

Alan Preston remains one of the seminal figures in contemporary jewellery, not only in his native Aotearoa (New Zealand), but across the Tasman Sea and right around the Pacific Rim. He was one of the six founding members (and is still a current partner) of the influential Fingers Gallery in Auckland in 1974. Since opening, Fingers has been steadfastly dedicated to representing contemporary jewellery and jewellers and continues to be a destination for collectors from around the globe.

Preston's work and career were recently celebrated in New Zealand, when he was honoured as the inaugural recipient of the biannual Deane Award for Decorative Arts. The award enabled him to produce a new body of work for inclusion in a significant survey exhibition organised and toured by TheNewDowse: *Alan Preston: Made in Aotearoa*. The exhibition showcased Preston's key works and themes from 1979 to the present day.

The year 1979 was an important starting point, as it was at this time that Preston abandoned conventions to focus on making jewellery from materials that reflected the environment, values and identity of his Pacific homeland. In the ordered chaos of his studio – along with traditional metals such as silver and gold, which only ever play a modest supporting role in his work – one can find stashes of black-lipped oyster shell, paua shell, kowhai seeds, kauri seeds, hibiscus bark and greywacke stone (a hard, bluish gravel used for roadworks). Preston uses these materials' capacity to speak of place – to him they are precious, and are often only subtly altered in his hands.

Preston established his first studio in central Auckland in 1973 and relocated to a bush-covered block perched high above Muriwai Beach (about half an hour's drive west of Auckland) in 1975. After a decade of living in a rented bach (shack) and working from a space at the end of an adjacent garage, he commissioned the now lauded New Zealand architect David Mitchell to design a house and studio that was sensitive to both the site and to Preston's practice. Completed in 1986, the elegantly understated buildings echo Preston's jewellery in a similarly considered relationship between materials and place. The studio was divided into three rooms to allow 'dirty' and 'clean' activities to be separated, with two additional workstations provided to accommodate occasional work experience students.

ALAN PRESTON



‘There is some sort of kinaesthetic map that tells my hands where to go to find and do things in the making process.’

ALAN PRESTON IN HIS STUDIO MAKING CORD WITH VAU (HIBISCUS BARK). PHOTO: STEPHEN ROBINSON



Preston says that the location of his studio has more impact on the work than the physical space itself – understandable when you consider that tourist brochures refer to Muriwai Beach as one of the most ruggedly picturesque wilderness beaches in New Zealand. He adds that, after more than two decades, a great deal of his recent work has been made almost entirely from materials sourced from this sublime location. ■■■■

www.fingers.co.nz
www.dowse.org.nz
www.mitchellstoutarchitects.co.nz

BRIAN PARKES IS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AT OBJECT:
 AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CRAFT AND DESIGN, SYDNEY.

INSET, FROM TOP:
 TWISTING BLACK DYED
 VAU (HIBISCUS BARK) WITH
 UNDYED VAU TO MAKE
 CORD; A DRAWPLATE IN THE
 VICE ON PRESTON'S WORK
 BENCH. THE DRAWPLATE IS
 USED FOR DRAWING DOWN
 SILVER OR GOLD WIRE
 WHICH IS THEN TWISTED
 AND PUT ON THE ENDS OF
 THE VAU CORDS. PHOTOS:
 STEPHEN ROBINSON.
 SELECTED IMAGES
 COURTESY RANDOM HOUSE
 FROM CRAFTED BY DESIGN:
 INSIDE NEW ZEALAND
 CRAFT ARTISTS' STUDIOS
 BY JEANETTE COOK

BACKGROUND: ROADWORK
 PINS, 2006, ROAD METAL
 STONES, PAINT, SILVER.
 PHOTO: JULIA STACE
 BROOK-WHITE.



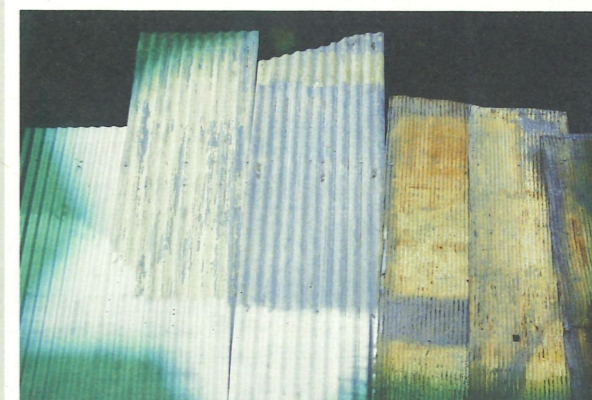
A NEW BOOK ON THE WORK OF
 ALAN PRESTON, *BETWEEN THE TIDES*,
 BY DAMIAN SKINNER IS DUE OUT IN APRIL
 2008. THE EXHIBITION *ALAN PRESTON: MADE
 IN AOTEAROA* IS TOURING NEW ZEALAND IN
 2008 AND WILL BE SHOWN AT THE SOUTHLAND
 MUSEUM FROM 7 MARCH TO 4 MAY.

Madeleines

May 8th – 28th, 2008

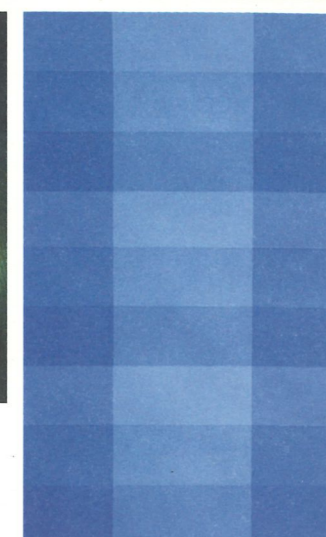
Opening Night
 Wednesday May 7th, 2008

Gallery Hours
 Wed – Fri: 11am – 5pm
 Saturdays: 11am – 3pm



Pictured Work: (from left) Anke Stacker 'Regent St', Judith Duquemin 'Gradient Blue'

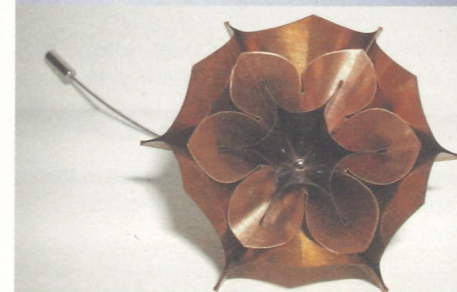
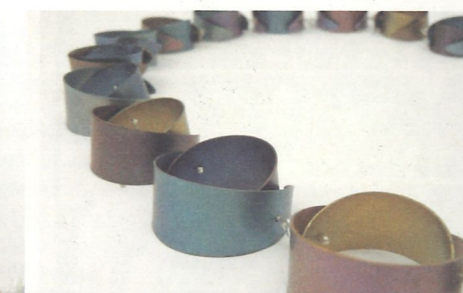
Judith Duquemin
 + Anke Stacker



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Gaffa is an artist-run initiative supported by The Australia Council for the Arts
 Visit our website for details of our exciting 2008 exhibition programme
 We are now accepting proposals from artists and curators for 2009
 Art work images clockwise - Rosary Coloma, Sarah Rothe, Mirna Harri N
 Mon-Fri, Sat 11-6, Sun & Pub Hols closed, Level 1 7 Randle St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 PH 02 9231 1103