



A HOOK IN THE HEAD

GEORGE TURNER

HUNTERS AND COLLECTORS

18 SEPT - 30 OCT



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George Turner

At the base of prehistoric trees lie bundles of *toi* *toi* and dried grass. Once the forests had served their economic purpose, they were ignited. The complex ecosystems—developed over millions of years—fell to ashes, replaced today by concrete and transplanted soils. The smoke from razed undergrowth and native grasses rose, mixing with the damp air to form clouds. Propelled by a final escaping wind of the evening, they drifted out over the Cook Strait to meet with an encroaching storm; a front which had travelled from the frozen seas of the south and wound past the rigid spine of alps now races northward with southerly gale, as it has done for millennia.

Emerging off the cold South Pacific Seas, the wind and rain is funneled through canyons of steel, concrete and glass as it struggles to find its natural release among the young city. The clouds move further north where their remaining content is set free in a rage of gravity upon the Tararuas. Falling, gathering and eventually running, the rain travels down into water catchments carved out of the mountains from centuries of weather patterns. The water accumulates in the valleys and rushes down through the ancient beech forests, sliding beneath giants before breaking back into daylight, where the trees are replaced with the barren grass fields of the Wairarapa. By the time the water returns to the sea via these rivers and the drains of the city, the once purified liquid is now full of nitrates, algae, plastics, sewage and silt. After travelling through what were once rivers but are now highways for human effluence, the water brings sickness back to the sea from which it came.

In the relatively short time that people have occupied space on these isolated islands, we have transported the landscape from a symbiotic relationship to a space that serves our own desires. Although Cook never breached the gates of Te Whanganui-a-Tara, his influence over the area is undeniable. ‘A good Harbour’ was all that was written in Cook’s journal of what would become our capital city. It was Cook’s reports of the isolated harbours of Marlborough Sounds that inspired Edward Wakefield’s New Zealand Company to search the area for the location of their first colonial settlement. In September 1839—four months before the Treaty of Waitangi was signed—Wakefield’s brother William set out upon their ship, the *Tory*. Heading north from Queen Charlotte Sound, the Wakefields sought out the land to fulfil their agenda of systematic colonisation.

Wakefield described the land as ‘Covered with high forest to within a mile [of the beach]’. Over the following century the forest was burned, the wetlands were drained, the rivers were redirected, the land was acquired and stolen, the harbor was filled, the ground was sealed with concrete, and the ecosystems that had allowed the land and sea to flourish in all their glory were destroyed. A land which Charles Heaphy had written about from the deck of the *Tory* as ‘a scene of indescribable beauty’ now withers away under the boot of industrialized life.

A Hook in the Head is George Turner’s second solo exhibition. After exhibiting in Tāmaki Makaurau and online already this year, Turner returns to Te Whanganui-a-Tara to present their most expansive collection of work so far. This iteration builds on their exploration of modern Aotearoa’s colonial roots, this time directed by narratives pulled from the history of the city. Through the use of geographical data, photogrammetry and photography, Turner’s work creates surreal tableaux of both the capital’s history and its potential future. Digital prints, artifacts and ceramics are employed with the goal of redirecting common misconceptions around Aotearoa’s environments. Throughout the exhibition, Turner argues that without an understanding of our history and drastic changes to the way we approach our world, the dystopian images presented here may become a reality—all that once made this country unique will be lost. A Hook in the Head is an attack on the continuing exploitation, commodification and fantasising of what lies outside of homes.



A Good Harbour (2020)
1200 x 1200mm
Fine Art Print



A Perfect Vale (2020)

1200 x 1200mm

Fine Art Print



Within A Mile (2020)
1200x1200mm
Fine Art Print