

SHANE COTTON

To and Fro

GOING

TO / NW

EARTH

IN THE E



SHANE COTTON: AS THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

Yet man is born to trouble as sure as sparks fly upward

Book of Job 5:7

By choice Shane Cotton is a painter, by birth a New Zealander, by heritage a mixed *Ngati Rangī* Maori and Christian Pakeha (via Upper Hutt, Northland), from which five-ways condition he processes what it means to recover the past through art. Following the main stops of Shane Cotton's two-decade itinerary you track an artist zigzagging between urgent inner need and a conscience-knotted awareness; between private dream and the claims of a political world calling you to account.

Anyone trying to get to grips with the legal and policy frameworks that have occurred in Maori society since the Treaty of Waitanga of 1840 (the founding document of New Zealand) and the acrimonious court battles between tribal groups and urban Maori in the 1990s, would have to sit at some pretty tough poker tables. Much of the struggle was centred - as it is for Aboriginal communities embarking on the legal recognition of native title - on what it means to have a fixed 'authentic' identity in the teeth of cultural change.

A painter of truly burnished gifts Shane Cotton (b.1964) is something of a human litmus paper for the changes wrought from the twisted wreckage of colonialism, with its attendant disinvestment in spirit, but with a rich and idiosyncratic take on the issue. Coming to maturity in the 1980s meant exposure to a period when Maori culture, language and society were being revived, culminating in the 1995 Waitangi Treaty Riots. Akin to other contemporary New Zealand artists referencing one culture with another - like Lisa Reihana (b.1964) and Peter Robinson (b.1966) - Cotton's lyrical, secretive pictures thread their way between rootsy ideals and unpleasant realities, spiritual charge and self-conscious replay. Mixing form and disjunctive narrative he is a new kind of history painter in the way that Anselm Kiefer is a history painter, drawing on their country's foundational myths and the complexity of their sense of belonging.

Largely annihilated by European settlers and missionaries, Maori art - with its stylized carvings in wooden fence posts or greenstone, its bone and stone jewelry or the woven panels in the *marae* (or meeting houses) - was a form of ancestor veneration to ensure the deceased's continued positive disposition towards the living. This art, with its elemental dynamism, was considered blasphemous by the white settlers and soon replaced in the nineteenth-century by cozy figurative works. What cosmic orders did the white settlers affront one wonders?

Cotton's paintings from the early 1990s like *Daze* (1994), and *Tekau Ma Ono* (1994) make a strategic reverse appropriation of that usurping European style. Here volcanoes sit side by side with lava lamps. "When the old God goes", wrote novelist Don DeLillo in *Mao II*, "they pray to flies and bottle-tops." In a darkly comic style resembling a mix of Saul Steinberg and Colin McCahon, the artist slots bowler hats, teacups, cooking pots and digital clocks (with numbers that are the dates of land seizures), into surveyor's topographical compartments. By the late 1990s, after delving

into his own family history, he makes witty works about territorial conflicts (wobbly flags, stiff potted plants and vessels) in a syncretic blend of Maori and Christian religious vocabularies.

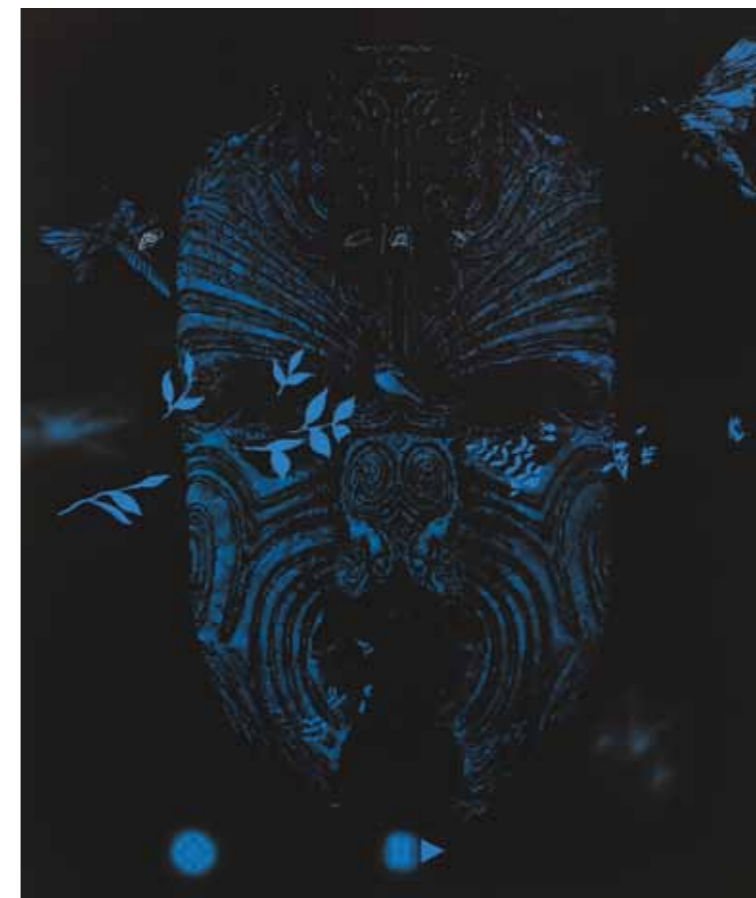
These evolving motives imply a double spirituality (traditional scroll patterns and scripture translations) which can sometimes get cross-eyed: indigenous eel-guardians mistaken for Satanic serpents. Everywhere there is identification, mis-identification and pseudo-identification. Signs mean too much and nothing at all. It is a world of grief made real by art, and in the new millennium Cotton's pictorial style begins to negotiate this grizzly semiotic terrain where nothing seems itself, but is hotly fused. The result is a dazzling skewering of tribal kinship drama, warrior vision quest (a mythic journey that tests a hero's courage in facing his own monsters), Christian myth, PoMo spoof and nightmare cosmology.

As art critic Robert Leonard sharply observed on the occasion of Cotton's survey exhibition in Auckland 2004, it's a face off between the deadly serious Colin McCahon¹ (1919-1987) - as hungry for meaning as an Old Testament goat - and Richard Killeen (b.1946) with his empty ciphers, flat vinyl cut stencils and floating cut-outs: signs that seem bankrupt of meaning because they are sliding away from the adhesive fiction that makes a culture possible. On the one side: the modernist McCahon's charged symbols with their roots in some time before time began; and on the other the postmodernist Killeen's press-on, peel-off icons blown loose into some weightless Nowheresville.

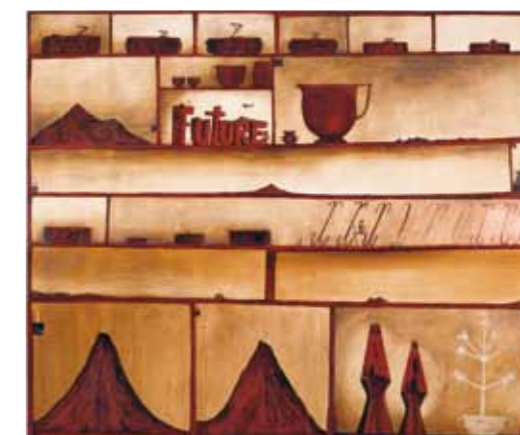
The big layered canvases of Shane Cotton's recent practice (late 1990s to early 2000s) are certainly tricky to read and painful to think about. They are too canny (and too uncanny) to be a mere report card on some vexing societal malaise, and too partisan to be simply a roadmap to his own neuroses. Broadly speaking, the emotional tug of war expresses a tension between the uncertainty of not belonging anywhere and the nested loyalties and solidarities of tribal kin-based descent (*whānau, hapū, iwi*)², with the artist trying to resolve the impulse to restore vestiges of the Maori Old Religion to the primal unity, and the misalliance and disorder due to the erosions of colonial expropriation.

The dark canvases now become notations of terrain covered and engagements fought, like scores both musical and military. Is that a Holy War or the roaring in my ears? The place is neither Maori nor Pakeha, but a blend of their diverse attributes, an infernal paradise, a limbo-zone where purgatory burns at the edges. Against a solemn nowhere backdrop which has the worked-up opalescence of brooding clouds: rock formations like floating jetsam, spidery or Gothic lettering, dead birds, slick logos and weather-beaten symbols are detailed with hallucinatory precision.

We seem to be doing time in some combat zone, where from a million miles away fretful luminescent signs and heraldic gang-patches, a brood



Play
2006
acrylic on canvas
180 x 160 cm (71 x 63 in)



Daze
1994
oil on canvas
160 x 180 cm (63 x 71 in)

¹ Colin McCahon (1919–1987) New Zealand's first painter of international significance "as good as Rothko, Newman, Pollock and Johns" (Thomas Crow, *Artforum* September 2003)

² Maori society was traditionally organised along three main units: *whānau* (immediate and extended family), *hapū* (clan), and *iwi* (confederation of hapū).

of dark emblems, denaturing camouflage and blue-lit cryptograms, plunge through space or hover and resonate in a spooky echo-chamber. And what of all the spirit-messenger birds hung up like photographic negatives on a line? Might this be a dream of flight? And the disquieting circular targets? They evoke art world references, of course, of Jasper Johns and Kenneth Noland, as well as RAF insignias. Might they be traditional spirals gone vicious and inviting bull's eye shots from all sides?

This is to say nothing of the tattooed and severed heads. Throughout Cotton's work the presence of these *mokomokai* cry out for a place, like a *marae* or church or a cemetery, to accommodate the desire for the living and the dead to communicate. These heads were preserved after the chief had perished or been killed (as grisly trophies by rival clans in their *marae* and then mocked or re-tattooed). The eyes would be taken out and the brains removed through the nose by puncturing the ethmoid bone. The head was then smoked, steamed or dried in the sun and the orifices sealed with flax fibre and treated with shark oil. The *mokomokai* were used in diplomatic negotiations between tribes, but later, during the destabilising Musket Wars against the Europeans, they were treated as trade items. Recently, however, repatriation of the heads from far-flung museums has been set into motion. They are highly contentious items then: respected, forsaken, orphaned, disrespected, sold as a commodity.

"The living", wrote the poet W.B. Yeats in *A Vision*, "can assist the imagination of the dead." In the transitional space of Cotton's canvases, the heads are not just seen with the eyes but felt with the hackles of the neck. They look like they have screams smeared on their mouths, yet also appear totemic, as natural energies held prisoner in time and space, engaged in ceaseless warfare to maintain their stations in equilibrium against the horror of infinity. Something like Mayan culture then, but also possessing something of the space-battle videogame: not just that insistence of targets and bird-scores, and airbrushed graphics of the PAUSE/PLAY console buttons or neon laser rays - but fundamentally with the game-player's anxious hunger to survive. To survive against the constant fire of an enemy whose exclusive function is to destroy: for each success, each new level achieved, makes the adversary move faster, fire more unremittingly.

As Ariel Dorfman has observed, video games would be inconceivable if the world didn't have the means to blow itself to pieces. Hence our civilisation's fantasy to be the last witness to the storm, with the world ending in a rain of bombs. Apocalypse is possible, and it is just a PAUSE/PLAY away.

Which brings us back to Colin McCahon, whose rough and holy works are often accented in the prophetic script of the Bible. To and fro between belief and doubt, triumph and chagrin, joy and suffering, wisdom and folly, McCahon runs like a fault-line through the consciousness of Shane Cotton,

and indeed most New Zealand artists. His late canvases gave off a whiff of brimstone (as one's heart sank into the blackness, the colour, as Reg Mombassa pointed out, of Wellington boots). An ontological assertion in block letters - I AM - is negated elsewhere in white cursive on black backgrounds in word-for-word citations from Ecclesiastes: *The emptiness of all endeavour and I considered all the acts of oppression.*

Alert to the same tectonic tremors, Cotton's new work - a new crater on the old volcano - draws on *The Book of Job*, that poem on the problem of good and evil. There is in Cotton, as in McCahon, a similar respect for the picture-power of letters, and a liking for the same pithy English of the King James bible with its homey tang and terse sententiousness; the same strain of dealing with the eternal problems of the spirit as felt by a people (the Hebrews of 750-400 BC) engaged in devastating wars against powerful empires and corroded by social evils. Crying out a bitter "Why?" the author of Job finds God's way incomprehensible, while His nearness and concern offer doubtful assurance.

What to make of these communiqués from the other side of prophecy? "Watch this space" suggests Shane Cotton. The world is a wilderness of unknowns and the wheel rolls on; tomorrow you might find yourself under it.

GEORGE ALEXANDER

is Coordinator of Contemporary Programs at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. His novel *Slow Burn* was published in 2009 by University of West Australia Press.

IN THE AIR SHANE COTTON'S RECENT PAINTINGS

1

The earliest painters of the New Zealand landscape seldom took the opportunity to look up. Along with the farmers, surveyors and other colonists who came to the country in the mid-nineteenth century, their gazes were fixed on the real estate below rather than the open space above. After all, in a settler culture success belonged to those who had their 'feet on the ground' and the means to work that piece of terrain. This preference for the earthbound over the atmospheric persists today in both art and life. Spend too much time gazing skyward and you'll find yourself pegged as a dreamer, a duffer, someone with their 'head in the clouds'. The common injunction to 'keep your head down' is more than just an attitude to work. It's an attitude to life, a world-view. Even today landscape painting tends to focus on land more than sky.

But there are exceptions to this rule. Internationally, there is Vija Celmins with her densely worked night skies; and in New Zealand, there is Shane Cotton. Over the last five years, this artist has presented an exhilarating argument for the importance of looking up. Throughout the 1990s Cotton painted a world with stable horizons, where sepia-toned slices of hill and coastline were carefully stacked like samples in a cabinet of curiosity. Nothing in these acclaimed early paintings prepared a viewer for paintings like *Red Shift* or *Lookout 1* from 2007, which perform the painterly equivalent of dropping the viewer off a cliff. Rock faces rush past uncomfortably close, their surfaces stretched by the speed of the descent. Birds fly through the air, buffeted and oddly flattened by unseen crosswinds. And always, beyond the landforms, there are skies – blue-black voids that seem deeper, higher and darker than an ordinary night. It is as if, after a decade spent patiently sampling and ordering pieces of the post-colonial landscape, Cotton wanted to punch out and through to a new landscape space where the old sense of gravity no longer prevailed.

There are six major canvases in progress when I visit Cotton early in 2010, and sky is everywhere in them. It's our habit to talk about sky as 'negative space', a formless background defined in relation to the 'positive' forms of land and buildings. But the skies that fill these new paintings are anything but formless or diffused. The point of view is low, raised just above the horizon, and from here cloud rises up dramatically – from low wide bands through thick pilings and further up into thinly raked cirrus. The bellies of the clouds are black, as if dense with stormy energy, and light simmers on their edges. The effect suggests the nineteenth-century productions of a painter like John Martin (1789-1854), who remade the sky as a religious theatre where God declared his glory or wrath. With Cotton's paintings, however, we're left unsure who exactly controls the skies. The absence of colour quietens and estranges the scenes – as if we're seeing a romantic nineteenth-century cloudscape through a twenty-first century filter. The light that remains has the strangeness of a full eclipse, when it is day and night simultaneously. Perhaps the light is about to go out, or perhaps it's about to break through. Either way, there's no mistaking the atmosphere of suspense: these skies feel tense, crackling, primed. *Something* is about to happen.

2

When they're completed, Cotton's new paintings will be freighted around the world for his first exhibition in London. The paintings have themselves been inspired by a journey from New Zealand to London – one undertaken in 1863 by a party of thirteen Maori from Cotton's home region in the north of New Zealand. After several months seeing London's sights and meeting notables including Queen Victoria, the party grew low on funds and found itself effectively stranded. Almost two years later the travellers found their way home with the sponsorship of Dorothea Weale, an influential philanthropist, and here the story acquires a lovely epilogue. When funds were raised in New Zealand to repay Weale, she refused the money – with an outcome that no one could have anticipated. The funds were used to build many small churches in the Hokianga region, among them one called St Michael's where many of Cotton's ancestors worshipped and are buried, and where a photograph of Mrs Weale still hangs.

This true story also has within it the makings of a fable or even an epic, a kind of colonial New Zealand odyssey, in which the travellers must venture across great distances, endure hardships, and receive unexpected gifts. Cotton, however, avoids the obvious imagery of homecoming and resolution. An artist more interested in flux and change than in settled identities, he seems especially drawn to the moments of doubt and suspense along the way, the long slow middle weeks of the journey when the travellers were neither here nor there. Without illustrating the story of the touring party in any obvious way, Cotton's new paintings evoke a journey over distances that are spiritual as much as physical. How do we orient ourselves, Cotton seems to be asking, when we're thousands of miles from arriving? What words and memories do travellers use to bring themselves imaginatively closer to home?

As befits an exhibition about journeys, the paintings in the studio are changing day by day, with several of the skies now anchored by a slice of ghostly landscape. But the newest and boldest additions are the objects that hang in the skies. There's a statue of Virgin Mary, dispensing graces with her hands outstretched. There's the long silhouette of a nineteenth-century musket. And there's a *mokomokai* or *Upoko tuhituhi*, one of the tattooed heads that were preserved by Maori for ritual purposes and later, very controversially, sold to European collectors. Considered on its own, each of these items reads as a piece of evidence of cross-cultural encounter, an object that might have travelled between New Zealand and London in the hold of a nineteenth-century ship. In this reading, the statue of the Virgin stands for the arrival of Christian beliefs, while the gun points to the Musket Wars of the 1820s and 1830s. This interpretation is fine as far as it goes, but it tells only part of the story. What matters as much as the place the images come from is where Cotton takes them next. "I want to see if it becomes something other than what it was," he says of his chosen imagery, and the paintings show us that "becoming" in progress. In *Sons of God[s]*, the musket becomes a long thin shadow of itself, arrowing across



Mother Mother
2010
acrylic on canvas
100 x 150 cm (39 1/2 x 59 in)

the sky as silently as a stealth bomber. In *Mother Mother*, a mass-produced religious statue becomes a full-fledged religious vision. And he brings the 'marked head' to life with startling directness – by opening its eyes and filling its features with livid, pulsing red paint. This astonishing face has its origins in the soldier artist Horatio Gordon Robley's 1896 study *Moko or Maori Tattooing*, a book that is both fascinating and, with its black-and-white photographic plates, profoundly melancholic. By lifting the face from the photographic record and rendering it with hallucinatory crispness, Cotton grants it a new and looming power. The result is "something other" indeed – not a historical footnote, but a haunting presence; not a souvenir, but a soul.

3

Having grown used to the cool beauty of Cotton's works in progress, it's almost shocking to receive an email from his studio and see what has happened next. Words, sprayed direct from the airbrush, have invaded the world of these paintings. *E tou matou Matua I te rangi*, the text on one work begins, written as roughly and urgently as graffiti. *Kia tapu tou Ingoa*, it continues. *I o te hunga e hara ana ki a matou...* For viewers unfamiliar with the Maori language, it's not till you reach the final words – *the kingdom, the power and the glory* – that you realise what you are reading. This is The Lord's Prayer, but a version that is anything but settled or authorized. The cadmium red paint seethes in the darkness. The paint often clots and runs.

In Wellington Public Library you can hold in your hands a much quieter version of The Lord's Prayer. Printed in Durham County in the 1820s for distribution by Wesleyan missionaries, it's thought to be the earliest printed Maori version of the prayer, and its sheer modesty – black type on a slip of yellowing paper – points to both the fervour and the fragility of the early missionary effort, as nervous churchmen headed for the Pacific to spread the word by hand. I like to think of Cotton's 'Lord's Prayer' painting (titled *Smashing Myths*) as a kind of sequel to this document, in which we no longer see the prayer tidily arranged on the page but hear it in the air all around us. The French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil said of The Lord's Prayer that it "contains all other petitions; we cannot conceive of any other prayer not already contained in it." That is distinctively true in New Zealand, where the prayer was taken up and adapted by Maori in the 1800s – the single Christian 'God' merging with the multiple gods or *atua* of Maori cosmology – and is today still commonly heard on *marae* and at *tangi* (funerals). Cotton's achievement in *Smashing Myths* is to evoke this process from the inside – the way the prayer was spoken and memorised by new readers, gaining and shedding meanings as it went. We seem to be inhabiting the prayer as someone translates and reimagines it – underlining words, crossing out others, obliterating some in clouds of red mist.

This ragged red graffiti now hovers in most of Cotton's new paintings, especially *To and Fro* and *Hole in Rock*. The words in these paintings come from a passage in the Old Testament Book of Job, where God asks Satan where he has come from, and receives a strange reply: "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Satan might seem an unlikely character to quote, but the history of the Old Testament's reception in New Zealand is rich with 'creative misreadings'. When historian Michael King observed that "Maori did not so much convert to Christianity as convert Christianity ... to their own purposes", he might have been foreshadowing Cotton's unexpected reading of this passage from the Book of Job. The spray gun permits Cotton to literally write Satan's words 'in the air', dispersing cadmium red in vaporous lines that seem to hang at different depths. They loom and fade, thicken and thin, like letters left in the air by a skywriting aeroplane. As they do so, the words start to lift away from their specifically Christian context and speak of other journeys. The archaic and beautiful phrasing – *going to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it* – conveys the effort and intensity of any vast human journey, the spiritual stamina required. And in the work *To and Fro*, the skyscape behind the words subtly affirms this idea of physically journeying through the earth. The clouds here rise up like the folded valleys of an enormous mountain pass, and a single skull cannonballs out into it. The sky becomes a landscape the soul must move through to reach the other side.

4

For anyone travelling to the other side of the world today, pausing the in-flight movie to stare down on the Indian Ocean, it's staggering to contemplate the long sea-trips that took people back and forth between New Zealand and London in the nineteenth century. Cotton's mission, however, is to remind us through paint that such journeys aren't just physical – that the distances traversed and the difficulties endured were (and are) also emotional and spiritual. And that word 'spiritual' goes to the heart of the challenge Cotton sets himself here. How do you use paint, a medium so tied to the visible world, to describe the changing shape of something as immaterial as faith? How do you convey, on a time-bound, handmade surface, the way thoughts and memories keep travelling through time even when the people who generated them have died?

For me Cotton's answer doesn't lie in the large and legible religious symbols that he sometimes employs. Instead the spiritual thrust of his art lies in the many small moments of painterly transformation to be found in each painting, where he is pushing his medium to find out whether a form can become 'something other than what it was' – moments where a long-dead head opens its eyes, or a hillscape materialises within a cloud, or a cliff-face dematerialises. The power of paint to activate historical forms is present in one device especially – the white patterns found here and there in these works. Resembling disembodied tattoos, strange plants, or clustered eyes and ears, these patterns grow upward through the atmosphere. One rises from the muzzle of the musket like a tongue of smoke after a shot's been fired. Another crackles behind the *Upoko tuhituhi*, like a strange kind of spiritual electricity.

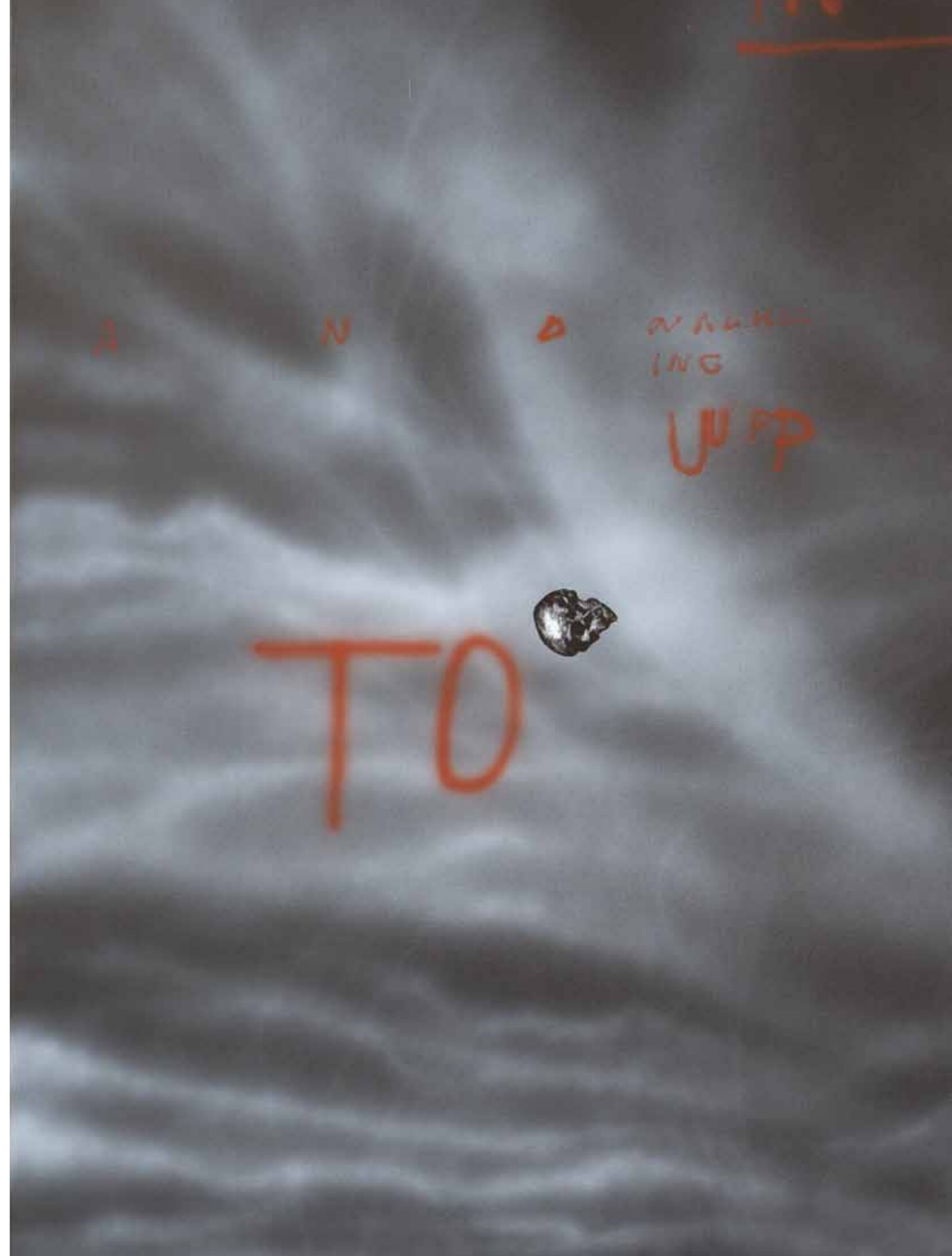
We don't have to fully decode these moments to feel the force of the new paintings. Indeed their resistance to being fully decoded is the very thing that generates their power and momentum. Having begun their life as skyscapes of cool if ominous beauty, Cotton's paintings now leave the studio in a form that is anything but serene. As viewers entering these works, we are always bumping and dropping between different languages, different depths, different kinds of imagery – a slice of landscape, a plume of pattern, a bird seemingly electrified in mid-flight, a prayer that flickers between two languages. What becomes apparent, as we travel, is that there is no authorized version, no final translation to be made that will settle the paintings' meaning once and for all. These are spaces where no one language will serve, where no form is only itself, and where every element is tearing away from its old meanings on its way to becoming something else. With all this movement Cotton offers a larger argument about who and how we are. We're beings in translation, he seems to be saying. The journey "to and fro" is also ours.

JUSTIN PATON

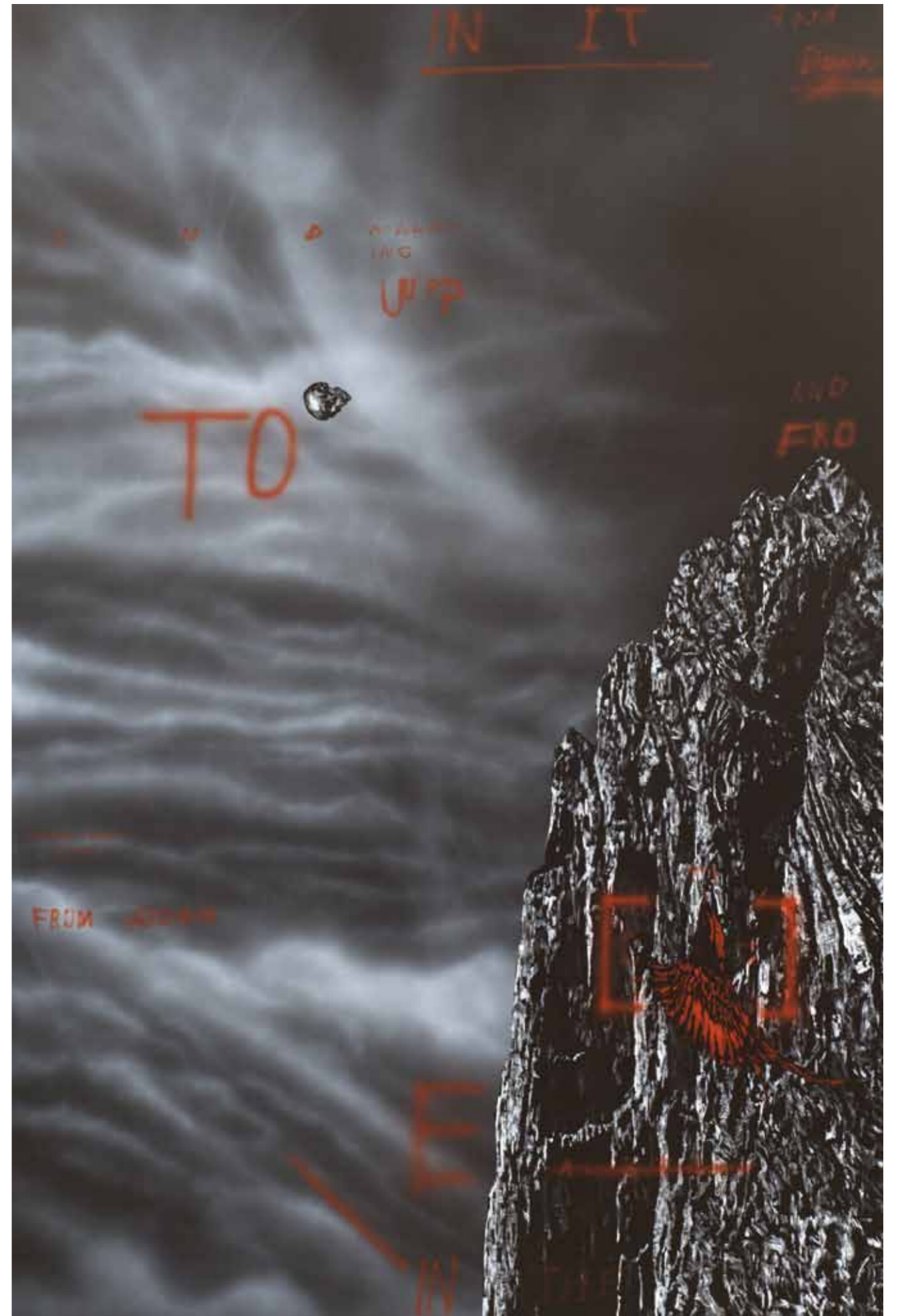
is Senior Curator at Christchurch Art Gallery in Christchurch, New Zealand.

PLATES

To and Fro
detail
2010, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm (59 x 39 1/2 in)



To and Fro
2010, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm (59 x 39 1/2 in)



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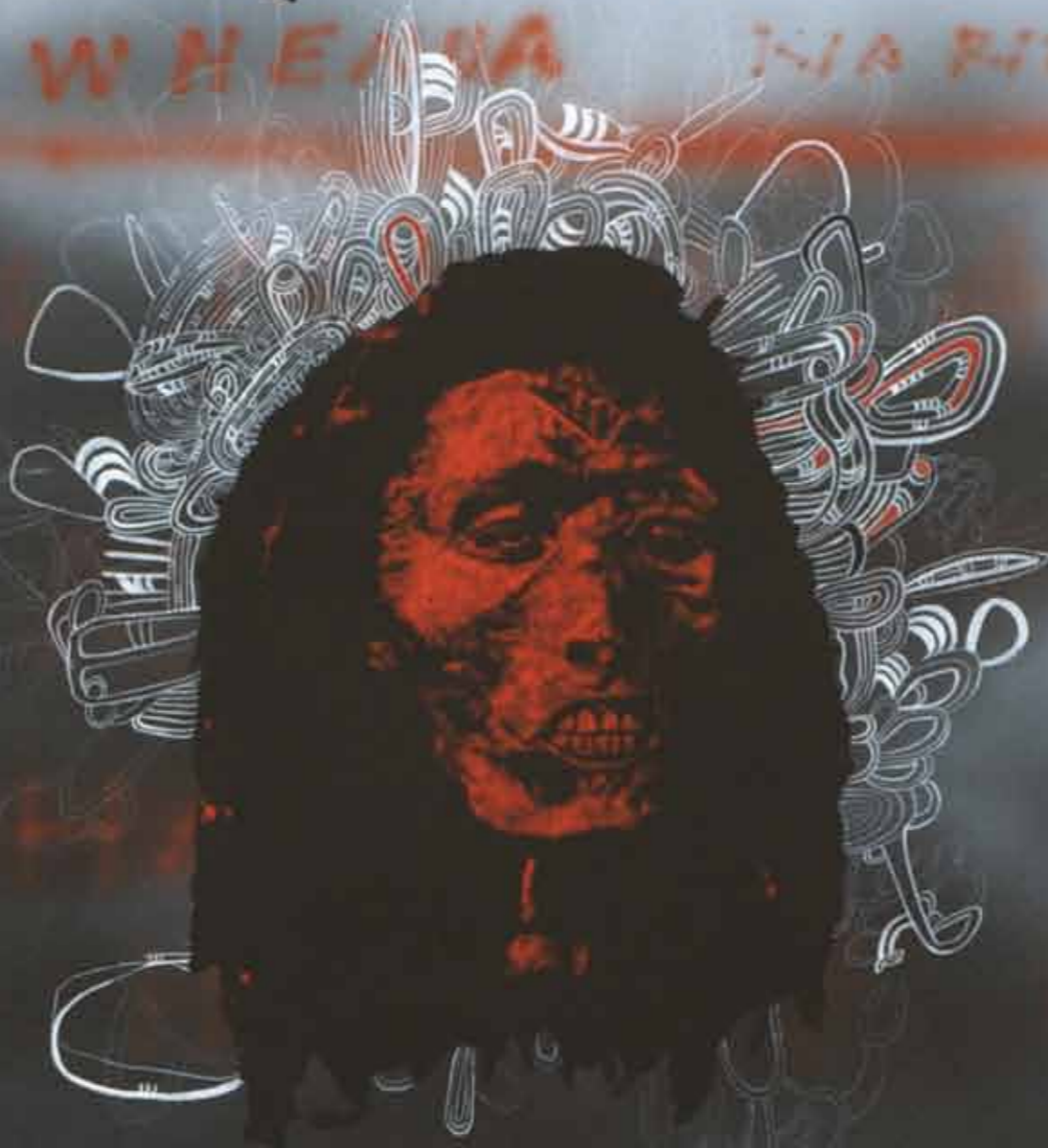
Smashing Myths

2010, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm (59 x 39 1/2 in)





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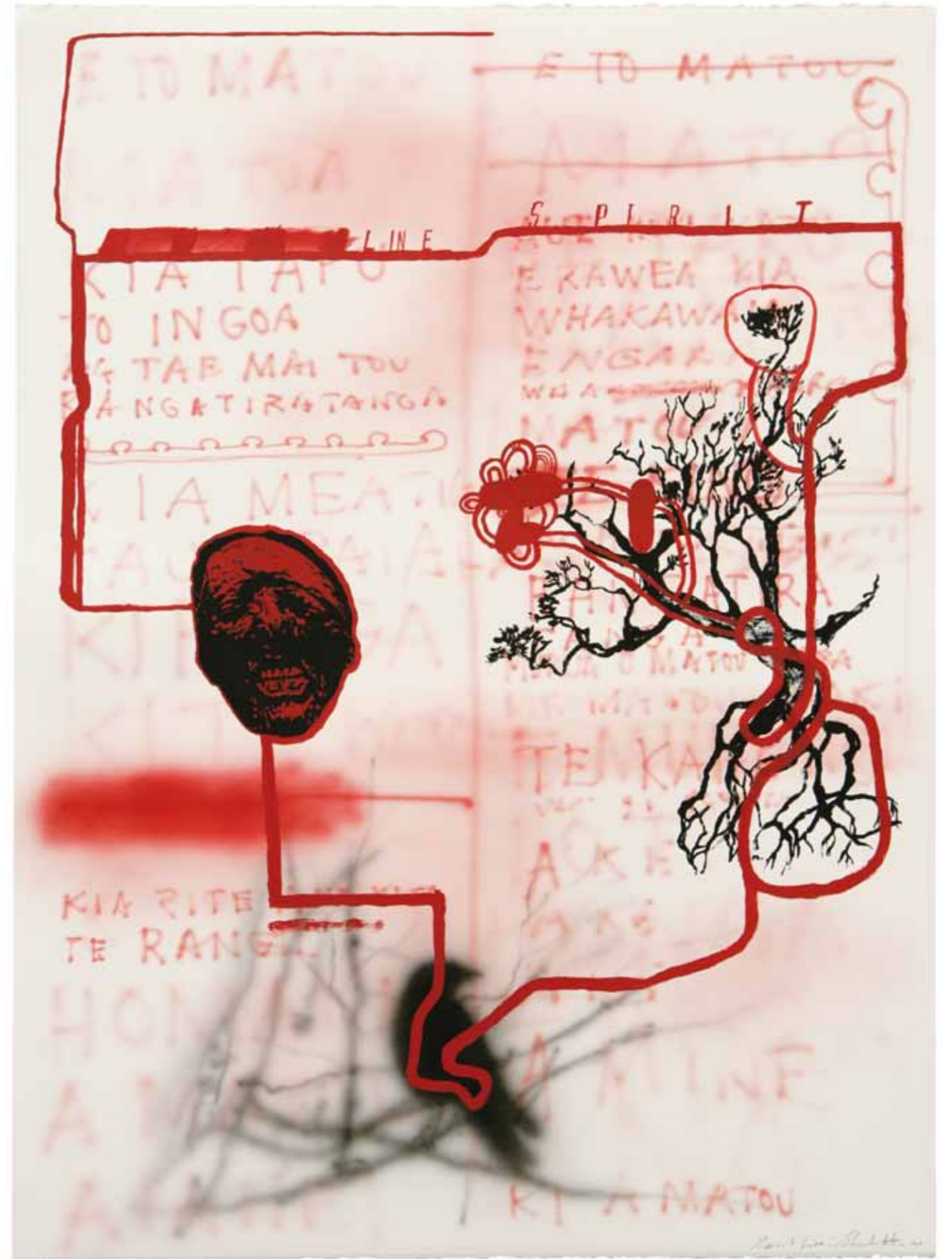


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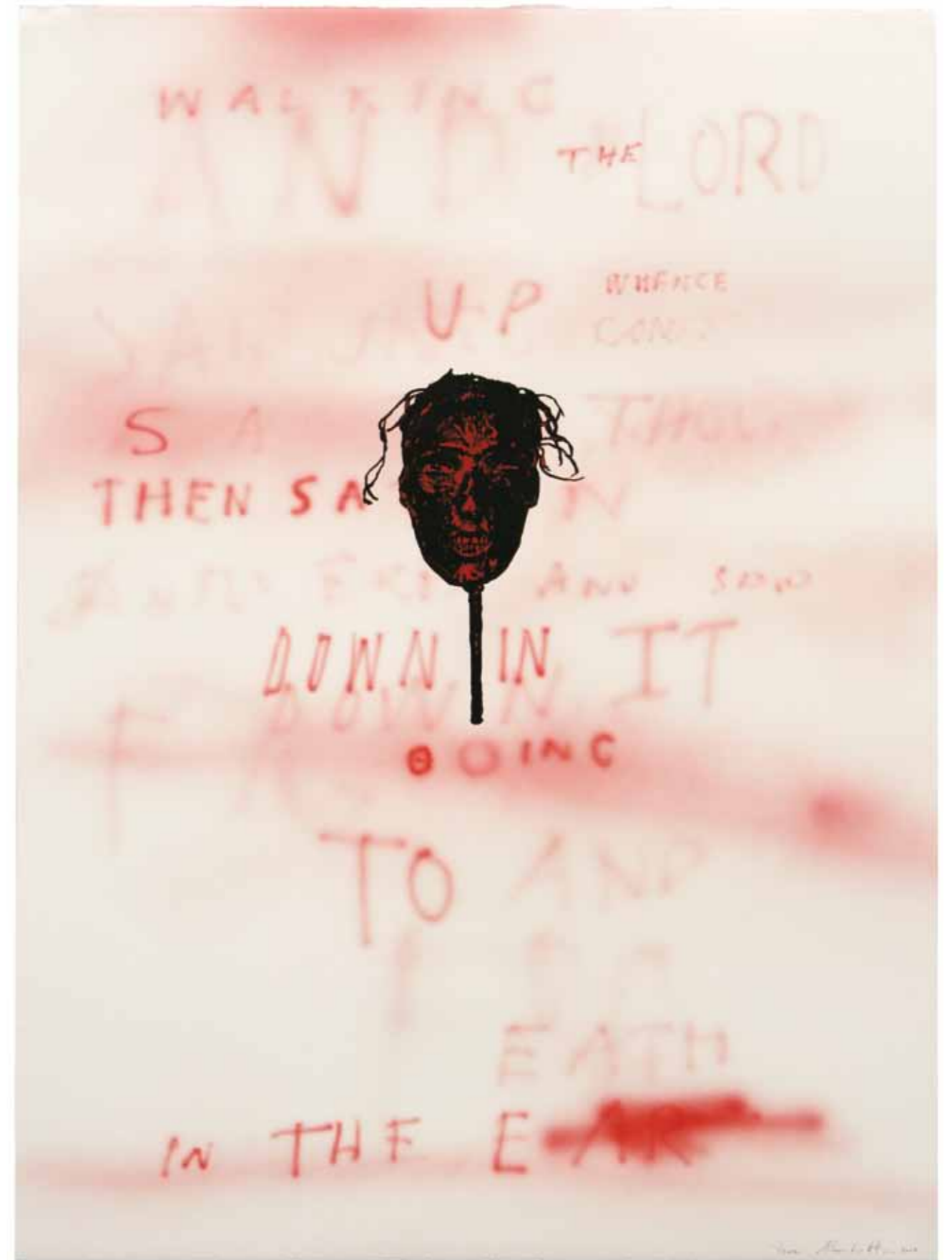
The Painted Bird
2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)



Spirit Line
2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)



Down
2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)



TO
AND

To and Fro (Study)

detail

2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)

FRO



previous pages:

To and Fro (Study)

2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)

and

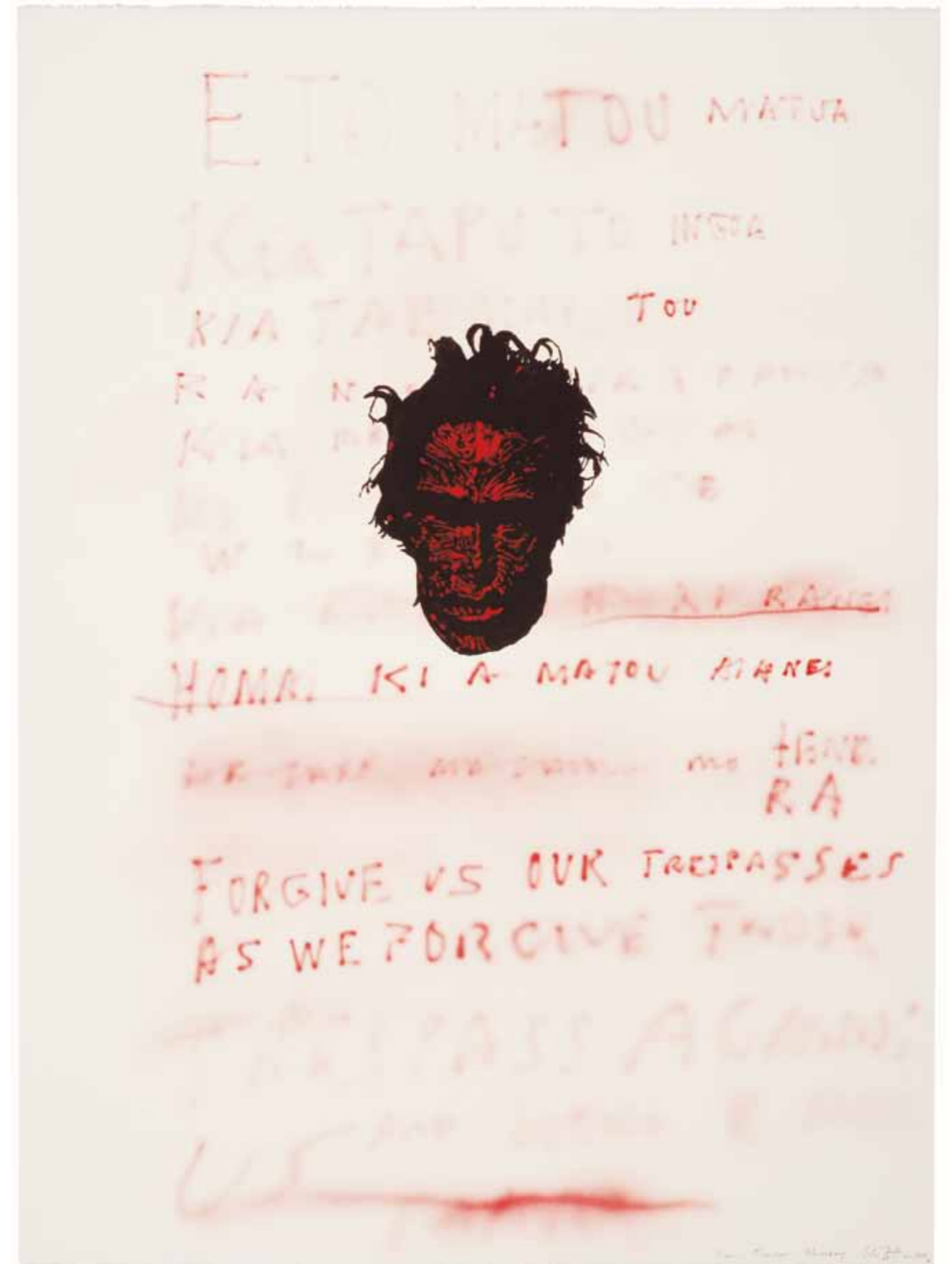
Feature, Face, Memory (II)

2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)

this page:

Feature, Face, Memory

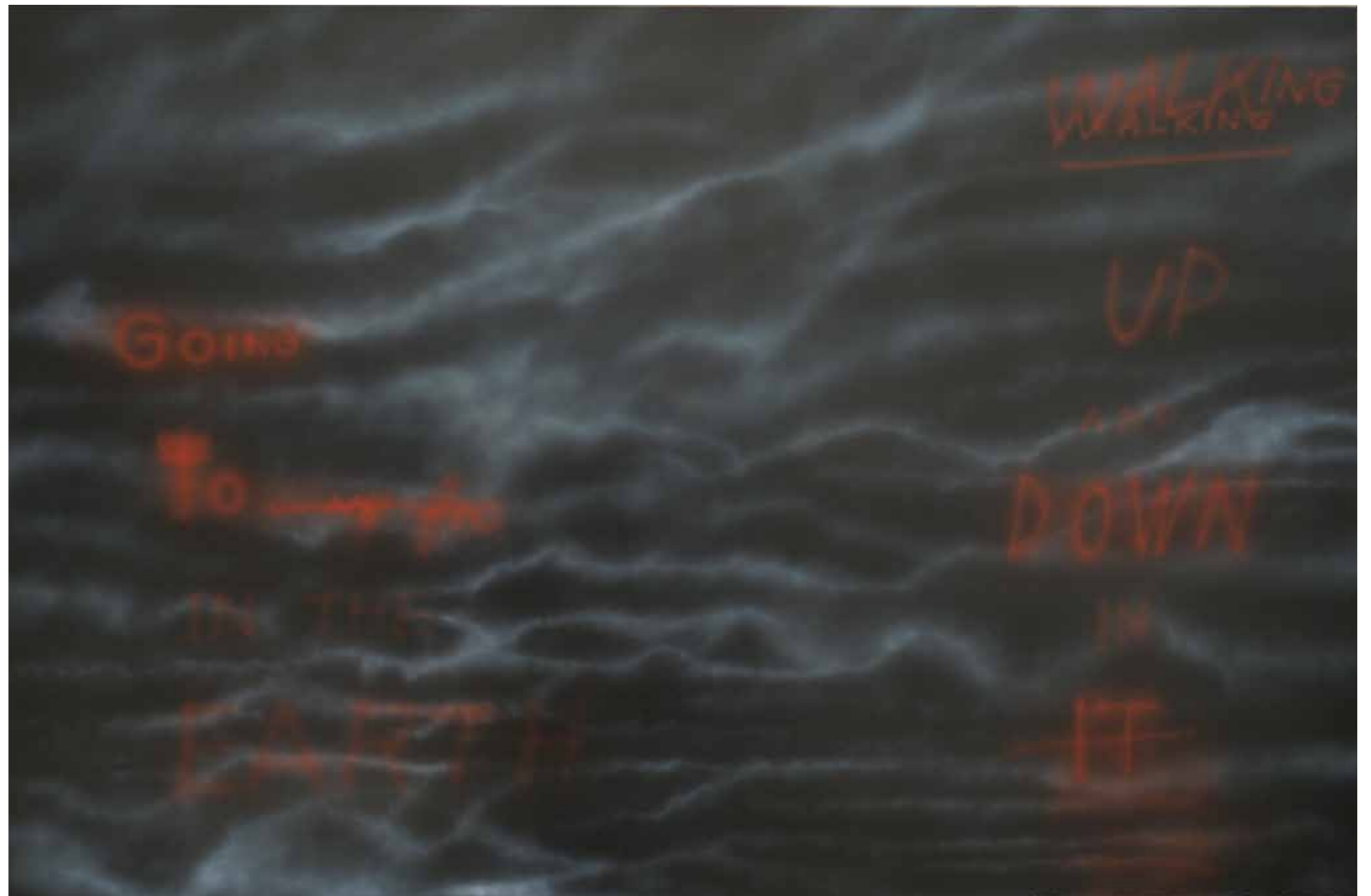
2010, acrylic on paper, 77 x 56 cm (30 x 22 in)



Sons of God(s)
2010, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 150 cm (39 1/2 x 59 in)



Going To and Fro. Walking Up and Down In It.
2009, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 150 cm (39 1/2 x 59 in)



Mother Mother

2010, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 150 cm (39 1/2 x 59 in)





Mother Mother

detail

2010, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 150 cm (39 1/2 x 59 in)



this, next and previous pages:

Hole in the Rock

2010, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm (59 x 39 1/2 in)





SHANE COTTON

1964
Born Upper Hutt, New Zealand
1988
Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, New Zealand
1991
Diploma in Teaching, Christchurch College of Education, New Zealand
1993 - 2005
Lecturer, Te Putahi-a-Toi, Maori Visual Arts, Massey University, New Zealand

Lives in Palmerston North, New Zealand

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2010
To and Fro, Rossi & Rossi, London, UK
2008
Coloured Dirt, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
2007
Red-Shift, Sherman Galleries, Sydney, Australia
Helgoland, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
2006
Shane Cotton, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
2005
Pararaiha, Sherman Galleries, Sydney, Australia
2004
Shane Cotton Survey 1993-2003, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
2003
Shane Cotton Survey 1993-2003, curator Lara Strongman, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Shane Cotton: Paintings, SOFA Gallery, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
Shane Cotton: New Paintings, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
2002
Powder Garden, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Birds Eyes Views, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
2001
Blackout Movement, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
New Paintings, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
2000
Te Timatanga: From Eden to Ohaeawai, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
1999
New Painting, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Shane Cotton, Hocken Library Gallery, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
New Paintings, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
New Paintings, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
1998
Local, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Shane Cotton, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
1997
New Painting, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Square Style, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
1996
New Painting, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
New Painting, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
1995
Shane Cotton: Recent Paintings, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Te Ta Pahara, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Shane Cotton: Recent Paintings, Darren Knight Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Ta Te Whenua, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North; Fisher Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
1994
New Works, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
New Painting, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
1993
Collections: New Work by Shane Cotton, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
1992
Strata, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2010
17th Biennale of Sydney: The Beauty of Distance, curated by David Elliott, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
2009
Art in the Contemporary Pacific, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan
2007
Turbulence 3rd Auckland Triennial 2007, curated by Victoria Lynn, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
Four Times Painting 2007, Adam Art Gallery Te Pataka Toi, University of Wellington, New Zealand
2006
Nuclear Reactions, curated by Paco Barragan, Caja de Burgos Art Centre, Burgos, Spain
Contemporary Commonwealth, curated by Charles Green, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
2004
Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific, Asia Society Museum, New York, USA
2003
Empathy: Beyond the Horizon, Artspace, Sydney, Australia
Emerging Artists of the Nineties, 10 Works from the Fletcher Trust Collection, Tauanga Art Gallery, New Zealand
2002
Koru and Kowhaiwhai: The Contemporary Renaissance of Kowhaiwhai Painting, Pataka Museum of Arts and Culture, Porirua, New Zealand
Taiawhio: Continuity and Change, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand
2001
Home & Away: Chartwell Collection, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Taranaki Te Maunga, Gowett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Still Life, Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand
Colin McCahon's Time for Messages, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Leaping Boundaries, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Empathy: Beyond the Horizon, The Finnish Fund for Art Exchange, Finland
Techno Maori: Maori in the Digital Age, City Gallery, Wellington; Pataka Museum of Arts and Culture, Porirua, New Zealand
Purangiho: Seeing Clearly, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
Good Work: The Jim Barr and Mary Barr Collection, Dunedin Public Art Gallery; City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Te Maunga Taranaki: Views of a Mountain, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Alive!: Still Life into the 21st Century, Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
2000
Eloquent Polarities: The Chartwell Collection - Recent Acquisitions, Auckland City Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance, City Gallery Wellington, New Zealand
Te Ao Tawhito/Te Ao Hou – Old Worlds/New Worlds: Contemporary Art from Aotearoa New Zealand, Art Museum of Missoula, Montana, US; Maui Arts and Cultural Centre, Hawaii, USA
Canterbury Painting in the 1990s, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Darkness and Light: Looking at the Landscape, touring to McClelland Art Gallery and Sculpture Park; Benalla Art Gallery; Ballarat Fine Art Gallery; Geelong Art Gallery and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
Text and Image, Lopdell House Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
1999
Group Show, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Chicago Art Fair, Chicago, USA
Wonderlands: Views on Life at the End of the Century, at the End of the World, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
The Raising of the Noxious, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Word: Artists Explore the Power of the Single Word, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Manufacturing Meaning: The Victoria University Art Collection in Context, Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Home and Away: Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art from the Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton; City Gallery Wellington; Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand
1998
Wake Naima, Centre Culturel Tjibaou, New Caledonia, New Zealand
Takeaway Symbols, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Skywriters and Earthmovers, Robert McDougall Art Annex, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Seppelt Contemporary Art Awards, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Black & White, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Leap of Faith: Contemporary New Zealand Art, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Dream Collectors: One Hundred Years of New Zealand Art, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
1997
Now Showing: Artists go to the Movies, The Film Centre, Wellington, New Zealand
1996
Patua, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Seven New Zealand Artists, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

1995

Stop Making Sense, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Korurangi: New Maori Art, Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand
A Very Peculiar Practice: Aspects of Recent New Zealand Painting, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
The Nervous System: Twelve Artists Explore Images and Identities in Crisis, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth; City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Korurangi: New Maori Art, Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand

1994

Five New Zealand Artists, Darren Knight Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
Te Puaroa, Shed 1, Wellington, New Zealand
Parallel Lines: Gordon Walters in Context, Auckland City Art Gallery, New Zealand
Taking Stock of the 90s, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, New Zealand
Taiawhio: The Coming Together, Page 90, Porirua, New Zealand
Localities of Desire: Contemporary Art in an International World, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia

1993

Opening Exhibition, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Te Hau A Tonga, Te Taumata Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Groundswell, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, New Zealand
Christmas Show, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Christmas Show, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

1992

Tracts, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Te Kupenga, CSA Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Latent Realities, McDougall Art Annex, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Canvassing South, Gow Langsford Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Motif/Motive, CSA Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Shadow of Style: Eight New Artists, City Gallery Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand
Prospect Canterbury '92, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
He Toi Tutanga Na Ngaa Toa o Te Whare Waananga o Waitaha: An Exhibition of Work by Past and Present Students of Maori Descent from the School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, School of Fine Arts, Christchurch, New Zealand

1991

Kohia Ko Taiakaka Anake, National Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Preparations: 25 Canterbury Artists, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Recognitions, McDougall Art Annex, Christchurch, New Zealand
He Toi Tutanga Na Ngaa Toa o Te Whare Waananga o Waitaha: An Exhibition of Work by Past and Present Students of Maori Descent from the School of Fine Arts, School of Fine Arts Gallery, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
Shane Cotton, Barnard McIntyre, Peter Robinson, Gow Langsford Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand

1990

New Works (with Peter Robinson), Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Christmas Show, Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand

1989

Wilkins & Davies Young Artist of the Year Award, CSA Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand; Auckland Society of Arts Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

1987

Young Contemporaries, CSA Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand

AWARDS

2006

Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate

1999

Te Tohu Mahi Hou a Te Waka Toi/Te Waka Toi Award for New Work

1998

Frances Hodgkins Fellowship, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand
Seppelt Contemporary Art Award for visual arts, Museum of Contemporary Arts, Sydney, Australia

1991

Te Waka Toi Projects Grant

1989

Wilkins and Davies Young Artist of the Year

1988

Ethel Rose Overton Scholarship
Sawtell-Turner Prize in Painting
Irwin Allen Hunt Scholarship

1986

Bickerton-Widdowson Memorial Scholarship

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, New Zealand
Chartwell Collection, New Zealand
College House, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

Christchurch City Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, New Zealand
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand
Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Wellington City Council, New Zealand

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2007

Oriwa Soliomon, Huhana Smith (ed), *Taiawhio II Contemporary Maori Artists*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, New Zealand
Blair French, *Painting Presence, Four Times Painting*, Adam Art Gallery Te Pataka Toi, Victoria University, New Zealand

2006

William McAloon, *Meet me by the Rabbit: Jim Barr & Mary Barr Collection*, Art & Australia, vol. 44, no. 2
Paco Barragan, *Nuclear Reactions*, Centro De Arte Caja De Burgos, Spain
Sue Gardiner, *New Cotton Works*, Artnotes, Art Monthly Australia, no. 194
Laura Murray Cree (ed.), *Twenty: Sherman Galleries 1986–2006*, Craftsman House, Melbourne, Australia

2005

Shane Cotton: Pararaiha, Nichigo Press, August
Tracey Clement, *Shane Cotton*, Metro, Sydney Morning Herald, 12–18 August
Shane Cotton, What's On, The Art Newspaper

2004

Lara Strongman (ed.), *Shane Cotton*, City Gallery Wellington and Victoria University Press

2001

Susette Goldsmith (ed), *Te Maunga Taranaki: Views of a Mountain*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Good Work: The Jim Barr and Mary Barr Collection, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand
Te Miringa Hohaia, Gregory O'Brien and Lara Strongman (eds), *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance*, City Gallery, Wellington, Victoria University Press and Parihaka Pa Trustees, Wellington, New Zealand
Ngahiraka Mason and Ellis, Ngarino, *Purangiaho: Seeing Clearly*, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Techno Maori: Maori Art in the Digital Age, City Gallery Wellington and Pataka Museum, Porirua, New Zealand

2000

Blair French, *Crossing the Tasman: The Work of Gordon Bennett and Shane Cotton*, Postwest, no. 16
Justin Paton, *Homing in, Shane Cotton: Te Timatanga: From Eden to Ohaeawai*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, New Zealand

1999

William McAloon, *Stirring the Pot: Recent paintings by Shane Cotton*, Art New Zealand, no. 90
Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture*, Thames and Hudson, London
Imants Tillers, *Locating Shane Cotton*, Art AsiaPacific, no. 23
Linda Tyler (ed.), *Shane Cotton*, Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand

1998

Elizabeth Caldwell (ed.), *Skywriters and Earthmovers*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
David Eggleton, *History under Canvas*, New Zealand Listener, 12 December
Robert Leonard, *Shane Cotton*, Art/text, no. 63
Ian Wedde et al., *Dream Collectors: One Hundred Years of Art in New Zealand*, Te Papa Press, Wellington, New Zealand

1997

Jim Barr and Mary Barr, *Shane Cotton: Mana from History*, World Art, no. 15
Louise Garrett, *Exhibitions: Wellington*, Art New Zealand, no. 83
Charles Green, *Shane Cotton*, Artforum, November
Ewen McDonald, *Shane Cotton: Square Style*, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia

1996

Sian Daly, *Show Champion*, Monica, October - November
Michael Dunn, *Contemporary Painting in New Zealand*, Craftsman House, Sydney, Australia
Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, *Korurangi/Toihoukura: Brown Art in White Spaces*, Art New Zealand, no. 78
William McAloon, *Amidst Seas and Skies: Casino Art in Auckland*, ArtAsiaPacific, vol. 3, no. 4, Sydney, Australia
Gregory O'Brien, *Lands and Deeds: Profiles of Contemporary New Zealand Painters*, Godwit Press, Auckland, New Zealand

1995

Warwick Brown, *100 New Zealand Paintings by 100 New Zealand Artists*, Godwit Press, Auckland, Australia
Richards Dale, *Insider/outsider: A Report from the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery*, Art New Zealand, no. 77
Bernice Murphy, *Localities of Desire*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Justin Paton, *Exhibitions: Christchurch*, Art New Zealand, no. 76
Peter Shand, *Time Spent in Four Chambers: A Very Peculiar Practice*, Art New Zealand, no. 77
Allan Smith et al., *A Very Peculiar Practice: Aspects of Recent New Zealand Painting*, City Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand
Susan Smith, *Ta te whenua: Shane Cotton & Robert Jahnke*, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, New Zealand
Penny Swan, *Shane Cotton: Recent Painting*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand

1994

John Daly-Peoples, 'Exhibitions: Auckland', Art New Zealand, no. 72
George Hubbard, 'Buy Culture', Planet, no. 13
Allan Smith, 'Shane Cotton', Art & Text, no. 49
Luke Strongman, 'Something in the Pot: Luke Strongman talks to artist Shane Cotton' Midwest, no. 5

1993

Jane Sayle, *Exhibitions: Wellington*, Art New Zealand, no. 68
Allan Smith, *The Surfaces of Style*, Art New Zealand, no. 66

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