

# The Bureau, Melbourne

ILAM PRESS

Mono 1:1

Robin Neate

*I think I'll go on down to the  
Pacific and from there I'll  
Improvise, Part II*

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## **I think I'll go on down to the Pacific and from there I'll Improvise, Part II**

I was once asked what my painting really means in terms of society, and my answer was that if my work were properly understood, it would be the end of state capitalism and totalitarianism.

Barnett Newman<sup>1</sup>

Accidental encounters between unlikely elements have become the stuff of everyday life.

Jacky Bowring<sup>2</sup>

Today, the certainty of Barnett Newman's claims about painting's ability to solve the problems of the world's economy and government, merely seem like evidence of modernism's final moment of misguided faith in its status in Western civilisation. And if an artist like Robin Neate – a painter whose work shares an inquisitiveness with modernism – has any interest in Newman's work, it is most likely to reside in the way Newman's minimalist aesthetic eventually found its way into popular interior design in the 1980s.

Where Newman put forward an argument in the 1970s for colour-field painting as critical to the fate of Western civilisation, Neate's recent paintings, by contrast, are decidedly more measured and tacit – yet arguably – no less about the connectedness of painting to time and place. And without wishing to overstate a case for the influence of immediate environment on the work of any artist, Neate's painting over the past three years have possessed a curiously perceptive and empathetic spirit with the 'otherness' of the earthquake damaged city of Christchurch in which he lives.

<sup>1</sup> Barnett Newman, 1970, [https://education.moma.org/moma/learningresources/cms\\_page/view/366529](https://education.moma.org/moma/learningresources/cms_page/view/366529)

<sup>2</sup> Jacky Bowring, 'The Sublime, the Surreal and the Melancholy: Surveying the Setting for Scape 7,' *Scape 7 Public Art Christchurch Biennial*, Volume One: Guide/Reader, Christchurch: Scape Public Art, 2013, 22.

