A warm invitation to view an exhibition

The Possibilities of Water
A collaborative project by sisters Jen Webb and Lorraine Webb
Painting and Poetry

Edith Gallery  Whanganui UCOL
Open from Monday 21 August - Thursday 2 September
Week days 10am - 3pm  Enter from Taupo Quay

This exhibition is the result of a collaboration between two sisters; painter Lorraine Webb from Whanganui and poet Jen Webb, Canberra, Australia.
The Possibilities of Water

Jen Webb and Lorraine Webb

Aug-Sept 2017

Edith Gallery
Whanganui UCOL
New Zealand

References


Jen Webb is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra, and Director of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research. Her recent work includes Art and Human Rights: Contemporary Asian Contexts (Manchester UP, 2016), and the collaborative poetry/photography publication Watching the World (with P Hetherington; Blemish Books, 2015).

Lorraine Webb graduated with a Masters of Fine Art from the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. She was winner of the Cranleigh Barton Drawing Award; a recipient of the William Hodges Fellowship and an invited artist in residence at CAMAC, Centre of Contemporary Art in France. Her work is represented in 240 Years of New Zealand Painting in Docking, G, Dunn, M & Hanfling,E. (2012). Lorraine is a Fellow at the School of Design at Whanganui UCOL, where she

Lower the sounding line. Feed it, fathom by fathom, into the water. Each knot calls its mark as it passes the palm of your hand. Deeper and deeper, the lead seeks out the depths. We are taking soundings, we are calling the deep, we will not run aground.

‘Navigating’ (detail) 2017. Mixed media on paper.
Artists have always collaborated with one another, throughout history and cultures. But creative workers may not always recognise, or acknowledge, the influence of collaborative practice upon their work.

We are sisters, one a painter and one a poet. Our shared memories from childhood form a platform from which we have chosen themes for our practice: water and myth. For both of us our experiences and our creative practices have been informed by water as motif; in the history of our work to date, we have independently included mythological themes; and we have separately developed poetic and visual works along these lines.

Now we have consciously collaborated in a project organised according to what the US artist team Helen Mayer Harrison and Newton Harrison, in conversation with Craig Adcock, call “conversational drift”. This is a collaborative dialogue that enables those engaged in it to be free of the need to forge a compromise “between two forces of opposition”.

Two forces of opposition. The language arts and the visual arts are often presented as though they are opposites in a dialectic. Martine Reid and Nigel Turner, in their introduction to the 1994 issue of *Yale French Studies*, write “We are all aware of the narrative history of the disjunction which, from the very beginning, heralds the relation between writing and drawing.”

But really, is it a disjunction? For generations now, makers and scholars have been captured by the problem of the relationship of text and image. It starts, most obviously, with Horace’s analogy, *ut pictura, poesis* (as is painting, so is poetry), but we seem to have made little progress in the two millennia since then. Still, many scholars and creative practitioners have tested out the boundaries between writing and drawing, text and image, abstract thought and material actuality, and on occasion those apparently divided by form have found ways to converse.

He is making the shapes of sounds. His mouth opens, and closes, silently.

A fish out of water. Is it *oh*, you ask him; is it *ell*?
He makes the sign of the hangman and turns, slowly, his back toward you.

One of the key modes of collaboration has been ekphrastic: poems that describe visual art, paintings that illustrate poems.

Neither of us is particularly interested in this approach, though, not least because ekphrasis depends on one text being a point of origin for the other. We have, rather, aimed to work in an allegorical relationship: what Barbara Stafford calls “the creative and tentative weaving together of individuated phenomena”, modes of correlation that allow very distinct modes of practice to collaborate, to cohere.

The works in this exhibition—paintings by Lorraine, poems by Jen—converse with each other, but do not illustrate each other. We invite viewers and readers to find their own conversations, their own allegories, and their own ways of engaging with the works in this exhibition.
installation shots