to her list of media. By referring to the snakes which were central to the Tableau but absent due to New Zealand's acclaimed snake free status, Gatfield brought their absence to the fore.

The artist's eclectic palette of physical and ephemeral content is facilitated by an adept and creative approach to construction and installation. Her use of materials and processes test and expand known technical boundaries. Works appear to float, hover or emerge, without fixings

or foundations. A seamless merging of disciplinary boundaries – engineering, architecture, earth sciences, urban design, landscape design, fine art and public art – lends an overriding harmony to the work and its presentation. The result is rich and context-sensitive installations – whether permanent or temporary, indoors or outside – and art with a strong sense of identity, purpose and place.

An underlying spatial order in the overall presentation of the work gives rise to things you sense but may not see. In the many-layered installation, *Current Work* (2008), specific geometric correlations between artworks were further articulated through the artist's precise use of the architectural space, as described by the reviewer:

These small conversations of measured scale are developed in the larger underlying geometry of the exhibition. While *Deadline* bisects the gallery longitudinally, the piers through which it is threaded subdivide the main area laterally into three. This unseen grid sets the organisational structure for an exhibition that has been meticulously planned for the gallery space. ... These relationships invest the exhibition with a sense of balance and physical order, even if more felt than actually seen. The geometric grid lends an invisible coherence to frame the multiple allusions of Gatfield's works as they continue to prick the imagination¹²

Beauty

Qualities of balance, ratio, proportion and symmetry underpin our perceptions of beauty; and when presented in harmonious relationships, provide an innate sense of pleasure for the human psyche – the public eye. The complex notion of beauty provides a rich source from which many of Gatfield's conceptual ideas are drawn.

The absolute contestability of 'beauty' delivers the liminal stage up-front. The subjectivity of beauty is in the I-form, the Frame and the Text. Exposing and expressing the process for determining beauty, is the task of the work. – Artist

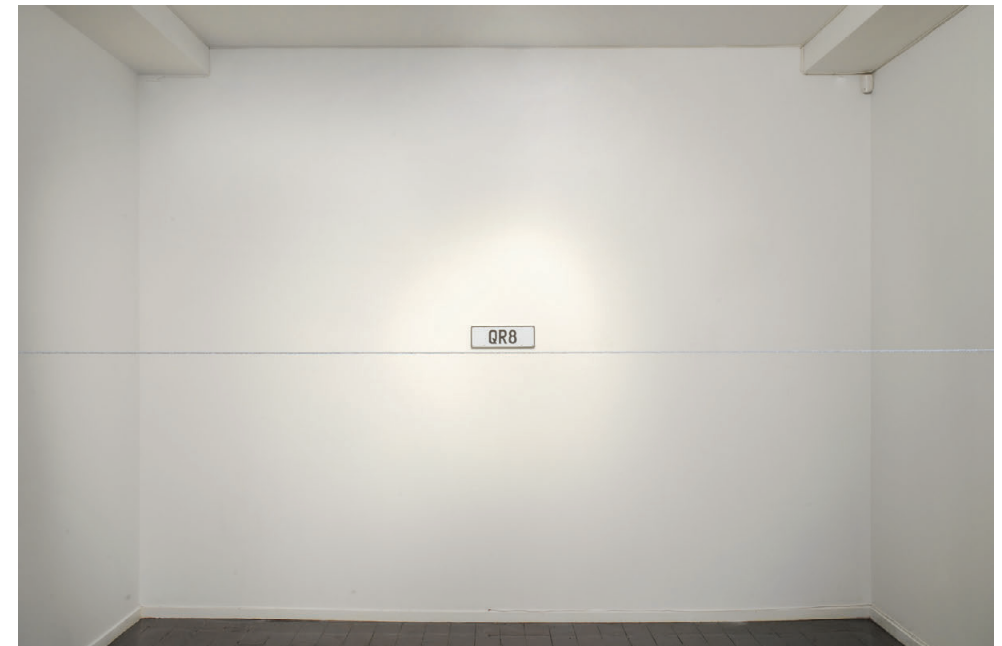
An enduring aesthetic upheld in the 'perfect proportions' of the human body underscores a 'divine' canon, recognised by the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, and reinforced by Vitruvius, Leonardo and Le Corbusier; creating a blend of art and science, aesthetics and geometry. Working from a core of geometric figure/text/frame structures, Gatfield's minimalist forms – solid and void, object and space – develop variations within this canon. Measuring dimensions intuitively and ergonomically, the artist uses her own body and the average male/female dimensions as initial bearings.

Piece by piece the actions taken dilute traces of the self ... until ultimately there is no self left. Only the Abstract Figure. – Artist

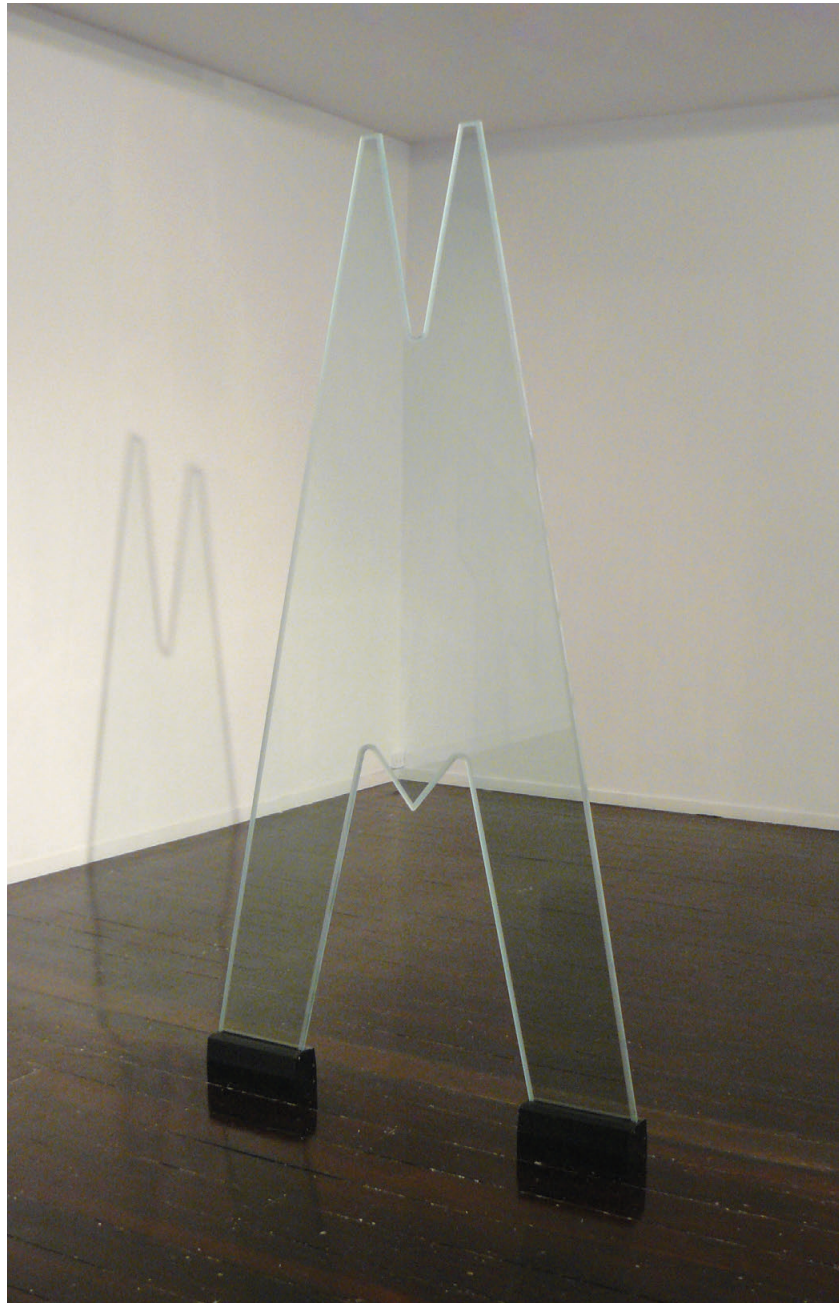
As a neutral object with asexual and anthropomorphic characteristics, the Abstract Figure can be tall and slender such as *Je Suis*, *Silhouette*, and *The Snake Charmer*; expressing elements



Current Work (2008) Room 1



Current Work (2008) Room 2



I AM/MAI (2008) detail

of classical femininity (as in the Ionic order); the elegance of elongation (as in the Gothic and Mannerist styles); and the glamour of the currently favoured tall/thin aesthetic. In contrast, *Native Tongue*, *Chip* and *Il*, appear thickset and sturdy; and without defining the works as such, a solidity, strength and muscular physique (as in the Doric order) is implied – the quintessence of masculinity.

Adjustments from ‘the norm’ open up the liminal ground for interaction and discourse, as the works contest presumptions about beauty, gender, and the human condition. The seductive allure of materials such as sheer translucent glass, silky-smooth wood, and ink black granite, together with a harmonious relationship between form, site and titles of each work, contribute a qualitative and quantitative beauty to each Abstract Figure.

Sublime

Intrigue arises from the creation of atmospheric conditions that suggest divine or sublime space. Light, materials and measured space occupy central positions in Gatfield’s practice where phenomenology, metaphysics and geometric abstraction are successfully blended to suggest such conditions. Indoors or outside in natural settings the artist makes use of all available additional elements. Natural light, shadows, air, atmosphere and genii loci are absorbed into the design, material and structure of her larger, free-standing forms and installations.

In *Current Work* (2008) at City Art Rooms, in the heart of Auckland’s art district, the artist transformed the first level of a 1930 historic building into a challenging yet serene space. This solo exhibition created a mise-en-scène, articulating the gallery space in such a fashion that the visitor was obliged to physically pause in front of *Deadline* (2008) – a live wire carrying 8,000 volts of electric current – and examine the compositional spaces of the narrative. The thin but threatening white line dissected and connected the two gallery enclosures. The eye-height of the line forced the same physical action of genuflection in front of both the freestanding glass text installation *I AM/MAI* (2008) in one space, and the registration plate *Curate*, with the text QR8, hung in isolation on the back wall of the second space.

The renowned philosophical phrase ‘I am’, raises concepts of identity and questions of presence. ‘I Am’ is one of the Seven Names of God accorded special care by medieval Jewish tradition and is used in other world religious literature to describe the Supreme Being. Read in reverse, mai is a Maori word used as a directional particle indicating an extension in time or space. The unusual shape and proportion of Gatfield’s ‘M’ conjures up a vision of Primal Man, also suggesting a waharoa (Maori architectural structure) – a gateway, a point of entrance, a cultural portal. Sited on dark native timber floor boards, the translucent text, read frontally from either end of the room, provides glimpses of blended colour tones, texts, words and cultures.

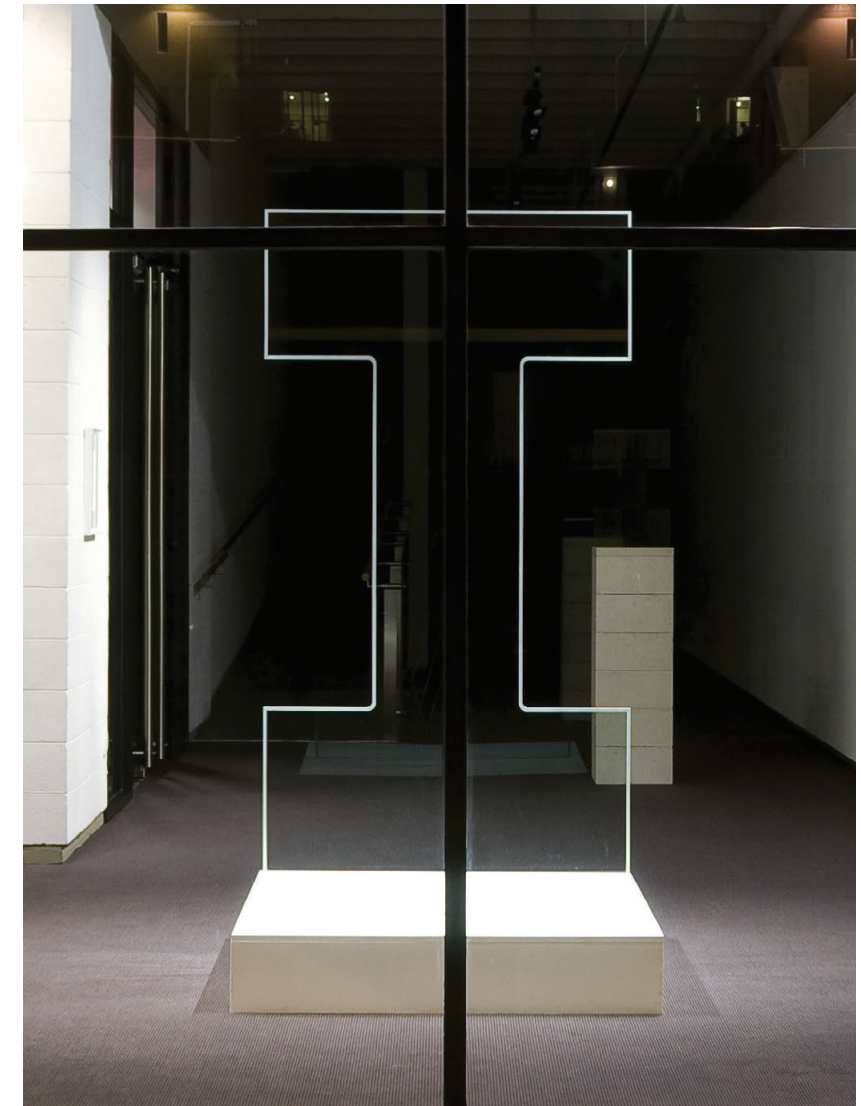
In Christchurch, Gatfield incorporated the architectural features of the Front Gallery in the Centre for Contemporary Art – an elegant, modernist space – to develop a complex installation of geometric simplicity. *Third Person* (2010) was installed in this intimate space; a composition of I-figures that touched on themes of self-image, spirituality and reflection, while simultaneously developing a theory on authenticity and authorship. Three distinct and individually titled I-shaped *Maquettes*, elevated on chest-high stone bases were aligned, evenly spaced, suggesting a colonnade of classical caryatids. They shift from dark (*Portia*) to light (*M. Le Blanc*) as they neatly demarcate stations of contemplation. The nave-like interior of the gallery offers a journey of ‘reflection’ as the viewer instinctively moves toward the natural light and the largest glass work, *Untitled*. Standing taller than the average human adult, at 2.4m, the perception of the work is even greater. *The Press* art reviewer noted that *Untitled*,

assumes a monumentality and calm which transforms the space in which it stands.¹³

This singular heroic work is a clear glass I-figure rising gracefully above a flattened white cube. With shifts of light and movement, the body itself becomes ephemeral; the sandblasted edges glow as a luminous outline, suggesting a presence, a memory, or the tracing of a blueprint for the I-object. Viewing this work face-on, from inside or outside, the outstretched figure seems suspended, lining up to virtually ‘hang’ from the crossbar of the intersecting window frames. The surrounding architectural imagery inclusive of crosses, allusions of aisles and altars, suggestions of temple colonnades and precious icons, all collude to bring a strong sense of integrity, durability and spirituality to the platform of ‘I’. As a modern temple, the existing plan, structure and fenestration of the public gallery space provide essential bearings and alignments to this installation, offering a heightened sensory and sublime experience to the gallery visitor.

Nature

The natural landscape, offering rich colour, deep light, undulating landforms, sea and water courses, and unpredictable weather, provides an animated setting for the Abstract Figure. Devoid of obvious decoration, two selectively sited outdoor works *Mirror Image* (2008) and *Half Glass* (2009) effectively demonstrate inclusion and multiplicity in their design and presentation within the context of the outdoor landscape setting. A Victorian cheval mirror shape, of adult human scale, is deleted from the centre of *Mirror Image*. Secured vertically, directly from the ground and aligned to face east across the Hauraki Gulf, the sheer frame reflects images of glowing sunrises and sunsets, and glimpses of an eager audience. The absent ‘mirror’ serves both as portal and lens, extending the focus to an ancient volcanic island, the changing sky, and ships passing through the channel.



Untitled (2010)



Half Glass (2009)



Half Glass (2009) detail

In shaping the form for *Half Glass*, Gatfield pushed the materials to extremes, achieving what was thought to be technically impossible. In *Half Glass*, the absent central void equals one-half of the volume and area of the glass; thus the work embodies the proverb of a glass half empty and a glass half-full, through media, form, concept, title *and* process. Standing over 2m tall on a gentle slope on Waiheke Island, the fragility of this medium is almost forgotten as the work competently both withstands and interacts with the harsh outdoor environment. Cited as ‘a memorable sculpture’ in a review of Headland Waiheke, *Half Glass* was described as:

an evanescent work that subtly focuses on the act of looking and perceptual / spatial processes. ... [It] has a vertical plate of thick, tinted glass overlooking the sea with an I-shaped rectangular hole cut in its centre. ¹⁴

The viewer is able to recognise the absent form as Figure; the void in the solid, the Text in the Frame. By incorporating the natural chemistry of nature’s transient elements, and the arbitrary and uncontrolled dynamics of birdlife, passing sea vessels and visitors to the site, Gatfield’s transparent frame-works elicit an absent presence that unites content and context, landscape and object, viewer and view; and lifts the gaze beyond the everyday to more profound questions. The unrivalled splendour of the landscape, as framed and reflected through the works, becomes an impressive stage for the Tableau; a striking reminder of the sublime in nature and the human role as its guardian and conservationist.

Strength

Apart from the obvious need for physical and structural strength, public artwork requires strength in purpose, design and atmosphere to have ongoing appeal. Gatfield’s minimalist abstract forms are powerful in their simplicity; they are stark, singular structures, monochromatic and uncluttered. Despite the abstract form, which has a history of being aloof or inaccessible, the artist’s public work invites intimacy. She describes her approach to the work in the public arena as follows:

I’m interested in engagement, in making the work accessible. There needs to be something for the eye, the hand, the heart, and the head. – Artist

Gatfield applied these aims to the design of *Silhouette* (2011), an award-winning work developed in response to a competition brief. Located at the gateway to a busy Auckland city transport station at Smales Farm, this sculpture was conceived as a landmark monument and a place of reflection, in a scale that suggests human aspiration but does not overwhelm or deter human connection. Through a process of in-depth research, the artist developed a sculptural Tableau that honours the formal elements of the station, roadway, buildings and topography, as well as the history, geology, and constant public use of the site.

Silhouette is more than a frame. Implying the presence of a figure, it becomes an active geometric grid of intersecting planes, shadows and reflections, which emanate organic qualities. The long lines and internal curves mirror the roadway with its straight lines and curved right-angle corners. The tall black vertical element dissects the dominant white horizontal lines of the Station. Its balanced proportions, reflective surfaces, and ever encircling shadow on the horizontal white glacier stone platform, serve to anchor as well as activate the site.

Archived images of elongated seams of dark basalt that once ran through the old Smales Quarry, informed the artist's selection of a slim black igneous stone, to also reflect and register the Station's location at the edge of a volcanic lava flow. Made from a single unique monumental block of black granite, specially quarried in India and shipped to New Zealand, the stone itself had to be one solid form, not made from components.

If you lay the composition flat, it is a template for the encircling Station roadway – a horizontal silhouette of what is at ground level, and a slice of what is below. – Artist

These formalist sculptural investigations combined with an intuitive spatial configuration, celebrate the function of the site as a place of constant transition and its history of ongoing transformation – from pasture to 'green' business park, from horse drawn carriages to modern transport hub. *Silhouette* has no inside and outside, no front and back, no single fixed point of perspective. Green spaces, pond, buildings, Station, roadways and people are framed and contained in *Silhouette*, while simultaneously encircling and enriching the work. Seen by thousands of people who use the Station daily, the artwork has enduring appeal, as described by a member of the panel of selectors:

Silhouette remains strong and continues to draw people – this is especially good when they do not appear to notice they have been drawn! ¹⁵

Primal Origins

Native Tongue (2011) is made from a unique log of ancient Kauri heartwood, radiocarbon dated at over 45,000 years old. This prehistoric, reclaimed wood is from a forest of majestic native giants that had grown for nearly 2000 years before they fell at the end of the last Ice Age. It predates the migration of Neanderthal man across Europe, the hunt for mammoths, cave painting in Europe, and human migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Recovered from a peat swamp in New Zealand's far north, the timber used in *Native Tongue* is one of the rarest single pieces of ancient wood in the world. A national icon and taonga (treasure), the Kauri is still the largest species of native tree in New Zealand, standing up to 50m tall in the emergent layer above the forest's main canopy; and is under serious threat from human spread disease.



Silhouette (2011) view 1



Silhouette (2011) view 2



Native Tongue (2011) view east



Native Tongue (2011) view west

Describing the primary number One and the universal ‘I’ in this elemental and precious material, Gatfield’s *Native Tongue* places the earth’s evolution at centre-stage. In carving a monumental text/number/symbol in a unique indigenous timber that pre-dates the invention of written language, she extends the idea of Mother Tongue beyond race, nationality and humanity, and into much deeper universal and spiritual territory.

Located in a field at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, *Native Tongue* was precisely positioned by the artist on an east/west axis to catch the rising sun on one face, and to bask in the evening glow on the other. This orientation was enhanced by an intersecting north-south axis which centred the work between two significant trees, both important botanical specimens, and two stands of juvenile trees in the mid-ground. On one side, the ancient Kauri text was book-ended by hardy Totara, its native forest companion; and on the other side, by a stand of imported Australian Gums, a weed-like invasive species from a neighbouring land. This site placement added further botanical, environmental and cross-cultural references.

Gatfield’s skill in contextualizing art is evident again in the relocation of *Native Tongue* to an indoors setting. In the spacious multi-storey corporate atrium of Telecom New Zealand’s head office in Auckland, *Native Tongue* brings ancient and organic content to a post-modern world of high-tech communication. Creating a stage for *Native Tongue* to ‘speak’, Gatfield positioned the sculpture in geometric alignment with key axes and architectural elements within the campus-style building. The selected location, centred in one of the busy public ‘naves of the cross’ in the atrium design, and visible from all levels in the 8-storey building, lends an air of authority and stature to the work.

As though standing emerged above a long forgotten ancient forest canopy, the giant timber I-figure quietly compliments the five-star ‘green’ rated building design, which boasts an environmentally tailored approach to water, heat and energy consumption; an ideal habitat for sustaining life. The inherent stability in the symmetry of the design, the comfortable familiarity of seeing text as form-figure, and the natural urge to ‘hug a tree’, makes the work both approachable and accessible. Adults and children alike are attracted to the strength of this giant 3m form and find it irresistible to inspect, touch, smell and savour its natural warmth. Like the timber itself, the sense of the sculpture is ‘all heart’. The warm glow of the oiled wood surface, its smooth sensual surface and aromatic finish, induce an atmosphere of awe and reverence usually reserved for places and objects of worship.

Local / Global

The Snake Charmer (2012) is an illuminating work which kept its audience spellbound for the duration of its presentation at the artist’s carefully selected site overlooking the entrance to Auckland Harbour. This Tableau incorporates a slender I-shaped column of ink black granite standing in a landscape of native plantings beneath the serpentine branches of a Pohutukawa.

Based on Henri Rousseau's 1907 painting of the same name, where a seductive black Eve plays the flute to encroaching serpents, the alluring work is perfectly staged.

The dark, mysterious Figure, the landscape, water, the sun and moon, the flora and fauna, create an eccentric outdoor set with an ongoing, live performance; transporting the viewer into a very real Eden. Birdlife abounds and the scenic postcard setting provides the perfect location for the reflective abstract figure/flute, presiding over an apparently snake-free paradise. This contemporary chanteuse appeals at a visceral level. Visitors of all ages, creeds and nationalities reach out to touch *The Snake Charmer*, trace the stone curves, and glimpse themselves and the native scene reflected in 'her' liquid-black form. Yet Gatfield deliberately inverts Rousseau's image to reconceptualise his idealised Eden at the antipodes. The seascape backdrop becomes a living canvas of moving container ships, ferries and sailing boats, providing a constant reminder of the arrivals and departures of vessels, people and freight, to and from this remote paradise.

In the context of Rousseau's naïve painting style with its surreal depictions of exotic scenes and symbolic imagery, connections to ancient Maori iconography become relevant in terms of the concept of kaitiaki (guardianship) and the form of a toko; a pole between sky and earth – and a tokotoko; a prop, a weapon and a charm. *The Snake Charmer* becomes siren and guardian, figure and symbol, native and spirit; holding watch over land and water. The allure of this Tableau extends to current reality, where the seductive charmer entices danger – the *absent content*. This Pacific idyll is threatened by the arrival of real poisonous sea-snakes migrating from islands to the north, and illegally imported and stow-away snakes; as well as other hazards, such as climate change and global crises. Against this backdrop, the romanticised setting takes on deeper relevance in terms of future migrations, intrusions and invasions; and situates the local firmly within the global.

Gatfield's holistic approach as illustrated by these large-scale works transforms fixed objects into 'a happening', providing a slow and gentle live performance that taps into the pulse of nature, and that of the people. As a central feature in the staged Tableau, the sculptural form and the well-considered *free content* (both arbitrary and motivated) unify, to create fluid content which is meaningful, deeply moving, and dynamic. By incorporating notions of beauty and the sublime into the Figure within the Tableau, the artist ensures the iconic strength of each art piece; making public work that rewards the public eye.



The Snake Charmer (2012)



The Snake Charmer (2012) photomontage



The Snake Charmer (2012)



The Snake Charmer (2012) detail

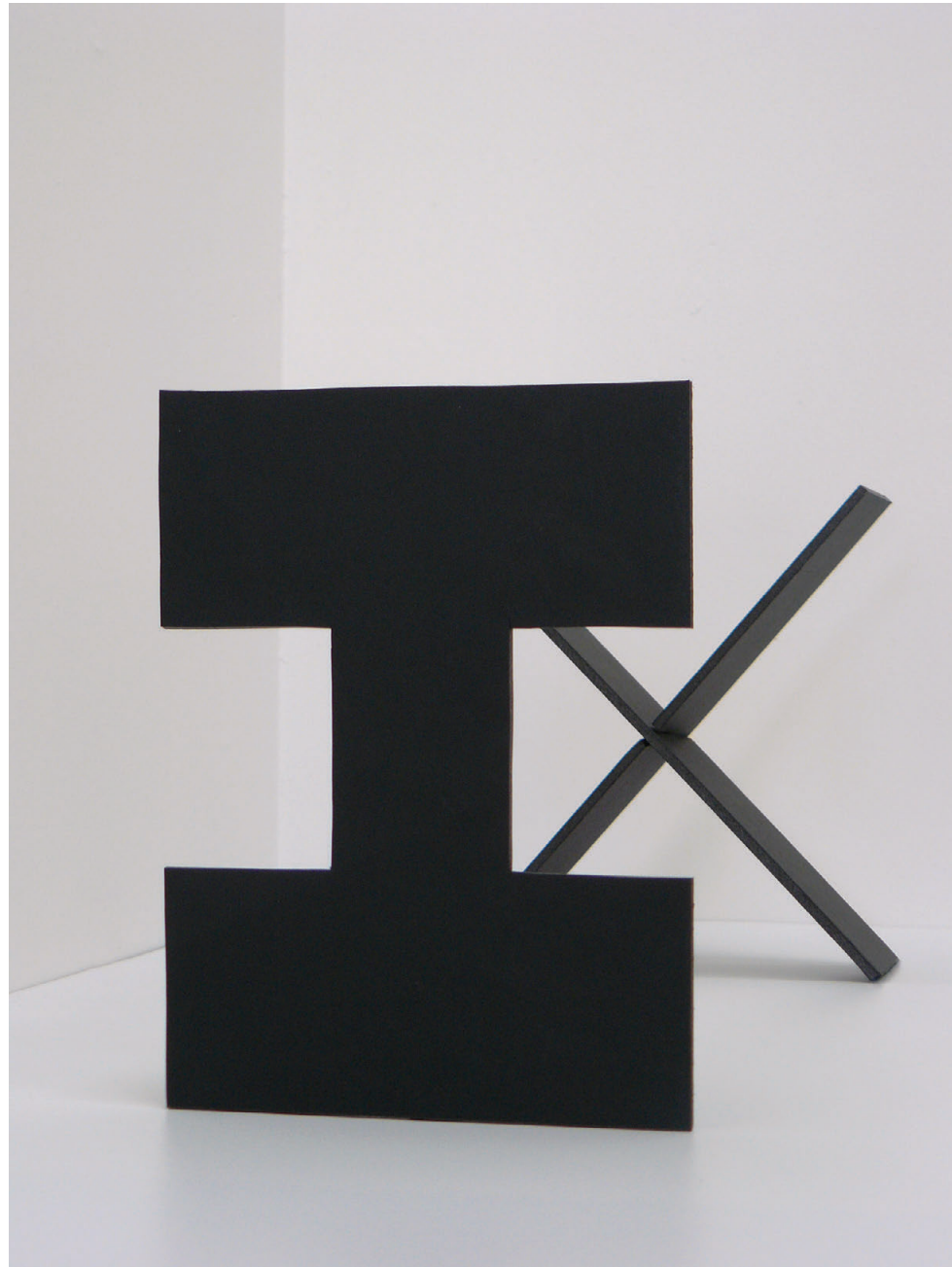




Silhouette (2011) profile – summer



Silhouette (2011) profile – winter



I-X (model) view 1

V. Postscript

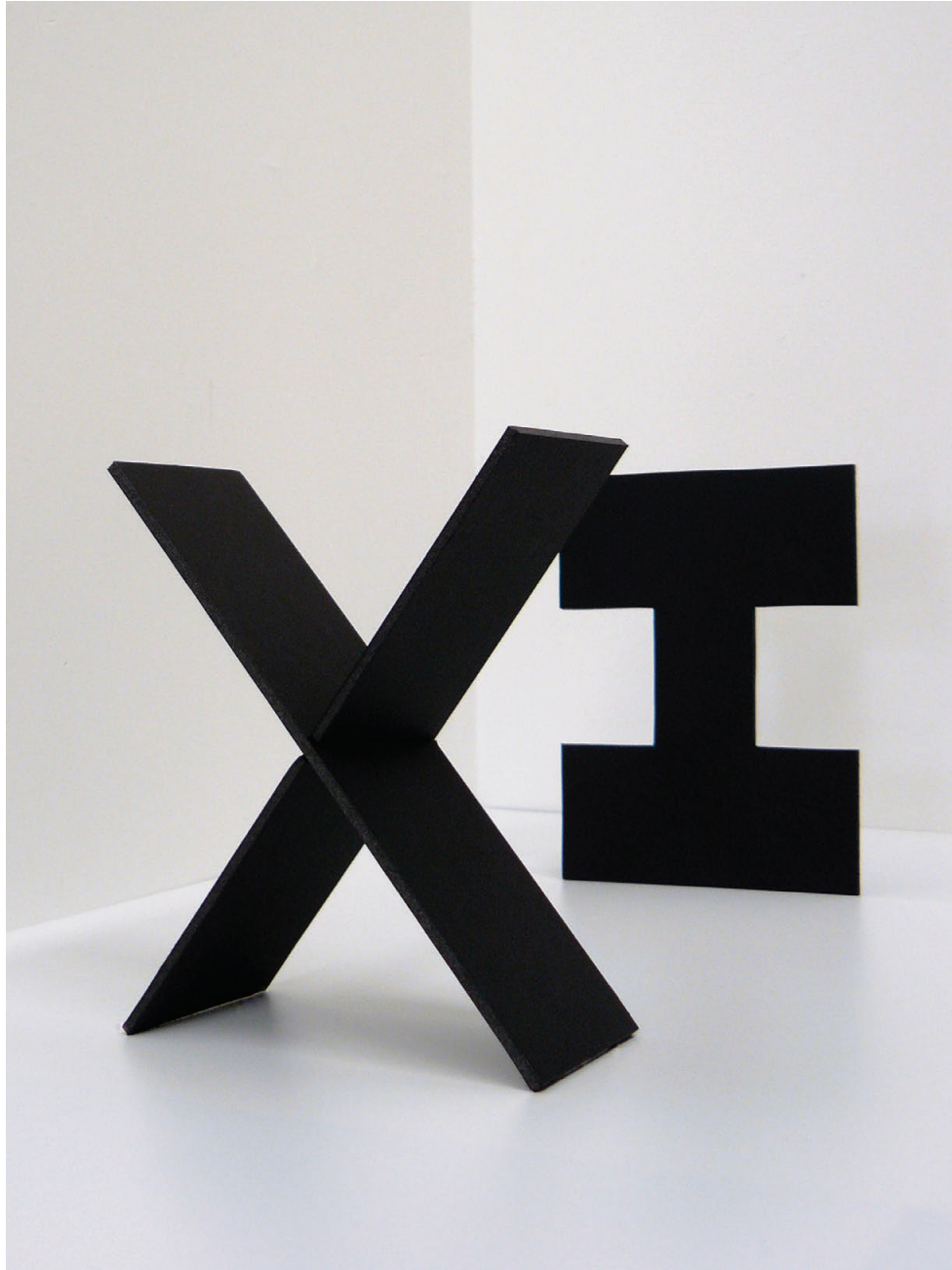
While the Tableau embraces aspects of land art, performance art, and ephemeral installations, Gatfield's works also retain and assert their permanence, autonomy and integrity as art objects. Each piece is rigorous on all fronts: from concept and theory, to materials, process and context. They simultaneously encapsulate, deconstruct and reconstruct topics that are central to understanding the complexities of contemporary life. By maintaining an elegance and subtlety that includes rather than excludes – that invites discourse rather than dictates – these artworks attain longevity and continue to operate on subliminal and sensory levels.

A proposed new work, I-X presents a pair of monumental, freestanding figures – an I and an X – formed in equal volumes of black mirror-polish granite. In describing the concept, Gatfield says,

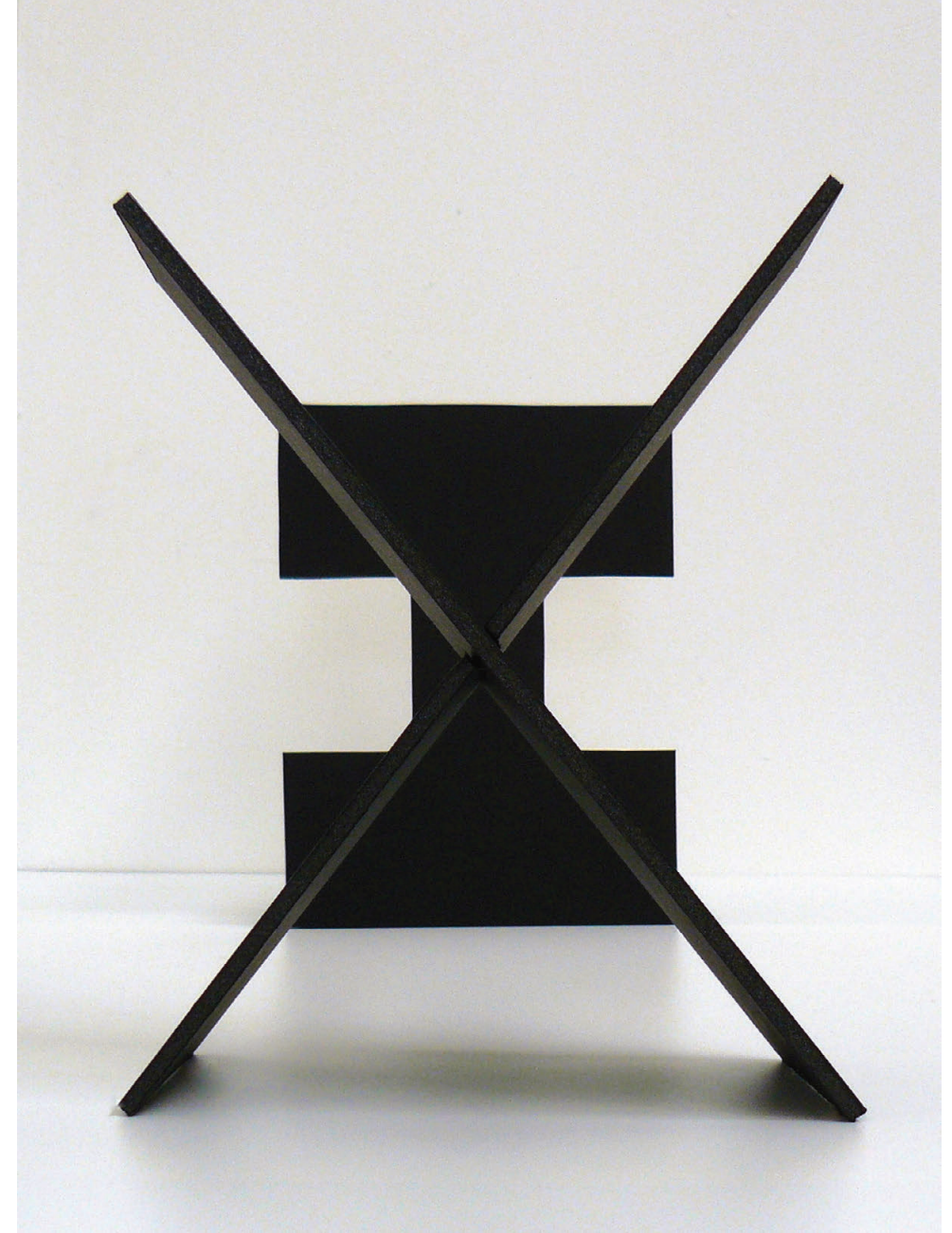
It adopts ancient and universal notions of the object as a repository for contemplation, without dissolving the symbolic content into bald representations of the romantic, figurative, heroic or horrific. – Artist

Set apart, yet facing each other, the imposing duo is staged to operate as a visual catalyst. Dependent on the viewer's angle as they circumnavigate the work, the dark forms overlap, merge, and interchange. Separate readings of these glyphs gradually unfold as perceptions of the Figures shift; from symbols and letters, to words, texts, sounds and numbers. Perpetually resisting closure, the themes and narratives triggered by the interactions are multi-faceted and cross-cultural. With references ranging from chromosome to kiss, anonymity to democracy, individual to global, and conflict to victory, the X and I both invigorate and delete each other. As consecutive Roman numerals, they form the numbers 9 (IX) and 11 (XI); a two-way combination solemnly memorialising the date 9/11 as a critical turning-point in postmodern history.

With an oeuvre that demonstrates a dexterous combination of conceptual ingenuity and minimalist form, Gill Gatfield's artworks do indeed 'convey much, in the manner of less'. The artist creates liminal art for the public domain that is appealing and challenging, beautiful and visionary, with enduring connections to location and site. Though reductive in form, these works do not isolate themselves from human personality and affects; rather, the austere simplicity of the geometry is rooted in the portrayal of archetypal symbols with universal significance. By employing the Figure in its wider interpretation as abstract form, Gatfield is carving out fresh pathways into contemporary art theory and practice, and developing a new chapter in the language of abstraction – the Abstract Figure.




I-X (model) view 2





I-X (model) view 3


List of Works


Frames


- 


2 *Half Glass* (2009)
toughened glass
2mH x 1mW
- 


9 *In/Out* (2003)
glass installation
7m x 9m
University of Auckland
New Zealand
- 

10 *Mirror Image* (2008)
toughened glass
2mH x 1mW
- 

11 *Grass Roots* (2006)
earth, kikuyu grass, soil
1.8mH x 1.8mW x D variable
- 

25 *Being-Made* (2007)
City Art Rooms, Auckland
New Zealand
- 

52 *Silhouette* (2011)
black granite
3mH x 1.5mW x 105mmD
glacier stone aggregate
20m x 6m
- 

66 *Half Glass* (2009)
toughened glass
2mH x 1mW
- 

67 *Half Glass* (2009)
toughened glass
2mH x 1mW

- 

71 *Deadline* (2008)
wire, 8500v electric current
14mW x 3mmDia.
- 

76 *Half Glass* (2009)
toughened glass
2mH x 1mW
- 

79 *Silhouette* (2011)
Smales Farm Station
Auckland New Zealand
- 

88 *Silhouette* (2011)
black granite
3mH x 1.5mW x 105mmD
glacier stone aggregate
20mH x 6mW
- 

89 *Silhouette* (2011)


Monochromes


- 


4 *The Pleasure Garden* (2009)
fescue grass, frame
370H x 450W x 40+mmD
- 


4 *Still Life* (2007)
couch grass, ply
850H x 850W x 200+mmD
- 


5 *Organic Abstraction* (2009)
rye grass, canvas, pine
300H x 300W x 40+mmD


- 


8 *Kaitiaki* (2003)
nappies/diapers, astroturf, planks
2.5mH x 4mW x 5mD
- 

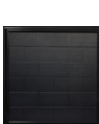
16 *Subdivision* (2008)
rye grass, steel, acrylic
800H x 1800W x 60+mmD
- 


16 *Six Days* (2008)
couch grass, canvas, pine
1015H x 1520W x 120+mmD
- 


20 *High Country* (2009)
couch grass, canvas, pine
510H x 1015W x 40+mmD
- 


20 *Black Cloud* (2009)
polished steel pins, canvas, pine,
magnetic field
510H x 1015W x 40mmD
- 


23 *Lawn (Greener on the Other Side)*
(2006-)
couch grass, canvas, pine
505H x 505W x 45+mmD
view 2006
view 2008
- 


25 *All Black* (2008) mixed media
1360H x 1360W x 31mmD
White Island (2008) mixed media
1360H x 2560W x 31mmD
- 


26 *All Black* (2008)
mixed media
1360H x 1360W x 31mmD
- 


27 *Black Fringe* (2011)
polished steel pins, oil, linen, pine,
magnetic field
200H x 200W x 60mmD
front/angle/profile
- 


28 *Prick* (2007)
steel bead pins, Belgian linen, pine
magnetic field
1mH x 1mW x 50mmD
- 


28 *Bush* (2009)
steel dress pins, acrylic
magnetic field
600mmDia x 40mmD
- 


29 *Prickle* (2008)
steel bead pins, linen, magnetic field
200H x 200W x 18mmD
- 


29 *Black Tie* (2013)
satin ribbon, glass, frame
135H x 135W x 20mmD
- 


30 *Untitled* (2005)
nappies/diapers, glass, frame
1480H x 1480W x 60mmD
- 

30 *Canvas* (2007)
nappies/diapers, staples
2.7mH x 5mW x 500mmD
- 

31 *Kaitiaki* (2004)
nappies/diapers, staples
2.9mH x 13mW x 40mmD
- 

37 *13% Painting (Abstract Representation)* (2010)
automotive paint, ply
1190H x 595W x 13.6mmD
- 

48 *Muses* (2007)
feathers, glass, stainless steel
oak/tawa/mahogany pedestals
3 parts 1.3mH x 1.5mW x 1.5mD
- 

48 *Muse I* (2007)
feathers, glass, stainless steel
oak pedestal
1285H x 440W x 400mmDia.
- 

71 *On Reflection* (2008)
black wall
7mH x 3mW

Texts



6 *Babel* (2009)
 glass, masonry
 1840H x 400W x 400mmD



8 *Fake* (2003)
 oil, astroturf
 1.8mH x 2.2mW



12 *I AM/MAI* (2008)
 glass, aluminium
 3 parts ea.
 2.2mH x 1.1mW



13 *I AM/MAI* (2008)
 glass, aluminium
 3 parts ea.
 2.2mH x 1.1mW



14 *Native Tongue* (2011)
 ancient kauri/agathis australis
 (>45,000 yrs)
 3mH x 1.7mW x 200mmD



15 *Native Tongue* (2011)
 ancient kauri/agathis australis
 (>45,000 yrs)
 3mH x 1.7mW x 200D



32 *First Person* (2008)
 nappies/diapers, ply
 8.8mH x 2.4mW x 40mmD



33 *Present Tense* (2008)
 barbwire, fence staples
 8.8mH x 2.4mW x 20mmD



34 *Suspended Sentence* (2009)
 barbwire, 8500v electric current
 705H x 700W x 557mmD



41 *The Maquettes* (2010)
 glass, masonry
 3 part installation
 variable dims.



42 *Art New Zealand Image* (2010)
 advertisement



43 *Third Person* (2010)
 advertisement/invitation



44 *M. Le Blanc* (2010)
 glass, steel, masonry
 1840H x 400W x 400mmD



45 *M. Le Blanc* (2010)
 glass, steel, masonry
 1840H x 400W x 400mmD



46 *Rose Sélavy* (2010)
 glass, masonry
 1840H x 400W x 400mmD



47 *Rose Sélavy* (2010)
 glass, masonry
 1840H x 400W x 400mmD



49 *Chip* (2012)
 ancient kauri (>45,000 yrs)
 kauri pedestal (C.1900)
 1430H x 430mmDia.



50 *Not I* (2011)
 moleanos limestone
 400H x 300W x 80mmD



51 *Not I* (2011)
 moleanos limestone
 400H x 300W x 80mmD



51 *II* (2011)
 moleanos limestone
 280H x 425W x 100mmD



55 *Portia* (2010)
 glass, masonry
 1840H x 400W x 400D



58 *Portia & Babel* (2010)
 Shapeshifter 2010
 New Dowse Gallery
 NZ International Arts Festival



61 *I+I* (2012)
 glass, ink
 600H x 800W x 20mmD



62 *Echo* (2013)
 glass, marble
 1345H x 815W x 500mmD



63 *Echo* (2013)
 glass, marble
 1345H x 815W x 500mmD



63 *Narcissus* (2013)
 glass, granite
 1345H x 960W x 650mmD



64 *Narcissus* (2013)
 glass, granite
 1345H x 960W x 650mmD



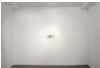
65 *Narcissus* (2013)
 glass, granite
 1345H x 960W x 650mmD



68 *Native Tongue* (2011)
 ancient kauri/agathis australis
 (>45,000 yrs)
 3mH x 1.7mW x 200mmD



71 *Current Work* (2008) Room 1 incl.
Deadline (2008)
I AM/MAI (2008)



71 *Current Work* (2008) Room 2 incl.
Curate (2008)
 steel registration plate (1 of 2)
 120H x 360W x 6mmD



72 *I AM/MAI* (2008)
 glass, aluminium
 3 parts ea.
 2.2mH x 1.1mW
 (the 'M')



75 *Untitled* (2010)
 glass, pine
 2.4mH x 1.2mW x 1.2mD



80 *Native Tongue* (2011)
 ancient kauri/agathis australis
 (>45,000 yrs)
 3mH x 1.7mW x 200mmD



83 *The Snake Charmer* (2012)
 black granite, landscape,
 water, flora, fauna
 tableau: 5mH x 6mW x 8mD incl.
 figure: 2mH x 500mmW x 100mmD



84 *The Snake Charmer* (2012)
photomontage
205H x 225mmW



85 *The Snake Charmer* (2012)
tableau, figure
5mH x 6mW x 8mD



86 *The Snake Charmer* (2012)
tableau, figure
5mH x 6mW x 8mD



87 *The Snake Charmer* (2012)
tableau, figure
5mH x 6mW x 8mD



90 *I-X*
black granite
monument model



92 *I-X*
black granite
monument model



93 *I-X*
black granite
monument model



104 *Native Tongue* (2011) crated
ancient kauri/agathis australis
(>45,000 yrs)
3mH x 1.7mW x 200mD

Photograph Credits

Images by Artist unless specified

Adin Beharic	42
Vanessa Coxhead	34
Ursula Cranmer	80 (above) 86 87 (below)
Nick Grant	41 44 46 47 75
Young Sun Han	12
Sam Hartnett	4 (below) 26 30 32 33 48 48 71 (below)
Chester Nicholls	68
Dylan Taylor	4 (above) 16 (below) 20 20 29
Howard Williams	87 (above)

Gill Gatfield, *The Snake Charmer* (2012) (photomontage) image source: Henri Rousseau, *The Snake Charmer* (1907) © RMN (Musée d'Orsay)/Hervé Lewandowski

References

Preface

¹ Khan, David. Gill Gatfield – ‘Third Person’. *Exhibitions*, Centre of Contemporary Art, Christchurch, 2010

Essays

Artist quotes are from interviews with Gill Gatfield, and her archived material.

¹ Rankin, Elizabeth. The Galvanizing Impulse: Gill Gatfield’s Current Work. *Art New Zealand*, No.128 Spring 2008, p38

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