In through the earth, and up to the sky

This 'box set' has been designed to cosily house two exhibition publications – Caroline McQuarrie's *Homewardbounder* (shown at Enjoy in April) and Bridget Reweti's *I thought I would of climbed more mountains by now* (shown at Enjoy in June).

I initially invited Caroline and Bridget to exhibit alongside each other but logistics wrested them apart into solo showings. Still invested in their conceptual companionship, we've instead paired them in this joint publication.

I've always had a soft spot for utopias and semi-utopias – their promise, their disappointment, their fallout. It's the inevitability of compromise that fascinates, these situations brimming with aspiration and resignation – two states of emotional nuance more complex than absolute success or failure.

Both *Homewardbounder* and *I thought I would of climbed more mountains by now* are the product of some physical exertion on the part of the artists; Caroline tramping throughout the West Coast, and Bridget mountaineering nearby in the Southern Alps. Grounded in their research and very real experiences, Caroline and Bridget's work navigates the territory between aspiration and resignation through interactions with the New Zealand landscape – both personal and historical.

Caroline's photographs feature adits, or exploratory mine shafts carved out by West Coast miners during the 1860s. Bridget's work documents her traversal of an alpine plateau near Erewhon Station. Considered together, they encompass a spectrum of attitudes towards the land. Mining's problematic exploitation of natural resources is weighed against human costs and economic gains in

Homewardbounder, while Māori, religious, and imperial landscape ideologies are central to Bridget's work, which negotiates the colonial traces implicit in the act of 'conquering' a mountain.

We relate to the landscape both individually and collectively, often leaving it marked. Moving between the sublime and the human, Caroline and Bridget remind us that it also leaves its marks on us.

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We are grateful to both Massey University and Creative New Zealand for supporting the development of these works and this publication.

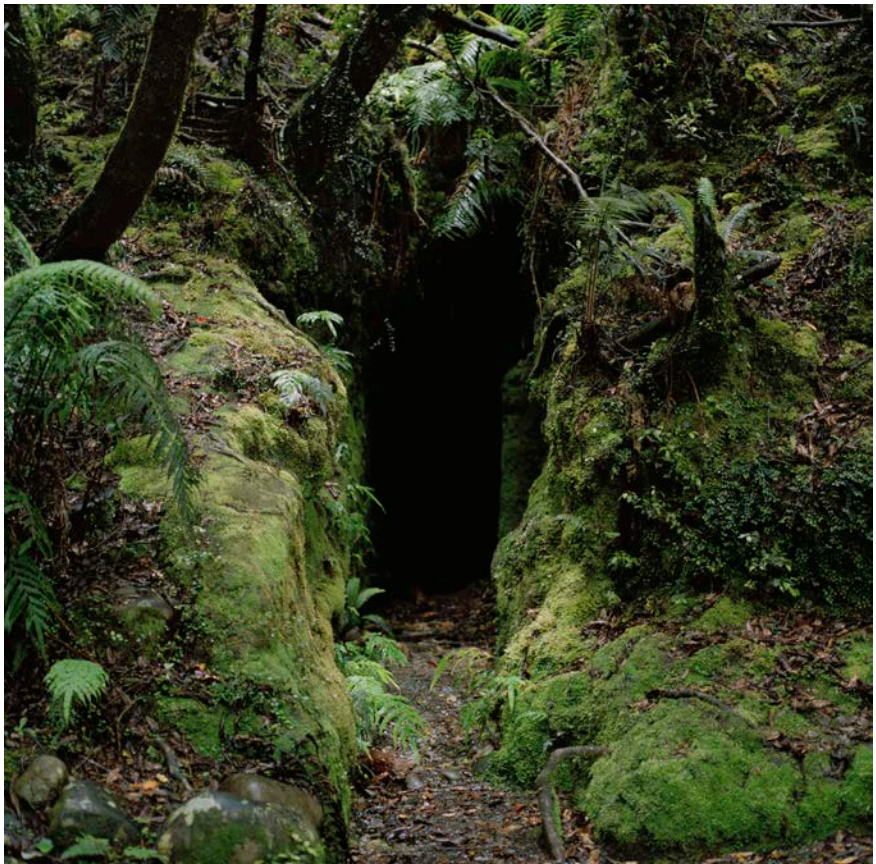
K. Emma Ng

Curator/Manager, Enjoy Public Art Gallery

Homeward
bounder

Homeward

Homewardbounder #01. 2014.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.



‘The aim of every miner was to strike a ‘homeward-bounder’, a claim that would provide him with the means to travel back to his home country…’

The photographs in the series *Homewardbounder* are of the entrances to 'adits', or horizontal mineshafts, left in the West Coast landscape after exploration by gold miners in the 1860s, when Europeans populated the region due to a gold rush.

Miners on the West Coast in the 1860s rush were usually men who were born overseas. Many came to the West Coast via other rushes in California, Australia and Otago. The aim of every miner was to strike a 'homeward-bounder', a claim that would provide him with the means to travel back to his home country and set himself up as a person of substance for the rest of his life. However the reality for most was hard physical labour with a hand to mouth existence in which they moved from site to site in hope of the big strike. In only a few years most of the goldfields were company run, and the miners who stayed quickly settled for the certainty of working for wages, the only sign of the haphazard madness of the rush being the marks left on the landscape.

What are we to make of these marks today? They were made up to 150 years ago; the voids themselves begin to represent our collective memory as we move further away from the time they were made. The dark, damp spaces in these images remind us of the hardship and extreme conditions many of our pioneers endured.

It is difficult for us to conceive of a decision to travel across the world and into an unforgiving landscape for a chance at making your fortune, yet thousands of people made this decision in the 19th century. These voids in the landscape are reminders of their extraordinary decision, which ultimately shaped our country.

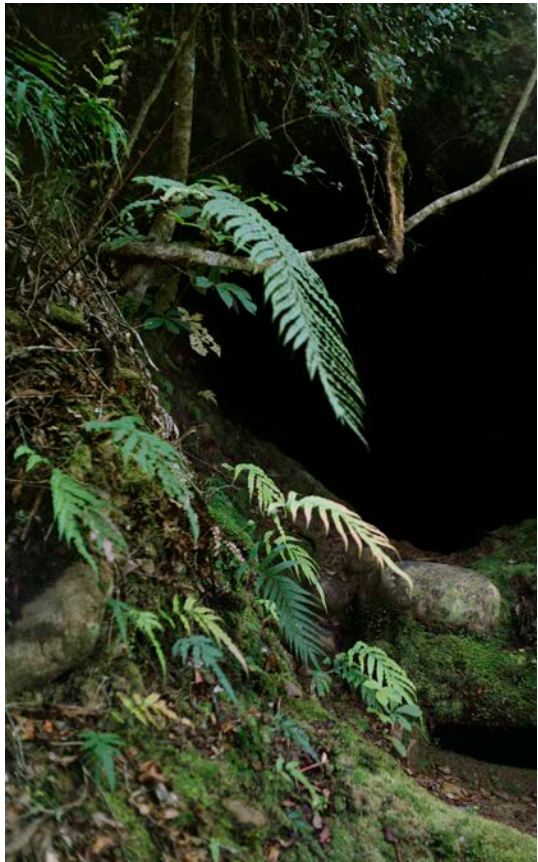
And yet... this is only one version of the story. Another version might suggest that these voids explore a nationhood built on the heroic exploits of men, yet there were many women on the goldfields, and many more waiting at home (in New Zealand and abroad) for their husbands and sons to come home once they had their great adventure. These women also built our country, yet they did not mark the land in quite such a way, their exploits generally being of a less physically detrimental nature.

Yet another version of the story recognises that in Aotearoa New Zealand the question of ownership of and dominion over land is extremely problematic, and even if we accept that the sale of the West Coast in 1860 was legitimate,1 the European miner's attitude to how the land should be used was very different from local Māori who had been living in the area for generations.

Caroline McQuarrie

The idea that resources in the land are only there to be exploited still pervades the West Coast, and indeed New Zealand today. And yet in a cruel twist of fate for the descendants of these miners, the central paradox of the West Coast region is that the instability of the primary industries it was founded on also threaten its current existence; mining founded the region, mining keeps it limping along, but mining may also be its downfall.

1 With 'great reluctance' and 'after weeks of argument', the West Coast chiefs signed the Arahura Deed on 21 May 1860 on behalf of the Kai Tahu tribe (Evison 1993: 388)' in *Roberta McIntyre, Historic Heritage of High Country Pastoralism: South Island up to 1948* (Wellington: Science & Technical Publishing, 2007), 63.



Homewardbounder #02. 2013.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.

Homewardbounder #03. 2014.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.

Homewardbounder #04. 2014.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.

Homewardbounder #05. 2014.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.

Homewardbounder #06. 2014.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.

‘The past is never dead.
It is not even past.’

—William Faulkner

The caves are prosaic objects. They are the marks of men. They are the removal of earth. They are the absence of the earth. They are darkness. They are void.

Don't go in. It's dangerous.

They creep me out. They're beautiful. They shouldn't creep me out. They're nature. They're beautiful. They're Aotearoa/New Zealand. They're the luscious West Coast. They're bush. They're beautiful. They should make me happy. But they don't. But they don't make me unhappy. They make me disturbed, pleasantly disturbed. They remind me somehow of childhood, of Alice's rabbit hole or her mirror, or of Lucy's wardrobe. As if somehow they promise adventure – a dark creepy adventure. They remind me of The Picnic at Hanging Rock. They remind me of adolescent yearning, of danger, and of escape. Where do they come from Caroline? Why were you drawn to them? I know you find them eerie, melancholy. You told me that. Why did you need to have them? Why did you need to capture them in the light of your camera? These voids, these anti-lights, these refusals. What do they add to your story?

You have a story going. It's a story about love. It's a story about nostalgia. That weird nostalgia we get for the place we couldn't wait to leave behind us. For that place we left behind us. For that place we can never leave behind us. Home. We are small town girls. And small town girls leave.[1]

'The past is never dead. It is not even past.'[2]
- William Faulkner

Your story so far, your shows, seek the traces of the dead, traces of the abandoned. Traces of what you abandoned? You stalk the West Coast with your camera to find out what was left behind. You want it, you want them, remembered. You want us to see their traces, the remains of what they did. They had opera houses once upon a time. They had culture. They sought to better themselves. You want us to remember them because you care about them. Because you feel like they're misrepresented? Because a media pundit feels like he can call them feral. But you know it's hard work living on the Coast, it was hard, and it's been tough. The jobs are going. They've been tough. Your people have been tough. They've been tough and independent. They've combined the practical and the romantic. And the world that might have admired them, that might have admired the traits they show, is disappearing. But they have been admirable haven't they? For all their many flaws. No story is singular. You want us to learn to their stories, the way you have.

Jessica Hubbard

Homewardbounder #07. 2014.
Digital photographic print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag. 90x90cm.

On abandonment and other matters: a supposition

Listen.

What kind of ornery mad man would you have to have been to have come to the West Coast in the 1860s? If you came by land it was a treacherous mass of jungled cliffs, sharp mountains, and constant floods, if you came by sea it was a dangerous wreck zone. Māori lived there, but they knew the land, they knew the rhythms, they knew the stories, they had the guidance of their ancestors, and they knew what was edible, they belonged. But for foreigners, this was no easy lottery ticket, no rock up, find some gold, go back home, start a business, buy a house, marry a sweetheart love story. This was surviving getting there, slipping off a cliff or down a mine, drowning in a flood, being buried alive by falling earth, being bitten to the point of madness by mosquitoes, sandflies, and rats, dying of the fever caused by you all shitting in the same stream you drank from, starving to death because you didn't know you could eat the fern roots or the nikau kernels and what little food you had with you rotted away in the damp and the rain. This was constant discomfort and chipping away, chipping away, slowly chipping away at rock with your pick and a pan and your mate by your side.

Those romantic sods, they came here with their dreams. They wanted something better. They wanted to escape. They didn't want to work for someone else: in factories, in shops, in mines. Isn't that ironic Caroline? They didn't want to work for someone else. They wanted a better life. They wanted to make something their own. They didn't care it was someone else's before they came. They didn't know it would belong to the companies after. And after all they didn't really have the right. Even though they believed they did. No wonder you feel melancholy.

But, Caroline, you know this story. You've been patching them back together, stitching them up, drawing in the dead. How come? Is it only nostalgia? Or is it something more complicated? What are you looking for? What are you trying to do? Reclaim the dead? Memorialise the abandoned? It's a complicated process, this colonial history, this admiration, this love. Knowing what we know, can we ever not be ambivalent? If this work is nostalgic, it's dark with it.

In fact, these adits, these horizontal mines, they don't seem abandoned. If anything it's the opposite. Nature grows fierce and lush and with no particular interest in this human scar. They have simply been absorbed into the landscape. Maybe after all it's not

them that are abandoned; it's us, abandoned by time, abandoned by nature. Is that what stares out at us, our own abandonment, our own guilt? Is it nature that makes these caves so eerie, that lingering westernised romantic thrilling fear of the wilderness, that remorseful post-colonial sense of unbelonging that has so long clung to us incomers of Aotearoa/New Zealand? Are we still afraid of nature? Is it still a mystery to us? It seems so here. I remember having it as a child, that fear of the dark and silent bush. But I've lost it in my more rational adulthood. What a pity, for all we've lost.

'There's something about this land here which is bloody spooky. I don't feel it anywhere else I've been in the Western world. I feel it here.' [3]
- Gaylene Preston

And when I see these works I remember that feeling, the adolescent possibilities of mystery. And I return.

It is like they hold a secret. And they're keeping it from us.

And all we have to do is be brave.

Go in. It's dangerous.

On abandonment and other matters: a supposition

1 In a study on a small Cantabrian town Hugh Campbell found that 44% of girls, as opposed to 15% of boys left the town on finishing high school. Hugh Campbell, 'Real Men, Real Locals, and Real Workers: Realizing Masculinity in Small-town New Zealand' in *Country Boys: Masculinity and Rural Life*, ed. Hugh Campbell, Michael Mayerfeld Bell, Margaret Finney (Pennsylvannia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 90-91.

2 William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (London: Vintage Books, 1975).

3 Jonathon Dennis, 'Reflecting Reality: Gaylene Preston, An Interview' *in Film in Aotearoa* New Zealand, ed. Jonathon Dennis and Jan Bieringa (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1996), 171.

Jessica Hubbard

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Go in. It’s dangerous.

I thought
I would of
climbed more
mountains
by now

Practising Safe Art in front of the Devil's Backbone
2015 Digital Photograph

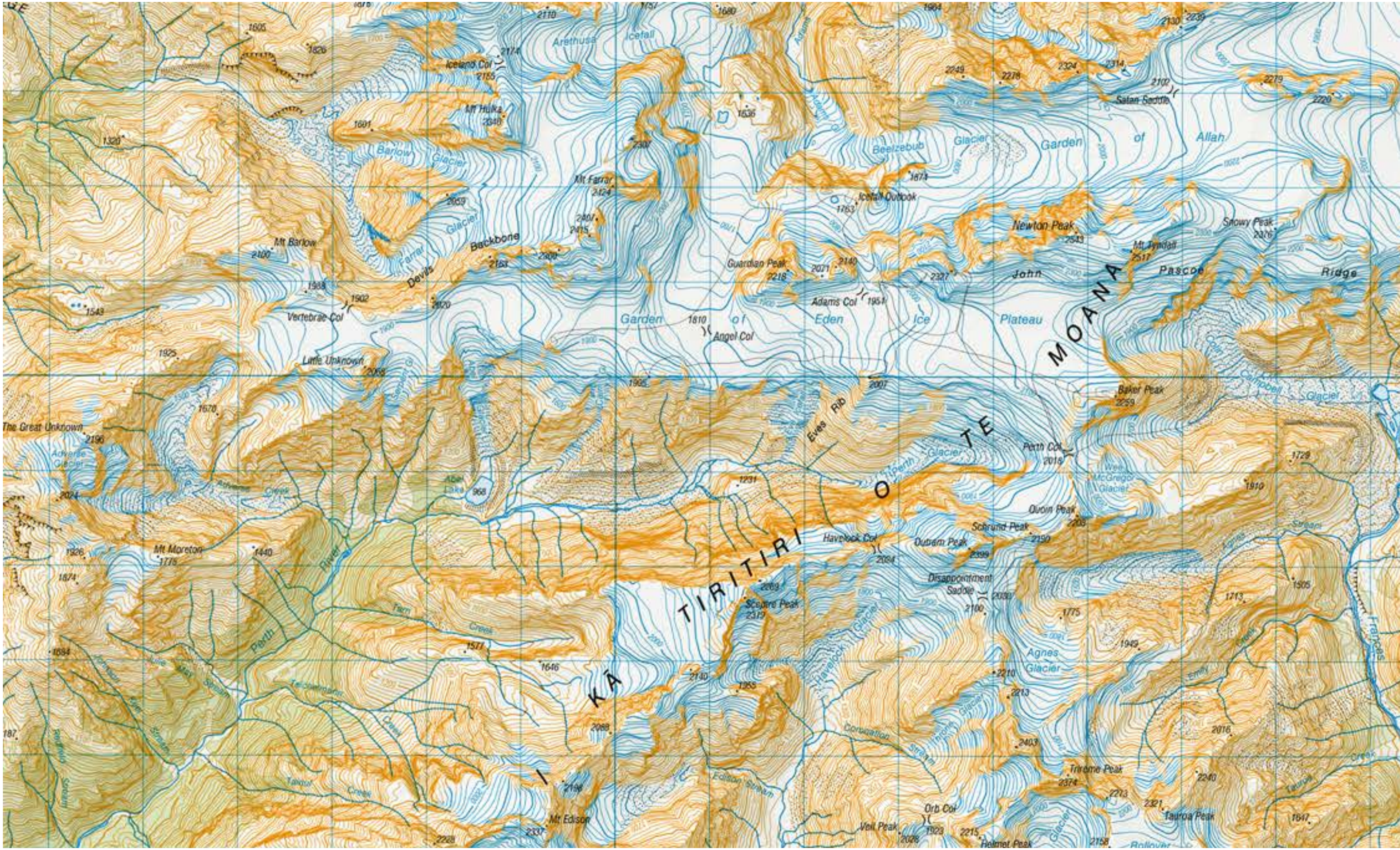
Haramai te toki!

Introduction —
I thought I would of climbed
more mountains by now

Walking toward the Devil's Backbone.
2015 Digital Photograph

‘Toitū te whenua’

Ask that mountain



Iceland Col
Mt Hulka
Arethusa
Icefall
Satan Saddle
Barlow
Glacier
Beelzebub
Glacier
Garden
of
Allah
Mt Farrar
Icefall Outlook
Mt Barlow
Farrar
Glacier
Devils
Backbone
Newton Peak
Snowy Peak
Mt Tyndall
Guardian Peak
John
Pascoe
Ridge
Adams Col
Vertebrae Col
Garden
of
Eden
Ice
Plateau
Angel Col
Little Unknown
MOANA
Baker Peak
The Great Unknown
Eves Rib
TE
Perth Col
Perth
Glacier
O
Abel Lake
Quoin Peak
Schrund Peak
Havelock Col
Outram Peak
Mt Moreton
TIRITIRI
Disappointment Saddle
Sceptre Peak
Perth
River
Agnes
Glacier
KĀ
I
Mt Edison
Edison Stream
Coronation Stream
Tirohe Peak
Orb Col
Veil Peak
Helmet Peak
Tauroa Peak
Frances

Landscapes have an uncanny ability to put you in your place; mountains can astound and they can humble. Mountains can embrace you and then leave you bereft in their absence:

> ‘And all the time I was aware of a dreadful feeling of nothingness which was somehow intensified by the city itself – the endless flat straight streets, the sky without a horizon of hills, the distant horizon without sea. I felt as if I and the city were at the bottom of a huge well walled with sky, and who could climb the sky? When people came to their front or back doors to look out, where did they gaze? I felt so lonely without even the hills close by, like human bodies, for comfort.’ [1]

They can be the menacing presence of James K Baxter’s poem, enticing you in as they crouch like tigers waiting to claim you. They are a constant reminder that though you may have climbed many or few, you will never be a mountain:

‘But O the heart leaps to behold them loom!’[2]

When mum’s body was in the ground, I dropped down some dirt, a flower and my favourite pair of knitting needles. Embracing one another in sadness and despair, we tightened against the cold whip of the Manawatu wind. It is a permeable wind, unlike the infamous Wellington wind that forces you to shelter from it. This wind is crisp, and it cleansed. It was a calling home to te pito o te whenua where my mum now lies beside her father and another dead sister.

After the nehu we left mum, stopping at the top of the hill to yell, “I’ll come visit you soon mum! We love you!” and began the long drive back to Parewahawaha. We were fed to bursting. As the kirimate we got the finest food, no tītī, pāua or whakamara for the others. The wharekai was cleared and cleaned, the kids showered and put to bed. The ubiquitous guitar that is called upon at every whānau gathering was brought out to play the faithful Māori strum: junga-chik, junga-chik. At the hākari we sang into our beers; the kapa haka stars in the family showing off with their lilting haka voices harmonising perfectly. The rest of us howled, flat as, hoping no one could hear us and shame us out for not being able to sing. The songs we sing are oldies, but they are goodies. I don’t know how I know the words;

Matariki Williams,
Tūhoe, Ngāti Whakaue, Taranaki, Te Ati Awa, Ngāti Hauiti, Te Ati Hau.
Matariki grew up in Tauranga Moana, has a Masters in Museum and Heritage Studies, writes, knits and grows great kids.

Many thanks and much love to Adele Reweti and Aaron Gillespie for being the best company in the hills, Emma Ng for your kindness and patience, Matariki Williams for your bravery, my art-visory team for your great art-vice and Creative New Zealand for your support.

— Bridget,
Ngāti Ranginui, Ngā Te Rangi

Haramai te toki!