

# OF DEITIES OR MORTALS

JAMES LOGIE  
MEMORIAL COLLECTION

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CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY TE PUNA O WAIWHETU

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Cover: Neil Pardington **Memorial #1** (detail) 2007, chromogenic prints on Dibond, 1200 x 3400 mm (triptych).  
Courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery

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## Of Deities or Mortals

# What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape Of deities or mortals, or of both, In Tempe or in the dales of Arcady?

Excerpt from *Ode on a Grecian Urn* by John Keats (1819)

## On quantum physics

It's late 1960s suburban Christchurch – I'm square-eyed by age nine or ten. Two of my favourite TV shows are American productions, and make an oddly compatible bookend pair. *Lost in Space* trails a futuristic family who enter a space mission then find themselves forever frustrated in their attempts to return to Planet Earth. The other is *Time Tunnel*, whose protagonists have become lost (thanks to a giant, computerised op art contraption) in the past. The adventures are even better here, and (while outer space in the future is a blast) from this point on, the past is sending out signals as a magnetic, compelling place.

While it was always understood (alas!) that there was no time tunnel, no easy portal to the past, a surrogate could be found in books, allowing previous times to come to imaginative life. With this came the discovery of physical evidence: ancient objects from distant peoples, which survived their own times (and those of multiple generations to follow) before being brought to light. So the museum object may be considered, and as we seek to understand, speaks mutely. The human skill behind its production is acknowledged. We may

begin to feel something of the pulse of the daily life of its makers and users, recognising their humanity therein, and noting concerns both temporal or sometimes otherworldly, more or perhaps less like our own. (The issue of how the object reached us, here and now, is a separate discussion.)

So here's an experiment. At the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, find the Classics Department and enter the lift. Press the button to the top floor, then with every effort (even if it is a mighty stretch) tell yourself you're in the time machine. From the top, walk straight ahead, and – wait a minute – this thing is working!

## Welcome to the James Logie Memorial Collection

The Logie Collection (as it is usually known) is 'one of the finest collections of Greek and Roman antiquities in the southern hemisphere'. (Actually, to do this thing properly, you'd best make an appointment or you might find the space full of students.) We have some Egyptian items here, too. Used primarily as a teaching resource, this singular group of objects consists of nearly 300 material fragments of mainly ancient Mediterranean culture, far removed from

geographic or historical context. This is where study comes in.

The person responsible for establishing the collection was Marion Kerr Steven (MA, MB, ChB (NZ)), who enrolled at the University of Canterbury in 1938 to study Greek and Classics, thus commencing her lifelong passion for Greek art, pottery in particular.<sup>1</sup> Most of the objects were personal purchases, made long-distance from New Zealand through British auction houses and dealer catalogues, though some resulted from archaeological digs in which she and the university were officially involved. Employed at the Classics Department from 1942 to 1977, Steven was a popular lecturer, senior lecturer and reader. In 1950, she married James Logie, registrar at the university from that time until his death in 1956. In 1957, the collection was entrusted to the university in his memory (and in 1998 formally gifted from Steven's estate).<sup>2</sup>

### A Classics assignment

In 2007, Christchurch Art Gallery invited eight artists to make new works responding to ancient objects selected from the Logie Collection. Liyen Chong, Tony de Lautour, Sara Hughes, Marian Maguire, Neil Pardington, Reuben Paterson, Jamie Richardson and Francis Upritchard are a diverse group. They have been selected for the strength of recent work, together with their potential in this task to offer the unexpected, or maximum optical surprise.

So how will they perceive these ancient objects – as 'museum things', or as

artefacts with content to be unlocked and the power to inspire? Each artist visits the collection. The objects are chosen and plans formed. Bound together now by archaeological status, these objects were originally varied in purpose. There are vessels connected with eating, drinking and merry celebration, and others to entertainment. Some link to worship or funerary purposes, and show a surprising concern for displays of wealth and prestige (less useful, perhaps, beyond the grave, but clearly important for those still on this side of it).

### Neil Pardington

The pairing of a painted 5th-century BC southern Italian bell-krater with Wellington-based Neil Pardington's *Memorial #1* is almost arbitrary. Although the wine-mixing vase can be located within his large-scale photographic work, the only link beyond this is its three-part symmetrical composition. With his large-format camera – the eye that sees everything – Pardington negotiates the space by maintaining sharp distance. In triptych formation, his work incorporates a flanking pair of 1980s grey cabinets packed with treasures, with the central image focused on an obstructed back corridor entrance. Here, dimpled ceiling tiles hover over strip-lighting, a pink plastic siren, protruding maroon upholstery and carpet in mottled gold. Sentry-like, behind glass doors, a pair of standing plaster replicas block the view. Everything that is seen here seems to obstruct our ability to get close to the collection objects, keeping them in a strange and difficult-to-access zone.<sup>3</sup>

### Francis Upritchard

London-based 2006 Walters Prize recipient Francis Upritchard regularly shows her work in international locations including New York, Germany, the Netherlands and Auckland. She visits home town Christchurch as often as she can. Early in 2007, Upritchard viewed the Logie Collection and for this project offered a selection of recently completed works in bronze as an improvised response, their inspiration having come at least partially from the art of classical antiquity. Three of her standing bronzes therefore take position to greet Zeus on a 5th-century BC Greek amphora. Offering physical proximity in response to the deity's extended hand, the figures appear as thwarted philosophers or hesitant ascetics. Part of an extensive off-the-leash archaeological fiction, and related to an earlier series of figures in natural rubber, the ungainly scholars seem unable to accept that (being now cast in bronze) they have been granted an afterlife, receiving from their Maker instant posterity.

### Liyen Chong

Auckland-based, Malaysian-born Liyen Chong received her MFA from the University of Canterbury in 2003. She has held dealer shows in Christchurch and Auckland, and made her debut with extraordinary embroidered drawings

on cloth – using her own hair as thread. For this project, a piece of ancient linen mummy wrapping (a fragment from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*) was a natural choice for its aesthetic and symbolic connections to her work. Aware of the perceived link between hair and death (particularly in Western culture), Chong has also sought to examine the elaborate nature of ancient Egyptian death rituals and their intense focus on assistance for the afterlife. Chong's *I am here and there* consists of two embroidered works: a horizontal skeleton with folded arms, and a heart (the only organ left inside the mummy's body during the embalming process). The process of making offers time in which to think and form a clear purpose, but Chong admits that "the obsession needed in creating these tiny, detailed, labour-intensive pieces borders on 'going overboard'."

### Marian Maguire

Christchurch printmaker Marian Maguire is in familiar territory in the investigation of the objects and motifs of the ancient world. She utilises various media in her work, and in her five-part *Pyxis* has paid tribute in pencil and acrylic to one of the oldest items of pottery in the collection. The richly decorated, 4000-year-old Bronze Age pyxis is a type of vessel known to have been used for storage of cosmetics or perfumed oils. Uncovered

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1. Marion Steven is also notable as the founder and donor of the University of Canterbury Library Detective Fiction Collection, consisting of some 1600 volumes, including many rare items and first editions.  
2. *A Catalogue of the James Logie Memorial Collection of Classical Antiquities at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch* by J. Richard Green is due for publication by the University of Canterbury Press in 2008.  
3. *Memorial #1* fits neatly into Pardington's *The Vault*, an expanding series with a focus on storage and collections.

in northern Cyprus in 1960–61 during an archaeological dig funded in part by Logie Collection founder Marion Steven and the University of Canterbury, this particular vessel is believed to have had a funerary role. Topped with votive goddess figures, the ovoid, womb-like form is incised with a complexity of zigzags, parallel lines and concentric circles, and offers fertile territory for Maguire's consideration. Here, the pyxis is reborn as an offering with holding power, a clear-sighted distillation of a specific set of ancient abstract designs.

### Reuben Paterson

Auckland-based Reuben Paterson gained early recognition with his sharp-edged kowhaiwhai and op art paintings in glitter dust. Here, he places himself in a more elusive zone. Having recently spent 18 months in Greece, his time divided between Athens and Ikaria, the geographical connection was welcomed. Zeroing in upon the remarkable 6th-century BC Athenian wine cup, which when raised to lips transforms into a startled mask, Paterson's response came via mood rather than visual form. The kylix was used in the symposium – drinking party and pleasure dome, realm of Dionysus, god of wine and drinking. Large-scale and glitter-splashed, Paterson's reflective surfaces offer optic intoxication, an atmospheric backdrop in which the Dionysian impulse is expressed with revelry and abandon. The exuberance of their making, however, seems balanced by an elegiac tone: within the titles of the works may also be heard the voice of the philosopher.<sup>4</sup>

### Sara Hughes

Shortly before leaving New Zealand for her art residency at ISCP in New York, Auckland-based Sara Hughes viewed the Logie Collection and was drawn to the possibilities attached to an impressive 4th-century BC Red-Figure volute krater. Optical palmette motifs on the vessel's sides particularly drew her attention, linking as they did to an ongoing project and body of work connected to pattern and its historical associations. Hughes visited many European museums en route to New York, then later the Greek and Roman Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum: the palmette was observed frequently and in multifarious forms. Her extraordinary response, *Mourn*, consists of 300 clear plastic food trays of various shapes and sizes – the everyday food packaging of New York – hand-painted on the reverse with palmette designs in black and white, then pinned to the wall. While objects usually not permitted the possibility of an afterlife have been 'improved' by new, classical branding, the overall sense of Hughes' imposing installation is of lament over expedient and wasteful norms, the sacrifice of the purely individual – and possibly more – on the altar of mass consumption.

### Tony de Lautour

Tony de Lautour considers one of the most impressive objects in the Logie collection, a 2300-year-old Italian funerary vessel topped with worshippers and triton- or centaur-like beasts. Carrying de Lautour's unmistakable imprint, *Vessel* places prominent elements from the askos

within an imposing tableau of his own invention. Dominating the canvas is a wooden, coffin-like board, launched upon a sea of black. Affixed to the raft (from the bow) are a bleached cross, a row of mountains from which amorphous figures rise, then (towards the stern) an altar and smoking urn. Mastlike, and heading the procession, the cross (perhaps referring to the vessel's original user) takes the plain form of memorial to Anzac soldier or roadside victim, though more insistently reminds of that great roadblock, death. The 'beginning of the end' for the classical world may be another possible interpretation, but (as should be expected from de Lautour) no single, straightforward reading is attached to the work, and like the askos, it remains enigmatic.

### Jamie Richardson

Jamie Richardson has built a growing fan base for his bad-ass sculptural characters exhibited in Christchurch and Dunedin in mainly non-establishment artist spaces. Drawing inspiration from selective subculture, including comics, anime, low-fi video games and cable wrestling, Richardson squares off against the object that is best known internationally in the collection – a 6th-century BC amphora depicting popular Athenian entertainment. Attributed to one of the most productive painters of the period 540–520 BC, the amphora shows

on one side five bearded men on stilts – a unique scene in Greek vase painting. Thought to be actors in a chorus, possibly representing giants, their connection to comedy (at this early period) adds to their significance. Richardson's strategy is a generous, cuddly sculpture paying homage to seven-foot celebrity wrestler André the Giant, a compelling television and movie presence from the late 1960s to the 1990s. With his Greek curls, sequin scales and menacing stance, this is the sideshow souvenir every Athenian bruiser would have wanted to take home.

### 'Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought'<sup>5</sup>

Each of the new works made here could stand alone without the classical objects as reference, and in every instance sit convincingly within the artist's usual range of production. Offering objects of awe-inspiring age and beauty as specific starting points for the artists, however, has resulted in animated juxtapositions and thoughtful discussions with the present as well as the ancient past. If there is any hint of irreverence to the encounter, the defence – if any were needed – is in allowing these artists to attune us to objects and times which might otherwise have been beyond our ability to reach. Each has negotiated their own path. And an impressive collection of ancient objects has been introduced in a new light.

### Ken Hall

4. As an adjunct to these paintings (and also inspired by the kylix), Paterson has created an artist edition set of Italian crystal 'moustache glasses' that transform the user's face into that of a moustached reveller.

5. Excerpt from *Ode on a Grecian Urn* by John Keats (1819).



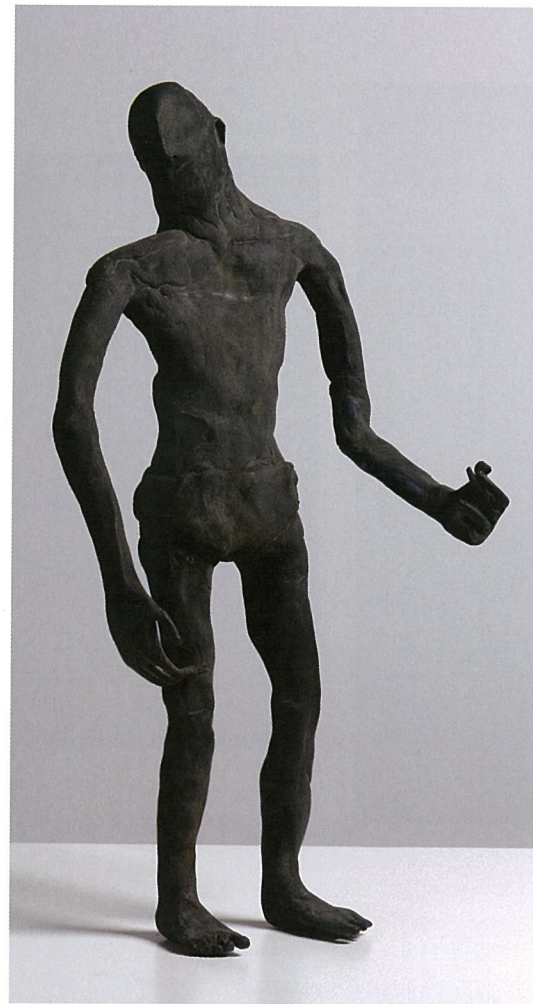
**Bell-krater, attributed to The Cyclops Painter,**  
 Lucania, South Italy, 420–410 BC. Height, 339 mm  
 James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics  
 Department, University of Canterbury (CUC 18/53)

On one side of this 5th-century BC bell-krater, or wine-mixing vessel, three standing figures – thought to be mortals, not deities – can be seen in animated conversation. Standing between two naked athletes, the woman takes an assertive, even provocative stance, yet holds her robes tightly.

## Neil Pardington

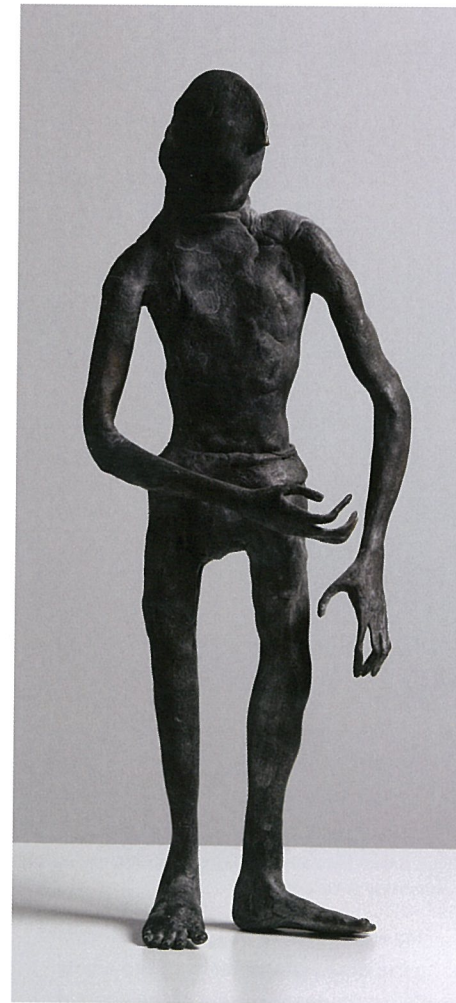
**Memorial #1** 2007, chromogenic prints on Dibond,  
 1200 x 3400 mm (triptych)  
 Courtesy of the artist and Jonathan Smart Gallery

“The title provides a shift in the reading of the collection. As a memorial it almost personalises the objects, as if they were buried in a tomb alongside their owner. The statues at the door, then, could be standing guard.”



**Attic Red-Figure Neck Amphora, attributed to the painter Hermonax**, Athens, Greece, 470–460 BC. Height, 358 mm  
James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics Department, University of Canterbury. Gifted by M. K. Steven (CUC 45/57)

The bearded male on this amphora, or storage jar, is thought to represent Zeus, king of the gods and ruler of Mount Olympus. He was often shown in one of two poses – enthroned or striding forward, sometimes with a thunderbolt in his right hand.



## Francis Upritchard

**Gesturing Bronze** 2007, bronze, 420 x 210 x 120 mm, collection of Webley Inc.

**Aged** 2006, bronze, 440 x 165 x 58 mm, Barr Family Collection

**Bronze with Towel** 2007, bronze, 400 x 135 x 75 mm, collection of J. B. Gibbs  
Courtesy of the artist and Ivan Anthony Gallery

“The Logie collection was very beautiful. The bronzes were made as a direct response to the paintings on Greek vases (muddled together with shaman figures). All my work is muddled. I’d never make a work only about one thing/ place/ time; the whole point of my work is that it is a mess. The poses suggest actions, but aren’t very pinned down.”

**Fragment of the *Book of the Dead*,**  
**linen mummy wrapping,** Egypt, Ptolemaic  
Dynasty 304–330 BC. 485 x 60 mm  
James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics  
Department, University of Canterbury (CUC 121/73)

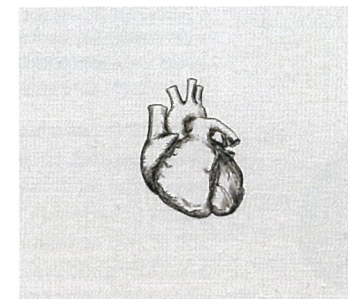
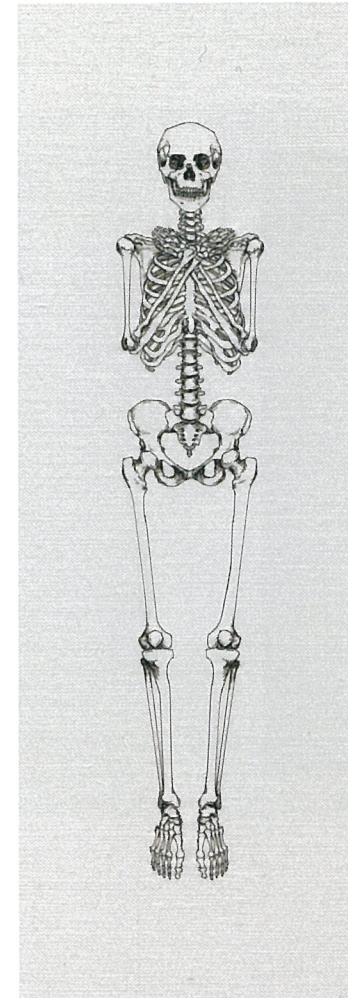
This fragment of linen mummy wrapping shows scenes from the beginning of a copy of the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. It includes part of a funeral procession and preparations for entombment and sacrifice. Priestly spells and incantations written as hieratic text were intended to assist the departed in safety to the next world.

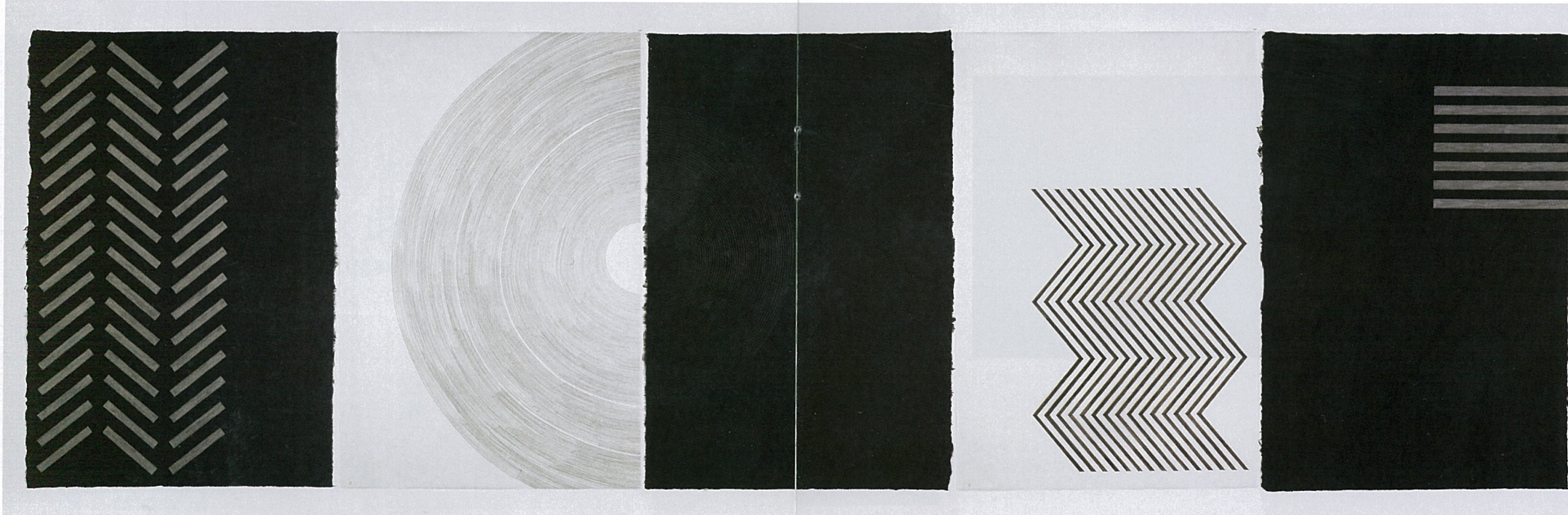


## Liye Chong

**I am here and there** 2007, artist's hair embroidered  
on cotton, 184 x 60 mm (skeleton), 60 x 60 mm (heart)  
Courtesy of the artist

"My work [is offered] as a counterpoint to the ethos characterising the highly elaborate death rituals of the ancient Egyptians. It also highlights how differently death is perceived and treated in contemporary New Zealand society."





**Cypriot Bronze Age pyxis with lid**, Lapatsa, Cyprus,  
c. 2030–2000 BC. Height at lip, c. 170 mm; length c. 375 mm;  
width c. 280 mm  
James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics Department,  
University of Canterbury [CUC 130/73]

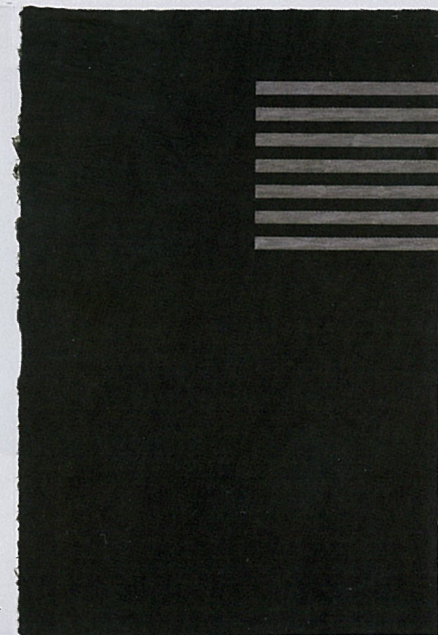
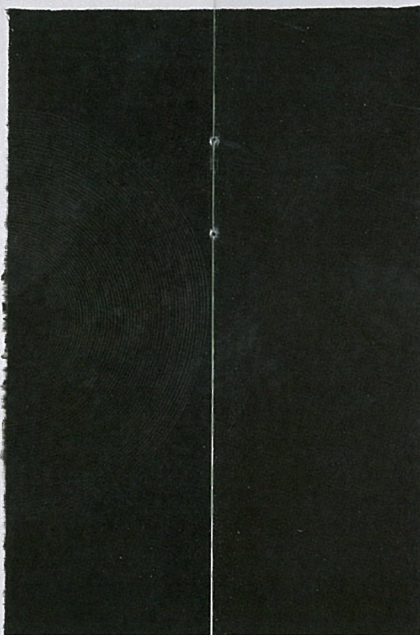
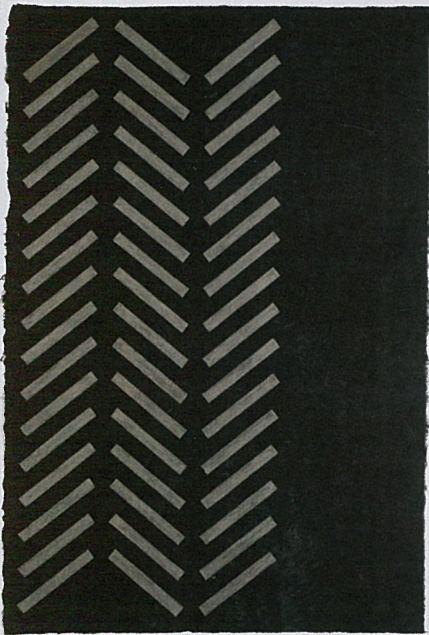
Thought to have been made specifically for the grave, this ancient lidded vessel is of the same type as those used for perfumes and cosmetics. Beside the pair of juglets on its rim, one of two remaining plank idols represents a fertility goddess, a prototype of Aphrodite, whose cult reached Greece via Cyprus.

## Marian Maguire

**Pyxis 2007**, lead pencil and acrylic on Japanese paper,  
980 x 3400 mm (5 sheets, each 980 x 650 mm)  
Courtesy of the artist and PaperGraphica

“The ancient Pyxis looks very modern to me. I like the irregular shape. While the decoration is carved with care, it is unmeasured, so the design is free on the vessel and feels mobile. I liked the way the incisions catch the light in contrast to the darkness of the contained space inside, and chose white and black paper for the association of light and shadow.”





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**The Logie Cup, by the Logie Painter**, Athens, Greece, c. 525 BC. Height, 112 mm; diameter, 263 mm  
James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics Department, University of Canterbury (CUC 56/58)

This 6th-century BC kylix, or wine cup, transforms into a startled mask when lifted, with handles becoming ears, and central portraits a nose. It was used in the symposium, a popular 'men only' celebration belonging to Dionysus, god of wine and drinking.

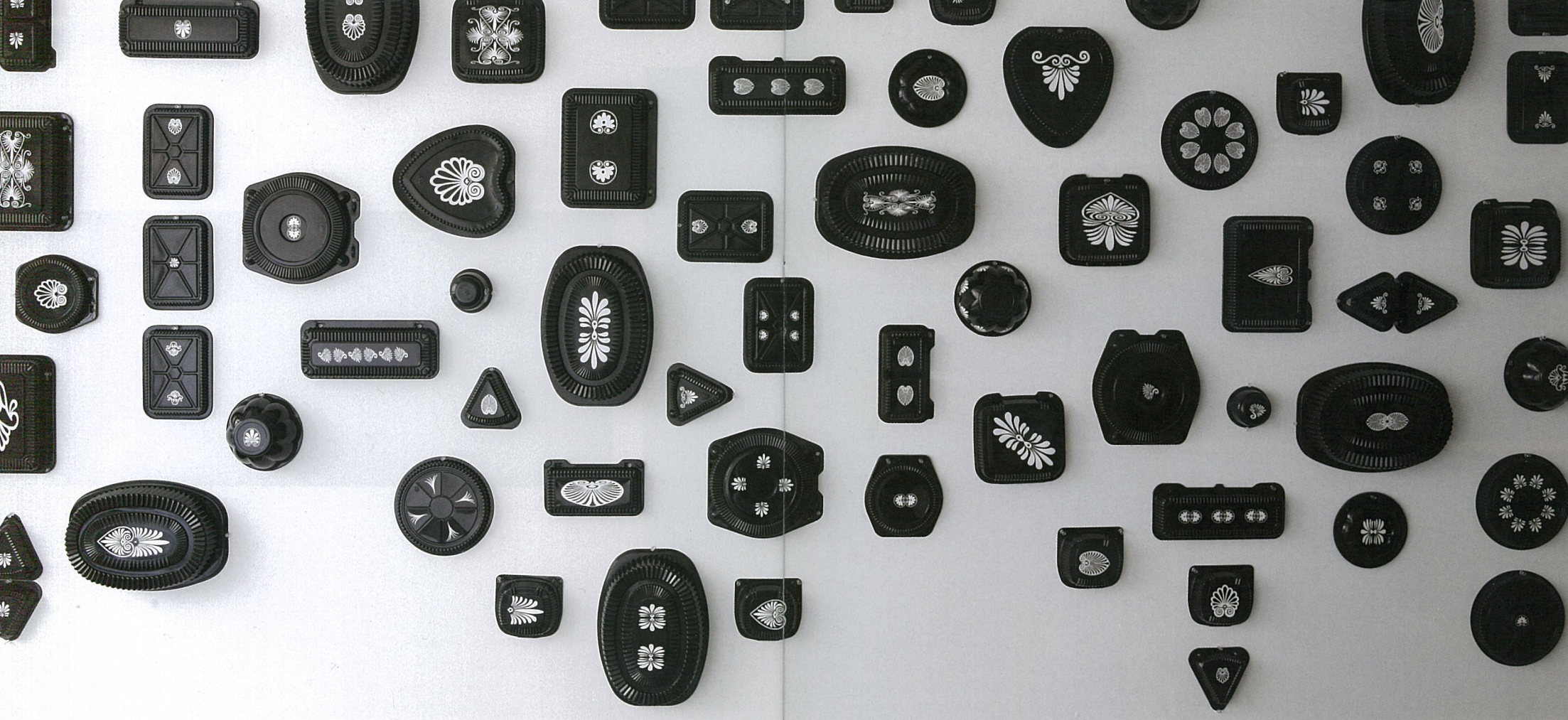
## Reuben Paterson

**Loss of Self by Eruption** 2007, glitter, household gloss enamel and polyurethane varnish on Dibond aluminium, 1500 x 3000 mm

**Prometheus** 2007, glitter, household gloss enamel and polyurethane varnish on Dibond aluminium, 3000 x 1500 mm

**What is the Source of Our First Suffering** 2007, glitter, household gloss enamel, veining medium and polyurethane varnish on Dibond aluminium, 1500 x 3000 mm  
Courtesy of the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery

"Dionysus was the god of the Island Icaria, where I had stayed for so long, and I think this is my strongest connection. I see these works as celebration/ intoxication paintings."



**Red-Figure Volute Krater, attributed to the Ganymede Painter, Canosa, Apulia, South Italy, c. 320 BC.** Height at lip, 746 mm; diameter, 402 mm James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics Department, University of Canterbury. Gifted by M. K. Steven [CUC 158/75]

A funerary monument intended to impress, this highly decorative 4th-century BC krater might once have held ashes of the deceased. The palmette motif on the vessel's sides is most commonly seen on Greek and Italian pottery produced in the 4th to 1st centuries BC, but has been recorded also from 2nd-millennium BC locations, including 15th-century BC Assyria (present-day Iraq).

## Sara Hughes

**Mourn 2007**, plastic containers, acrylic paint and pins, dimensions variable  
 Courtesy of the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery

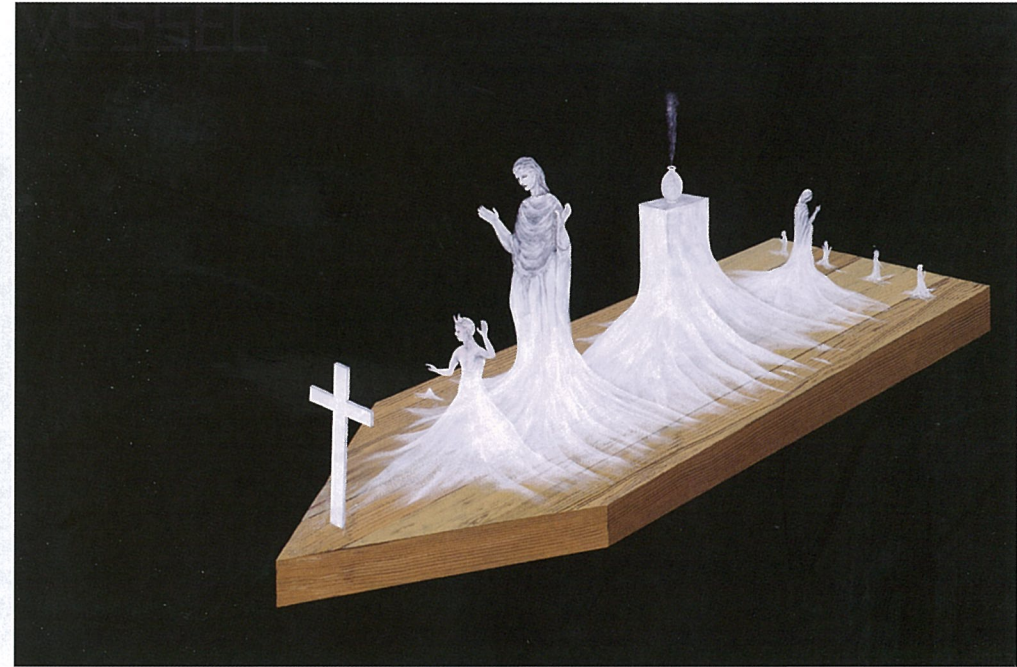
"The installation references both an archaeological site and a salon hang, and has an overall feeling of darkness; its sentiment one of memorial to the unknown person whose ashes were once held in this vessel, as well as to the excess of the present day."



## Tony de Lautour

**Vessel** 2007, acrylic on canvas, 800 x 1200 mm  
Courtesy of the artist

**Vessel**, ves'el, *n.* [O.Fr. *vessel*, *veissel* (Fr. *vaisseau*), from L. *vascellum*, a dim. of *vas*, a vessel. VASE.] A utensil proper for holding liquors and other things, as a barrel, kettle, cup, dish, &c.; a ship; a craft of any kind, but usually one larger than a mere boat; *anat.* any tube or canal in which the blood or other humours are contained, secreted, or circulated; *bot.* a canal or tube in which the sap is contained and conveyed; *fig.* in scriptural phraseology, a person into whom anything is conceived as poured or infused (a chosen *vessel*, *vessels* of wrath).— *The weaker vessel*, applied in a jocular way to a woman, a usage borrowed from 1 Pet. iii. 7. *The Large Type Common English Dictionary*, Charles Annandale, London, 1925



**Askos**, Canosa, Apulia, South Italy,  
late 4th or early 3rd century BC. Height, 608 mm  
James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics  
Department, University of Canterbury  
(CUC 186/00)

This spectacular Italian funerary vessel is of a type specific to Canosa, southern Italy, in the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC. The impassive serpent-haired Gorgon face on the front was probably intended to warn off grave-robbers.

## Jamie Richardson

**André we hardly knew ye** 2007, polyester felt, sequins, polyester fibre filling, cardboard and MDF, 1350 x 1250 x 380 mm  
Courtesy of the artist and 64zero3

'His parents named him André Rene Rousimoff, but we knew him as The Eighth Wonder of the World, André the Giant. ... André the Giant holds the unofficial world record for the largest number of beers consumed in a single sitting. These were standard 12-ounce bottles of beer, nothing fancy, but during a six-hour period André drank 119 of them. Think about it: 119 beers in six hours. That's a beer every three minutes, non stop. That's beyond epic. It's beyond the ken of mortal men. It's god-like.' Richard English, *Modern Drunkard Magazine*

**Attic Black-Figure Amphora, attributed to The Swing Painter**, Athens, Greece, c. 525 BC. Height, 435 mm  
James Logie Memorial Collection, Classics Department, University of Canterbury.  
Gifted by M. K. Steven (CUC 41/57)

This Athenian Black-Figure amphora is unique in Greek vase painting for its depiction on one side of five bearded men on stilts, thought to be comic actors – possibly representing Titans or giants. The amphora also suggests that the introduction of comedy to Greek theatre was four decades earlier than is indicated by literary sources, making this the most internationally well-known object in the collection.



CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY  
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