



Scott Eady, *The Philanthropist's Stone*, 2015, Wellington. Photo Shaun Waugh, Courtesy of Wellington Sculpture Trust



Susan Te Kahurangi King, *Untitled*, mixed media on paper, 2015. Courtesy of City Gallery Wellington

WELLINGTON

Saturday night in Wellington: the Chinese lanterns are strung above Lower Cuba Street and the wind carries the scent of good things to eat from the international food stalls. Outside Kate Sylvester, the candles on top of *The Philanthropist's Stone* blaze whitely. Scott Eady's new public sculpture was unveiled in August, but unlike the Wellington Night Market it hasn't been warmly received. *The Philanthropist's Stone* is a joint project between the Wellington Sculpture Trust and the TG Macarthy Trust. Eady's plinth is a playful postmodern mash-up that commemorates 19th-century businessman and brewer Thomas George Macarthy. A furious blue Corinthian column supports a Jurassic sized gold nugget, a reference to the gold rush that eventually brought Macarthy from London to Otago. The large candles that poke out of the gold nugget on jagged angles contain hand blown glass flames. The candles are said to be celebratory, marking the centenary of the TG Macarthy Trust that has been "a beacon of hope for countless numbers since its inception" donating millions to charitable causes in the Wellington area. One member of the public described *The Philanthropist's Stone* as a giant gold poo with arrows sticking out of it. This uncharitable comment reminded me of the first Scott Eady work I ever saw. A bronze ball painted to look like a piece of bubble gum. The ball wore a handwritten note that read quite simply *Kick me*.

Contemporary art isn't a popularity contest and maybe that's just as well. However, the dire winter was briefly illuminated by LUX, Wellington's free public light festival. Thirty-six light works were situated around the waterfront and laneways. LUX had everyone from art aficionados to kids, mums, dads and dogs out in the cold hunting down works on the trail. The crowd pleaser was a wall of animated graffiti by Ian Hammond, Johann Nortje and BMD. Tucked away on Opera House Lane, BMD's graffiti mural came to life. A projection coloured in and animated the graphics one by one. A spray painted bike floodlit the purple head of a penguin. A fish floated out of a potted coconut tree. LUX was quite simply delightful.

Meanwhile survey shows of women artists have dominated floor space in the major galleries. Fiona Pardington's *A Beautiful Hesitation* is a smouldering testament to her 30-year romance

with noir. Out in Lower Hutt, The Dowse staged impressive solo exhibitions by Séraphine Pick and Lonnie Hutchinson. But it's the smaller shows that really wooed me.

The pairing of Susan Te Kahurangi King and Shannon Te Ao upstairs at City Gallery provided a lovely counterpoint to the noisy rubble of *Demented Architecture*. *From The One I Call My Own* asked viewers to contemplate communication and non-communication in both artists' work. In his celebrated video *two shoots that stretch far out* Shannon Te Ao reads to a cast of barnyard animals. At the opposite end of the spectrum, King has not spoken since she was a child. Her intricate works on paper open a window onto an interior landscape inhabited by a primordial Donald Duck lookalike and other beings in a fantastical afterlife. A self-taught artist, King has attracted international acclaim and her work has recently been exhibited in the Paris and New York Outsider Art Fairs. King's checkered colours gyre and gimple in the wabe; her distinctive drawings skirt the line between sense and nonsense.

It's summer: must be time for *Fruit Salad*. Did you know there is a gallery on Massey University's central Wellington Campus? The Engine Room runs a lively programme during term time and it doesn't just showcase student art either. *Fruit Salad* was a punchy little show by visiting Australian artist Anthony Johnson. The exhibition included a silicon lemon cut into quarters and wedged into the corner walls of the gallery. Johnson's lemon quarters are apparently a reference to the way we measure things but equally they seemed to sum up an approach to life.

The show featured a tennis racket without strings, a wall of dried spaghetti and *A mobile suspending all the things used to make it*. A ladder hung from the ceiling but I didn't walk under it. There was also a fly in *Fruit Salad*. The artist took a fly onto an airplane and photographed it in situ. A fly in flight; I'm a sucker for this kind of inane literalism. The main ingredient in *Fruit Salad* was Johnson's sense of humour. And don't doze off yet. His book *Sleep Transcription* is a beautiful compilation of the keys he pressed while napping on his keyboard. If life gives you lemons...

/Megan Dunn