1 BOWEN AVENUE AUCKLAND 1010 NEW ZEALAND

## TRISH CLARK GALLERY PRESS RELEASE:

## STELLA BRENNAN: BLACK FLAGS

## July 19 - August 19, 2016

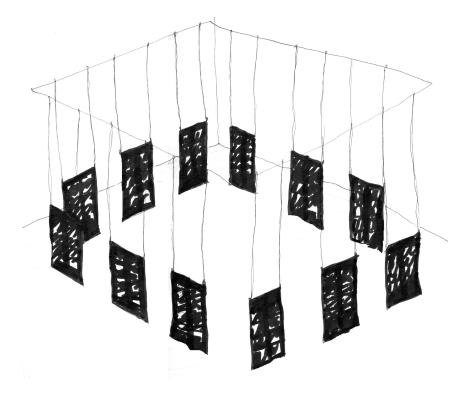
With a practice that spans the handmade, new media, curation, installation, social projects and urban design, Stella Brennan's work deals above all with navigating the space and time between human subjects. Brennan prises open history, its losses and possibilities, interrogating colonialism, industrialisation and computerisation. Chief Curator at Wellington's City Gallery, Robert Leonard, has stated "Brennan...explores the history and currency of modernity, the dream of human perfectibility and emancipation premised on rationality, technology, progress. She researches modernity's grand schemes and utopian ideologies, and their fate in the brave new world of the present."

As an artist, Brennan has exhibited across Australia, Asia, North America, Europe and New Zealand and has been awarded Residencies including at Apex Arts in New York City, and Artspace in Sydney. Having graduated MFA from the University of Auckland in 1999, Brennan co-founded Aotearoa Digital Arts and was co-editor of the Aotearoa Digital Arts Reader, the first comprehensive text on digital arts practice in New Zealand.

Brennan has been difficult for some commentators to quantify. While her concerns remain consistent, her avenues of expression are diverse. Relishing material and technical challenges, over the last two decades her installations have included video projections, soundscapes, sculptural constructions, light works as well as found objects. In her Walters Prize-nominated work Wet Social Sculpture, a fully functioning spa pool was installed in an art gallery and the audience invited in. Memory Hole, her solo exhibition at Trish Clark Gallery in 2015, delved into the materiality and affect of outmoded technologies, presenting for rumination the glossy surfaces and effects of our flawed interface with technology, alongside a 'New Zealand-mythic' landscape comprising a small tent surrounded by pine bark mulch and, in typical Brennan fashion, housing an ironic video work of an auger grinding its way into the earth, endlessly looped.

In this, her second solo exhibition at Trish Clark Gallery, Brennan hangs black 'flags' burnt through with text, suspended to form a square within the gallery space. Text is contained in the negative, the burnt apertures forming "a lovely absence". The burning process has encrypted a code in the black fabric, linking us through time to early computer punch cards, then far beyond those to the Jacquard looms of the early Industrial Revolution.





## Just as a flag serves to promote social cohesion (or new orders) so too the quadrant marks out a social space. Mindful of the utopian promises of previous generations' urbanism, and reflecting on the failure of these promises to deliver, Brennan mines her own locale, "a place with no provenance", as material for this new installation. Described by Dr Susan Ballard as "archaeologist of suburbia", Brennan creates a mythology from the residue of both cultural greatness and bleakness, her physical explorations through the everyday suburban streets of Glenfield creating the narrative logic of her flag text, linking the death of James K Baxter, the paintings of Charles Blomfield, local landmarks and tragedies.

The flags are accompanied by drawings like dismembered books, with pages folded, printed, perforated, stained and soaked. Ink marks bleed into their very structure like a Rorschach test or a stain seeping through cloth.

Exploring another tactile history are Brennan's kintsugi, artworks based on a historical Japanese method of mending broken ceramics with layers of lacquer, topped with gold leaf. Both pragmatic and beautiful, the patina of age is revered in some cultures and disdained in others. Brennan's conceit is to manufacture this progression; her treasures are found trawling junk shops, only to be artfully broken, repaired and oddly filled with organic and inorganic material, riffing on the similarly historic Japanese technique of ikebana.

Brennan maintains a practice as a writer, as essayist for artists including Ann Veronica Janssens and Patricia Piccinini, as well as critic for magazines including Art Asia Pacific, the New Zealand Listener and Art New Zealand. She has also been an advisory editor for Eyeline Magazine, Australia.





Brennan curated the exhibitions Nostalgia for the Future (Artspace, Auckland, 1999), Dirty Pixels (Artspace, Adam Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery and Waikato Museum of Art and History, 2002-3), and co-curated Cloudland: Digital Art from Aotearoa New Zealand (The Substation, Singapore, 2008).

Brennan lives and works in Auckland.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, IMAGES AND QUERIES PLEASE CONTACT THE GALLERY

info@trishclark.co.nz

09 379 9556 / 021 378 940

IN THE GRAVEYARD	IN THE GRAVEYARD				
IS A WOODEN MARKER.	IS A WOODEN MARKER.				
WHEN IT RAINS	WHEN IT RAINS			AUTUMN AFTERNOON,	AUTUMN AFTERNOON,
THE OLD TIMBER GLOWS	THE OLD TIMBER GLOWS			MY BABY AND I	
FUNGAL RED	FUNGAL RED			PASSING TIME	PASSING TIME
AGAINST THE DOUR	AGAINST THE DOUR			ON THE ROUGH LAWN	ON THE ROUGH LAWN
HEADSTONES.	HEADSTONES.			BETWEEN THE STONES.	BETWEEN THE STONES.
THE WIDOW LEFT LONDON	THE WIDOW LEFT LONDON			WALKING ON	WALKING ON
	WITH HER CHILDREN.	ACROSS THE ROAD	ACROSS THE ROAD	WE WATCH A GIRL	WE WATCH A GIRL
	SAILED ACROSS THE WORLD.	FROM THE GRAVEYARD.	FROM THE GRAVEYARD,	IN A BARE CIRCLE	IN A BARE CIRCLE
	LANDED WHEN THE CITY	A RED BRICK WALL.	A RED BRICK WALL.	TRAINING A	TRAINING A
	WAS STILL A	FIXED NOW.	FIXED NOW.	HORSE ON A ROPE.	HORSE ON A ROPE.
	BARRACKS TOWN.	BUTIREMEMBER	BUT I REMEMBER	OUT WEST.	OUT WEST.
	1888.	THE BRICKS HEAPED UP	THE BRICKS HEAPED UP	A GREY PLANE	A GREY PLANE
	A DAUGHTER SOMEHOW CAME TO REST HERE:	ROUND & RAGGED GAP	ROUND & RAGGED GAP	TAKING OFF FROM	TAKING OFF FROM
	CAME TO REST HERE; ELIZA.	FILLED WITH CANDLES	FILLED WITH CANDLES	THE AIRFIELD	THE AIRFIELD
	ELIZA,	AND FLOWERS.	AND FLOWERS.	ACROSS THE WATER	
HER BROTHER'S		SOME BOY	SOME BOY	CATCHES THE SUN	
FAMOUS PAINTINGS.		CRASHED HIS CAR.		ON ITS WING.	
	ALL COLONIAL ROMANCE.	DIED HERE TOO.		ON ESKDALE ROAD	
	PINK AND WHITE TERRACES.		WRITTEN IN WHITE ON	THE CARS KEEP	
GREAT KAURI.	GREAT KAURI.	THE NEW BRICKS.		HISSING BY:	
HE PAINTED THAT RIVER.	HE PAINTED THAT RIVER.	FADED.		DOWNHILL.	
PASSED BY	PASSED BY		BUT STILL LEGIBLE:	DOWNHILL, UPHILL.	
HIRUHARAMA,	HIRUHARAMA,		BABY	[marrer re-	
RANANA,	RANANA ,			DOWNHILL.	
ATENE,	ATENE,	WISH YOU COULD		WASHING PAST,	
MIRRORS OF ANCIENT CITIES	MIRRORS OF ANCIENT CITIES	SEE OUR GIRL NOW		DRIVING THROUGH	
PLANTED IN THE PAPA.	PLANTED IN THE PAPA.		SHE'S SO MUCH	THIS CITY	
BANKS SLICK AS GLASS	BANKS SLICK AS GLASS	LIKE YOU.		UNDER ASPHALT,	
IN THE RAIN.			LOVE YOU ALWAYS.	BEHIND GLASS.	
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