

All works by Erica van Zon [1st row] McCahon Bookends (clay, acrylic, gouache). Amoxicillin and Measure (clay, acrylic). Antarctic Rations (clay, acrylic, gouache). Brains, held and eaten (clay, acrylic, paving sand). Bubble Gum (sculpt, acrylic). Arts Centre (masonite, acrylic) [2nd row] Shuttlecocks (clay, acrylic, feathers). The Pear (clay, acrylic, gouache). Cheese Chain (sculpt, acrylic). Pollution Puddles (clay, acrylic). Cheese Stool with Cheese (wood, clay, acrylic, gouache). Old Lemon with Peel (clay, acrylic). [3rd row] Ripe / Not Ripe, Spooning (clay, acrylic). Encaustic Infinity (rope, beeswax). Boiled Egg (clay, acrylic, gouache). Rubber Bands (clay, acrylic). Chips (clay, acrylic). Murky Waters 2 (teax, shoes, grass) [4th row] Of The Sun (wood, steel, aluminium, acrylic). Chesdale Cheeses (clay, acrylic). Best Café (clay, acrylic). Cue Ball and Chalk (clay, acrylic, gouache). Sausages (clay, acrylic). Canongate View (canvas, pure wool) [5th row] Cat in Basket (masonite, gouache). Gourmet Carrots (clay, acrylic). Swede (clay, acrylic). Cut Melons (clay, acrylic, gouache). Flatto (clay, acrylic, gouache). Grapes (sculpt, enamel) [6th row] Moeraki Crab Claw (clay, acrylic, gouache). Candy Corns (clay, acrylic). View Street Rug (canvas, pure wool, cotton). Bacon Lump (clay, acrylic). Frances Hodgkins (cotton, dacron, clay, acrylic, gouache). Luncheon Ends (clay, acrylic). [7th row] Electric Element (clay, gouache). Friday, a summary (clay, gouache, acrylic). Peeled Egg (clay, gouache, acrylic). Murky Waters (wax, fabric). Breeze Block (cardboard, paper collé, acrylic, paving sand). VW (linen, dacron, clay, acrylic, gouache, silver leaf). All 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Roger Gallery

ERICAVANZON

DOGWOOD DAYS 29.11.14-15.03.15

30 The Octagon Dunedin New Zealand
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ERICA VAN ZON

DOGWOOD DAYS 29.11.14-15.03.15

Introduction

Aaron Kreiser

Erica van Zon spent eight weeks in Dunedin researching, developing and editing together a new body of work, as part of the Gallery's Visiting Artist Programme. However, *Dogwood Days* represents an even more sustained generation of work, with the artist building the residency into a much larger production cycle of ten months. So, this exhibition not only provides a moment for van Zon to stop, assess and hone her practice, it also marks a significant point in her broader art career.

For audiences familiar with van Zon's work, they will recognise her continued investigation into 'domestic' modernism: culinary, fetishism, disposable and popular culture. *Dogwood Days* is a substantial and resplendent sculptural tableau, which hovers tantalisingly within 'our' grasp conceptually, metaphorically and visually. Crafted and coerced away from their everyday environs, these objects bear all the marks of their handlers' treatment, while still retaining enough realism to be more than simple cut-outies.

Van Zon's sculptures are infectious because they walk an artistic tightrope between obsessive making, associative thinking and humorous provocation. *Dogwood Days* is a 'mixed-up' repository of lateral image-word games, fictional reference points and fantastically speculative objects. This project cleverly weaves together a back catalogue of personal fascinations with local (residency) encounters, allegorical with historical personalities, in a tightly constructed formal and aesthetically set-up.

Portraits: real and fictional

Thomasin Sleigh

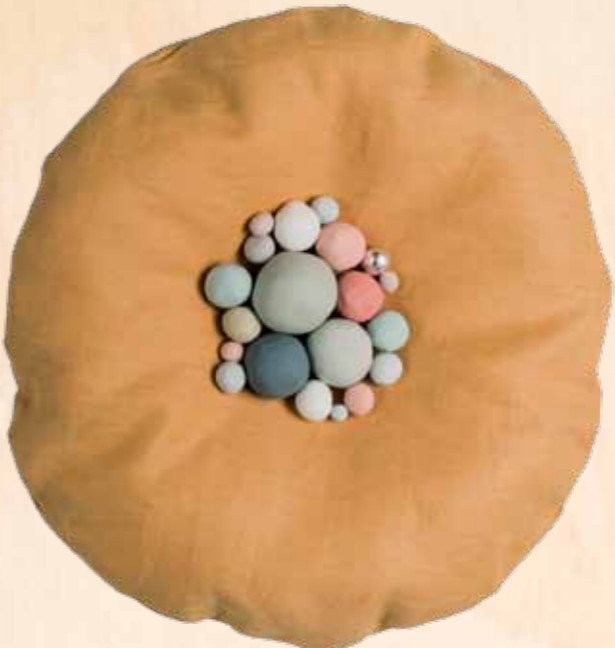
Metaphors and smiles bring things closer whilst simultaneously pushing them away. An object, person, or place, is described by stating it is, or is like, something else.

A great metaphor can describe a thing with crackling intensity; it immediately conveys the sensation and attitude of an object; the thinness of it with all its attendant associations. Metaphors also pull objects away from the reader and expose the limits of language. Their very existence suggests that an object cannot be autonomously described; it needs an exterior world to give it meaning and shape. Smiles are a horizon line over which objects disappear—forever deferred to be like something else.

Mrs Dalway, by Virginia Woolf, is rife with metaphors and smiles, and the book's first paragraph contains an arresting image: *And then, thought Clarissa Dalway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach.*

Erica van Zon has been magpie-like in her collecting of images, memories, and prompts for *Dogwood Days*, and *Mrs Dalway* has been a rich source. The book's protagonist, Clarissa, is depicted in the exhibition as a finely stitched cushion, and so is Virginia Woolf—the queen of metaphors herself—as a collection of balls resting on a beige pillow. There are other portraits too: the artist's parents; a former work colleague, Frances Hodgkins; and Zebulon, a character from a Margaret Atwood novel.

Van Zon exploits the push and pull interplay of metaphors in these portraits of real and fictional people. For those familiar with *Mrs Dalway*, the glittering embroidery of the cushion conjures up the upper class London hostess as described in the book. The pleated material and carefully arranged rods that depict van Zon's mother and father point to activities they may have been involved in, and the faceted surfaces of van Zon's recreation of a Frances Hodgkins painting will be familiar to those versed in Hodgkins' work. But the metaphorical portraits also cleverly defer their subjects, Virginia Woolf as a cushion is more abstract. I can't draw a connection between the assembled objects and the writer, so the metaphor pushes her further away; she is deferred and suspended out past the horizon line.



Friday, a summary

Bopha Chhay

Two tea bags and two slices of cucumber; their composition reminiscent of brackets.

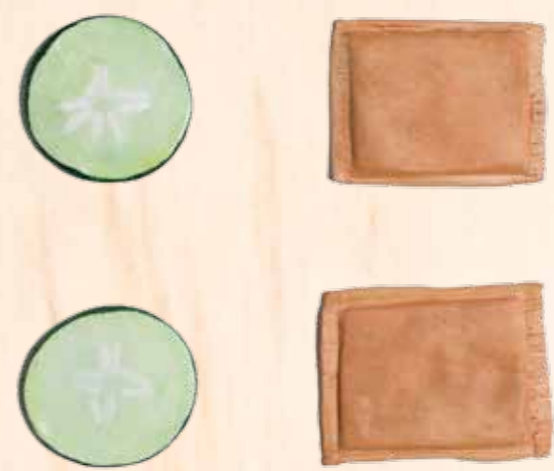
In the way that brackets, parentheses, function as structural supports within sentences, offering clarity, supplementary information or a minor point of interjection. Taking these common domestic consumable items and switching their utility, whether applied or 'ingested', causes them to form a configuration for a moment of respite.

The paintings, the double protagonists and symmetrical pops, set the stage for a dose of time out. Acting as cues, time for a tea break, the cooled tea bags are then transferable to soother forms rest upon the eyelids. The ancient Romans believed that cucumbers were a cure for bad eyesight. Today, the cooling capabilities of the cucumber are harnessed to aid in reducing puffy eyes. Allowing us to press pause and trade in a brief spell to eliminate the all too familiar glare of the screen or mobile device that continuously demands our gaze.

What truths lie beyond the coolness of a cucumber? What realities or epiphanies might these shades reveal or gesture towards? Poised on the cusp of the week just been and the impending weekend, Friday, a summary presents the left-overs, the remnants of a moment passed, objects cast aside with only an oblique evocation of human form.

Our gaze is reflected, mediated by objects. We become pseudo-archaeologists, left with clues of the immaterial, discernable through the detritus of human consumption.

A bracketed moment, which unwittingly withholds narratives from us.



Requiem for a Fruit

Rachel O'Neill

The bananas release the spooning scene.

The ripe banana whispers to the unripe banana, 'What am I meant to be feeling again?'

The unripe banana says, 'I'm so sick of being typecast as unripe! Hey, did you know we're botanically a berry?'

While they wait for the director to arrive on set, the ripe banana leaves the bed and goes to the fridge and takes out some leftovers.

The production designer arrives and sees the ripe banana near the fridge and yells, 'Step away from the fridge! There's nothing real in there.'

The next scene they shoot is the fantasy scene. 'Look, the emotional love we want to set is something like a dog,' the director says, catching her breath, 'a dog that has become suddenly inviolated with nihilistic rage but represses this fury so thoroughly that it wags its tail. It's pretty sad stuff.'

'Is the dog house broken or heartbroken?' asks the unripe banana, titling.

No,' says the director.

'What she's saying,' says the ripe banana, 'is that before the fantasy we were being subtextually house trained, but we didn't know it. Now we know that the rules that gave us pleasure and seemed merciful mean nothing. The rules are shown to be hollow, like props. Even if we were to break the rules we would just be breaking props. But even more importantly the fantasy is expressing what a subject that has grown merciless looks like.'

'Yes,' says the director, 'in this scene we are taking the subject to its human limit!'

'I preferred the merciful spooning,' the unripe banana says. The director pretends not to hear this.

After spooning the fantasy they do a pick-up of a scene from earlier in the day. The director yells 'Action!'

The ripe banana goes to the fridge and improvises with the nothing that is there.



Swede

Georgina Watson

The swede is a ubiquitous food item in the south, perhaps because it is an economical root vegetable that prospers in southland damp and cold climates. Exploring the manifold textures and impressions of place, Erica van Zon for her exhibition *Dogwood Days* has sculpted out of modeling clay a number of everyday food items encountered during her stay in Dunedin.

These items include unripened ends, carrots, boiled eggs and of course the swede, shaped quickly, exuberantly and activated through her tactile forms and use of bright colours, van Zon's re-made foodstuffs seem to fetishise the culinary experience whilst demonstrating her taste for the strange.

Made through an aesthetic lens of Alison Holst microwave cookbooks, plastic food displays and archival images of 60s party food, van Zon's brand of heat-room kitchen sees familiar food items become wacky, slightly off kilter and a little unappetising. Drawing from craft based traditions her small sculptural items share an investment in economy, in domestic materials and bricolage.

Van Zon's Swede, with its lumpy form and beige colouring, conjures up scenes of frosty mornings, bleak landscapes and the compelling of countless bland sensations. Acting as an index or marker of place, van Zon's small Swede in its absurd and obstinate presence instead becomes a sort of anti-monument residing, fittingly, in a town full of monuments.



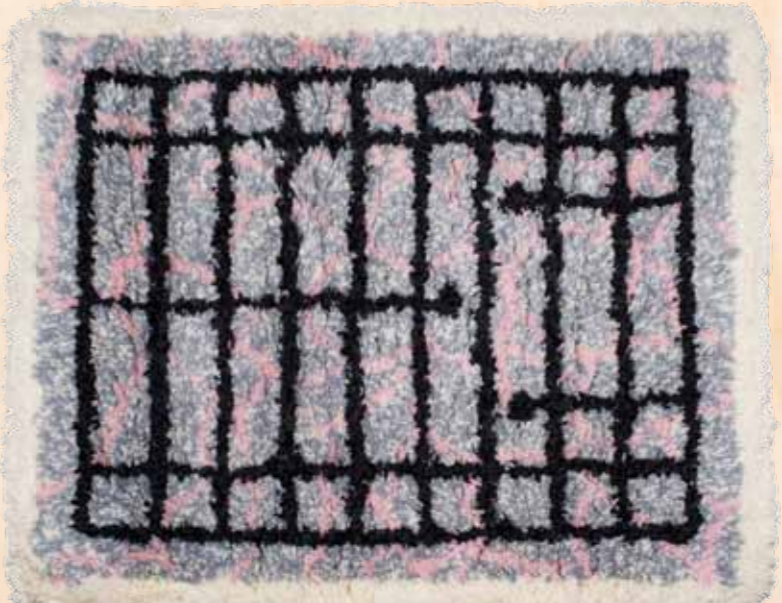
How Retro Culture Inspires Fear

Martin Patrick

I often find it peculiarly difficult to encounter new art that revisits (yet often reinvents) the colours, motifs, and materials of 1970s design.

This was a fashion damaged era as is empty documented, but as I see these carpets rising their ever-so ugly 'Bag again or macramé baskets, pseudo Op-Art patterned lampshades, shapless olive upholstery, I yearn for different inflections of retro style. I'm also recalling the American humourist David Sedaris who sharply tilted one of his books *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*. Mr. Sedaris actually was polyester and heaps of it. I do still wear denim, but was deeply traumatized by corduroy. In a contradictory manner, the things we most hate as adults (learned from childhood) were likely chosen by the people we love. Embarrassed and awkward poses in old snapshots might convey a bit of this muted grief but in an almost Proustian sense, certain burnt sienna surfaces or mauve and turquoise and goldened combinations might set me off along my/ed paths of mangled memories.

Patrol hues become petit dishes to cultivate curdled bacterial designs; retro culture has the capacity to evoke profound fear and utter enjoyment simultaneously. For some reason, pursuing the recent artworks of Erica van Zon that reference rugs and tapestries, evokes a similar sense of attraction, wonderment and an undercurrent of anxiety and distress. But these tensions are valid and resonant as they negotiate a plethora of dualities: art/craft, real/reconfiguration, material/conceptual, now/then. When is a carpet not a carpet, perhaps when it was a Modernist versioning of Miro, Picasso, etcetera, or a contemporary artwork, dealing in a complex amalgam of ironies, games, and complete sincerity. In contemplating van Zon's *View Street Rug* (or is it 'street view rug?'), echoes of maps, Monopoly boards, glyphs, and semaphores of various sorts come to mind. Like some Eric Hesse bathmat, the representative grid is actively warped by its fuzzy, tactile funkiness. I am thwarted, enchanted, and disturbed. The artist has created an uneasy, associative abstraction deftly playing with enclaments of a formal language co-temporal with easy listening Muzak, comfy suburban homes and sleekly designed flats: anodyne aesthetics offering buffers against surrounding chaos.



Erica van Zon Biography

Erica van Zon, b.1979, MFA University of Auckland, 2007, BMA (Auckland University of Technology), 2001. Lives and works in Wellington.

Solo exhibitions include *The Light on the Deck*, City Gallery Wellington (2013), *Moving Forward*, RM, Auckland (2012), and group exhibitions: *Collected Fictions*, Te Manawa, Palmerston North (2014), and *Slip Cast*, The Dovecot, Lower Hutt (2014). In 2011 she was recipient of the Asia NZ/WCC WAPE Residency at Red Gate, Beijing, China.

Images from left: **W** (line, diction, clay), gouache, acrylic, silver leaf) **Friday, a summary** (clay, gouache, acrylic) **Rip/rot (rip, spooning)** (clay, acrylic) **Swede** (clay, acrylic) **View Street Rug** (cotton, pine wood, cotton) At 2014, courtesy of the artist and Melissa Rogier Gallery

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