

# Fantasyland

# FANTASYLAND

MARTIN POPPELWELL

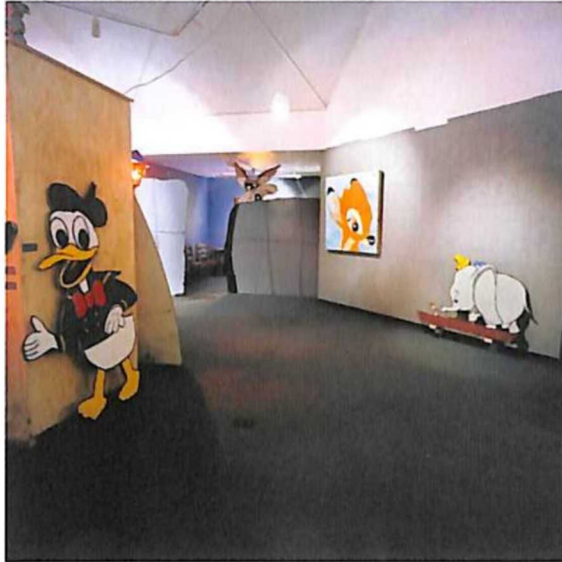
31 May - 28 July  
MMII



Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre 201 Eastbourne St E Hastings

# ***Bottles, refrigerators and two old cars***

**More than half an acre of bottles, refrigerators, electric and gas stoves, two ancient cars, beds, clothes, books, pictures, (including a modern one valued at 30 guineas), baths and half a ton or so of motor parts are some of the goods collected by the Birdseye-Crest Fantasyland committee during their drive on Saturday.**



Top Left: Installation view DONALD DUCK 1700mmH, enamel on plywood, re-exhibited 2002. WILE E COYOTE BAMBÍ DUMBO WITH MOUSE, oil on plywood, 1400mm x 970mm 2002. Top right and lower left: Workshop 2002. Lower right: installation view, BUGS WITH CANON oil on board, base 2500mm x 3250mmH 2002. WILE E COYOTE, oil on board 2600mmH 2002



Installation view left: Humpty Dumpty, fibreglass, plaster, concrete, enamel, straw, variable dimensions, c. 1970 right: Pinocchio, oil on board, 2440 x 2440mm 2002.



# acknowledgements

Naughty Bunny

Anna Bibby Gallery Auckland

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EIT Video Production

The Poppelwell family

Skippy the Bush Kangaroo

creative  
NZ

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND *TOI AOTEAROA*



Harry Poppelwell as 'Miss Clarion Nett', Hastings Band Burlesque Revue , 1924

# CONCESSION CARD

I am quite aware that any local 'cultural revival' which left the political and economic framework unaffected would hardly be more than an artificially sustained antiquarianism: what is wanted is not to restore a vanished, or to revive a vanishing, culture under modern conditions which make it impossible, but to grow a contemporary culture from old roots.<sup>1</sup>

For the past year at least I have been looking at value systems and the way in which they exist in an ever changing landscape. In many respects, my interest in excavating through material about the children's park Fantasyland (established in Hastings in the late 1960s), stems from both fascination in my family's history and a period in a community's development.

The process has required the help and assistance of many people, and in forming this document I realise that much of the story of 'Fantasyland' has not been told. By this I mean all the people and groups who have been involved in establishing and maintaining the park throughout its existence.

It has been eye-opening to realise the amount of voluntary work and effort that the local community provided. Therefore I am apologising to any individuals who feel part of the park's story and who are not mentioned. However, in re-exhibiting 'a history' of Fantasyland I hope there is the feeling that these efforts are being honoured.

The staff who work at Splash Planet have been more than helpful in allowing me access to archives and their site. Chris Anderson and the Hastings District Council similarly have allowed access to archive material. And the support of Hilary and John Poppelwell, whose unfailing interest in the project and their work in digging up archival material has been invaluable.

In creating the exhibition the skills and knowledge of the following people have enabled me to realise an idea: Bridget Sutherland, Richard Brimer, Bernard Winkels,





James Sutherland, Tony Hill, Dick Frizzell, Denise Wilkinson and the staff at the Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre.

It is inevitable that the exhibition has a certain air of nostalgia, but nostalgia exists only as a memory which lingers in the air. By dipping into the past it becomes clearer that vision is easier when there is an understanding of where we have come from.

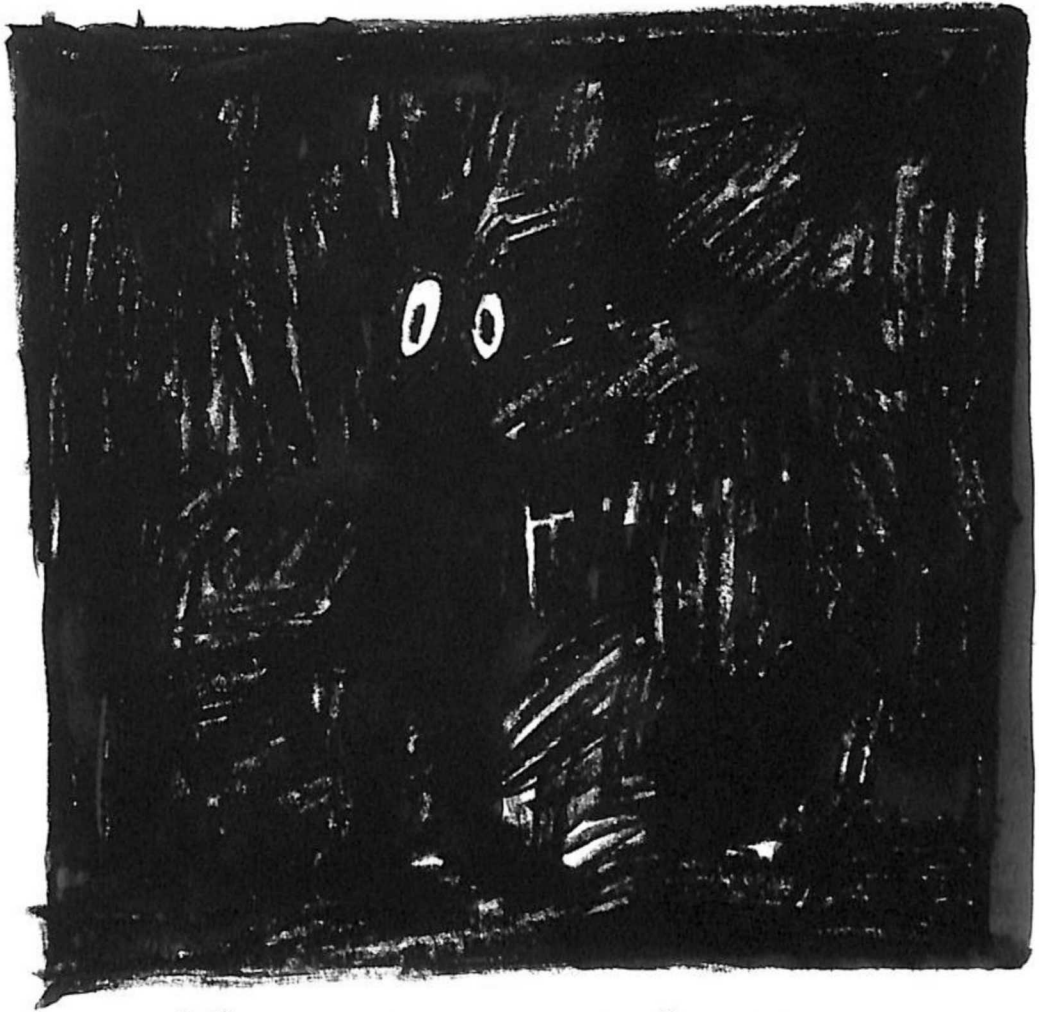
Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then but that's no matter tomorrow. We will run faster, stretch out our arms further... And one fine morning - so we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.<sup>2</sup>

*Martin Poppelwell 2002*

#### notes

1. T S Elliot, Unity and Diversity: the Region. Notes towards the Definition of a Culture. Faber and Faber London 1962, p53.

2. F Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby. Penguin Classics 2000, p172



Study FOR FTD  
Fantasyland IVIGIT  
Whats-ther...  
Cheshire. Cat...



ACRY  
ACI

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with  
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in P 2002. NO WORK  
TODAY



Detail from drawing of coyote, Martin Poppelwell 2002

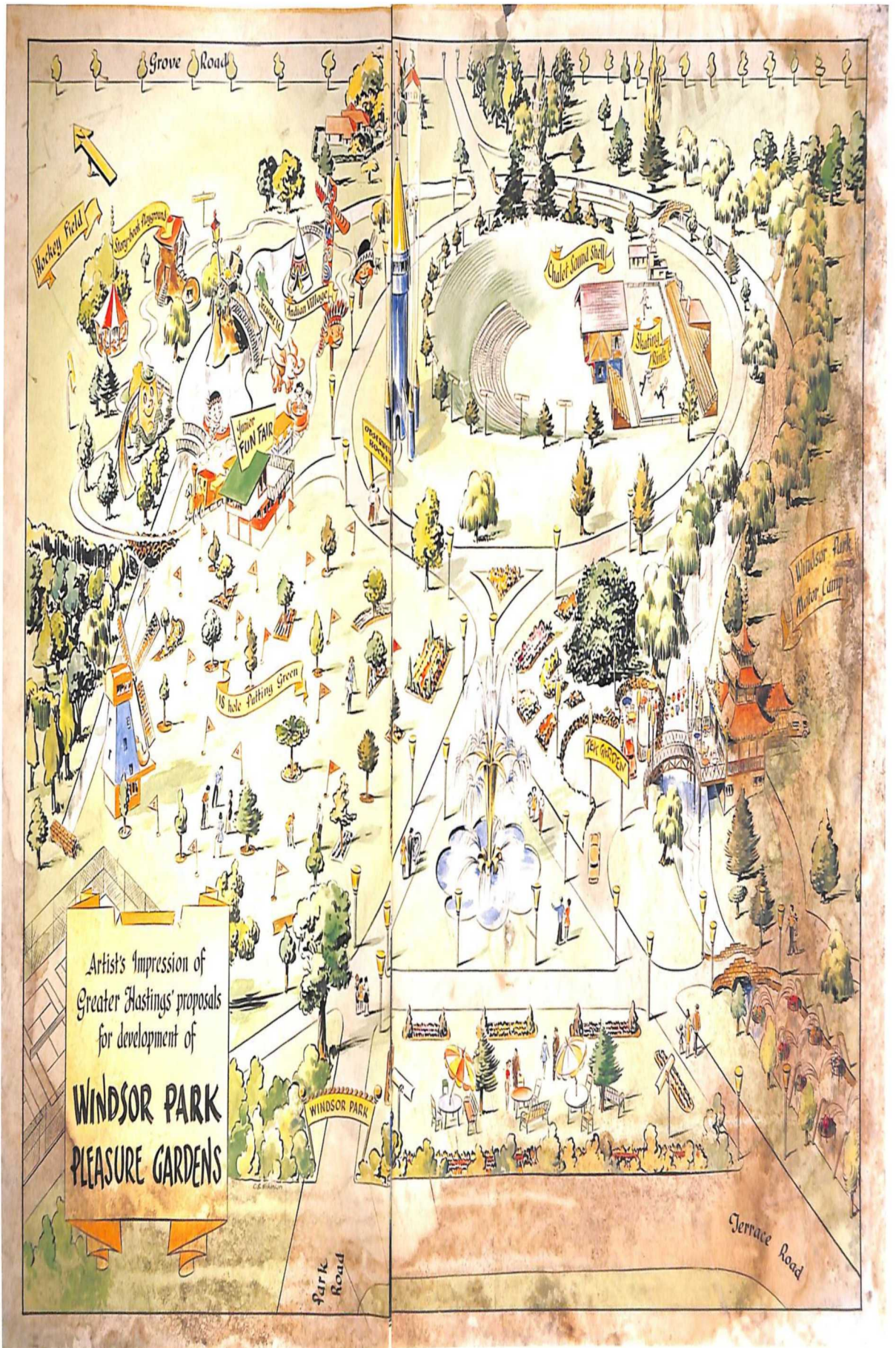
# SETTING THE TOWN AGOG

## Harry Poppelwell and the making of Fantasyland

### Harry...

When Harry Poppelwell walked into the offices of Pictorial Publications in 1963 it was with the intention of commissioning an artist to illustrate the myriad images and ideas for a wondrous park, that had been haunting him since the early 1960s. The resulting picture, gifted at half price, was elegantly labelled by C B Wilkinson as 'Artists impression of Greater Hastings Proposal for Development of Windsor Park Pleasure Gardens'. A unique and priceless document, it is testimony both to Harry's entrepreneurial nature (the mayor exploded when he heard the cost of the picture and so Harry paid for it himself) and the community-focused spirit of 1960s New Zealand.

Harry Poppelwell was an old hand at raising money for community projects and social causes. During the war he was Chairman of the Patriotic Society, raising money for the troops overseas. Then in the 1950s, with great postwar optimism, Harry gathered twelve leading citizens to form an organisation called Greater Hastings. It was the aim of Greater Hastings to bring a brighter and more festive quality to the town. As such they instigated the magical Hastings Blossom Festival and the Hastings Highland Games, both of which became renowned nation wide.



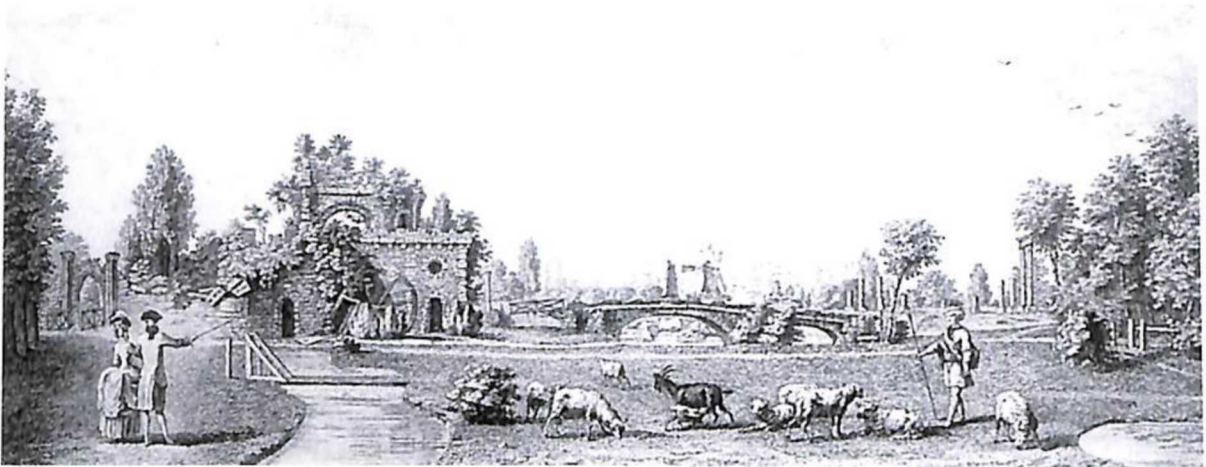
Artist's Impression of  
Greater Hastings proposals  
for development of  
**WINDSOR PARK  
PLEASURE GARDENS**

PAGE  
TEN

It was while in his position as President of Greater Hastings that Harry suggested the idea of building a special park in the Hastings region. Of course, ideas for the creation and use of public space don't come out of thin air. The fact that Harry's first artist's impression for the development was called Windsor Park Pleasure Gardens and not Fantasyland is indicative of the historical and cultural forces that necessarily play their part in determining the world we live in.

## A little bit of Park history...

The great European gardens dating from the early 1500s are direct predecessors to Harry's 1960s pleasure park. With some connections to Medieval Fairs and Commons, these princely gardens were more specifically related to an innovation in private rather than public life - the folly.



Follies first started to appear with the rediscovery of Nero's Palace in Rome in the early 1500s. Nero's underground chambers, painted in a style totally different from classical sobriety, inspired wealthy land owners to construct grottoes of their own - "private spaces that were picturesque, antiquarian and useless."<sup>1</sup> Artists adopted a new decorative style called the grotesque, characterised by symmetrical excess, twining tendrils, nymphs, satyrs, urns and so on.

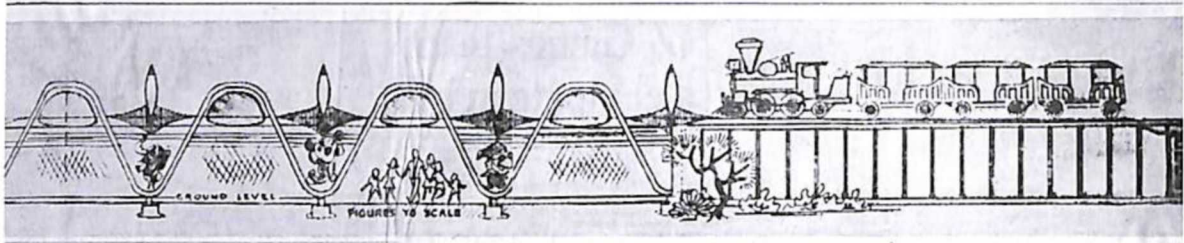
The grottoes themselves expressed a new aristocratic taste for solitary contemplation and pastoral melancholy - a mood reflected in the paintings of such artists as Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain. Landscape painting and the Great Gardens became a complex of philosophical and religious beliefs that fed into each other, the seminal image revolving around biblical Eden, notions of The Fall and Time's hand on man.

Private estates would often build their gardens in imitation of the paintings and had their gardens fitted with ruined temples, sham castles and other such historical time-touched architecture that took their fancy.

By 1767, follies were so popular that a pattern guide book, 'Grotesque Architecture or Rural Amusement' was published. This book included designs for a Dorick Hut, a Hermetic Retreat, a Gothic Grotto, an Oriental Hermitage and a Turkish Mosque. In France the repertoire included Gothic Churches, Dutch Windmills, Egyptian Obelisks and Pyramids.

The French estates were open to the public in a way that the English Enclosure Laws forbade. However, with the flocking of country people to the urban centres of England, a new kind of folly arose, - The Pleasure Garden, - a public version of the private garden estates fitted with all kinds of ruins, walks, fountains and other edifying amusements.

In 1661, New Spring Gardens, now known as Vauxhall Gardens, was laid out on the east bank of the Thames river in London. It became more truly popular in 1732 when it was further developed as a brightly lit and colourfully painted entertainment park. Vauxhaull Gardens commingled garden walks with arbors, mazes, statuary, shops, replicas of ruins, illusionistic paintings, dining pavilions and obelisks.



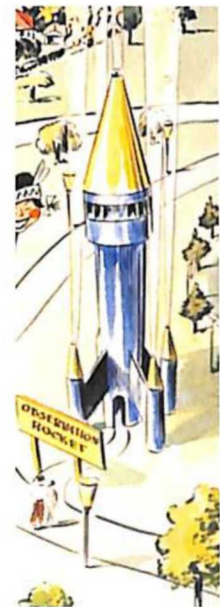
## *Fantasyland bridge*

### Back to Harry's picture...

In comparing Harry's picture for Windsor Park Pleasure Gardens with an etching of the Jardin de Monceau in Paris from 1779, the historical connections are clearly visible. The picturesque bridge, windmill and waterway merge across the centuries as does the implicit landscaping of trees and walkways to make the experience more pleasing and welcoming to human habitation. The grazing animals in the foreground at Monceau reference to a biblical Eden, where men live happily with nature. The animals in Hastings, as with Disneyland USA, take on a more anthropomorphic presence. It's been a gradual development.

The idea of paradise here on earth is a challenging one, and Harry's fountain reflects another feature of the Great Gardens, the redirecting and manipulating of fallen nature. An invention of renaissance hydraulic engineers, the fountain forces nature to move "unnaturally skyward for human pleasure."<sup>2</sup> In the same way the waterways are constructed and made to flow by human design. Harry's proposal depicts just such an artificial lake, turning into a small river that circumnavigates the park.

However one does not have to look hard at Harry's picture to notice the enormous differences from Monceau as well. Treasure island, perched in the middle of the lake and encircled by a miniature railway, tells another story - at once colonialist in its myth of frontier and peculiarly modern in its ideas about childhood. The rocket speaks for itself.





## Disneyland USA...

It is at this point that our comparison is forced to acknowledge the influence of that other, much much bigger pleasure park, Disneyland USA. Itself a strange hybrid of 15<sup>th</sup> century pleasure gardens, World Fairs, Expositions, California fantasy architecture, outsider art and movies, Disneyland, like its Hastings counterpart, is a conglomeration of many influences and cultural beliefs.

Disneyland has four major theme lands: Adventureland, inspired by adventure documentaries the Disney studio had been making since 1948; Frontierland which corresponded to the live action Disney Westerns, including Davy Crockett; Tomorrowland which was less closely tied to Disney films but reflected Disney's interest in technology and corporate research; and Fantasyland, which of course alluded to the animated fairytale features.

The Windsor Park name change from 'Pleasure Gardens' to 'Fantasyland', the most famous and favourite of Disney theme lands, is an enormous indicator of the International significance and novelty of Disneyland at this time. And it is no coincidence that Harry Poppelwell, two years before, had travelled to both the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen and to Disneyland USA. He had seen first hand the popularity and wonder of these parks and, as quoted in the Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune in 1967, "set the town agog" with his plans to make something exciting like this for our children back home. "While we, as a young part of a young country cannot at this stage hope to match the elaborate set-up of either Tivoli Gardens or Disneyland, I can see no reason why we cannot produce a miniature of both."<sup>3</sup>

Harry's instructions to Wilkinson to include a 'storybook land' and model train are closely based on attractions he would have seen on his travels. It would also explain the American Indian Tepee, a fad also in 60s New Zealand promulgated by the influx of Cowboy and Indian movies on TV.

# Breakdown delays ambassador

TRIBUNE  
15-10-66

The American Ambassador, Mr H. B. Powell's schedule in Hastings today was disrupted slightly by a helicopter breakdown at the Hawke's Bay Airport, Napier.

Mr Powell and the Mayor and Mayoress of Hastings, Mr and Mrs R. V. Giorgi, the wife of the member for Hastings, Mrs Duncan MacIntyre, and the technical director for Crest-Birds Eye, Mr M. Grainer and Mrs Grainer were to take an air trip over Hastings.

Mr Powell was at the Crest-Birds Eye factory's Family Festival, which was to raise funds for the Fantasyland Camelot Bridge.

The Iroquois was delayed in Napier awaiting a spare part which was being flown in from Ohakea.

The Iroquois arrived shortly after 2.0 o'clock, and took the passengers over Windsor Park, Havelock North, Bridge Pa and back to the factory.



LEFT: After the show was over, Mr Grainer, Mrs Grainer and Mr Powell with some of the Kia Ngawari Maori company after the evening concert. Members of the company are (from left) Mrs Harriet Powell, Mrs Caroline Matina, Mrs Mary Solomon and Mrs Joy Abbott. Quartet at back stage centre comprises Taka Walker, Tom Curtis, Peter Marekura and Michael Curtis.



ABOVE: With the traditional honi, Mrs Grace Peihopa greets the United States Ambassador. LEFT: Mr Duncan MacIntyre, M.P. for Hastings, Leona Tutene and Mr Powell. Booked out weeks before, the concert ended a day which crowned a wonderful campaign in the interests of the children of Hastings.

The absence of Maori culture from any plans for the park is at once typical of the era and sadly at odds with the enormous support given by local Maori groups such as the Kia Ngawari Maori company of Hastings. After travelling through the States as part of 'Festival Polynesia', including performing at the Hollywood Bowl to an audience of over 100,000 people, the group came back to Hastings and gave a fund-raising concert for Fantasyland. It was attended by the American Ambassador, Herbert B Powell.

"We wish to thank the American Ambassador Herbert B Powell and his wife for accepting our invitation to be guests of honour at this performance, thus enabling us to convey personally through him, our gratitude to the American people for the hospitality shown to our people who toured America, also to the officials of Disneyland America, who have so readily offered and made available any information or details required to assist in the planning and building of the local Fantasyland children's play area."<sup>4</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints  
in association with  
Crest-Birdseye Fantasyland Castle Bridge Committee

*Presents*

THE

**Kia Ngawari Maori**

COMPANY  
of  
Hastings, N.Z.



## Fantasy...

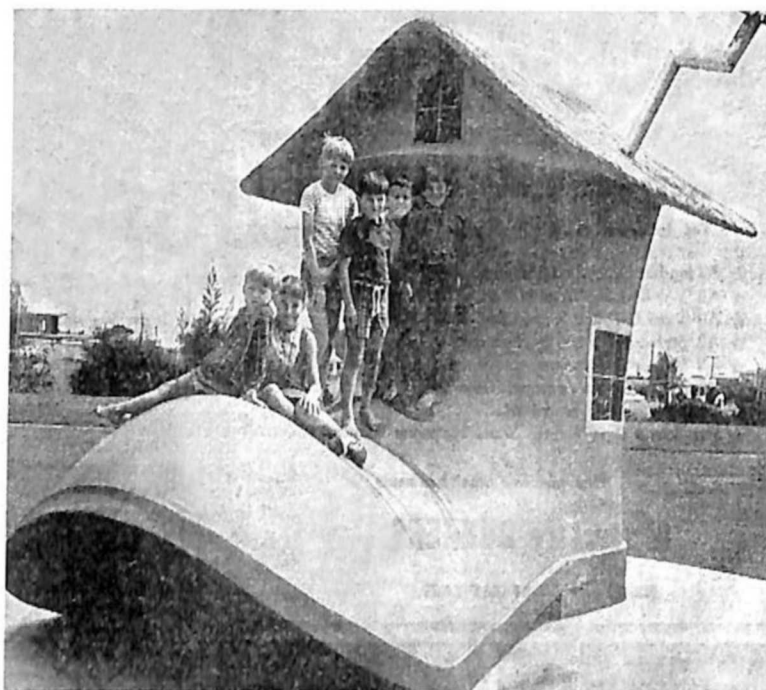
On the one hand, Fantasyland is nothing but a colonialist footprint in miniature, its myths and fairytales belonging to a culture that is hardly innocent. However, and paradoxically, it is precisely this belief in childhood and its more innocent and utopian world that unites a community such as Hastings to pool resources and make something beyond the ordinary. The element of play and transformation inherent in fairytales cuts through the culture at many levels, and on an imaginative level at least, turns it upside down.

Fantasyland accommodates play, magic and intuition. Concerning Fantasyland USA, one writer contends that “Fantasyland occupies a special realm, a kind of unconscious or basement level for the mythos of the human realm, for it features the stories of fear, struggle, transformation and conquest transposed to the level of the unconscious, of fantasy, of the fairytale.”<sup>5</sup>

The cultural implications of Disneyland USA are many and have inspired an enormous amount of critical debate. Perhaps the most famous notion comes from Jean Baudrillard who contends that the brilliance of Disneyland lies in its ability

to fool people into thinking that the rest of America is real. Either way, as Capitalism with a capital C, “Disneyland is a work of genius.”<sup>6</sup> Here of course is one of the major differences between Walt’s and Harry’s dream ... the Hastings version was never going to make truck-loads of money.

In the early sketches for Fantasyland Hastings, nursery rhymes seem to predominate over the more classic fairytales. In Wilkinson’s sketch we find Old Mothers Shoe and Humpty Dumpty. A year later the Castle becomes a major focus and new



sketches are made for its construction. The shift to a castle focus (as with the name change) marks a more pronounced emphasis on American trends, favouring the Disney model over Harry’s initial concept of a Pleasure Garden closer to Tivoli in Copenhagen. But these influences make for a complex mix. Tivoli itself was a major model for Walt Disney who, after visiting the gardens in the 1950s, employed Tivoli’s manager to come and advise on crowd flow at his own ‘Tivoli’ in Anaheim, California.



## Unique in Hastings...

The unique and local development of Hastings Fantasyland, as traced through old newspapers from the 60s, illuminates both the similarities and enormous differences between Hastings and its colossal namesake across the pacific. The most glaring difference, as already mentioned, is that one was funded off the back of a mega movie privately owned corporation, while Fantasyland Hastings was the product of community fund-raising and personal donations, and was publicly owned. We may well wonder now how freely Hastings used Disney images of Tinkerbell and Dumbo in their fund-raising activities without fear of copyright issues. One can only assume that Disney America viewed this as a form of free advertising.

The first major fund-raising effort for Fantasyland Hastings, a Queen Carnival, was instigated by Harry and Greater Hastings in 1965. It had as its target the sum of 20 thousand pounds. The Colouring Competition organised for the Carnival clearly shows how the ideas for the main attractions had developed from the first pleasure garden extensions and storybook area. Harry's treasure island theme is still paramount but now features a pirate ship and Tinkerbell. Interestingly the train appears as a cross between Disney's Frontier mine train and Fantasyland's Casey Jr. The castle is depicted as a mammoth European fortress, replete with pines. 2,500 children entered the colouring competition.

# FIFTEEN MORE BABIES TO HELP FANTASYLAND



**Tessa Joll**  
(Country)



**Edward Winitana**  
(Maori)



**Michael Alexander**  
(Food & Beverages)



**Danny Tewhaiti**  
(Maori)



**Susan Harbord**  
(Jaycee/Nurses)



**Elizabeth Downey**  
(Womens  
Organisations)



**Hayden Hall**  
(Retail East)



**Vicki Morgan**  
(Crest/Birdseye)



**Mark Abelson**  
(Lions)



**Kathryn Mawley**  
(Havelock North)



**Julie Evans**  
(Motor Trades &  
Transport)



**Grant Smith**  
(Country)



**Sophie Karekare**  
(Combined Industries)



**Jane Atchison**  
(Country)



A Baby Competition was also held to help raise money; these the very children who would learn to love and play in Fantasyland. A Beauty Competition was used as another ploy, and like the Blossom Festival, was a kind of local quest for magic and eternal youth. It whispered of something far more ritualistic and wondrous than its business sponsors could ever align themselves with in the normal hum drum of daily life in Hastings.

The appeal for the building of the castle used a number of ingenious methods, mostly centred around the decision to call the castle 'Camelot'. Given that Disney's centre-piece castle is most definitely a Sleeping Beauty Castle, this is an interesting departure, reflecting perhaps an undercurrent of sentiment for British as apposed to American or European lore. The entrance to Fantasyland USA does have a medieval theme, but the history of its castle architecture belongs very much to models that Walt saw in Germany, especially the 1884 model for the castle of 'mad' King Ludwig II.

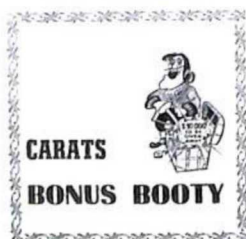
On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1965, a request for funding of the Hastings Castle reads; “Camelot Castle Bridge Appeal \$600 required. We broadcast tonight entertainment, quizzes, prizes. Phone your donation in now, yes, a ten shilling (or over) Camelot Castle Lapel Badge will entitle you to free afternoon tea at the Matinee Trotting Tomorrow.”<sup>7</sup>



Another call for help around the same time reads; “Fantasyland Proclamation: Be it known to all our friends, that by gracious permission of His Majesty King Arthur: Camelot Castle is to appear from the heavens where it has floated from time immemorial, to a resting place across

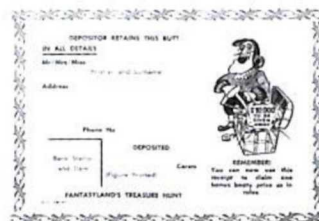
Fantasyland stream in our own Windsor park. The ravages of time, combined with the shock of descent, have so weakened this Fantasy Castle, that it must be rebuilt stone by stone. King Arthur has charged the Crest/Birds Eye Fantasyland Committee with the task of restoration ... Contributions will be rewarded with the presentation of the Insignia of Camelot Castle - an Insignia to be worn with pride. King Arthur has instructed us to bestow the Order of the Round Table on those who contribute more than 5 pounds.”<sup>8</sup>

The Castle was finally completed in 1968, based on drawings by R N McLachlan, and later modified by A H Selles, the city engineer. The towering spires and elaborate details of McLachlan’s lofty vision recall drawings by Disney illustrators for their Fantasyland equivalent. In reality, the Castle becomes simplified and constructed according to budget. The most prominent wall which faced into the lake was left strangely blank and unadorned, out of character with McLachlan’s original drawings.



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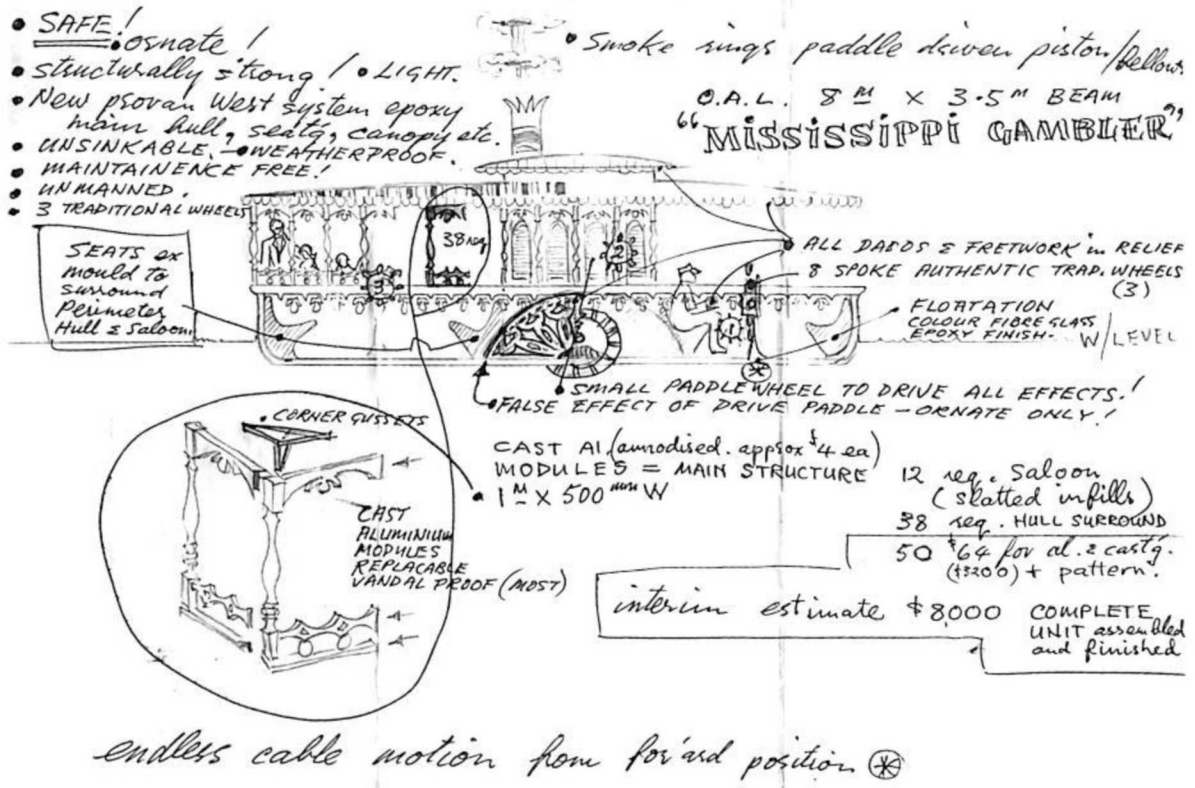




By 1967 the miniature railway track had been laid with two bridges. A lake had been formed and boat shed built. "Like Disneyland, our Fantasyland will never be finished because of the constant ambition to use the area to its greatest value and the continual changing of the features."<sup>9</sup>

## Under a flood of coloured lights at night...

Harry Poppelwell continued to work and contribute ideas to the growing success of the park through the seventies and into the eighties. A letter to Harry in 1981 testifies to his personal and continuing commitment to Fantasyland even though by this time he was no longer President of Greater Hastings. Concerning inquiries regarding the building of the Mississippi River Boat, it demonstrates the amount of time, attention to detail and thought that Harry was putting in behind the scenes for this community project.



Harry had a vision for Fantasyland that was expansive and based on international models for theme parks. It would have been inconceivable to him that a theme, such as Splash Planet, would have been implanted over the top of a fantasy theme already in place and so long worked for. Disneyland itself sports its own 'Splash Mountain', but at some considerable distance from the main Castle and Storybook playgrounds.

Fantasyland is now a dream from the past, yet one etched firmly in the minds of a whole generation of children who grew up or visited the region through the park's heyday. Martin Poppelwell, grandson of Harry, has instigated this exhibition to pay tribute to Harry's dream and to revisit the images and play things that were so much a part of our childhood.

"The whole of the Fantasyland area will be under a flood of coloured lights at night, so that it will also be an evening attraction. It will be a garden scene, a place of beauty as well as fantasy..."

"We are going ahead with the train, the boat lake and the castle as major features, plus smaller things such as crazy swings and slides, and we are confident that we will have enough to show by next Christmas to make people realise that this project is something different and more spectacular than any other similar undertaking in the Dominion."<sup>10</sup>

*Bridget Sutherland*



Mickey Mouse + Snow White in  
 1976 Waving to crowd of  
 PEOPLE  
 FROM Mounting UNIQUE RAY  
 Study III GROUND ALL IN  
 a decades work  
**Fantasyland** 11



# BY ORDER OF CAMELOT CASTLE BRIDGE

## notes

1. Stuart Klawans, Film Follies. The Cinema Out of Order. Cassell Wellington House, London 1999, p16
2. From *Disneyland. It's Place in World Culture*, Yi-Fu Tuan; printed in Designing Disney's Theme Parks. The Architecture of Reassurance ed. Karal Ann Marling. Canadian Centre for Architecture, Flammarion 1997, p192
3. Harry Popplewell quoted in *Fantasyland Finished for Christmas?* Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune 1966.
4. Kia Ngawari Maori, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in association with Crews-Birdseye Fantasyland Castle Bridge Committee, Programme Booklet 1966, p1
5. Miles Orvell, quoted in *Making Imagination Safe in the 1950's* by Ericka Doss in Designing Disney's Theme Parks. The Architecture of Reassurance ed. Karal Ann Marling. Canadian Centre for Architecture, Flammarion 1997, p181
6. *ibid.* Richard Schickel 'The Disney Version' (1968), quoted in *Forty Years of Overstatement* by Greil Marcus, 1997, p204
7. Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1965
8. Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune, October 1965 (exact date unknown)
9. Harry Popplewell quoted in *Fantasyland Finished for Christmas?* Hawke's Bay Herald-Tribune 1966
10. *ibid.*

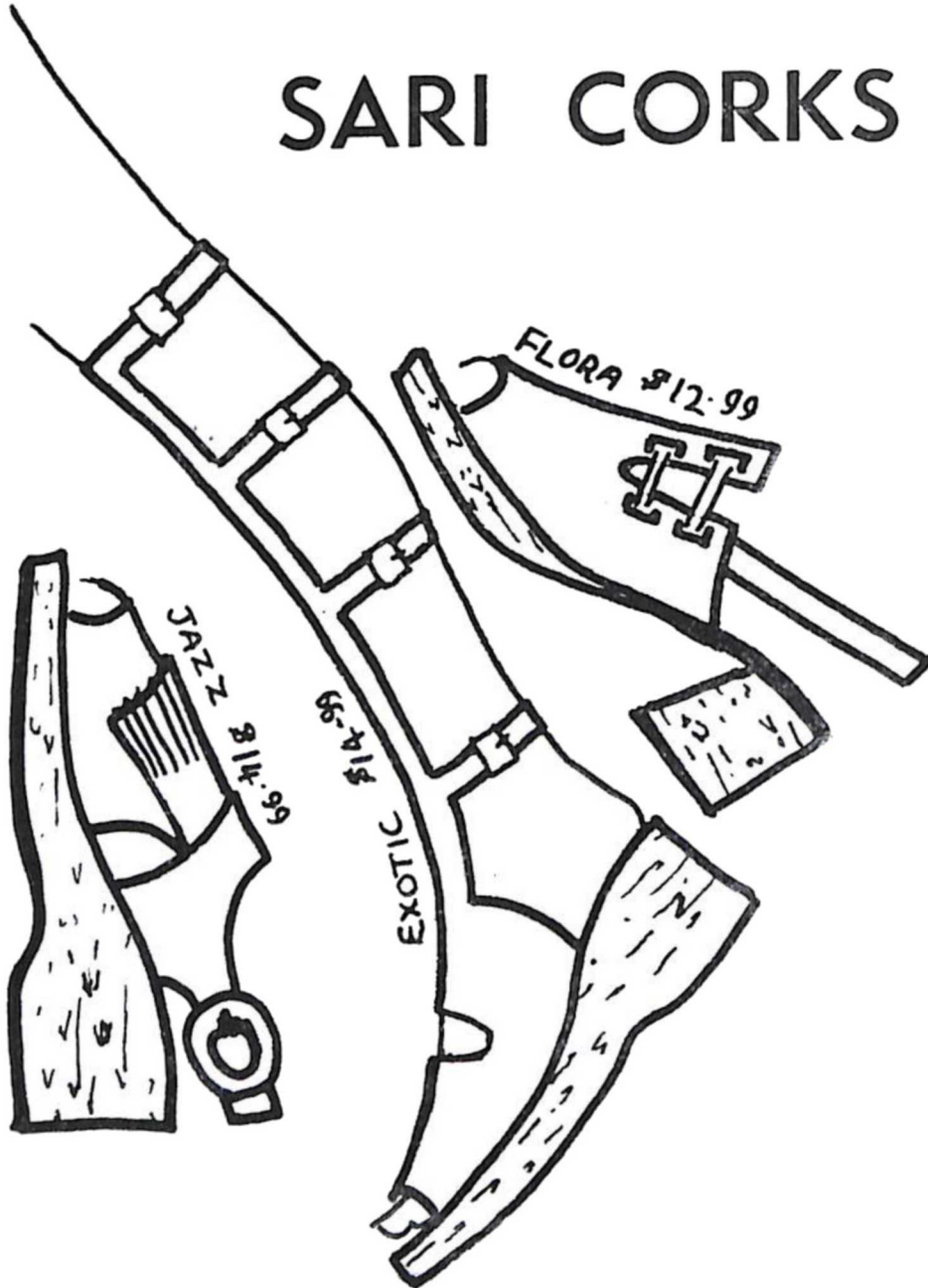
# BY ORDER OF TINKER- GLORIA



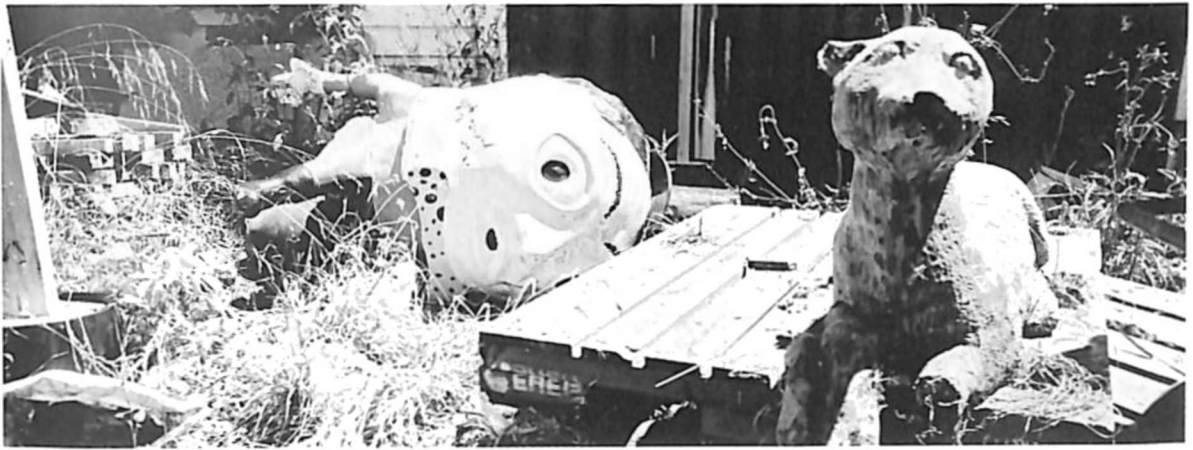
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HASTINGS AND NAPIER

# SARI CORKS



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Discarded Fantasyland props, Humpty and leopard  
Photos by Richard Brimer 2002

Monkey cages from the train

King Neptune's head



1313 HARBOR BLVD., ANAHEIM, CALIF. 92803 • TELEPHONES: KEystone 3-4456 AND MADison 6-8605

May 9, 1967

Mr. Harry Poffelwell  
P.O. Box 478  
Public Relations Office  
Russell Street  
Hastings

Dear Mr. Poffelwell:

Thank you for your nice letter telling us about the plans for the children's project in Hastings, and your kind comments about Disneyland.

Since the attractions at Disneyland are all designed by a division of Walt Disney Productions, which is called WED Enterprises, your letter is being forwarded to them. I also contacted the City of Anaheim Park and Recreation Department for possible assistance in obtaining the information you need since they purchase like equipment.

Sincerely,

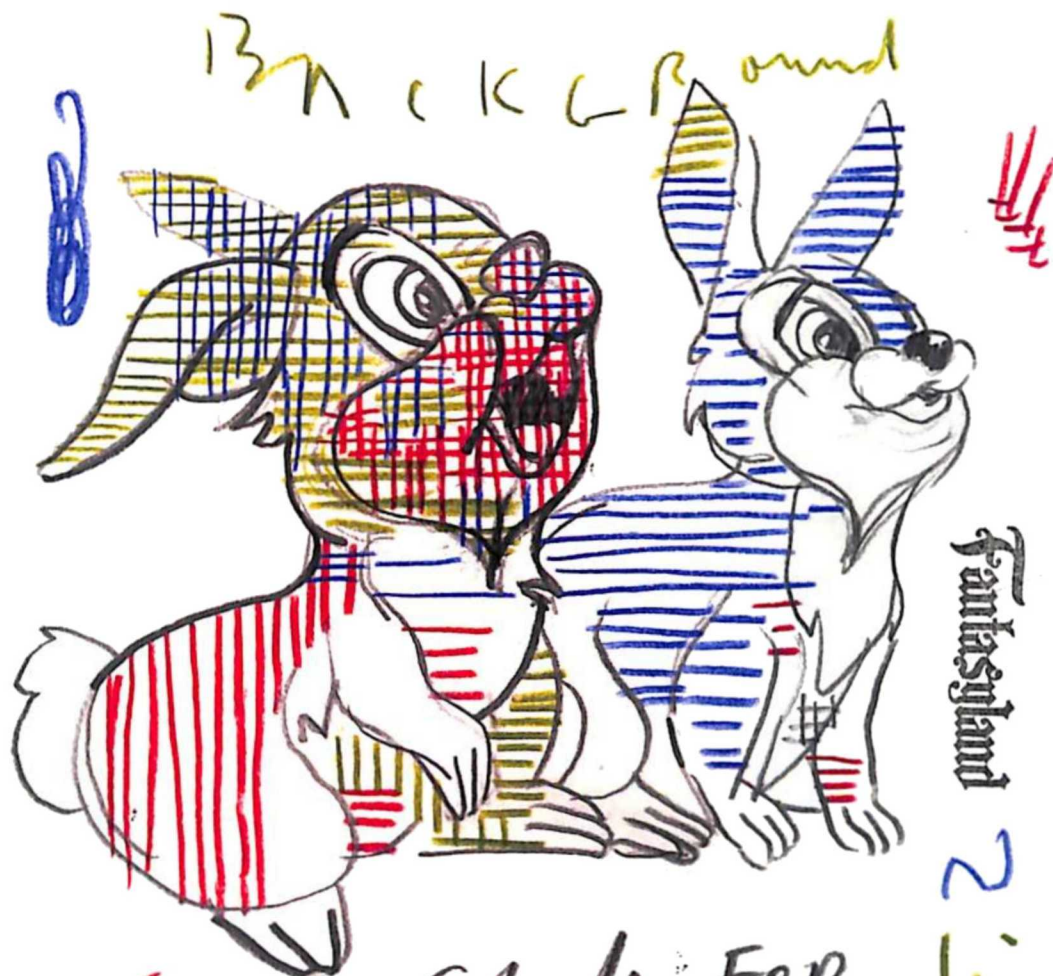
Mary B. Jones (Mrs.)  
Public Relations

MBJ:hn

PS. May 10 - The City Park and Recreation Department advises me that they purchase their equipment from --Jamison Inc., 19253 S. Vermont Avenue, Torrance, California 90509

NO AGREEMENT WILL BE BINDING ON THIS CORPORATION UNLESS IN WRITING AND SIGNED BY AN OFFICER





BACK Ground

Fantasyland

STIP Study FOR  
Bunnies H2O  
FOREGROUND



Red  
Golden  
spheres

Grey on Grey

GRISAILLE  
wallpaper.

Moat

Drawing FOR CASTLE

2½ hours of non  
stop variety.

# RE/FAKING FANTASYLAND

This conversation took place on 25 April 2002 at the Ultimate Wheel Alignment workshop, between the Napier Police and Peaches & Cream, Napier.

Dick Frizzell: You know that conversation we had about drawing? You made a fantastic observation about looking at that painted bit just on a completely white canvas, you know about how it's this act/knack of putting yourself in there, somehow putting yourself right in there, so that the mark actually turns into a hill, when you're drawing it.

Martin Poppelwell: The most reassuring aspect that everyone else that's been involved in the show other than me, has been their ability to see how it's going to look by virtue of how I've been able to draw it up.

Oh ok.

Whether it's been a castle form or the plans of the gallery or the plans of the space, which has been very good for me to see how useful in this day and age simply getting back to using a pencil can be, just to articulate a simple idea.

Now I'm starting to get a much clearer picture of what you're actually getting out of this, this parallel with opinion of folk art and everything else, by actually setting it up and having 3-dimensional things like the castle made, it actually puts you in the non-art head of the guy that did that watercolour in the first place. You know you're actually having to, because of designing this castle the very physical fact that you have to get all this information across, means that while you're doing it you can completely forget that you're an actual artist.

No, I'm the poor bastard that had to work out how we could draw it.

In the end you'll end up hopefully with a completely artless artifact that becomes art by definition because you did it. That's the magic moment that we're all looking



P A G E  
3 4

Fantasyland Castle with lighting effects, gouache and watercolour on paper R N McLachlan 1966

R · N · M C L A C H L A N · 66 ·

for, that we're all trying to,... I'm always trying to bushwhack myself and hijack myself away from the idea that I'm making art. That's why I call those landscapes cabinet making, that Stanley Palmer apron I put on and go out and make another cabinet. If I thought it was art I'd be too scared to start it.

You don't want to own the idea. You don't want to own the idea of the castle, nor do I expect that you want to own the idea of the landscape. What you do own is your ability to see into that landscape and articulate the way in which your mind's



working through the forms that you see represented in front of you. That's what we were talking about the other night - the use of the pencil and articulating what's going on in your head.

That's right... that's right, you're externalising yourself which is, you are literally expressing yourself and that's the way you do it, that's the way I choose to do it and then you end up with, - I used to talk about this at art school quite a lot, - that the stuff that you leave in your wake which is the result of all this articulating, then people will decide whether it's art or not, and whether they want to buy it or whether they want to exhibit it or whatever, but actually when you're in the studio, when you're in front of the thing, when you're in front of the drawing you really... If you thought you were making art... I mean you're seriously delusional at that point.

Well that's being far too precious about art. And I don't think cabinet-makers are too precious about their task.

They just get on and make it. But I find this the interesting thing that is this self-conscious investigation of the phenomena of art which is what we are always doing, of course we are constantly living with this idea that we are actually making art, that somehow or other we have to, everyday, hypnotise ourselves, we have to kid

ourselves into thinking that we're not. That's the kind of paradox that fascinates me about this business.

It is a paradox, and it is. And that's that.

But it's like Tim Finn saying how do we manage to live with the idea that we're actually dying, you know. You just have to forget it all the time or else you couldn't cope. That's probably why the notion of making art is seen as a metaphor for death as like living with death as well, because of that way that you have to lie to yourself to get any truth out of it. You have to bull-shit yourself hugely to be able to go there and make the stuff.

That's the beauty of the game, the more...

The cleverer you are the more you can, the better you can bull-shit yourself.

Yeah, the greater the deception. It's almost like the less art there is the greater the deception, the more potential there is for finding yourself in a slightly uninhabited space.

And if you get there, the actual artefacts that you leave behind you when you move on to the next one, has genuine meaning because it's been put together in that fabulous space which is just pure intuition and will and desire and all those things, you know.

Yep, which are all, to an art extent, a given...

It should be a given. I had an interview the other day from this old guy, artist, I can't remember who it was, and he said when you get to, like near 60, if you're still doing it, if you're still really driven to get out of bed in the morning and go in the studio and do it there must be something going on. You really shouldn't be worrying at that point whether or not there's anything going on because there must be. Mind you I know a lot of old wankers are out there still producing at that age too, so it's not necessarily true.

But you can understand what that's saying...

Just relax with it. You're in the hands of Jacob, if it's gonna happen it's happened by now, you know.

Yep, well that's one of the beauties about a project like this because it was never conceived as art in the first place. So if I'm gonna hijack the idea and fake another Fantasyland in order to present a sort of historical moment in a region's history,

then I don't have to be worried about whether it's art or not because it's never art in the first place.

No you don't.

And so...

It's interesting, my instant response is "where's the art?" You know, why is Martin doing this, I mean that's,... it always comes back to that - where's the art? I mean



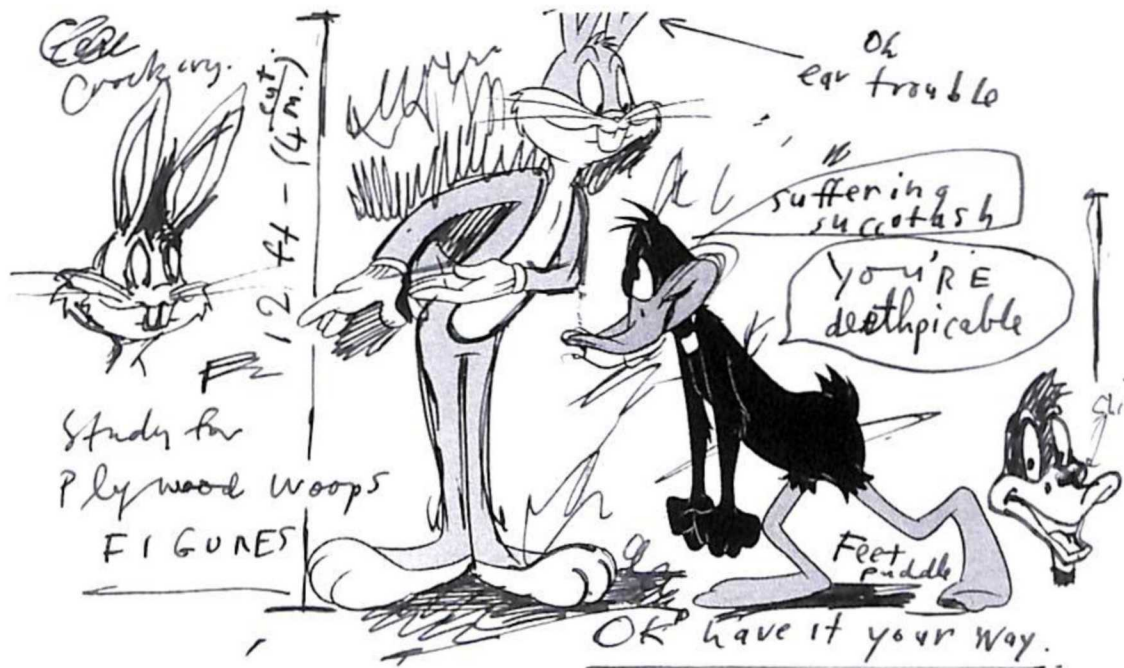
Ronnie van Hout got that old Uncle Albert tugboat nailed to the wall with the thing and I thought "where's the fuckin art?" You know. And then of course the penny dropped, and then I thought oh yeah of course, that's the art. I thought "he hasn't done anything to it", it's like such an incredibly conservative response, a bit like my mother or something and then you think, catch up eventually.

We don't have to make everything ourselves.

Well you just have to think of it. The minute you start thinking of it or I start thinking of it, you can't 'un-art' yourself. It's too late, you're too fucked up. The art family's fucked us up. Completely and utterly. You're completely over-influenced, over-reasoned, over everything... over it!

So many aspects of putting a project like this together have come out that are so much more involved with art, than would ever have been conceived in these days - the problem of how to make effective wood grain look effective but fake but still effective but well done - nice to look at but not overly... It sounds like an easy issue but who do I end up looking at? I have to go and look at still life painters...

What about rubbings? Wallpaper rubbed onto old wooden planks? What about crayon?



I've thought of that, but I've also thought if I can bang these things up reasonably well I can perhaps flog them off at the end of the day.

Ohhh... they might turn into art!

They might turn into art! But I quite like the idea of fake wooden panels, particularly people like de Chirico or Braque. How did people who knew what they were doing...

Why did the wall need wood graining?

The wall needs wood graining because wood graining was a large feature of aspects of the park. There were lots of posts nailed up, posts into caved areas. It's also reminiscent of the Queen's visit when at that time all the carvings were painted. There's this interest in the fake.



I see that's a stretched canvas over there with that yellow-ochre ground on it. You are quite deliberately setting up the situation where art might occur, without a doubt.

The minute you get a canvas on a stretcher like that you're saying, "I want this to be portable and permanent. I'm not just tacking up bits of old newspaper here."

Absolutely.

That's interesting. Actually, the more I go into this with you, the more sense it makes, which is what I thought would be the best thing to tape. If we could talk long enough for me to get a handle on what you're doing, then it would probably make... Like my maths teacher who said to me once at Hastings Boys' High School, "Frizzell, I'll ask you these questions and if you know the answers I'll take it for granted that the whole class does." I thought it was a compliment actually. It took a couple of weeks for me to realise what he'd said. By the end of this interview, if I can understand what you're actually setting up here, if you can leave out all the dregs in this conversation, it should make it relatively clear to anybody why you're doing it.

There are ways of getting art under people's noses and at the same time making them interested in an event.

It should be art and under the wire.

This is a way in which I can have a real play and experiment with techniques and information that I would normally not work with in an isolated, singular way.

It's luring you into work practices that you normally wouldn't find any logical reason for going there, but would quite like to be there.

I'd like to know, but now I have to go through the process of working out. Why do I want to know how to paint 40 square metres of faux wood? I've got better things to do with my day.

But have you got better things to do with your day?

No, actually, no I don't have better things to do with my day.

You could make a few more erotic pops, Martin.

Yep, erotic pops rocketing out the door.



JUDGED BEST  
LOOKING FROG

ambassador lends  
aid to APPEA

There will be spin-offs, as we say in the trade, I imagine. I'm sure you rather hope there will be.

As far as painting goes, I feel that I have something that I can happily paint about now.

It has been a bit 'scattish' up till now.

It's been scattish simply because I got stuck in making pottery, because I had to make a living. What do I make paintings of? I don't know. It's like, what do you make paintings of?

Tell me.

Eventually after making pottery for more often than not, for two or three years and there was heaps of drawing and stuff going on in there at the same time, which has meant that the pottery always looks kind of slightly not, but it still is. I worked out that the way to make paintings was the same way I make my pottery which was give it an ochre background and draw on top, stick a bit of white on and that's it. And it wasn't until I looked at people like,... hanging out to find out how to do that. Looking at people like Bacon who painted on lots of raw canvas, left big open spaces and um, Degas, lots of drawing on big open spaces with just sort of heightened areas of concentration and left the rest sort of open...

Degas or Lautrec?

Well Lautrec fits into the same category, Giacometti fits into the same category...

True, true, drawing?

Lots of drawing. They're trying to work out how to draw and leave the idea of painting, not worry about it. And...

OK, so you've got that, but the actual content, you're working up a head of steam with this project that does seem to be leading you to a kind of, in some sense, a continuity?

It feels like I'm just finding, I'm discovering, - which sounds like a word that means something but it's not, - it means sort of stumbling and bumbling I suppose...

I think continuity's a big,... I mean look at me, how discontinuous is my product? But you are getting to a point where you can tell what a Poppellwell is,... Oh yeah, there's the ochre and the white highlighting, I get ya.

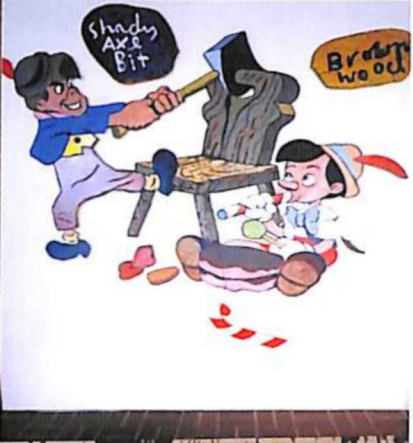
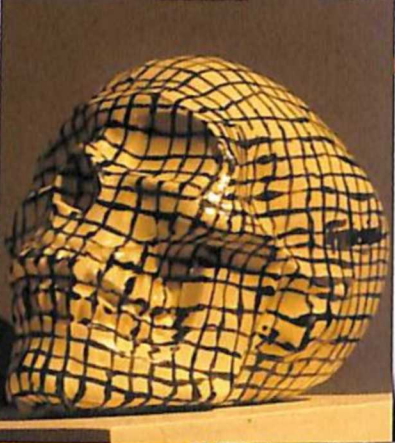
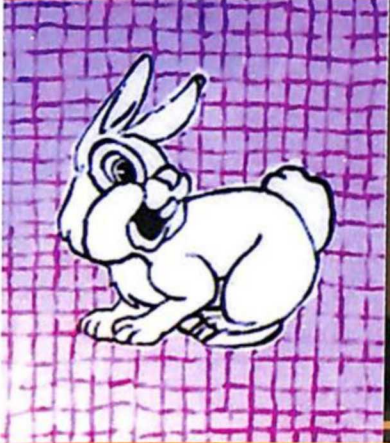
Yeah, it's just beginning to slowly fall into place, which means that no matter what you touch, it's like what you're saying, whether it's a landscape or a bit of real estate or a cartoon, or an abstract, no matter what you do it has that unnerving look of who you are.

Yes.

*Martin Poppelwell with Dick Frizzell*



Installation view left to right: Humpty Dumpty, Wile E. Coyote, Leopard, Bambi, Castle with Lamps



Left to right, top to bottom: WILE E COYOTE JUMP, oil on canvas 1065 x 1370mm 2002. CASTLE, plywood, wallpaper, lamps 3600 x 2440mm (variable) 2002. BAMBI, oil on wood panel 1220 x 1220mm 2002. THUMPER, acrylic on paper 880 x 610mm 2002. FANTASY AND SKULL, black stain on white earthenware 200 x 140mm (variable) 2002. PINOCCHIO, oil on board 2200 x 2100mm (variable) 2002. Detail inside Castle showing RABBIT WITH TRUMPET, white earthenware 265mmH 2002. TEAROOM CROCKERY in Faux Wood Wall, white earthenware, gold, 1000 x 700mm (variable) 2002. BAMBI, white earthenware, gold, wood base, 250 x 270 x 210mm, 2002, with WALLPAPER GRID, grey on grey 1999-2000. FAUX WOOD detail, acrylic on wood panel 2002.

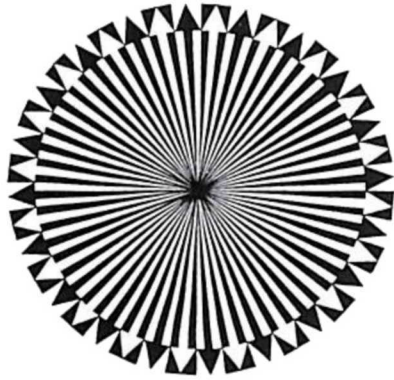
# MARTIN POPPELWELL

## Selected Biography and Exhibitions

BORN 1969 Hastings New Zealand

AWARDS 2001 Creative New Zealand New Works Grant. 1999 Creative New Zealand New Works Grant. 1998 Montana Emerging Artist Award. 1994 Merit Award Annual Exhibition Sarjeant Gallery Wanganui. 1991 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Project Grant with Daniel Malone.

EXHIBITIONS 2002 GROUP EXHIBITION Anna Bibby Gallery Auckland. 2002 PIMP Tairāwhiti Museum Gisborne. 2002 FANTASYLAND HB Exhibition Centre Hastings. 2001 LANDSCAPE Group exhibition Anna Bibby Gallery Auckland. 2001 NATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ART AWARDS Waikato Museum of Art and History. 2000 WORMS + MASH Light works on paper Creative Napier. 2000 FASHION ADVICE collaborative work with Marilyn Sainty Scotties Auckland and Wellington. 2000 YOU'LL LEARN TO LIKE IT Avid Wellington. 2000 THE LESS SAID THE BETTER Anna Bibby Gallery Auckland. 2000 THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI Window installation New Gallery Auckland City Art Gallery. 1999 BLACK + WHITE Group Show Anna Bibby Gallery Auckland. 1999 OLD PICTURES Oils on canvas The Studio Gallery Napier. 1999 UNFINISHED STILL LIFE SERIES Sappho and Heath Napier. 1999 BUSY IS NO EXCUSE: CERAMICS AND RECENT EFFORTS Anna Bibby Gallery Auckland. 1998 MUSEE DÉCOR Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery Napier. 1998 PIPES AND JUG DEALS Lesley Kreisler Gallery New Plymouth. 1998 ONE IDEA A YEAR IF YOU'RE LUCKY Wallpaper, Carpet and Pottery Avid Wellington. 1998 ICON RESTAURANT COMMISSION Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Wellington. 1997 LINES OF VASES Avid Wellington. 1997 AT THE END OF THE DAY IT'S POTTERY Testrip Auckland. 1996 BLACKBOARD WORK FOR VIRTU RESTAURANT New Gallery Auckland City Art Gallery collaboration with Gavin Chilcott. 1996 NEW GLASS PLATES Avid Wellington. 1995 OPEN FORUM Group Exhibition Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery Napier. 1995 CANDIDE Testrip Auckland. 1994 TESTRIP OPENING Group Exhibition Testrip Auckland. 1994 ESPERANTO Paintings and Drawings with Daniel Malone Curated by George Hubbard Rosini's Auckland. 1994 NEW CERAMICS Avid Wellington. 1993 KERMADEC RESTAURANT COMMISSION Noel Lane Architects collaboration with Gavin Chilcott and Ralph Paine. 1993 NEW CERAMICS Avid Wellington. 1992 LIGHT SENSITIVE collaboration with Joyce Campbell Artspace Auckland. 1992 RELISH collaborative work with Daniel Malone George Fraser Gallery (Artspace) Auckland. 1992 LIKE THEY ARE NOW Electronic text installation Curated by John Barnett and Lesley Kreisler Queen Street Auckland. 1992 ZIMBABWE MOBIL HERITAGE Selected work National Gallery of Zimbabwe Harare Zimbabwe. 1992 Gallery Delta Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings Harare Zimbabwe. 1991 Modern Show collaborative work with Daniel Malone Language School Gallery Archilles House Auckland. 1991 SCHEME collaborative work with Gavin Chilcott and Ralph Paine Wellington City Gallery.





**2½ HOURS  
OF NON-STOP  
VARIETY**