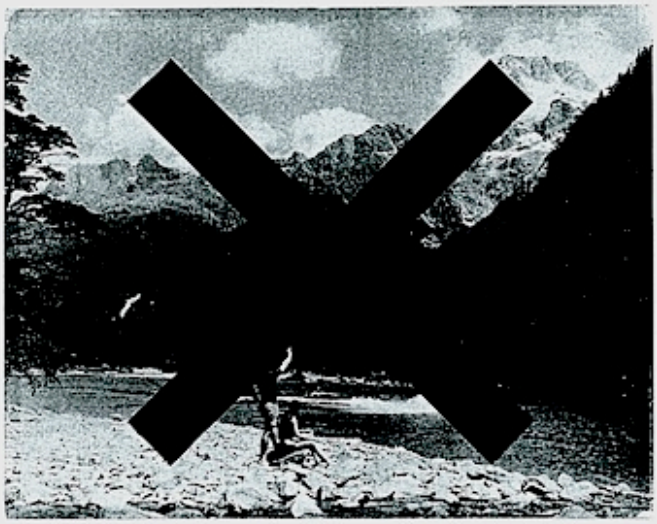


Straight-Edge, 2005, gaffer tape on found photograph from the series *Protection*, Daniel du Bern

Installation shot of *Heads of 23 Pakeha Men*, 2004-5, pencil on lined refill, Daniel du I

The black cross recurs throughout *Protection*, evoking the flags of Scotland and Paimarire (an 1860s Maori prophetic movement) as well as the youth subculture known as Straight-Edge, whose members advocate abstinence from alcohol, drugs and pre-marital sex and identify themselves by drawing a black cross on the back of ßtheir left hand.

In dü Bern's sculpture, *Minor Threat*, a skate helmet is attached to the gallery wall and painted the same colour as the walls. Du Bern says the work explores the tendency for some young white males, like himself, to marginalise themselves from their middle-class roots by adopting the position of 'the other' or joining sub-cultures like Straight-Edge.

"It's about young men having this 'Fuck you!' aspect to their work but it is all very restrained and they seem to be saying, 'Please love me' at the same time. 'You are going to like my work because I am a rebellious young man and I'm fitting the stereotype.'"

His *Self-Portrait (black)*, 2005, a photograph of the artist wearing a black hood, is unsettling and ambiguous, reminding us of Gavin Hipkins' photographs of disembodied, empty hoods in his series *The Homely*.

"The work reflects my interest in race politics. In it I've digitally blackened my skin to appear like some kind of minstrel," he says.

As part of *Protection*, du Bern drew a series of Pakeha male heads taken from news media photographs and anarchist posters in Wellington. Among the pencil portraits on lined refill paper are figures as diverse as Maurice Shadbolt, John Mulgan, Colin McCahon, Toss Woollaston, Don Brash and Kyle Chapman.

"I was interested in approaching the topic of biculturalism from my position as a Pakeha. I wanted to take all this information and re-format it in a way that can be read as really right wing, really left wing, or neither – depending on where you stand."

Like Kah Bee Chow, du Bern exhibited in Artspace's 2004 new artists' exhibition, *The Bed You Lie In*. *Wandering Jew (Tradescantia flumenisis)*, 2004, was a packing crate filled with weeds and dirt, which was transported from du Bern's back garden in Wellington to Artspace in Auckland. Behind it on the wall was a barely visible sign that read "Nohwere".

"I was interested in the way the by-product of colonialism is to blame the other. *Wandering Jew* was a weed introduced by colonialism – a weed that came from America via Brazil," says du Bern.

Daniel du Bern will have a solo exhibition at Michael Hirschfeld Gallery, Wellington, in March next year.

In May 2004, patients, staff and visitors to Wellington Hospital might have stopped in their tracks at the sight of what looked like a human brain on a bed of soil inside a one-metre-square clear perspex cube. The eerily organic brain sprouted curling tendrils with mirrors attached to their tips.

Significantly, this object – whose uncanny presence stemmed from its ambiguity (was it a medical model or an artwork?) – was sited half way between the neurology ward and the chapel and titled *What am I doing here?*

Thirty-year-old Canterbury University School of Fine Arts masters student, **Chris Clements**, says his work explored the impasse between medical and spiritual views of the mind.

The work certainly provoked a response – some people disliked its cold, clinical nature and others loved it. The work, which was made for Wellington's Art Box Project, marks the end of Clements' five-year investigation of medical and hospital environments through painting and sculpture. As a child he was hospitalised for chronic asthma and later in life lived close to Wellington Hospital, walking through the grounds and looking at the gardens and architecture on his way home. Clements became interested in the brain after having an MRI scan for a suspected neurological problem, which disappeared when he gave up coffee.

An admirer of post-war British painter Paul Nash and novelist Haruki Murikami, Clements says Bachelard's book, *The Poetics of Space*, reinforced his interest in the dynamics of urban spaces.

An ongoing series of oil and gouache paintings show

traffic islands and median strips – the negative or transitional spaces in between roads – spaces that are redundant or left over. Though at first he painted these urban islands directly from drawings and photos, later he began to construct them from imagination. These days he paints one every day as a kind of diary of events.

Clements is intrigued by the way these islands and strips become repositories for monuments, gifted to the city, or tiny landscaped native gardens marooned in the midst of the city. His painting, *Vicky*, exhibited at Shed 11 in 2002, shows the sombre statue of Queen Victoria on Cambridge Terrace – an icon every Wellingtonian is familiar with. All traces of the present have been erased and the statue looks much as it would have in the 1950s.

Another work, *Town Planning*, also shown at Shed 11, is a clever, witty site-specific sculpture with more than a dash of black humour. Inside the waterfront building there was a crack in the wall, dividing the space in two. Beneath it Clements mounted a semi-circular piece of blackboard on which there was a model car – a blue Mercedes with a Union Jack painted on its roof.

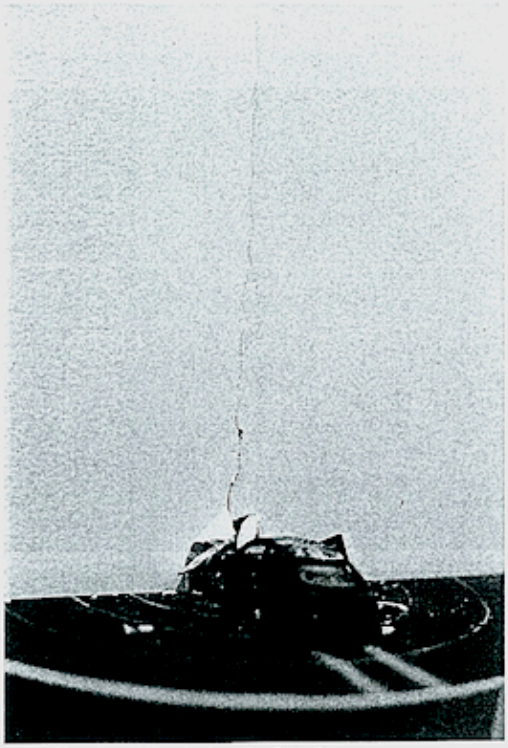
"This is a comic work about the death of Diana and a dig at colonial town planning," he says.

His solo show, at Enjoy Gallery in 2001, combined performance and painting in a simple, poetic gesture. At sunset, while people stood inside the gallery at the opening of his show, Clements climbed a ladder outside the building and painted all the windowpanes black while solenoid devices tapped the windows, creating the rhythm of a human heart and a twig scratching the glass. The work, titled *It's goodnight from me...*, was about sleep, the unconscious and saying goodbye.

Now completing his final year, majoring in painting under the tuition of expat American artist, writer and teacher, Roger Boyce, Clements says he chose Canterbury because of its excellent reputation for painting. He finds the critical feedback, which is part of the course, helpful to his practice.

"In critiques you have to shut up while everyone in the session says what they think as if you weren't there. It can be quite brutal but it's also helpful. You have to let go of your ego and pick up the useful things. It's really constructive and it's fast paced compared with working on your own," he says.

Chris Clements has exhibited at High Street Project in Christchurch, Pataka Porirua, Michael Hirschfeld Gallery and Enjoy Gallery in Wellington. He will have a solo exhibition at Mary Newton Gallery in Wellington, opening on the 4th of October.



Town Planning, 2002, mixed media, Chris Clements

Island 1, Chris Clements

Sleep, 2001, installation (or exstallation), Chris Clements. Enjoy Gallery, Wellington.