

Interview: Deborah McCormick Director, SCAPE

Begun in 2000, *SCAPE (Art & Industry Urban Arts Biennial)* occurs every other year with the Christchurch Arts Festival, providing the city with a rich and continual celebration of the arts. Art works are grouped around a general theme (2004 "from a different angle") and are sited in public spaces. The BiennialTrust, working with Strategy Advertising & Design, developed a brand identity that could be attached to the event; "SCAPE" was settled upon as a suffix to notions of landscape, cityscape, nightscape, lightscape, etc.

A tangible benefit of the festival is the contribution every two years of a permanent public artwork to the city. In 2004 it was Peter Roche's neon *Circuit* (2004) installation set in the clock tower entranceway at the Arts Centre.

Deborah McCormick has been involved from the beginning and was director for the second and

third *SCAPE* festivals (2002, 2004). She hails from Oxford and Christchurch, is a graduate of the Canterbury School of Fine Arts (in Photography) and has exhibited herself.

JS. Where did it all begin Deborah, as a response to Millennium celebrations?

"I was a recent graduate of film and finished up some art history papers and was looking for work opportunities and the next step to go into. I came up with an idea for a one-off exhibition called *Art & Industry*. I had been working with industrial processes to create photographic installations and wondered how that could be taken further to assist artist practice. I took a proposal to the city council who directed me to Warren Pringle at Artworks, who had just come back from London where he'd been working as an independent producer and promoter. Warren was looking for a way back into the Canterbury arts scene. He was

SCAPE 2004 Festival was expressed in five ways:

1. **ECHO** a site specific response at Riccarton House and Bush
2. **HOME/GROUND** at the Museum
3. **LightSCAPE** a nocturnal galleries experience
4. **WORK IT** a series installed in unexpected sites around the urban scape of Christchurch that explored the gap between art and industry
5. **Partner Galleries Programme**



fostering opportunities for arts employment for recent graduates, and that was me.

"We developed the concept for the *Art & Industry* exhibition into a city-wide biennial event. Through his knowledge I was able to look for opportunities. We noted there was nothing of its kind at that time in New Zealand, but very quickly a number began to pop up: The Auckland Triennial, *Art & Industry 2000*, The City Gallery's *Prospect* show, all major visual arts events.

"Warren then moved to work with the council, took the portfolio with him and it grew into a Trust. He has now gone, working with the Auckland City Council in public art. I learned most of my arts administration skills working with him, then flew solo in 2002."

What were some of the hurdles and victories along the way?

"We've always had good people come on board, and the energy of the steering group was a key factor. We were rejected for funding, but you have

been very focussed on that. Mike Kelly from N.C.C. had some good ideas on how to attract business. We held a launch function at the Convention Centre; we made a sample project and marketed that to other people, we held functions. Getting the original projects on the ground demonstrated to others how they could become involved.

"The Fulton Hogan and Pauline Rhodes collaboration is a good example. Fulton Hogan were making a kind of structure in their commercial environment, along came an artist who said, "what about doing this?" and they were excited by that. Then we could go to other businesses with a tangible model. It's about developing real partnerships. It sits well with the whole 'knowledge wave' model flowing into businesses, promoting different ways of thinking."

Is that a key benefit, drawing the strengths of the arts and business worlds and cross-pollinating them to get a holistic thing going?

"That's what drives me. Taking the ideas of artists to other people."

What other benefits does SCAPE bring to the city?

"A sense of surprise in the environment. In our daily activities we can stumble across works. It changes how we might feel about our environment. Reactions are positive and challenged. *SCAPE* is a shop front for industry as well as artists and promotes both. It contributes a level of sophistication, demonstrating Christchurch is a culturally diverse and forward thinking city, a place of different ideologies, not just one or two."

How does it mesh with the Christchurch Arts Festival?

"The city council has undertaken some research on this area, to look at festivals and how they sit. For Warren and I and the steering committee, we noted how quickly the Arts Festival became established in Christchurch. It excels in the performing arts, and has very good quality visual arts. To have both in the opposite year helps create an arts and culture profile in Christchurch."

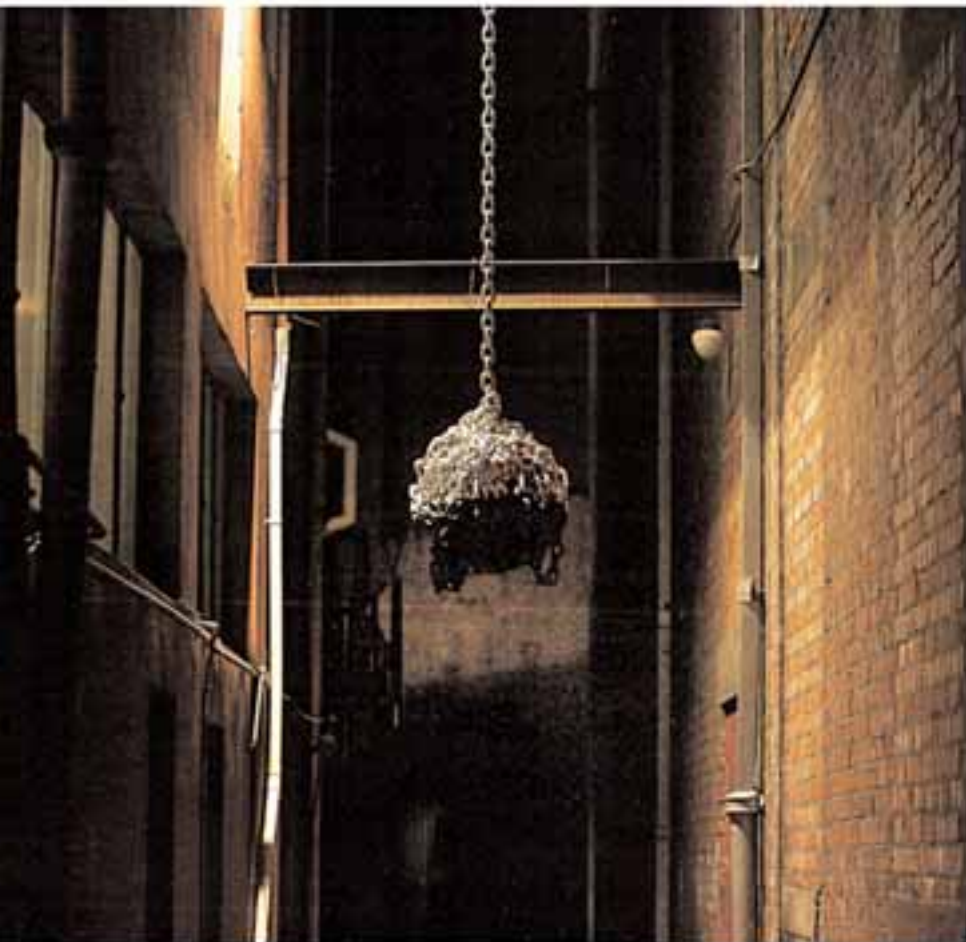
Highlights for you?

"The 2002 *Black Maria* project (Nathan Coley) at the Physics Room in Tuam Street was a fascinating project. The Parekowhai 'bunnies' situation was challenging but I enjoyed working through the logistics of that and the dialogue that emerged. It allowed dissonant voices. I commend Parekowhai for being such a strong and bold artist.

"Working on *LightSCAPE* in 2004 to create a city-wide 'nocturnal art gallery' as a central municipal project was also very satisfying."

SCAPE is funded by the Christchurch City Council, Creative New Zealand, New Zealand Community Trust and a cluster of community sponsors including British Council NZ, Asia 2000, Strategy Scotwood Group, Urbis, the Carter Group, and others. With *SCAPE* 2004 over, a strong review is under way to assess the strengths and weaknesses, and reinvent the wheel again for 2006.

John Stringer



Knotted, Monica Bonvicini, 2004, chain, asphalt. Photograph: Lightworks Photography

"*Knotted* was hung in an alleyway off Tuam Street, behind 84zero3 Gallery. Framed in the narrow space by tall brick walls, *Knotted* was illuminated at night, taking on an ethereal quality as it emerged from the darkness above."

to be tenacious. A quality art component was very present in 2000 through a wealth of public artists who hadn't really had an opportunity to do big works for Christchurch: Pauline Rhodes; Andrew Drummond; Margaret Dawson; Julia Morison had just come back from overseas; there was great energy around."

So it was simply a matter of growing the initial pool of sponsors?

"We've always had good trustees and a mix of arts and business. The Chair and Trustees have