

What Now? Lorene Taurerewa

Interview by Ashley Crawford

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WHAT NOW?

LORENE TAUREREWA

Your work is full of fantastical figures; part mythology, part fairy tale. What inspires the subjects? Were you a huge reader as a child? Now?

I put the figures together in a fairly whimsical fashion, making these decisions about what to put in and how to put different characters together as the drawing builds itself, involving a lot of rubbing out and redrawing. I don't think up any recipe for this but prefer to believe that a story that is otherwise hidden from view and from knowledge is bringing itself into view; these stories always involve a lot of ironies and inconsistencies and strange irrational relationships – this is the reason they are buried out of sight and mind. Usually these circumstances are closely bound up with childhood, because of the extreme differences in scale you are always processing as a child and the severe power relationships you have to try to survive with your wits.

I note that you come from Chinese, Samoan and European stock, were born in New Zealand and are now living in New York. How does this mix inform your work?

We all come from somewhere and we all are processing that – I wouldn't think my mix is any stranger than the next person's. I do find it incredibly tedious that the world needs to categorise, and this is a particular illness in the art world still – it is incredibly damaging in all kinds of ways.

It seems that drawing is central to your practice. Is that accurate?

Yes, drawing is central to my practice and should be to all artists' practice. Drawing has dropped out of art schools' curricula, consequently most painters these days are handicapped with lacking this most essential

tool to processing the interaction of the world with their personal thoughts and feelings. It has been replaced by the projector, and therefore dependence on the photographic image, which will only ever result in a certain kind of painting, no matter how an artist tries to dress it in different clothes.

You were part of Unnerved at Queensland Art Gallery this year. What is it that has inspired this dark vein of work in New Zealand? Do you discuss your work with your New Zealand peers? Is there a movement as such?

Sam Neill fronted a documentary on New Zealand film back in the 1980s, which he described as the "cinema of unease" and in which he pointed to a dark side of the New Zealand condition. Since then this idea has been borrowed by any number of New Zealand national exhibitions in an attempt to provide a unifying concept.

There is certainly a dark underside to New Zealand: you just have to look at the statistics for child murder, child abuse, suicide. But I don't see any artists addressing this other than in films such as *Once Were Warriors*. Colin McCahon got to it in a way, but since then New Zealand art has been characterised by a very cool rationalism, which I would say is more a smokescreen rather than anything trying to come to terms with the raw nastiness of the Kiwi psyche. I don't have anything to do with other Kiwi artists: I wouldn't mind meeting up with Jason Greig, Jane Campion and Shane Cotton. Hone Tuwhare is dead, sadly.

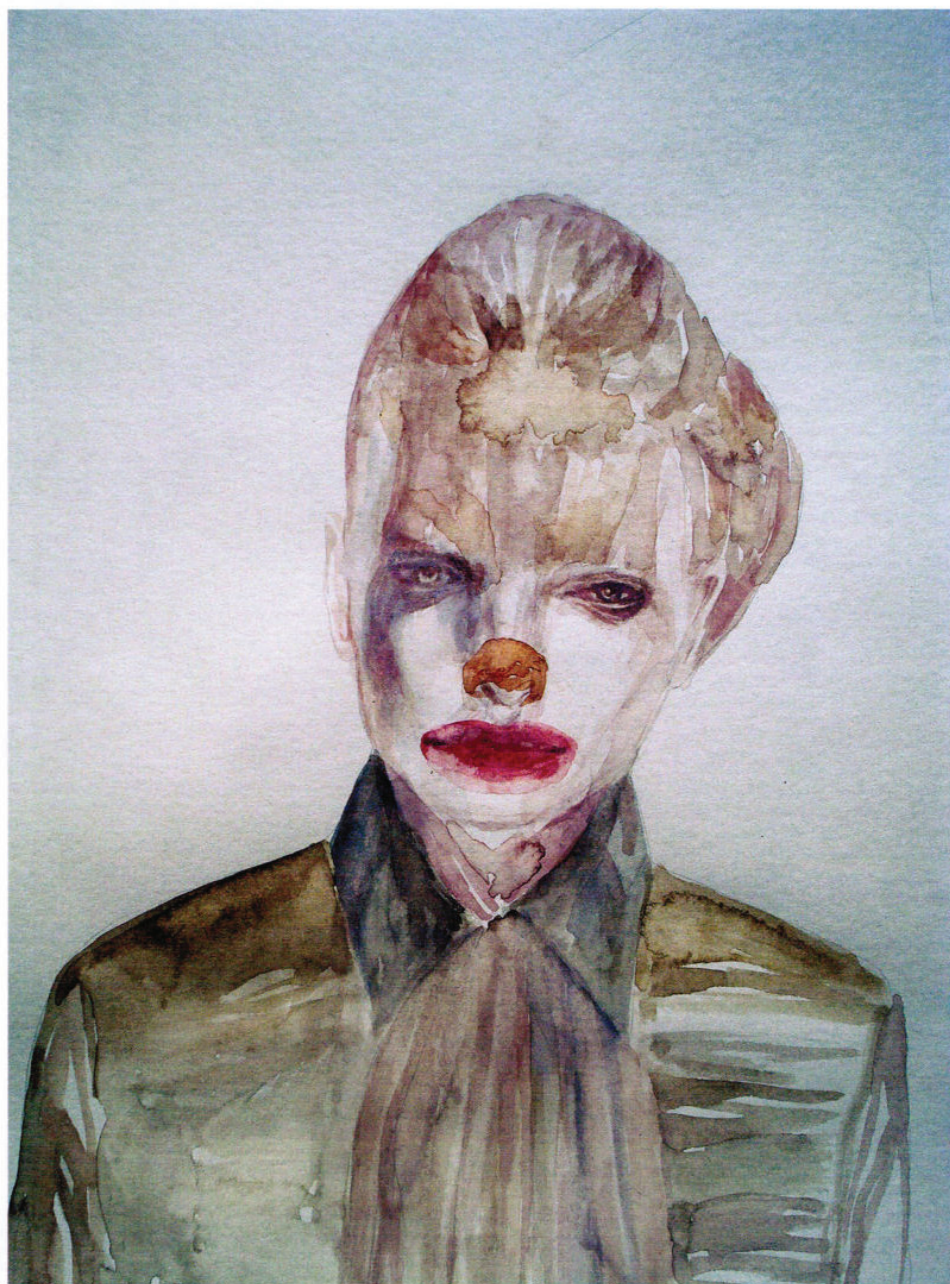
Ashley Crawford

Lorene Taurerewa's *The Company of Fools* will be staged at Melbourne's Helen Gory Galerie from 25 November to 18 December 2010.

Lorene Taurerewa, *Untitled 2*, 2010. Watercolor on paper, 58 x 38cm. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND HELEN GORY GALERIE, MELBOURNE

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