



(left) Christina Read's 1. *Here's a Plan—(things to do)* at SoFA Gallery, March 2017

(below)

CHRISTINA READ *Meditation Quilt* 2017  
Fabric, glue and thread, 1750 x 1460 mm.

## Christchurch

### Christina Read

#### 1. *Here's a Plan—(things to do)*

Ilam School of Fine Arts Gallery,  
29 March–27 April

HOLLY BEST

2016 Olivia Spencer Bower

Foundation award recipient Christina

Read's 1. *Here's a Plan—(things to do)* ruminates on the processes of an art practice, contemplating the fruits and failures of planning and spending time. This exhibition is the result of a year-long residency that takes the planning of future art

ventures as its subject, exploring the potentiality of artistic declarations and the possibilities that lie between aspirations and reality. In presenting an installation of propositions, Read offers not a collection of completed achievements but an inventory of prospects and plans rife with hesitation and promise.

*Quilt for my bed* (2017) exemplifies Read's penchant for humble ambition. She is interested in the handmade and homemade, and set herself the task of a hand-crafted patchwork quilt. Quilts are the Tetris of soft furnishings, usually requiring forethought and

precision; however, included in the exhibition catalogue is a diagram with instructions, in Read's shorthand, to 'adapt as go'. Read selects this work to improvise, though hilariously needs to give herself written licence to be recklessly, dangerously, living on the unsewn hem. After all the reconsiderations and amendments in its year-long construction, she chooses to fold it up and coyly display only a section of it, its potential present but unseen.

By contrast the Delaunay-esque *Meditation Quilt* (2017) is proudly pinned to the wall and clearly labelled, but too wonky to have the expected calming effect. This bold display could either be revealing a desire for or need of a balancing daily ritual, or be seen in a mocking or ironic light. Read's tone is consistently noncommittal and, while I like the play of aspirations and actuality, the theatre of goal setting and threat of failure, I am not wholly engaged in imagining alongside the artist when I doubt her actually trying out her propositions—or meditation—in reality. In this sense 1. *Here's a Plan—(things to do)* feels a bit like religiously reading *Consumer* magazine, and then never buying anything. Perhaps making plans is actually for the commitment phobic, a smokescreen for indecision, for uncertainty. Because plans can be well meaning, they are ocular proof of intent—but the planner is unbound by the to-do lists, free to throw away scribbled ideas to a Hokusai wind.

In applying for a residency such as the OSB, artists are usually required to detail what they intend to use the time for—proposing how it will benefit their practice, noting tangible goals and concrete achievements. As many artists can confirm, this can be counter intuitive, but 1. *Here's a Plan—(things to do)* seems to tip this process right way up. As an artist who likes to keep track of hours clocked up in the studio, she has consigned the year to works that are time uneconomic in their construction, or exist in idea infancy. Read has spent her residency doing what perhaps more artists should: going a little beyond what their normal practice encompasses—spending time like you have it in abundance. What has been achieved is a glorious quilt, a frivolous feat to think about resting under. Because all that planning really takes it out of you.

