

“Space” is the theme of this issue of *Junctures*, dedicated, in part, to the work of artists and scientists collaborating in the Science Series Project “Art and Space” in Dunedin from November 2015-September 2016 and concluding with an exhibition in the H. D. Skinner Annex at the Otago Museum. The scientists are all research-active in different fields that involve “space” in one of its many senses and the artists are students and graduates from the Dunedin School of Art, as well as other members of the art community in Dunedin, some of whom have participated in one or other of the Science Series Projects in the past. As in 2015, the Otago Museum was a Project partner. The theme of “Space” was of particular significance as the Project commemorated the opening of the Perpetual Guardian Planetarium in the Otago Museum on 5 December 2015.

The concept of “Space” is, of course, multivalent. It relates to “outer space,” the cosmos, as well as inner space, such as the space of the mind or the space made vacant by decaying cells. It also covers the perceived space/distance between objects, as well as the space in time between one event, or process, and another. There is also the space of social interaction, as well as the mapping of space in all these spatial and time related concepts. Indeed “Space” opened up a whole range of possible ways in which art and science could and would interconnect and interact, could and did find space to explore mutually rewarding co-experiences.

This issue of *Junctures* includes an overview of the works at the exhibition held in the H. D. Skinner Annex, as well as extended writing by some of the exhibitors in collaboration with the scientists with whom they worked. These articles bear witness to the fact that these co-operative relationships, built up over the period of the Project, have an on-going influence on the thinking and working of some of the artists, acting as springboards to new ventures, new ideas and creative concepts. In addition, scientists have also benefitted from the sometimes unexpected images and installations their artist co-workers have produced, giving them new perspectives on their own work, the reapplication of their ideas to totally different fields and media.

Space is also a cultural concept. Though Postmodernism was a Western academic progeny of the late 1970s, it opened up unexpected consequences for the reassessment of the West’s relationship with the rest of the world. It encouraged venturing out of the restrictive experience of art and ideas from an exclusively Western point of view, and a re-evaluation of Western experience of the “Other.”

Postmodernism, in the spirit of self-critique, later went on to question the very use of the term “Other,” that creates barriers in cultural thinking when the very reverse lay at the heart of the Postmodern project. The “Other” it had to be admitted, did indeed have a history of its own, an art history, a philosophy of life, its own sense of reality. It had a voice ready to relate that history and sense of reality, that the West, in both its own conceits of cultural superiority and commercially driven will to dominate, had not previously been disposed to hear. Under the pressure of Postmodern thinking history and cultures began to be considered in broader and, coextensively, and paradoxically, in more specific terms—we are all citizens of the world, but also existentially “cultural” actors. It was significant, for example, in New Zealand’s cultural history, that the Te Māori exhibition should take place after the Postmodern turn, opening in New York in 1984. New Zealand was not ready for the sort of shifts in thinking Postmodernism introduced until obliged to celebrate the art of its own “Other” only after it had been celebrated across the United States. Aotearoa New Zealand became an accepted name for the nation during the late 1980s, given impetus by its use in pop music songs.

Serious attention began to be paid to the art of other cultures, to layers of artistic experience among a range of peoples outside the West, as well as to the varieties of the creative arts within the multiplicity of Western cultures themselves. This began to be extended to non-Western experiences of alternative histories. Epeli Hau’ofa, the Tongan academic, developed the concept of a Pacific Island culture that was prior to colonisation, particularly in his essays of the 1990s—“Our Sea of Islands” and “The Ocean is Us,” that extended from island to island without clear frontiers or the artificial borders of colonial possessions drawn on the map by Western powers. In these essays Hau’ofa offers up a different sense of Pacific “space,” not relative to its distance from Europe but in relation to the mutually interlocked histories of Pacific migration and navigation. In the Art and Space exhibition *Heramaahina* Eketone used Māori cosmology, rediscovered and reemphasised by the work of Associate Professor Rangi Matamua from the University of Waikato, to create a complex installation of painting, sculpture and woodcarving, to represent, from a Māori perspective, both the universe and the individual threads of our specific and individual cultural beliefs and experiences that go to make up our collective knowledge.

The space of the Pacific, the Ocean cultures that Hau’ofa describes, in their difference to Western art practice and their difference from each other across that vast space, but encompassed by a mutually enriching history, is the subject of Susan Cochrane’s long essay “Art in the Contemporary Pacific” that extends the reach of Aotearoa New Zealand’s own sense of itself as part of that ancient pre-Cook culture of the ocean, a reimagining of our own cultural space.

Yet the energy of Postmodernism was not engaged in the direction of creating new garments to wear to mark us off as new beings in a new age, different from those of the past, not to create new markers of difference, but to admit, for the first time, and with the pain of any new realisation, that cultures are never static edifices but, like the stars in space, ever moving constellations, agglomerations of cosmic dust that swirl over time, coming to rest only for short periods before taking off again on some other trajectory and in other combinations of matter. Cultures all have shifting, hybrid histories and this always leaves behind a sense of grief. Change is cruel. Human cultures are not noted for their charity and clemency, for their justice in their dealings one with another. The reorganisation and reconstruction of cultural space through colonisation, through war and commercial predation is harsh and unforgiving. This is the theme of the powerful exhibition brought together by Moana Tipa

with the haunting waiata, the lyrical pain of the music and the grief and political punch of the images. The inevitability of change, the movement of cultures over and through each other, is often described by the word “hybridity” that seems to imply “neither one thing or another,” and with the undertone of “lesser.” But all art has always been hybrid in the sense of taking something from the past, the cultural “pasts,” and adding the circumstances of the present. This is one of a series of interlocked themes of the closing article in this issue by the Munich-based philosopher Pravu Mazumdar. He asks the apparently mystical question “How is it possible, that things appear?” a question he goes on to discuss in his own idiosyncratic and hybrid form of discourse. But, in the spirit of this issue of *Junctures*, we could also say that things appear “spatially,” that is they appear in the language, in the gaze, in the sight and in the time of the culture in which they have a value. The stars appear differently in the northern hemisphere to the southern. They appear with different names based upon cultural clicks of the tongue and expirations of breath. Under whatever cultural rubric they assist in navigating the oceans and crossing the deserts. Space can emphasise distance or closeness, mark a barrier or a place of fellowship. We see space, amongst other things, differently through our cultural eyes.

In putting this issue together I want to express particular thanks to my Editorial Assistant, Pam McKinlay, who has handled the complex detail of organisation with her habitual enthusiasm, skill and patience. She also worked with scientists to construct a woven appreciation of that reemergent concept in space/time, “gravitational waves.” I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of my co-organiser of the Science Series, Ruth Napper, who, this year, for the first time, successfully exhibited as an artist. Ted Whitaker helped Pam with the final lay out of *Junctures*. Thank you, Ted. There are many minds, hand and voices that contribute, in one way or another, to any publication. They are there in the words and images on the page.