

MCLEAVEY GALLERY

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Time After Time (A Subverted Plan)

Christina Read

From 1 April 2020

We are living in a time of subverted plans. Christina Read had no way of knowing the extent to which this would be true when she started preparing a new body of work for this exhibition at McLeavey Gallery.

Consisting of 15 brightly coloured hand-painted collages on board, the exhibition speaks of the universal truth that life doesn't unfold the way you expect. As Robert Burns said *"the best laid schemes of mice and men..."*

Based on drawings and doodles Read made while pondering unfulfilled plans and time running out, the work translate feelings of worry into playful forms interspersed with text. Running throughout the exhibition is Read's characteristic offbeat humour and knack for flipping ordinary vernacular on its head - the dreaded 'To Do List' becomes 'The Could Do List', meanwhile 'The years of my life' is reduced to a t-shirt slogan.

The works acknowledge the queasiness of personal uncertainty - a marked contrast to the recently familiar hyper-perfected realities championed on social media and in glossy magazines. By giving form to uncertainty, Read encourages us to reframe our relationship with it - to make peace or perhaps even befriend it. To find joy in the unknown or unachieved.

"There is something particular about the pictorial that I am interested in, the translation of the drawn mark, or quick doodle. My process is very laboured and time-consuming, but I work hard at it not making it look so." - Christina Read

Deliberately crafted to look spontaneous and carefree, the works are the result of a careful and time-consuming process that begins with mocking up scale and composition digitally and includes several rounds of colour testing and matching. Each work is constructed from multiple layers of painted paper that is cut by hand into delicate squiggles, shapes and letters.

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Read chose to work with the medium of cut painted paper as it allowed her to achieve an unfixed, fluid look – as if the wind could at any moment blow all the pieces away – an aesthetic that is hard to achieve with a direct painted line.

Each of the 15 works has a unique personality and story to tell. Some references are more overt – an egg timer, arrows, the tree of life – and some are more veiled, such as a bowl of eggs, perhaps representing new life or fertility.

The three black and white works are more diagrammatic – an attempt to portray an analytical or objective stance. The white lines emulate chalk on a blackboard. Several works of squiggly overlapping lines represent various forms of anxiety – some sharp, others more swirly. Meanwhile the 'Could Do List' becomes the rebel's 'To Do List' by acknowledging the tension between wanting to get things done and the desire to undercut or rebel against it.

Altogether, with their slightly sun-bleached palette, the works evoke feelings of nostalgia and comfort. Reminding us that there is fun to be had along the way, even if we don't know where the journey will take us.

Optimistic and hopeful, *Time After Time (A Subverted Plan)* is the exhibition for right now.

About Christina Read

Christina Read was the 2016 Olivia Spencer Bower Award recipient with a one-year artist residency in Christchurch, curator of 'The Brain' exhibition at Te Uru public gallery, and the inaugural winner of the National Drawing Award. Christina has a strong exhibition history with artist run spaces and has exhibited at Enjoy Gallery in Wellington: Rm Gallery and Newcall Gallery in Auckland, Blue Oyster Gallery in Dunedin, and Centrum Berlin in Germany.

Christina works as Senior Lecturer at Whitecliffe College, Auckland. She has an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Kent Institute of Arts and Design, Canterbury, England.

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