Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
The Southern Cross Cable: A Tour

Art, the internet and national identity in Aotearoa-New Zealand

An exegesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Arts

Massey University, Wellington
New Zealand

Bronwyn Holloway-Smith

2018
“The internet does not exist. maybe it did exist only a short time ago, but now it only remains as a blur, a cloud, a friend, a deadline, a redirect, or a 404. If it ever existed, we couldn’t see it. Because it has no shape. It has no face, just this name that describes everything and nothing at the same time.”

Abstract

This exegesis is the written analytical component of a studio-based Doctor of Philosophy that, as a whole, investigates the influence of international hegemony and power structures on popular notions of Aotearoa-New Zealand’s national identity. Selected histories and locations of New Zealand’s primary international internet connection, the Southern Cross Cable, have been taken and applied within a body of conceptually driven artworks that function as an effective metonymic vehicle to reveal unseen processes, conveyed over a specific infrastructural system, that are influential upon New Zealand’s national identity.

The creative works in this thesis comprise the suite of artworks *The Southern Cross Cable: A Tour*, a multi-platform art project comprising two moving image works, a sculptural work, a published tour guide and its associated web-based work. These sit alongside, and in response to, a historic mid-twentieth century New Zealand mural: *Te Ika-a-Maui* [sic] by the artist E. Mervyn Taylor. Together, these works encourage public awareness of the jurisdictional limits of the internet, and illustrate ways in which an individual member of the public can respond to the supposedly ‘intangible’ internet in a physical manner.

By strategically subverting popular nationalist symbolism, the works raise questions about the relevance of nationalism in an era of expanding globalisation and suggest the internet is increasingly becoming a tool of digital colonialism. By distributing this knowledge in the public sphere, this study challenges and tests the assumption—often asserted and implied by those who control this infrastructure and obscure it from public awareness—that public knowledge is a threat to the cable. Instead, viewers are encouraged to explore what individual agency they do, or do not, have as New Zealand citizens in shaping this dominant influence on contemporary New Zealand culture.
Acknowledgements

To Matthew Holloway for his confidence in my ability to persevere and complete a doctorate despite giving birth to our third child in the middle of it all. “We’ll figure out a way to make it work”, we said, with nervous laughter and sideways glances, and here we are.

To my supervisors Distinguished Professor Sally J. Morgan and Dr Martin Patrick for their advocacy, patience, sympathy and understanding through an ambitious and challenging few years.

To the numerous folk who have provided advice and support (both practical and emotional) throughout the past four years including, but not limited to:

At the Massey College of Creative Arts: Professor Claire Robinson, Ann Shelton, Sue Elliott, and my other wonderful colleagues. At City Gallery Wellington: Aaron Lister, Robert Leonard, Elizabeth Caldwell, Amber Baldock, Cat Williams, Phillip Robertson, and the other fabulous members of staff. Those who have contributed in some way to this body of work: Mark Amery, Sophie Jerram, Hamish MacEwan, Mark Antony Steelsmith, Duncan Munro, Jocelyn Smith, Murray Smith, Vaughan Smith, Rowan Smith, Mike McGrath, Jenny Steele, Rose Evans, Conor Roberts, Tony Briscoe, Cleve Cameron, Kirsten Brown, Harry Silver, Kerry Males, Kerry Ann Lee, Kylie Sutcliffe, Johanna Sanders, Rachel O’Neill, Ros Cameron, Sarah Jane Parton, Rose McColl, Jon Brewer, Dale Morgan, Margaret Kawharu, Nicole Starosielski, Shaun Waugh, Sarah Taylor, Bronwyn Taylor, and Nick Taylor, Raewyn Martyn, Paul Wilson, and Evan Roth.

Finally, to my exceptional children Stella, Abel and Lane. I hope this in some small way helps keep the internet you inherit from being super freaky and creepy.

Thank you all.
## Contents

List of illustrations ................................................................. vi
1.0 Introduction ......................................................................... 1
2.0 Review of the field ............................................................. 35
3.0 Process .................................................................................. 57
4.0 Results .................................................................................. 79
5.0 Conclusion ............................................................................ 141
Bibliography ............................................................................. 144
Appendices ................................................................................. 155
List of illustrations

| FIG 1 | Creative Freedom Foundation website, screenshot. | 9 |
| FIG 2 | The CFF Internet Blackout campaign demonstration outside Parliament. Left: The author conducting interviews with media; Right: The author presenting a petition to MP Peter Dunne. | 10 |
| FIG 3 | The official Southern Cross Cable Network map. Image: Southern Cross Cables Ltd. | 12 |
| FIG 4 | Left: an exhibit from the Telegraph Museum Porthcurno showing examples of cable breaks and faults; Right: *Breaks and Faults* (2015), a preliminary work made during this study. | 13 |
| FIG 5 | Developmental artwork: *The Earthquake*. | 14 |
| FIG 6 | Screenshot of the author’s Citizen Ex Algorithmic Citizenship. | 16 |
| FIG 7 | GCSB slide leaked by Snowden showing “Project Speargun Underway”. | 27 |
| FIG 8 | Landing the shore end of the Great Barrier Island submarine cable at Port Charles, Coromandel Coast, 26 Sep 1908. Image: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries. | 31 |
| FIG 9 | Pages from the official COMPAC booklet issued by the New Zealand Post Office. Courtesy: Archives New Zealand (R21682129). | 36 |
| FIG 10 | Left: Council Chambers of Wellington Town Hall during official opening of COMPAC. Courtesy: Archives New Zealand (R20938281); Right: Commemorative COMPAC stamps, (top) New Zealand, (bottom) United Kingdom. | 37 |
| FIG 12 | Screenshot, Evan Roth: *Ghost hunting across New Zealand*, POSTmatter.merimedia.com. Depicted is one of the buildings at the site of the SX Whenuapal landing station. | 44 |
| FIG 14 | Simon Denny: *David Darchicourt world map commission with New Zealand as the centre*, 2015. | 47 |
| FIG 16 | The COMPAC Visitor’s Book. | 63 |
| FIG 17 | Image of Voting Paper from Elections.org.nz website. | 67 |
| FIG 18 | The 100% Pure campaign. Image: Tourism New Zealand. | 70 |
| FIG 19 | Installation concepts for CGW. Left: 17 November 2017; Right 28 November 2017. Images: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith. | 80 |
| FIG 20 | Installation concept 29 January 2018. Image: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith. | 82 |
[FIG 21] Entrance to This Is New Zealand, City Gallery Wellington, 2018.


[FIG 23] The Southern Cross Cable: A Tour, installation showing (L–R) The Southern Cross Cable: A Tour (Publication); A Power Troubles The Still; and The Speargun Conspiracy, City Gallery Wellington, 2018.


[FIG 27] Map of the Hauraki Gulf showing the intended dive site in the Cable Exclusion Zone. Courtesy: LINZ CC-BY 4.0.


[FIG 31] Left: The entranceway to the COMPAC foyer, 2014; Right: the second-hand door. Images: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith.


[FIG 34] The Southern Cross Cable landing station at Whenuapai. Image: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith.


[FIG 37] Left: Still from Popper and Serafinowicz, Look Around You, Series 1, Module 9: Brain; Right: Still from Michael Stevenson, Introduccion a la teoria de la probabilidad (2008).

[FIG 38] The Speargun Conspiracy, video still.

[FIG 39] The Beach Access Road at Muriwai Beach, under which the Southern Cross Cable is buried. Image: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith.

[FIG 40] An historic cable, emerging from the sand above the Okiritoto Stream, Muriwai. Image: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith.


[FIG 43] The Southern Cross Cable: A Tour (Publication) showing framed photograph and shelf installation, City Gallery Wellington, 2018. 131

[FIG 44] Left: Caspar David Friedrich, Wanderer Above The Sea of Fog (1818); Right: Bronwyn Holloway-Smith, Untitled (2015). 134

[FIG 45] Screenshot: Additional content webpage, The Southern Cross Cable: A Tour. 136