



Fresh Gallery Otara

The 5th Auckland Triennial, *If you were to live here...*

Makeshift

(formed 2007)

Tessa Zettel: Born 1980, Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Karl Khoe: Born 1980, Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

The history of trade between New Zealand and Australia has a long and complex lineage dating back to colonial times. While it is mutually beneficial, the discrepancy between the value of exports has shifted markedly in Australia's favour since the signing of the Closer Economic Relations agreement in 1983. While an awful lot of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc goes through the major ports of Australia's eastern seaboard, this is dwarfed by the near monopoly on financial services held by the big four Australian banks in New Zealand. Free trade agreements rarely benefit the smaller signatory, and the trans-Tasman agreement is no different. Australia in the 1950s built its suburban arcadia partially on the back of cheap kauri timber felled in New Zealand's ecologically important native forests, and repaid the favour by drawing a good chunk of the profits from bankrolling New Zealand's own suburban dream.

With Makeshift's *Kauri-oke!*, 2013 project for Otara Market, the primary product (kauri) returns to its homeland as a tertiary artwork. Employing recycled timber sourced from Australia, the Sydney-based artists have developed a portable singing machine with a song list drawn from an array of ethnic folk songs popular in this multicultural part of South Auckland. Makeshift have value-added the kauri from rough-hewn timber to technological armature, re-'framing' its use value from the skeleton of private houses to an entertainment hub in a vibrant public setting. While this act of bricolage speaks to an economy of recycling and sustainable artistic production evident in all of their artistic and design-based projects, it also offers a pointed commentary on the profound and complex inequities of globalisation. Where neo-liberal governments such as those in Australia and New Zealand continually decry the fiscal endgame that is mining iron ore or felling old-growth forest for woodchips, the artists offer their own take on how to add more complexity and value to these raw materials.

Instead of opening up new commercial markets, however, Makeshift have produced a hybrid technological product that prefaces pleasure and community spirit over economic benefit. Like the diaspora of communities braving the public embarrassment of singing off key, the 'kauri-oke' machine is an amalgam of parts from an assortment of places. It speaks to the discourse around generic global commodities by offering a pointed if pleasurable intervention into the system of supply and exchange. The artists highlight the importance of cultural and environmental specificity as a crucial riposte to an economic system built on the rhetoric of generic products.

David Cross, Associate Professor in Fine Art, Massey University, Wellington.



Above:
Making Time 2013
live art, installation and workshops
photograph by Matthew Venable
image courtesy of the artists

Left:
The Restless Quarter (Archive A – No. 20) 2011
ink and inkjet print on notebook page
photograph by Matthew Venable
image courtesy of the artists