

## HOW TO LOOK AT A PAINTING

Justin Paton, 2005  
Paperback 128 pages  
ISBN 0958253889  
RRP \$24.95

Reviewed by Linda Tyler

Not content with new electronic resources or plain old books, Almelo Public Library in the Netherlands has recently begun lending people to counter public stereotypes. Library users can borrow a gypsy, a Muslim, a gay or a little person and take them away for an hour to question them in a way they might never dare in a random meeting. The scheme has proved so popular that there has been consideration given to extending it to rare or maligned occupational groups. Ever wondered what a coroner does? Would a parking attendant liven up your dinner party?

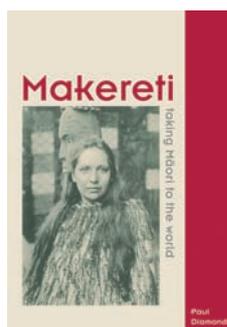
To read Justin Paton's book is a bit like borrowing him for an hour. It is part of the Ginger series, commissioned by Wellington publisher and feminist Mary Varnham so that she could read about the things she is interested in, and reasoned other Kiwis could be too: rugby, astronomy, pop music, racing, wine, fishing, reading, cricket, birds. The mostly male writers are all charming, well-educated companions for a short encounter with a specialist subject, helping the reader on the road to self-sufficiency en route to the Basin Reserve, the bottle shop or in this case, the art gallery.

Winner of the Lifestyle category in the Montana New Zealand Book Awards for 2006, *How to Look at a Painting* has been reprinted 4 times and is in over 50 public libraries in New Zealand. I have read it three times and have owned and given away 5 copies, dispensing each one like medicine to cure the fear factor amongst art neophytes. Avoiding the methodologies of art history and art theory assiduously, it is a perfectly formed example of its library classification: Painting Appreciation. It starts gently with nana's flower paintings, and checks off fourteen chapters, whisking past Caravaggio, Chardin and McCahon like stations on the main trunk line to end up at the beginning with a paint-laden brush about to connect with canvas. Something this simple must have been devilishly difficult to do, and many reviewers have praised Paton's easy and engaging writing style. *Landfall*, however, reproaches him (gently) for reinforcing anti-intellectualism with his eschewal of the terminology of critical theory while *The Book Show* on Australia's ABC wanted more guidance on sorting wheat from chaff,

worrying that instructing the masses to just go out and see more painting implied that no effort was required to work out what it is all about.

What insights could this book offer to a public art gallery or museum? It argues that paintings exist to be looked at, and like a take-home Muslim, can yield insights with personal interaction. Having recently cultivated exhibition design and interpretation as branches of the profession, it seems a pity to suggest pruning, but Paton advocates staging the occasional surprise encounter with a naked painting, unencumbered by acoustiguides, extended labels or gel covered lights. Reviewing this book two years after publication, I am reminded how our institutions have been shaped, not just by collections, but by the people who work in them. For eight years, Paton has been Curator of Contemporary Art at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, but has now left to become Senior Curator at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Inevitably, this is how the author looked at painting from Dunedin in 2005 – notwithstanding a trip or two overseas – and that could all change in the future.

**Linda Tyler** is Director of the Centre for New Zealand Art and Discovery and Director of the Gus Fisher Gallery, University of Auckland. With co-editor Stuart Strachan, she has just published, *Ka Taoka Hakana (Treasures from the Hocken Collections)*, Otago University Press.



## MAKERETI: TAKING MĀORI TO THE WORLD

Paul Diamond, 2007  
Random House New Zealand,  
Auckland  
216 pages  
ISBN 1869419006  
RRP \$44.99

Reviewed by Keri-Anne Wikitera

*Makereti: taking Māori to the world* is a poignant title as it exemplifies the subject's life. Margaret Thom, Makareti or Maggie Papakura as she was also known, was a tribal member of Tuhourangi. She lived and grew up with my great grandparents in Whakarewarewa, the small thermal village in Rotorua. Tourism was the village's main economic base, as it still is today - more than 100 years later.

Makereti was a trailblazer in the tourism industry in New Zealand. She portrayed her life in the village in such a way that early travellers took great interest in Māori culture, in performing arts, artefacts and the lifestyles of Māori in a geothermal landscape. In due course

she married, moved to England and studied at Oxford University. Sadly she died just before her MA dissertation was examined; she was buried (according to her wishes) in the English village where she lived, Oddington, Oxfordshire. Her grave is visited regularly by Māori resident in England. Reading the chapel's visitor book I saw that many Māori travellers come to pay homage to one of our great 'wahine toa'. Despite her later years spent overseas, this pioneering woman is no stranger to our tribe: she is survived by her direct descendants and remains a role model for many Māori who emigrated to England, those who have undertaken tertiary studies or chosen tourism careers. This beautifully produced book, with all the pictures, is itself another taonga that I consider precious – it will take an honoured place on mine and many family members' book shelves for years to come.

In these times of rapid technological change, many Māori are 'taking Māori to the world'. International travel, cyberspace, the internet, TV, iPods, mobile phones, even PlayStation gaming are all tools used to expand the Māori knowledge base and promote New Zealand's indigenous culture. It is, after all, one of our nation's points of difference in our increasingly global environment. Makereti's achievements are remarkable when you consider she was taking Māori to the world without even the most basic of today's communication technology. The book highlights this and shows that Makereti utilised the technology of her time to communicate Māori culture. Many of the photographs show the carvings and artefacts she took on her travels and donated to museums around the world.

The biography captures the essence of Makereti's life and the many identities she embodied. The book is set out in chronological order of her life, beginning with a brief context of New Zealand's early colonial history. The text merges with extensive illustration, mostly photographs of Makereti as a tour guide or with family members. The substantial acknowledgments list indicates the amount of research, support and endorsement required in putting this book together. It is encouraging to see that the research not only produced a book, but has been used for both an on-line and a gallery exhibition at the National Library. This provides a more comprehensive presentation of the research and exposes the material to a larger audience.

The book complements recent literature on museum history, tourism development, Māori economic development, tribal histories and leadership in New Zealand. A good museum example is Conal McCarthy's book *Exhibiting Māori - A History of Colonial Cultures of Display* (2007). *Exhibiting Māori* offers a critical historical examination of how Māori culture was exhibited, while this biography of Makereti provides context and illuminates

with real examples the lived experience for Makereti and her people in the first part of the 20th century.

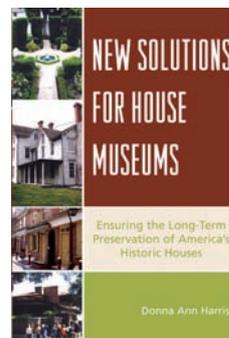
The collection of photographs, particularly the souvenirs and tourism literature showing Makereti's image, provide a good indication of tourism promotional material at that time and would be useful for museums studies and tourism students who are looking at historical interpretative and marketing material. The book portrays Makereti as a leader of her time, a role model for New Zealand and an entrepreneur who 'made it' overseas.

Author Paul Diamond has brought together a well-researched biography with carefully chosen photographs of Makereti's life. It is a timely contribution to New Zealand's heritage tourism literature, highlighting the fact that New Zealand tourism has always competed hard to attract and engage international visitors in a global market.

**Keri-Anne Wikitera** (Tuhourangi/Ngati Wahiao/Ngati Whakaue) is currently undertaking research at AUT for her doctoral thesis on 'Maori Spaces in Foreign Places: The case of Hinemihi o Te Ao Tawhito'. Hinemihi is a meeting house that was located at Tarawera until 1892 (post eruption) when she was moved to Clandon Park, Surrey where she is now cared for by the English National Trust. Hinemihi, like Makereti, has become a site for connection for Maori visiting and living in England and provides another example of how Maori spaces are created and can exist outside of tribal regions.

*The virtual exhibition, Makereti: taking Māori to the world, produced by the National Library, can be seen on their website: <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/collections/online-exhibitions/makereti>*

## NEW SOLUTIONS FOR HOUSE MUSEUMS; ENSURING THE LONG-TERM PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HISTORIC HOUSES.



Donna Ann Harris, 2007  
AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek,  
California  
Paperback 260 pages  
ISBN -10:0-7591-1087-5  
US\$27.95

Reviewed by David Reynolds

New Zealanders have long been great joiners. Check the Museums Aotearoa directory and you'll find we've also been quite effective at establishing small museums - an

eclectic mix of over 140 house and local history museums, where the building housing the collection, sometimes a pioneer cottage or country house but just as often an adapted post office, dairy factory, court, school or fire station, is also a major artefact in the collection (or should be).

We acquired the heritage bug big time in the late '60s (in the first big search for national identity?) - when we baby boomers decided it was not so bad living in quaint former slums and set about buying cheap Victorian housing and adapting it to late 20th Century needs. We were quite good at that, and came to believe we could just as easily restore the old gum store at Maungakaka or the runholder's 'big house' in Canterbury and open them successfully to the public. Interest in house museums was higher back then, when the Historic Places Trust was first acquiring and opening significant early houses as museums. Many local history groups followed suit and, at a rough count, 40% of small museums with MA membership are house museums or collections of domestic buildings relocated in more or less 'historic' villages.

Today the performance of small museums in attracting repeat or new visitors has dropped back to a fraction of what it was thirty years ago. Few house museum operators attract enough visitation and funding to maintain and renew interpretive programmes and displays at regular intervals. Dependency on grant money is a fact of life and only the very lucky may have an endowment to ensure that their building envelope is sound, weatherproof, and maintained at appropriate intervals. For those managing the quarter of museums identified in the 2007 Museum Sector Web Survey, operating on annual budgets of less than \$5000, this book could be a revelation.

Historic preservation consultant Donna Ann Harris undertook the research for this AASLH study at five US institutions, and has produced constructive guidelines aimed at board and staff members of historic house museums owned by not-for-profit organisations struggling with insufficient funds or personnel to sustain their site at the level that the historic building needs and deserves. Harris's message is prudent and pragmatic and the operating circumstances surrounding her case studies of house museums that have successfully made the transition to a new owner or a new use will be very familiar to many small museum operators faced with serious questions about the sustainability of their museum.

Those presently contemplating change in their museum's direction will find particular value in the case studies dealing with transition management, asset transfer and merger, and the return of buildings to private ownership with restrictive covenants such as the Heritage Covenants available in the Historic Places Act. For those who have never contemplated reviewing their corporate goals, let

alone writing them, this book could cause more than a few sleepless nights.

**David Reynolds** worked for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust in Auckland for 17 years and as Senior Curator managed the Trust's North Island portfolio of 30 properties including house museums, archaeological sites and a diverse range of other historic structures. The founding chairman of ICOMOS New Zealand, he was the first Clark Collection scholar to attend the Attingham Summer School. He now works as a heritage consultant specialising in conservation planning and heritage management

## WELLINGTON: A CITY FOR SCULPTURE



Jenny Harper & Aaron Lister  
(eds) 2007  
Photographs by Bruce Connew  
Victoria University Press,  
Wellington  
Paperback 144 pages  
ISBN 9780 86473 5706  
RRP \$50.00

Reviewed by Susan Brooker

Wellington City seems to have a great knack for making public art happen – or at least giving the appearance that this is the case. The city has consciously branded itself a 'creative city' and cultural destination and it cleverly uses its public art works in promotional material to reinforce this message. So much so that artist Neil Dawson's suspended sculptural globe *Ferns* has now become synonymous with Wellington. It is hardly surprising therefore that the first comprehensive publication devoted solely to public art *Wellington A City for Sculpture* has sprung from our capital city.

This book is a welcome arrival, given the dearth of New Zealand publications on public art. The editors have gathered together an impressive selection of writers from academic and curatorial backgrounds and each have provided a short, thoughtful essay that, in combination, cover a broad range of themes on Wellington's public art works.

Included are Maori art works, historical sculptures, temporary art projects, corporate art works including those created through the arts bonus scheme, as well as essays on public art works in specific areas such as Lambton Quay, the Civic Square, the waterfront and the Botanic Garden. Most of the essays are lively and engaging. Curiously absent is an artist's perspective

on creating art for the public realm, which could have provided an interesting addition to this collection.

Credit is given to the Wellington Sculpture Trust which has played a pivotal role in the funding and management of many major public art projects. The Trust appears to enjoy an enviable relationship with the City Council. Anyone who has been involved in a public art project will understand the complexity of creating art in the urban environment, so it is pleasing to see that along with the accolades, this book acknowledges the lengthy and sometimes fraught processes required to develop public art projects. Interestingly, this has been equally true for historical sculptures as Roger Blackley points out: "public sculpture always remains subject to the vagaries of both taste and town planning".

Jenny Harper offers an insightful essay touching on more uncomfortable issues surrounding the maintenance, restoration, relocation and disappearance of several public art works. Harper acknowledges that this book does not debate the growing abundance of art works in the city, and it will certainly be interesting to see how Wellington tackles the deaccessioning question in the future.

The publicity surrounding this book promised a 'visual feast'. However the publication is somewhat let down by its design. The use of staggered margins to delineate paragraphs is distracting and messy. Compromises have been made on the format and the result is disappointing, especially given the subject matter, which has been cleverly captured by Bruce Connew's evocative photographs.

However, despite this, *Wellington A City for Sculpture* fills an unmistakable void. It is an excellent documentation of

public art in Wellington and intelligently and accessibly explores a broad range of issues concerning the relationship between art and urban spaces. A useful index of the art works discussed is included in the publication, along with maps to identify locations. Although it is probably not the easiest book to take with you on a sculpture walk and dip into, it does provide great background reading.

**Susan Brooker** is currently on parental leave from her role as an Arts Policy Planner for Auckland City Council. In 2006 she developed a *Resiting or Removing Public Art Works Policy and Guidelines* for the City Council.

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