

Peter Stichbury

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Michael Lett

Peter Stichbury
Altered States
Installation view
Michael Lett, June 2018



Peter Stichbury
Altered States
Installation view
Michael Lett, June 2018



Peter Stichbury
*Terrence McKenna disciple self-administers Dimethyltryptamine to
alter ontology (Communing with an annoying jewelled, self-dribbling
basketball)*
2018
oil on linen
600 x 500mm



Peter Stichbury
Dr Eben Alexander, NDE, 2008
2018
oil on linen
600 x 500mm



Peter Stichbury
*Pam Reynolds, NDE/OBE, 1991 / Hella Hammid remote viewing a
submerged monolith, Santa Catalina Island, July 1977*
2018
oil on linen
1200 x 950mm / 600 x 500mm



Peter Stichbury
*Ingo Swann perturbs a shielded quark detector at Stanford Research
Institute, 1972*
2018
oil on linen
1200 x 950mm



Peter Stichbury
*Dr Mary Neal, NDE, 1999 / The Reincarnation of Cameron Macauley - The
Island of Barra (Barron Trump)*
2018
oil on linen
600 x 500mm



Peter Stichbury
Barbara Robbins, Westall High
2014
oil on linen
600 x 500mm



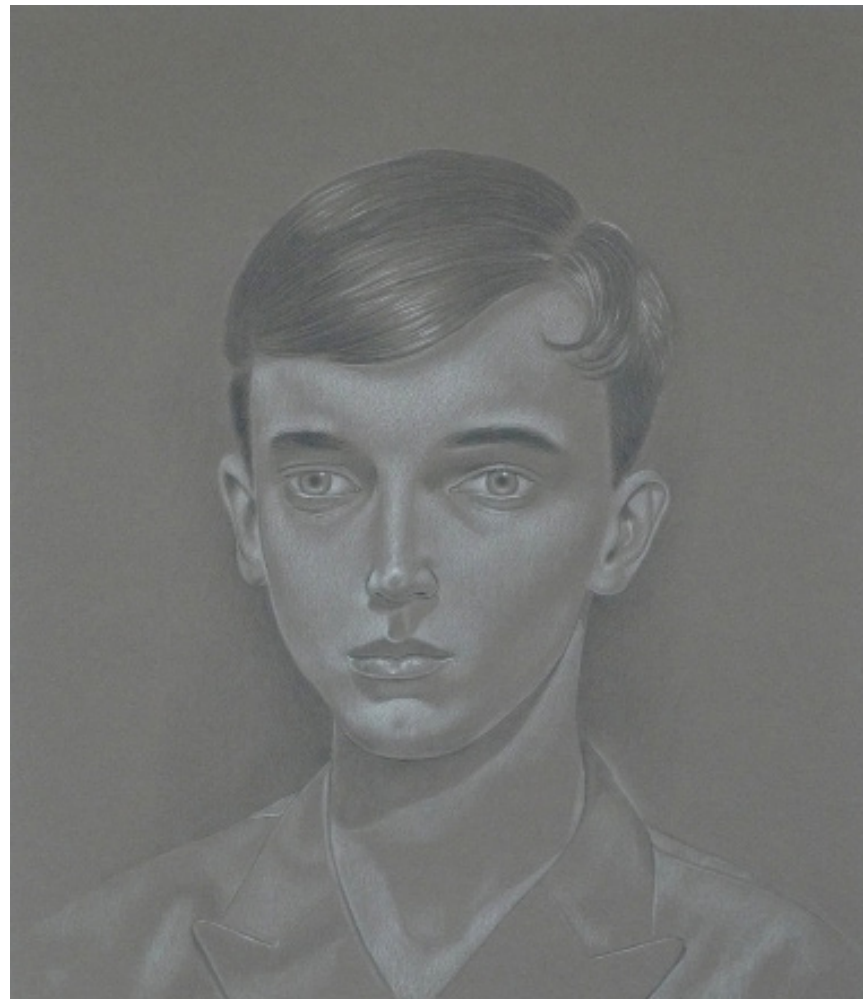
Peter Stichbury
Gordon Cooper / Mona Stafford, 1976
2014
oil on linen
600 x 500mm



Peter Stichbury
Marco Eli Chereze
2014
oil on linen
600 x 500mm



Peter Stichbury
Sources & Methods
Installation view
Michael Lett, August 2014



Peter Stichbury
Ray Bowyer / Frederick Valentich
2014
coloured pencil on paper
420 x 350mm



Peter Stichbury
Paul Bennewitz
2014
coloured pencil on paper
420 x 350mm

Peter Stichbury

Born 1969 in Auckland, New Zealand
Lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand

EDUCATION

1999
Postgraduate studies, University of Auckland (Masters/Honours Scholarship)

1997
Bachelor of Fine Arts, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Tracy Williams / UNTITLED, Miami Beach, Florida, USA

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2024
Promethean Problems, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
The Anticipation of Joy, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)

2023
Gallery Baton / Frieze London, United Kingdom
Mother's Tankstation, Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland
Gallery Baton / Art SG, Singapore
Fine Arts Sydney, Sydney Contemporary, Australia
Gallery Baton / Frieze Seoul, South Korea

2022
Limited Hangout, Fine Arts Sydney, Sydney, Australia (solo)
Gallery Baton / Frieze London, United Kingdom
Gallery Baton / Frieze Seoul, South Korea
Among Friends: Three Views of a Collection, The FLAG Art Foundation, New York City, USA
Gallery Baton / Frieze, No. 9 Cork Street, London, United Kingdom
The Truth is Out There, The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington, New Zealand
(Curator: Dr Chelsea Nichols)

2021
Ecology of Souls, Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

2020

Recent Paintings, Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

2019
Animals of God, Fine Arts Sydney, Sydney, Australia (solo)

2018
Altered States, Michael Lett Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

2017
High Strangeness, Gallery Baton, Seoul, South Korea (solo)

2016
Peter Stichbury: Anatomy of a Phenomenon, Nevada Museum of Art, USA
(Curator: JoAnne Northrup)

2015
Arstronomy: Incursiones en el cosmos, La Casa Encendida, Madrid (group)
Tracy Williams / UNTITLED, Miami Beach, Florida (group)
Ways of Recording, Gallery Baton, Seoul (group)
Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
Why Can't It Be Everlasting? Tracy Williams Ltd, New York (group)
Unpacked – Treasures from Te Papa, Whangarei Art Museum, Whangarei (group)
Gallery Baton, KIAF / Art Seoul, Coex Hall A&B, Seoul (group)
Michael Lett / Art Basel Hong Kong, (HKCEC) Hong Kong (group)
Tracy Williams / Art Los Angeles Contemporary, Barker Hangar, Los Angeles (group)

2014
Art Los Angeles Contemporary / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Los Angeles (group)
Anatomy of a Phenomenon, Tracy Williams Ltd, New York (solo)
Sources & Methods, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)

2013
Populate! Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Christchurch (group)
Art Los Angeles Contemporary / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Los Angeles (group)
Warhol Aotearoa, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (group)

2012
Superfluous Man, Tracy Williams, Ltd, New York (solo)
Art Los Angeles Contemporary / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Los Angeles (solo) Eugene

Y, Tracy Williams, Ltd, New York (solo)

2011

My Definitive Chief Aim, Art Brussels / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Belgium (solo)
Art Los Angeles Contemporary / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Los Angeles (group)

2010

The Proteus Effect, Tracy Williams, Ltd, New York (solo)
Hong Kong International Art Fair / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Hong Kong (group)
Art Los Angeles Contemporary / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Los Angeles (group)

2009

Peter Stichbury, Starkwhite, Auckland (solo)
Peter Stichbury, Art Los Angeles Contemporary / Tracy Williams, Ltd, Los Angeles (solo)

2008

The Alumni, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin (solo) The Alumni, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Auckland (solo)

2007

Less Than Absolute Zero, Starkwhite, Auckland (solo)
Art of The Nation/Contemporary Focus, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (group)

2006

Passport To Magonia, Starkwhite, Auckland (solo)

2005

Small World, Big Town: Contemporary Art from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and City Gallery Wellington, Wellington (group)

2004

Piggy In The Mirror, Starkwhite, Auckland (solo) Sticky, Randolph Street Gallery, Auckland (group)

2003

Portraiture: the Art of Social Commentary, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, Auckland (group)

2000

Measure of Strangeness, Artspace, Auckland, (group)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2022

Griffey, Erin, "Peter Stichbury: Between Matter and Spirit," Art News New Zealand, Spring-Summer, 2022.

2021

Lane, Chloe, "An Afterlife," Art Collector Magazine, April-June 2021.

2015

Wilson, Michael, "Peter Stichbury," Artforum, January 2015
Danielle Tilkin, Borys Groys and Chris Aubeck, "Arstronomy: Incursiones en el cosmos," La Casa Encendida, 2015
Sokol, Zach, "The Paranormal Portraitist- Peter Stichbury Paints Alien Abductees for a Living," VICE, Volume 22, Issue 2, 2015
Luzan, Julia, "De ovnis y fenómenos paranormales: Arte del 'más allá'," El Asombrario & Co, 2015
Strongman, Hall, Milburn, Pohio, Vangioni and Jenny Harper, "101 Works of Art," Christchurch Art Gallery, 2015
Buermann, Caro, "Attractive and Awkward Portraits," Hi-Fructose, 2015

2014

Gjording, Lindsey Rae, "Beautiful/Decay, Peter Stichbury's Unsettling Clone-Like Portraits," 2014
Knight, Kim, "Painting Perfect," Stuff/Sunday Star Times, August 2014

2013

Paton, Justin, "NDE," Bulletin:172, Christchurch Art Gallery Magazine, 2013
Wells, Georgina, "Peter Stichbury," Modern Painters, February 2013 Paton, Justin, "NDE," Christchurch Art Gallery Bulletin, Issue 172, 2013

2012

Yau, John, "Superfluous Men Can't Get No Satisfaction," Hyperallergic, November 2012

2011

Pascucci, Marisa, "Peter Stichbury: Artist to Watch," The Art Economist, Volume 1, Issue 4, 2011 Paton, Justin, "Skin-Deep: Peter Stichbury and the Art of Appearances," Art & Australia, 2011
Klein, Zach, "Is A Bird's Song Banal? Peter Stichbury interviewed by Zach Klein," Pilot Magazine, 2011

2010

Allison, Genevieve, "Stichbury in NYC," EyeContact, December 9, 2010
Schjeldahl, Peter, "Peter Stichbury: The Proteus Effect", The New Yorker, September 28, 2010
McDonald, Barney, "In Stitches," Black Magazine, Issue 12, 2010
Bugden, Emma "Peter Stichbury: The Alumni," catalogue, Te Tuhi Centre For The Arts, 2010

2009

Penhollow, Steve, "Stars Aligned for Portrait's Journey," The Journal Gazette, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 2009
Eggleton, David, "Living Dolls," New Zealand Listener, January, 2009
Hurrell, John, "Canvases to be (Nervously) Adored: the Portraiture of Peter Stichbury," Eyecontact, 2009

2008

Art World magazine (Australia), issue no. 5, 2008
Art News New Zealand, Spring 2008
Gifford, Adam, "Beyond the Perfect," New Zealand Herald, 26 July 2008
Hurrell, John, "Flickers of Comic Anxiety," Eyecontact, July 2008

2006

Gardiner, Sue, "Where to Draw the Line," Art News New Zealand, Spring 2006

2005

Paton, Justin, "How to Look at a Painting," AWA Press, 2005
Conland, Natasha, "Contemporary Art from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and City Gallery Wellington" exhibition programme, City Gallery, Wellington, 2005

2004

Clifford, Andrew, "Beautifying the Outsiders," New Zealand Herald, 1 December 2004

2001

Conland, Natasha, "Measure of Strangeness," Eyeline Magazine, no. 44, Summer 2001
Bywater, Jon, Art New Zealand, no.97, Summer 2001
Rainforth, Dylan, Log Illustrated, no.12, Summer 2001
Dunn, Megan, "Monument," Architecture and Design Australia, no. 42, 2001



Bulletin 172, 2013 Christchurch Art Gallery

Justin Paton in conversation with Peter Stichbury

NDE, Worcester Boulevard, Christchurch

Justin Paton: Your portrait paintings are finely worked and usually only a few feet across. How has it felt to make such a painting knowing that it will be blown up to billboard scale?

Peter Stichbury: It feels slightly strange knowing it will be transformed into a huge illumination. All those small hairs and tiny details I've been sweating over will end up as scruffy foot-long gestural brushstrokes. I should really be painting with a microscope. Actually, once it's blown up, even the linen will look like the moon's surface.

Have you made a public artwork before? Have you felt like a 'public artist' while making it?

No, this is the first one. Making a show usually revolves around the relationship of each painting to the others and of the paintings to the given space, so a singular public artwork is a novel challenge. I think studio painting can look oddly disconnected when it's taken outside into daylight and forced to contend with the scale of nature and buildings. My particular kind of painting seems to need an internal architectural context to make sense, a quiet and protective incubator to exist within. Ironically one of the great things about this project is the opportunity to become unencumbered by the rules I create for gallery shows.

What do you reckon it will do on the exterior of Christchurch Art Gallery that it might not do if seen on a wall inside it?

I'm hoping that being the large outdoor transparency will give the painting a mirage quality, the feeling of a technological deity on a giant computer screen looking over the nearby streets.

Though you're immersed in the tradition of portrait painting, you're not at all opposed to photography and reproduction. Indeed, you have occasionally tampered with your own paintings – cloned and altered them. How exactly do you do this, and why?

After you've laboured over a single work for six weeks, it's liberating to digitally play Dr Frankenstein with the finished painting. Photoshop gives me the freedom to accentuate or degrade the image's beauty or asymmetry. I remember when they cloned Dolly the sheep at the Roslin Institute in Scotland, there were reports of biological mishaps and failures before a successful clone was rendered. I think there must be drawers and drawers of malformed animals hidden away somewhere. I quite like the idea of having incorrect or botched manipulated paintings, like the 'In-Valid' characters in *Gattaca* – though I do get to the point where I need to put down the digital tools and get back to the hard graft of the studio.

We're used to seeing perfect faces on a vast scale, in billboards and advertising. Have you been thinking about those kinds of faces as you made this painting? Do you want your portrait to stand apart from that kind of imagery or to overlap with it confusingly?

It is unavoidable to think about the overlap, but I explored these ideas extensively in my first couple of shows. Now subverting advertising imagery is like flogging a twice-dead horse; most people are complicit in the consumer/advertiser transaction. However, leading up to this project, I did try to take photos of a cosmetics counter light-box at LAX, but I found out that Chanel doesn't take kindly to rogue artists photographing a photograph of Brad Pitt. Maybe they thought it was industrial espionage...

People familiar with your work will recognise the woman in this work; she's a model you've often used, called Estelle. But here you've refrained from naming her, and also left out the background details you sometimes include. Where is she? What's happening to her?

She's in an in-between place, a transition from one reality to another. I was reading about neurosurgeon Dr Eben Alexander's near-death experience and then started investigating other people's similar experiences. The commonalities of their visions close to death are uncanny and they exist across religious beliefs, culture and time. There's the cliched beckoning light or tunnel and the person's loved ones welcoming them into the afterlife. Often there's a communing with a loving God explaining that it's not their time and they must go back to their body. Whether or not these recollections are true or hallucinations caused by neurotransmitters or lack of oxygen in the brain at time of death is anyone's guess but the experiencers truly perceive that what they have gone through is real. When they recover from near death and return to their everyday lives they often report being less materialistic, more loving and altruistic in general.

Where else have your internet searches been leading you lately? You seem to keep a close eye on some of the stranger developments in contemporary psychology, which feed the crackpot back-stories you give your characters.

Hah, yes the back-stories can get somewhat convoluted and a little crackpot-ish. Their invisibility is a real paradox but I enjoy traipsing over a huge terrain. This year I've been researching ufology and its folklore, specifically Leslie Kean and Stanton Friedman's work on the subject. The mythology surrounding ufos or uaps (unidentified aerial phenomenon) is full of the most bizarre stories.

There's nothing obviously bizarre about your portrait, but the eyes suggest she might herself have seen something very unusual. What's with that gaze?

It's a middle distance gaze. A state of reverie, lost in thought. I liked the ambiguity it gave the character. Is she the 'angel' beckoning the departed to the afterlife or the person experiencing a vision or hallucination?

Does the gaze have art historical precedents? I've seen that book on Ingres in your studio...

The historical precedent in this case and with many of the Estelles is Lucian Freud's *Girl With A Kitten* from 1947 but I had also been looking at Antonello da Messina's *Christ at the Column*. I discovered the work of Domenico Gnoli recently. The way he painted hair was incredible, and I suspect his example has crept in somewhere too.

Public art has to carry quite a burden of responsibility; it's expected to be all things to all people. Instead let's imagine just one person walking along Worcester Boulevard one night in June and encountering your work. What, ideally, do you hope they will see?

I agree public art does carry quite a burden – often a need for approval revolving around sensation and visual punchlines. But I like that it can also be enigmatic and mysterious. A giant floating portrait close to the heavens will probably elicit more questions than answers. Who is this? Why do they have that particular expression? I'm hoping it won't make much rational or narrative sense but will induce an uneasy emotional response, like witnessing a UFO.

ARTFORUM

Artforum

January 2015

Peter Stichbury

Tracy Williams, Ltd. New York

“In the afternoon of April 6, 1966, one of the most famous UFO cases in the world occurred over a school in Westall, Australia,” begins a passage on a handout that accompanied “Anatomy of a Phenomenon,” New Zealand painter Peter Stichbury’s recent exhibition. “Pupils and teachers were told not to talk about what they had seen, and the chemistry teacher, Barbara Robbins, who had taken photos with her camera, was forced by authorities to hand it over.” In Stichbury’s portrait of the woman, Ms. Robbins is depicted as an oval-faced blonde with haunted, wide-set eyes that suggest the persistence of a traumatic memory—and give her something of an otherworldly appearance. This particular look is a longtime signature of the artist’s, and in this exhibition, he explained it by asserting that those pictured were all “experiencers”—individuals who have supposedly had a close encounter with aliens or their craft.

At Tracy Williams, Ltd., Barbara Robbins, Westall High (all works 2014) was joined by four other portraits ranged along one wall. These faced off against five black-and-white paintings based on published photographs of UFOs, and a sixth such pair hung together in a separate space. Picturing mostly saucer-like shapes—and, in one case, the elongated inverted teardrop of a weather balloon—the UFO series made the exhibition’s basis in the culture of sighting, encounter, and abduction visually explicit. The images’ internal ambiguity—the geometric simplicity of their forms and near-featurelessness of their aerial backgrounds make them appear virtually abstract—not only established an effective contrast with the portraits but also sparks a dialogue around the

nature of perception, representation, and reportage that extends far beyond the particularities of alien-spotting.

The portraits in Stichbury’s previous exhibition at this gallery, 2012’s “Superfluous Man,” shared the current crop’s slicked-back hair and smooth skin, symmetrical features, and glazed expressions; on that earlier occasion, the artist linked his subjects’ apparent torpor to the existential angst associated with the nineteenth-century Russian literary archetype from which the show borrowed its title. And two years before that, in “The Proteus Effect,” he tethered the unreality of his steely, Lempicka-esque visages to the robotic idealization of digital avatars. Although his style remains consistent from project to project, this continual thematic reinvention has allowed the artist’s oeuvre to gradually accumulate an absorbing breadth and complexity.

Perhaps Stichbury’s work is linked, however, not only via explanation but also via continuing mystery. Just as the UFO phenomenon is shrouded in layers of disinformation, conspiracy theory, and myth that no amount of investigative reporting or academic debunking seems able to conclusively penetrate, so too do Stichbury’s portraits depict the citizens of an alternate reality that hovers just out of reach, visible but partially suppressed. The stony-faced likes of Milton Torres, a military pilot who was ordered to open fire on a UFO over England, and Gordon Cooper, an astronaut and repeat experiencer, confront the viewer with a seeming candor that ultimately repels helpful analysis. The photo paintings too are self-consciously frustrating, offering only tantalizing glimpses, never the longed-for head-on view. The UFO phenomenon is real in the sense that it continues to generate reportage and debate (not to mention entertainment), but, as with the “phenomenon” of art, its interpretation is unfixed, perhaps unfixable. It is, like the photographs on Barbara Robbins’s government-confiscated camera, removed from common view.