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HEATHER STRAKA | ... *another dissection*
1 November – 21 December, 2019

Press Release

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Trish Clark Gallery is pleased to present Heather Straka's third solo exhibition, ... *another dissection*. True to her word, Straka takes another deep-dive into perceptions of socio-political and cultural lives, this time exploring the shifts in gender and cultural power, particularly in the arts and film, that have exploded in the wake of Harvey Weinstein's downfall.

Heather Straka's insightful explorations, through her different approaches in the dual mediums of paint and film, have created a significant body of compelling and often controversial work. With an MFA in Film, Straka demonstrates technical control of her medium and coupled with a finely modulated handling of her contentious subject matter, she deftly questions tradition, challenges the politically correct, and subverts expectations. This latest series of photographs expands on her two previous series, *The Anatomy Lesson* and *Blood Lust*, bringing together a new team under her direction that explicates Straka's usual subversive dark-humoured play with stereotypes while referencing a number of art historical tropes. This time she is focussed on efforts at extinguishing the status quo via the torching of that cultural referent widely recognised as symbolic in cultural life in New Zealand-Aotearoa through the Jane Campion film of the same name, *the piano*.

Rising above nationalist concerns in this year marking the 250th anniversary of Cook's first voyage, Straka has carefully orchestrated her model choices to reflect the gender and ethnic stereotypes explored in her paintings. Individually power dressed but united by standardised red armbands as if in uniform, serious-minded women contemplate the symbols of colonial repression about to be incinerated at their hands; a non-binary African airline hostess screams Straka's frustration to the world and the return of a burqua babe model illuminate high-vis diversity; while hulking men attempt to halt this process in a failed raising of the flag of domination; leaving a dishevelled child amidst the rubble contemplating his and the planet's future; it's a fresh dystopian Straka take on the mad world, in advertising, in film and in reality.

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Everything is grist to Straka's mill, with no apologia. Unafraid to confront racist and sexist stereotypes, Straka's engagement with such debate is a core part of her practice, her caustic gaze skewering and illuminating her subject matter.

Graduating BFA in Sculpture at the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts in 1994, Straka honed an acute attention to detail later carried through to her painting practice, developed over several years spent in France. Straka returned to New Zealand to her first exhibition of paintings in 1998, later graduating with an MFA in Film from Canterbury University's Ilam School of Fine Arts in 2000. Since then Straka has been awarded several scholarships and residencies: in 2002 she was presented the Pierce Low Award for Excellence in Painting from the Royal Overseas League, London; was awarded New Zealand's esteemed Frances Hodgkins Fellowship in 2008; and the William Hodges Fellowship in 2011. Her work is held in all New Zealand's major public collections.

Heather Straka warmly thanks her contributors to / participants in this project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, IMAGES AND QUERIES PLEASE
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