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# ART COLLECTOR



**THE UNDISCOVERED ISSUE** + YHONNIE SCARCE + JACQUELINE FAHEY + AREEZ KATKI +  
GRACE WRIGHT + PETER STICHBURY + ARCHIE MOORE + MARION BORGELT + MORE...

# A RATHER SPECIAL STORY

The Gardner family's art collection on Auckland's Waiheke Island is a rare glimpse at the work of New Zealand's undiscovered artists.

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**IT'S A CLICHE:** the visitor to a home wandering around, glass in hand, ticking off the familiar artist names, showing off knowledge. Private art collections in this way can sometimes be pretty cookie cutter.

Not the Gardner family's collection. Anyone lucky enough to visit their secluded holiday home – hanging above a cove at the remote end of Waiheke Island, Auckland – would be frequently stumped as well as impressed. In a collection of 66 artworks, there are many young artists the dealers have yet to discover, underappreciated established artists and an impressive roster of the acclaimed.

It's the result of a unique situation. With experience in art curating, law and project management, Belgians **Eugénie Coche** and **Arthur Buerms** had come to New Zealand to launch The Nomadic Art Gallery. Purchasing a small truck to both sleep and exhibit in, they travelled the country in 2020 meeting artists and exhibiting their work in the back of their van. 106 artists added their visual mark to the truck's exterior, itself now exhibited at Connells Bay Sculpture Park on Waiheke Island.



PREVIOUS PAGE: Kent Gardner with Tjalling de vries' *Stolen folder*, 2017. Mixed media on Belgian linen, 220 x 190cm.

ABOVE: From left: Arthur Buerms, Kent Gardner and Eugénie Coche. Painting: Inga Fillary, *Rust*, 2020. Clay, mud, soil, gravel, hair and rust on canvas, 153 x 102cm.

RIGHT: The Nomadic Art Gallery in Kalkoura, New Zealand. COURTESY: THE NOMADIC ART GALLERY.

OPPOSITE: Ophelia King, *Eyelash wishes and butterfly kisses*, 2019. Eyelashes, custom clay frame, ed. 1/3, 30 x 25 x 2.9cm.



*"I wanted to look at New Zealand art through fresh eyes, not my eyes, without any preconceptions about what is important."*

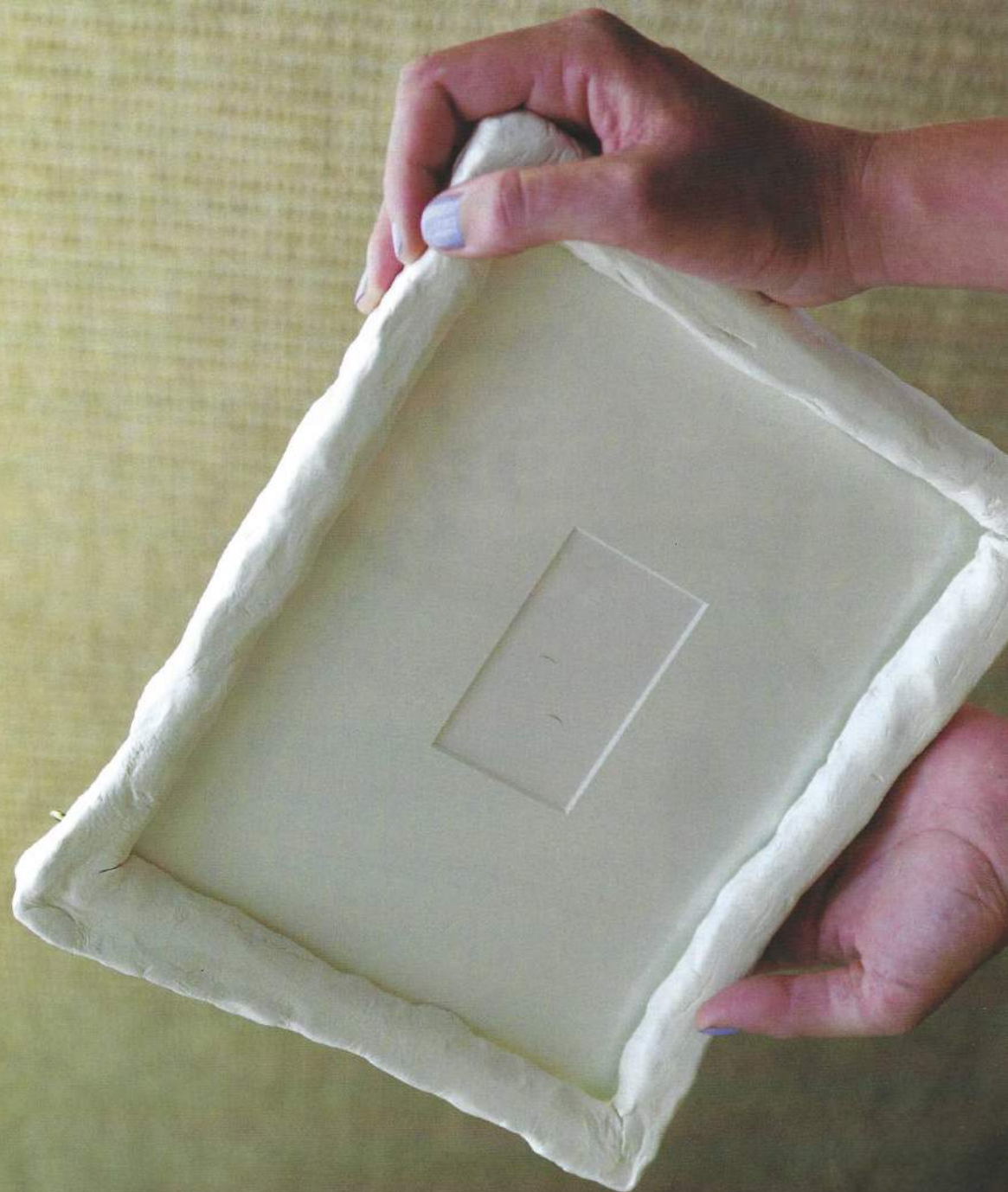
KENT GARDNER

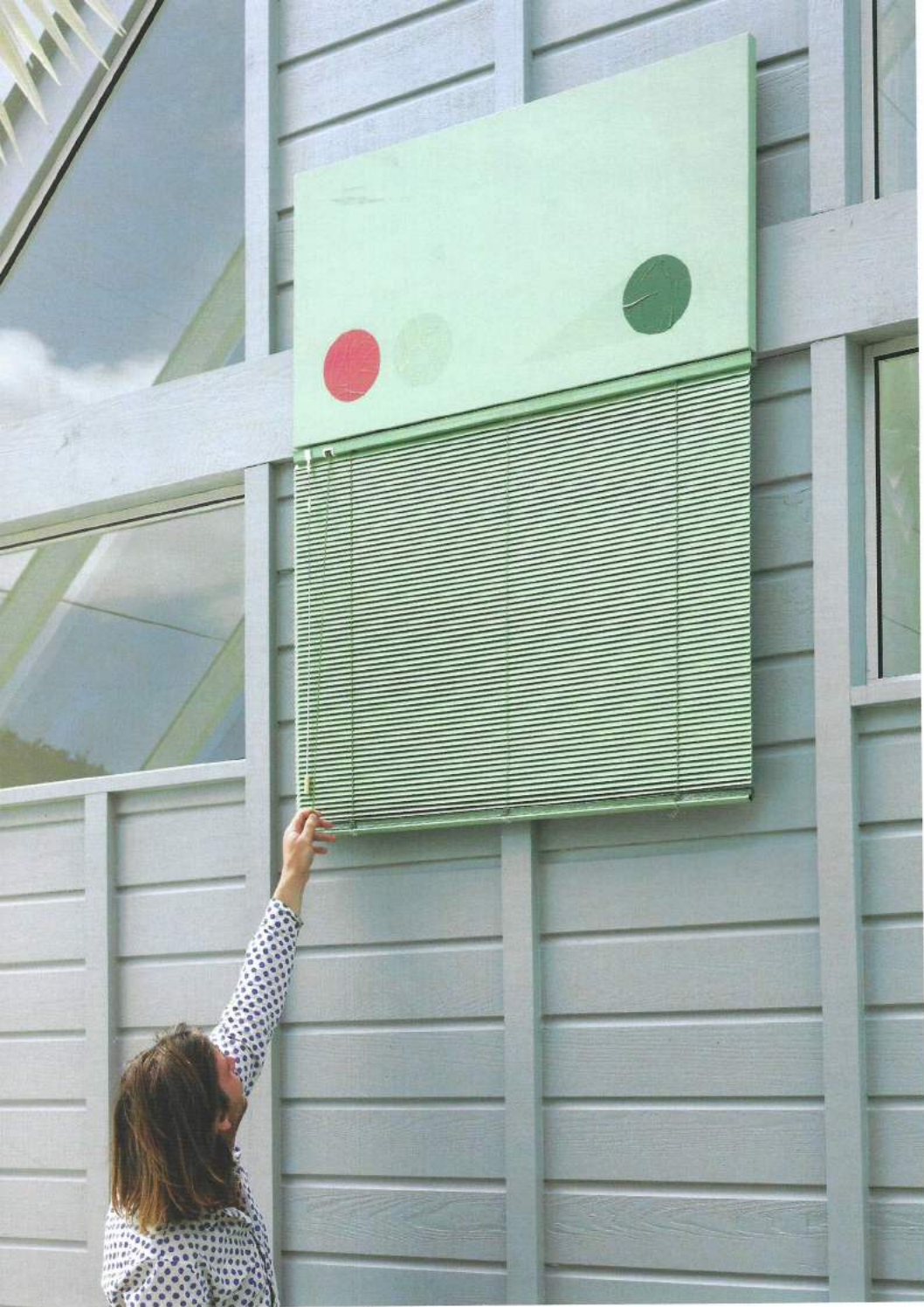
As a trustee of The Arts Foundation New Zealand foundation facilitating opportunities for artists through private philanthropy – Kent Gardner guided the collection in a crowdfunding campaign and, impressed with their knowledge and passion, teamed them – in addition to their nomadic gallery enterprise – with building a collection for his family's holiday house. Gardner wanted the collection to be based on The Nomadic Gallery's exhibition themes, which include birth, death, nostalgia, belief and alienation. So, Coche and Buerms made one final trip around New Zealand, packing the truck with Kent's soon-to-be collection, some of which had been previously exhibited in the truck, others specially purchased.

"I had been a little reluctant to start collecting New Zealand art, put off a bit by the box approach to collecting," says Gardner, who had been living for some time in London as an investment bank chief executive, but wanted a more grassroots and considered approach. I wanted to look at New Zealand through fresh eyes, not my eyes, without preconceptions about what is important. When I got talking to Arthur about what we were going to do I saw an opportunity."

"I liked that they were completely dedicated to it and wanted to do it properly. The level of detail, and so much time spent going to galleries and meeting artists. Maybe Arthur and Eugénie will go away and be the people in Europe who know the most about contemporary art in New Zealand at this time."

All this leads to a collection full of surprises. Photographic series *Korokoro* by Shannon Ao, a dealer exhibition highlight in 2022 here long before it gets to a NZ public gallery. Then there are lesser-known artists: a two-metre long Chinese inspired scroll painting in ink of a Manukau Harbour panorama (presented rolled in a small tube) by Mi Yang is stunning, while Ada Leung creates a glowing wasp's nest, or shell out of paper shavings.





ferent spaces in the house also played a role in thoughtful selection. In the guest rooms, visitors can appreciate works with stive connotations by Heather Straka, Ward Knox, Kushana Bush and Aiko Ison. They stand in contrast to the men's rooms which focus on quirky and dil paintings by Milarky, Ayesha Green, Valerie Bos and Philip Trusttum. Works here by artists Helen Calder, Emily Skudder and Oliver Cain speak naturally to nearby bathrooms. A combination of themes and location are touching: several works in the master bedroom are on the theme of love and growth, including a small work by Ophelia King made for her and her partners' eyelashes, hidden in the dressing room.

LEFT: Arthur Busch's stairs the house opens out spectacularly with Ed Bats' *Blur* (Moos green with white and sky, and the art responds. The 2020. Acrylic on cradled panel (b attached), 173 x 120 cm) is present in works by artists Jasmine Brisby, Fatu Feu'u, Andy Leleisi'uao and Dith Amituanai. Above the stairwell, an impressive layered James Robinson Green, *Meeting* (a mandala of fabric looks like it might once hung under the jetty you can see through the manuka trees below, while Inga Valerie Bos, *Findy*'s heavy abstract above the fireplace, is of clay, mud, soil, gravel, hair and rust to the tidal coastline out the windows. OPPOSITE BOTTOM wall: James Robie most important part in selection was *Open and close* (the work fitted within the themes," says series #6), 2019, fabric and mixed media, "To have a conceptual boundary 220 x 220cm. Sape for the collection." In this way the Ada Leung, *New* works work as a whole, telling a rather 2018. Newspaper PVA glue, 30 x 41 story.

