

Art Forum, 5th Auckland Triennial, by Jens Hoffmann, P273, Dec 2013

ARTFORUM  
艺术论坛

as in *Iraqi State Railways After Anglo-Iraqi Treaty 1903 & Current Pipelines*, 2010. If the triennial had one dominant theme, however, it was what one might call the emotional intelligence of objects. Standouts in this regard were Gabriel de la Mora's *Altamirano 20 I* and *Altamirano 20 III*, both 2012, large-scale works consisting of the cracked and peeling canvas-backed ceilings removed from two Mexico City apartment buildings. The works' tenuous beauty, born of time and deterioration, serves as a reminder of the everyday lives in which their materials played a part.

Appropriately for a show predicated on cultural exchange, a number of pieces dealt with themes of translation and interpretation, such as Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's 2008 video of Thai farmers discussing Jean-François Millet's 1857 *The Gleaners*. The most humorous work in this vein, Kim Beom's *Yellow Scream*, 2012, offered the Korean artist's take on the touchy-feely painting instruction of TV-show host Bob Ross. Like Ross, the painter in Kim's video (played by an actor) calmly talks the viewer through the steps of making an artwork. But when applying each brushstroke, he unleashes a ferocious scream, as if releasing a wellspring of pent-up aggression.

If a single work from the triennial might be said to have been representative of the whole, it would be Australian-born Shaun Gladwell's *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)*, 2012. In this video installation, two projections face each other from opposite sides of the room, one screen showing a person beat-boxing into a microphone in an empty studio, and the other showing a person freestyle dancing to that beat in a vacant urban space. On the one hand, each performer (in all, two beat boxers and three dancers) gives a solo performance, which spotlights the individual nature of improvisation. Yet in Gladwell's installation, the videos play off each other in a two-way conversation, and the result is surprisingly harmonic. One could say the same about the works in the exhibition: Though made at different points across the Pacific, they engage in subtle dialogues that come to light only when brought together.

—Jennifer King

## AUCKLAND

### 5th Auckland Triennial VARIOUS VENUES

For this edition of the Auckland Triennial, titled "If you were to live here . . ." the French-Chinese curator Hou Hanru, a veteran of the biennial/triennial circuit with more than a dozen such megashows under his belt—Venice, Shanghai, Lyon, Istanbul, etc.—decided to disperse the presentation throughout the city. But the Auckland Art Gallery, newly refurbished and hugely expanded, remained a major hub, where Hou cleverly integrated the triennial's contemporary works into the collection. His thoughtful curation both foregrounded high points of the institution's holdings—the nineteenth-century Photorealist portraits of Maori leaders by the Austro-Hungarian painter Gottfried Lindauer are worth a trip to New Zealand on their own—and produced provocative juxtapositions of the historical and the contemporary. One such memorable moment was the installation by Claire Fontaine of neon signs reading FOREIGNERS EVERYWHERE in Maori, Samoan, Chinese, Korean, Hindi, and French—new works in an ongoing series begun in 2005—amid early European masterpieces in the gorgeous Victorian-style Mackelvie Gallery. Another striking combination of old and new was the display of Michael Lin's *Model Home*, 2013, developed in collaboration with Andrew Barrie and the Japanese architecture firm Atelier Bow-Wow, amid the museum's collection of New Zealand modernism. The paper-and-wood house was slightly too big for

the space, forcing visitors to engage with the artworks on the walls—and with one another—at often uncomfortably close range.

While participants such as Yto Barrada, Anri Sala, or Allora & Calzadilla might be familiar to the avid biennial/triennial visitor, the most striking pieces were by New Zealand-based artists with less of an international profile. Many of these addressed the central question of how to reimagine the relationship between local and global after the extensive discussions of postcolonialism in the 1990s. Maddie Leach's video *The Most Difficult Problem*, 2013, for example, takes its title from the memoirs of the cytologist James Brontë Gatenby, who studied a specific type of New Zealand glowworm. *Right of Way*, 2013, by the Samoan-born, New Zealand-based artist Janet Lilo examines the concept of community by looking at a particular Auckland neighborhood. Luke Willis Thompson's *Untitled*, 2012, speaks to the city's gentrification and accompanying racial tensions, but, unlike Lilo, Thompson takes a negative view of multiculturalism, a term only recently introduced in New Zealand, where until lately ethnic conversations were centered on Māori (indigenous) versus pakeha (white). Thompson's piece is a set of three roller doors and a security camera extracted from a local house. The residence had been tagged by a young Maori boy, who was then stabbed to death by its middle-aged pakeha owner. But indigenous/white conflicts are no longer the only ones at issue. Auckland's rapid population growth is in large part due to a big influx of immigrants from northern and Southeast Asia. Hou's curatorial strategy involved inserting, sensitively and with local conditions in mind, a strong dose of an international artistic and intellectual discourse that touched on this and other issues relevant to Auckland.

The title "If you were to live here . . ." resonated most strongly in the portion of the exhibition housed in the primarily Polynesian suburb of Otara. The experience of visiting the Fresh Gallery there turned most triennial visitors into voyeurs, since most white locals had likely never visited the space; it was precisely this strategy of drawing people out of their cultural habits and comfort zones that elevated the entire exhibition from simply an accumulation of artworks at a given site into a truly meaningful undertaking, crystallizing the most pressing local issues of the day. Here, the large-scale, collaborative mural by San Francisco-based artists Emory Douglas and Rigo 23 and New Zealander Wayne Youle spoke of the complexities of public space, community identity, and gentrification, probing the challenges of representing local concerns in a global world. While Hou is by now known for taking artists and visitors into overlooked or marginalized areas of the cities he works in, his strategy still exerts an effect, making clear what the curator means when he describes (perhaps a bit naively, but also poignantly) biennials and triennials as places for producing new aesthetic forms and social spaces. As a living process, he says, these events are occasions to see not only art but also real interactions among artists, the public, a city, and the world.

—Jens Hoffmann



View of 5th Auckland Triennial: "If you were to live here . . .", 2013. Center: Michael Lin, *Atelier Bow-Wow*, and Andrew Barrie, *Model Home*, 2013. Auckland Art Gallery.

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