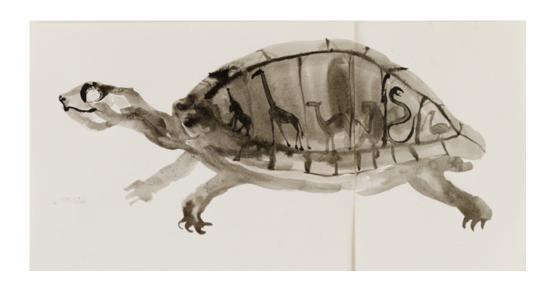
Five Dials



NUMBER 32B

New Zealand 'wā tāpiri'

JANET FRAME Correspondence SHANE COTTON Wild Paintings



CONTRIBUTORS

The artworks of Shane Cotton (Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Hine and Te Uri Taniwha) are represented in many major public collections. In 2013, a major survey of his work toured venues in Australia and New Zealand. In 2008 he received a Laureate Award from the Arts Foundation, and in the 2012 Queen's Birthday Honours he received an ONZM (Officer of the said Order) for services to the visual arts.

Janet frame was never awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature but she is reported on good authority to have reached the short list more than once. The New Zealand author first gained international attention for her novels while living in London in the early 1960s. She also wrote poetry, short stories and a bestselling autobiography *An Angel at my Table*.

A BRIEF NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

In Maori, there's a word for the extra bit of time added at the end of a game, perhaps after the final minutes of a rugby match. Wā tāpiri is the noun. We've decided to make this our wā tāpiri issue.

At the beginning of June we released an issue dedicated to new New Zealand writing. If for some reason you haven't downloaded your copy, best go and get Five Dials 32 right here. It's free, as always. Our wā tāpiri issue offers extra time for you to read some of the wonderful Janet Frame's correspondence and look at a few untamed paintings from Shane Cotton. We're pleased to be able to include them in our extended New Zealand special.

We'll be back soon with a complete issue.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Camping in Our House

Letters passed between Janet Frame and the poet, Charles Brasch



Janet Frame Portrait by John Money

36A Heriot Row Dunedin

10 December '63

Dear Janet,

I'm so very pleased that this year's Scholarship in Letters has gone to you, & hope you'll be free to do what you wish for some time.

May I say that I thought *Scented Gardens* your best book yet, more consistent than *The Edge of the Alphabet* (though that seemed to me to get better and better as it went on). I was fascinated by the fable of Albert Dung-Beetle, an unforgettable one. I hope your roof is keeping out the rain & that the rats & birds aren't too intrusive as neighbours.

Best wishes, Charles Brasch c/o D. W. Gordon 61 Gladstone Road Northcote Auckland N.4.

January 2, 1964

Dear Charles Brasch,

Thank you for your congratulations. I'm happy to have won the Scholarship and to be free, for a time, from money worries which have plagued me more in New Zealand than beyond it. During the past six years my living income has been assured through the kind understanding of the doctors at the Maudsley Hospital. In New Zealand, except for the arrangement Frank Sargeson made with a local doctor for me to receive a medical benefit while I was writing Owls Do Cry, there's been only the nightmare of working in hotels for a living. I mention this because although the prospect of having one thousand pounds brings dreams of finding a place to stay permanently in New Zealand, I have to resist the dreams; for me, living away from New Zealand is a means of ensuring physical safety and security. How I wish it were not so! There is so much here to be written about with passion if not always with love.

I left Oamaru because I was pursued by ghosts. The rats and the birds were kind; it was the vegetation which became hostile when I stayed at Willowglen longer than it expected; like all truly mythical vegetation it grew thorns, impeding and encircling tentacles; I had to fight my way up to the little old house on the hill.

I finished the article 'How I Began'. I'm not pleased enough with it to send it. I may try again.

While I was in Christchurch I asked Albion Wright about his current Authors' Contract. He said that where formerly he deducted fifty percent of overseas earnings, he had now made the percentage open to negotiation with the author.

I'm not staying at the above address although my mail goes there while I move around in search of transistor-free environment.

Sincerely, Janet Frame

P.S. I was interested in your remarks about *Scented Gardens*. I also read the *Landfall* Review (one of the few that I feel obliged to read for I know the reviewer has read and thought about the book – N.Z. writers are fortunate to have such a

service). I was interested in the remark that I've a 'weakness for metaphor; something must always be compared'. To me, such a statement was as depressing as if someone had told me I'd better stop writing. I can understand a statement that I've a weakness for weak metaphor – but isn't the need to compare, to perceive relationships the source of all art? Perhaps I'm being naive, and Owen Leeming's objection is a philosophical one, to the definition of one thing in terms of another; or he's expressing the hope for a pure literary style which I, at least, will never find or am not equipped to find. I'm afraid I breathe metaphors, mostly bad or indifferent; it is the obsession with images which prompts me to write. I know that the path to good prose isn't necessarily tangled with metaphors; it can be clearer, more serviceable, more beautiful if the wayside is bare; it can have a dignity and strength which no images blossoming in the hedgerows can provide. I don't think I'm equipped to operate the verbal DDT. I can aim to be more disciplined, less indulgent with my images, but they are the basis of my life and my need to write, and they all have meaning. The fact that they impede the path of narrative makes me a bad novelist, but, except in some of my stories, I'm not taking the narrative path. Enough of that.

Surely there's a poetry-insect in this country, which breeds and bites and infects the inhabitants? Or is there an unknown land somewhere, closer to New Zealand than one dreams of, where the poetry blossoms grow and the seeds are blown to our shores?

But that's only a way of removing the common burden of the human heart when there are not enough people in the land to sustain it. (I mean enough people not by heads of population, but by realization.)

J.F.

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36a Heriot Row Dunedin

9 May 1969

Dear Janet,

The NZBC put on our TV programme 'Crossing the Plain' a few nights ago. So many people have told me they saw it – Ruth and other friends, students, shop people. Ruth, Warren Dibble (this year's Burns Fellow, who is very perceptive abt the theatre, radio and TV, films) and other thoughtful friends, found it as bad as I did – flat, unimaginative, photography mechanically echoing every image in the script. Several people enjoyed some of the poems, and a few of them picked out my 'All Our Days' which ends the programme; one woman said she'd never enjoyed poetry so much before. The father of another friend (he keeps a pub) thought the whole a load of nonsense! I'm sure I've never had such an audience before, and probably never will again. But really it was an opportunity lost. And yet some friends

say it was, for the NZBC, at least a start, and might lead to better work of similar kind. I must now watch for notices in the *NZ Listener* and *ODT*; if they are critical, I may write to say that I am too.

Thank you for your p.c., I was very glad to hear. How are you finding Yaddo this year? I hope some congenial people are there again. Has the U.S. changed since you were last there? No doubt extremes are more extreme; I imagine it to be both frightening and exhilarating. I must tell you that I'm abt to have my first (and last?) publication in the States, a poem from LF last year chosen for an annual published by Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards (ominous title); have you heard of it, I wonder? I infer from its earlier choices from LF that it's not wildly distinguished.

My book ought to be out any day. Shall I send you a copy to the U.S. or would it be more convenient if I kept one until you return? It is even later than the March LF which did not appear until very late in April; most shameful.

It's a pity you are missing the Francis Hodgkins exhibition, which has a lot of lovely work in it, abt half from Britain. Earlier, the Hocken put on a show called The Origins of F.H., work by her NZ contemporaries as well as her own, up till the time when she last visited NZ in 1913. Sixty years of painting in the two shows; a lifetime of exaltations and agonies, work that comes off and work that doesn't; and I wanted so much more of all kinds. I have to try and write abt the two shows for LF – hope I can find something worth saying; I feel very much involved; impossible not to when one looks at the work again and again. I re-read Eric McCormick's books, and the few critiques to be found; none of the writers had seen enough of the work, so I have that one advantage.

The Capping procession today was all good risqué fun, some funny, with heavy concentration on Piggy Muldoon, the lower gynaecology, Renta-Placenta, Chinese, Roosians, Brig. Gilbert and the Security Police. The Capping Book is much better in appearance than usual, much more carefully prepared and edited – not that I've read it, just flipped through; and the Concert is said to be one of the best, well-drilled, witty and uproarious. I rather wish I could see it.

Jim B's last play at the Globe seemed to me one of his worst. It is set on the day Barney Flanagan of Jim's ballad, dies, discusses him in his pub; resurrects him briefly; all to the accompaniment of much bawdry and almost as much theology – or piety. I'd have preferred that splendid ballad to be left untouched. The play adds nothing to it, for me.

Next month the Globe is putting on two short plays by Warren Dibble. Warren declined to attend rehearsals when he found how Patric Carey was proposing to treat the plays; so I expect the production will be half travesty – as was that of Jim's play, indeed. Perhaps one cannot judge any play from a Globe production. Sad. So much good effort badly misdirected.

You know probably that Ralph Hotere is Frances Hodgkins Fellow this year. And Michael Smither is going to be in and out of Dunedin, because he has come to live at Patearoa; a very likeable fresh direct character. John Maynard of New Plymouth Gallery came with him, so that the town seemed to hum with painters for a few days.

Yesterday the Wahine was split into three by a whale of a storm, blocking Wgtn harbour, so that the ferry had to return to Lyttelton; I gather the bits have been found today. Think what you're missing!

Greetings, Charles

Yaddo Saratoga Springs New York 12866

May 17, 1969

Dear Charles,

I was so pleased to get your letter. It seems ages since I had news from Dunedin – or gave anyone in Dunedin news from U.S.A. I can't decide whether your news of the Capping Procession and Concert sounded real or unreal when here the *New York Times* devotes at least two pages a day to reports of violence on the campus, with pictures of students getting their heads knocked in and troops releasing tear gas. West Virginia has just passed a law which reads 'Police or mayors shall be guiltless if anyone is killed or wounded in an attempt to put down a campus disturbance even if the victim is only a spectator.'

I was interested in your view of 'Crossing the Plain'. Perhaps the next one (if there is a next one) will be an improvement. The Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards is a strange title. At the end of this letter I'll add something about it. I think the young woman who lives downstairs, a Chinese poet from Singapore, has appeared in the annual. Her poems are pure and very fine with every word strong as a stone; I mean no word is sticky or flabby. There's another poet here, Milton Gassler, whose poems I have not read but who, the second day he was here, invited us to hear his tape recordings of his poems. He had an audience of two - Wong May and myself, though I had given myself an escape by saying that I could only stay for ten minutes as I had work to do. I stayed the full half hour. The poems were interesting and some were moving, particularly one about his father, but the 'little talks' between each poem where he gave details of his private life ('we still love each other ...') and talked of the next poem, were rather embarrassing; perhaps unnecessary.

I've been here at Yaddo since February 19th and I'm staying until June 23rd. Until this past fortnight when the Mansion opened (it is closed from November to May) and more guests began arriving, there had been only four, sometimes five, people here, including myself. Philip Roth; Alan Lelchuk, a young novelist who came from Russia as a child

during the Second World War and who has been writing his first novel; Blanche Dombeck, a sculptor, a former pupil of Brancusi in Paris. Jules Feiffer was here for a time; also Robert Brustein, Dean of the Yale Drama School. Blanche, Alan, Philip and I had our quarters upstairs in West House, and of course during the long winter we came to know one another very well, and worked and played hard. All are gone now, except me. We said goodbye to Alan yesterday. We shall miss him if only because he kept the meal-table conversation always at a high level with his discussion of current affairs, books, ideas. He was impatient of 'chat'. While Jules and Philip were here many of our evenings were spent listening to their brilliant comic dialogue. I think Philip had been under some strain since the attention paid to his Portnoy's Complaint and the publicity seekers were after him, but here at Yaddo where there was no one to stare at him or report on his doings, he and Alan had a wonderful time going back to their boyhood. As soon as the snow cleared they bought baseball gloves and went into training on the lawn and gave wonderful imitations of players and commentators.

Now that the Mansion is open and guests have arrived Yaddo will become more and more like a European watering-place. We have dinner in the Mansion, in a room where every piece of oak furniture is carved with designs, human figures, and animals. Spencer Trask, the former owner, imported wood carvers from England and Holland to do the work. We listen to music in a huge music room with a Tiffany fireplace eight feet high, fourteen feet wide (I think); stained windows; two grand pianos – the place is like a museum – the room off the dining room has an indoor fountain playing, and European carved sledges and painted chairs, some like thrones; and of course everywhere the paintings – mostly of the Trask family – and the gods and goddesses in various poses. I feel as if we have moved into a room in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Our after-dinner conversation now, as Alan pointed out, is like something out of Chekhov; the theme, too, of the strangers arriving and disrupting the former life. We have looked suspiciously at the new arrivals; they seem very slick and 'American'. What decent poet would begin his stay here by insisting that we hear tape-recordings of his poetry?

Three of the guests here now were with me last time – Lucia Vernarelli, a painter from Italy; Hyde Solomon, a painter from New York; and George Essayian, a painter from Philadelphia who comes every year for several months to paint and to act as night watchman in the Mansion. Hyde is going to paint my portrait, beginning today. He is a very good painter and has done some fine portraits. I've seen one of Hortense Calisher which Hortense owns. I've never had my portrait painted before.

I've a written a novel since I've been here but it needs much work done to it.

I have enjoyed the surroundings here so much. I loved the winter days with the snow always on the ground and deepening with each fresh snowfall, and the nights when you could walk in the snow at midnight, by snowlight. It was impossible to walk through the woods and on some of the paths and we wore crampons on our boots to get to and from meals. And, surprisingly, I did not find the air cold, as I thought it would be. The snow vanished early in April, in less than a week and the grass came up suddenly like velvet; and now most of the leaves are out, and the fruit blossoms (they tell me this is 'apple counnry'), the violets and lilies are blooming in the woods; and the lakes are busy with fish and frogs and flies and snap turtles. All the birds are nesting — chickadees, robins, swallows, purple martins, cardinals, blue jays, woodpeckers; and the morning calls of the birds sound, to me, less like singing than like the sounds of workmen — sawing, hammering, knocking, creaking. There's one bird that sounds like a door opening on rusty hinges.

When I came here I was questioned so much about New Zealand that I sent to the embassy in Washington for information. I was ashamed of the information they sent and I'm ashamed of the newsletter, sent every fortnight, which gives the impression that N.Z. has few cultural events. There is news under the following headlines: Viceregal, External, The Pacific, Politics, Defence, Agriculture, Trade, Industry, Finance, Petroleum, Industrial Unrest, Hydroelectric Power, Transport and Communications, Education and Welfare,

Obituary, Sport – Swimming, Athletics, Rugby, General, Personal. Any items of cultural interest are brief, if they appear at all, and are put under Personal or General. Perhaps the long Racing list is the equivalent - half a page of horses' names and money earned. Mary Hercus (who's coming back to N.Z. this month, I think) also sent some Landfalls that I've given to the library. I hope they take out a subscription to Landfall as they buy almost every magazine of the Arts, at least in U.S. And from U.K. they get T.L.S., the Listener, London Magazine. Wong May has just pushed under my door some information about the B. M. Poetry Awards. It does sound as if they are given from somewhere on top of a mountain. 'They are given to poems chosen from certain magazines. It's not a competition but all poems appearing in those magazines become entries - whether you like it or not, therefore it's considered an honour when one's awarded you didn't ask for it. And then all the award-winning poems appear in the annual.'

Congratulations.

Thank you again for the Dunedin news, Charles. I hope you are well. I'll be writing to Ruth soon. I owe her a letter.

Janet

c/o Dr/ John Money,
2104 East Madison Street,
Bsltimore 21205,
MD., U.S.A.
July 1, 1967.

Dear Charles,

I've been neglecting my correspondence! Thank you for your letter of 21st April giving me complete dates of your itinerary. By now you'll be back in London. I hope you had a very enjoyable trip to the Continent.

I've been having so many impressions here that I think I've had enough. I'm coming to London on 28th August, staying in U.K. fintil the end of September, returning to U.S.A. to spend October and November at the writers' and artists' and emposers' colony at Yaddo, then returning to N.Z. for Christmas. I spent the whole of May at the Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, and I've been invited to return for the two months in the 'fall'. I wonder do you know of Yaddo? It is a mansion with two smaller houses each with separate living quarters and studios, set in five hundred and fifty acres of lakes and woods and gardens. It is a working community, and costs nothing for those who are accepted for a stay of maximum and costs nothing for those who months. Each writer, artists etc. has a self-contained bedroom, bathroom, studio, and meals, except for lunch which is made up early in the morning in the and thermos, are taken in the mansion in summer and the smaller houses in antumn and winter.

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I won't go into details in this letter but I found it a very satisfying place to work and am looking forward to my return there.

Also, I met people that I would not have met - poets, artists, novelists. Not to mention chipmunks and squirrels and scarlet tanagers!

People I met at Yaddo have lent me their apartment in New York for July and most of August. I'm looking forward to seeing the galleries again. I've had the most wonderful e perience of seeing paintings that were known before only in dull postcard colours: the reality is far more than the dream. And in New York I shall be staying almost next door to the galleries.

The days are got here. Going outside is like walking into a hot bath.

I will may goodbye now Charles and good luck and journeying.

I have not yet solved the pro blem of fear of flying. Perhaps I may
see you in London or will you be too busy?

Vanet.



We acknowledge our gratitude to:

Pamela Gordon and Denis Harold, Janet Frame executors

Alan Roddick, Charles Brasch literary executor

Janet Frame correpondence © Janet Frame Literary Trust.

Charles Brasch correspondence © Estate of Charles Brasch.

We acknowledge and thank the Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago, for permission to reproduce and quote from the Frame and Brasch in their collection.

Passages from the Frame/Brasch correspondence were first published in Dear Charles, Dear Janet: Frame & Brasch in Correspondence. Selected and edited by Pamela Gordon and Denis Harold. (The Holloway Press, University of Auckland, New Zealand 2010.)

Shane Cotton's The Haymaker Series

By Justin Paton

single work made of five paint-Aings that together stretch nine metres across the gallery wall, [The Haymaker Series] is full of souvenirs and silhouettes - pieces of Cotton's past. There's the pot plant from his 1993 painting Faith; there's the slice of Northland landscape that inhabits the bottom edge of He Pukapuka Tuatahi from 1999-2000; there are the 'carved heads' from 2009's Tradition, History & Incidents; and there, attached to a stand like a piece of museum taxidermy, is the bird with its outflung arms from the 2010 painting Flat Light. Yet the mood of The Haymaker Series overall is in no way mellow or retrospective. What rises from the work, in fact, is a feeling of serious play and wilful impurity, as Cotton steals back from himself images that were frequently burgled from others in the first place. The icons of this impurity are the figures that occupy the first and last panels of the series, like the flanking saints or angels in an altarpiece or Renaissance predella. The carved wooden figure that rises up staunchly on the left is He Tangata, He Tangata, a sculpture made in 1956 by the pioneering Māori modernist Arnold Manaaki Wilson. Its appearance here amounts to a homage to Wilson, who died in 2012 aged eighty-three and was much respected by Cotton, but it is a homage made in the spirit of Wilson's own work at its most venturesome and modern. Placing the figure on a stage decorated with what seem to be Jasper Johns's 'targets', Cotton has impaled and embellished its body with curious gifts and trophies (a billiard ball, a blue rock, one of Cotton's own birds), creating a strange new idol or protector figure – a bristling Māori St Sebastian.

For sheer strangeness, however, this form is thoroughly outdone by the one at the other end of *The Haymaker Series*, which looks like a hi-fi system crossed with a nineteenth-century

automaton crossed with Julian Dashper's 1988 Mural for a contemporary house (no. 4). Cotton calls this fifth panel Staging Post, the term for a place where voyagers stop to rest and consolidate their belongings before moving on, and among the objects he unpacks here are artworks by his two key 'fellow travellers' among contemporary Māori artists: Peter Robinson (represented by one of his hanging 'chains' from the early 2000s) and Michael Parekowhai (by the ornamental doe).

This is, surely, another vote for creative impurity, since Parekowhai and Robinson are well known as shakers-up of what 'Māori art' can be. But beyond these visual shout-outs, the more resounding vote is the 'staging post' itself, an invention of such monsterish oddity that it threatens to overbalance the entire painting (I imagine Cotton stepping away from this final panel, genuinely surprised by the creature he'd fashioned). With its multiple mouths, stylized cigarette and gawking central 'eye', all presented in different painterly registers, it calls to mind the lumpen, chain-smoking figures that populate the 1970s paintings of Philip Guston - the American artist who said, in words that Cotton would surely endorse, 'painting is "impure". It is the adjustment of "impurities" which forces its continuity.'

From the flanking figures at each end we move to the three paintings between, each one a dark sky filled with signs and wonders. In panel two (Diamond and Circles), we look up at a mighty diamond, a shape that seems partly to sit in the sky and partly to open into it. And in panel four (Coloured Dirt Dreaming), we peer out at eighteen Toi moko hovering in front of cloudbanks like a formation of lost souls. Both the diamond and the heads come with a heavy burden of significance – the diamond perhaps evoking the mystical form said to have revealed itself to the

nineteenth-century Māori prophet Te Kooti, and the heads, with their livid red flesh, trailing histories of reverence, trade and war. But even as these forms lead us back, if we're willing to follow the trails, to historic moments of conflict or revelation, they also recall us to the playful, process-driven and present-tense setting of Cotton's own studio. The diamond, for instance, could be a cosmic vent opening on to some diagram of the spheres, but it is also, emphatically, a surface for painterly experiment, a kind of palette in the sky, which Cotton has filled with drips and curves of fluid paint and a commotion of Kandinsky-like circles. Likewise, in Coloured Dirt Dreaming, paint gets between us and the deep space of the sky, in the form of bars, splats and spots of bright colour placed over each of the hovering heads, recalling the 'price-sticker' interventions famously made in the 1980s by Californian conceptualist John Baldessari (more recent examples of which Cotton had encountered in the collection of his friend and patron David Teplitzky). Beyond the straightforward visual kick of this device, which pits flatness so aggressively against depth, what's exciting here is how tricky it is to place Cotton's precise intentions for these faces. Some look as though their identities are being protected, like witnesses in a criminal case. Others suggest extras in a B-grade horror movie, with ectoplasm oozing from their eyes. And still others look as though they have come under direct fire – albeit from someone whose only weapon is a paint gun. It is as if, having created a realm of skies and placed these heads within it, Cotton is now moving freely and even mischievously through his own painted stratosphere - cutting back across former flight paths at unexpected angles and, in his own words, 'never staying in the same place for too long'. We are a long way here from the

torn feeling of earlier Toi moko paintings, like *Flat Light* from only two years earlier, where the heads hung amidst spiked forms and a red mist of words. When I asked Cotton what differences he saw between *The Haymaker Series* and those works, he replied, fascinatingly, that the new work 'is more about the living than the dead'.

The Haymaker Series strikes me ... as an active performance, a statement of purpose, a shaggy kind of manifesto – a painting made of five paintings about the process of painting. Even by the standards of this self-professed burglar and magpie, the series brims with allusions to other painters and artists: Wilson, Kandinsky, Baldessari and Guston, to name only those that leap out at me.

And it also foregrounds the material and means of painting with a directness that is new in Cotton's art, cranking up the tension between the deep space of the skies and the flat bright forms that float upon them. My favourite of all these moments occurs in the central panel SEE.R, whose title contains an allusion to yet another painter revered by Cotton: Ed Ruscha. In the scene's foreground another art object, a carved head, turns away from us and looks out into the space of the sky. What this 'seer' sees is indicated by another of Cotton's abstract interventions, four slender bars of colour that together make a rectangle in the sky. It is a frame, a kind of sighting device, a window on a changing world. And it is also a

simple and eloquent diagram of what a painting does – the way it sets up an illusory space and invites us to enter imaginatively into it.

One could say that, across the past six years, Cotton has used painting to explore the space of the sky. But SEE.R is a crucial reminder that the opposite is true. He has also been using the sky to explore the possibilities of painting. And I for one will be watching that space.

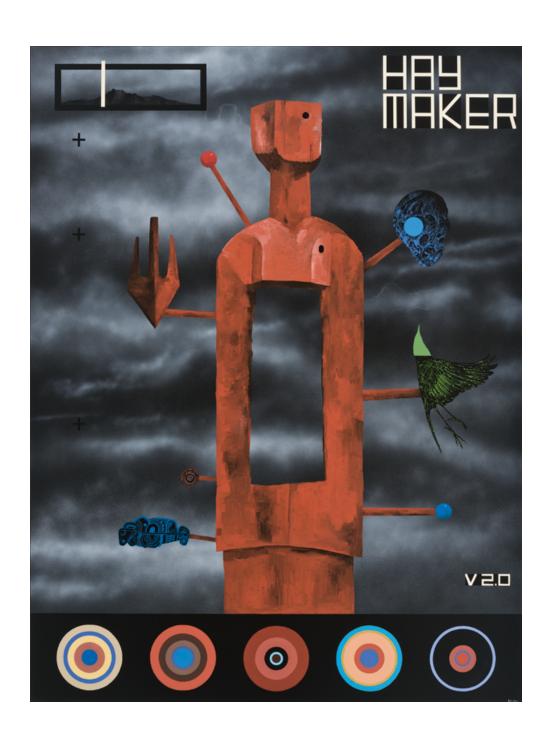
This excerpt is taken from the essay 'The Hanging Sky' by Justin Paton, first published in Shane Cotton: The Hanging Sky, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, New Zealand, 2013.

GALLERY BY SHANE COTTON
THE HAYMAKER SERIES

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COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MICHAEL LETT, AUCKLAND





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DIAMOND AND CIRCLES
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SEE.R
2012
ACRYLIC ON LINEN
2400 X 1800MM



COLOURED DIRT DREAMING
2012
ACRYLIC ON LINEN
2400 X 1800MM





STAGING POST
2012

ACRYLIC ON LINEN
2400 X 1800MM

Five Dials









Issue 32 launch at the King's College college chapel. Hosted by the Australia & New Zealand Festival of Literature & Arts. Clockwise from top: C.K. Stead, the chapel, Micah Ferris, Lail Arad.

LAIL ARAD VIDEO

LINK TO FRANCIS UPRITCHARD SHOW

