

Difficult conversations laid bare -

Reviewed by Ruth Allison

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Containment Fran Maguire/Joanna Fieldes

Containment is a clever juxtaposition of works by ceramicist Fran Maguire and painter Joanna Fieldes, whose works not only speak to their audience, but to each other.

Both use vessels as a means of containing and at the same time offering their ideas. They are concerned with the fine social patterns that prevent people speaking or dealing with the truth.

Fieldes is more concerned with the effects of early colonialism in New Zealand, Maguire with the more domestic nature of conversations which are not always clear or easily resolved.

Both approach their ideas with a wry humour, which in Maguire's works is appropriate but in Fieldes' luminous landscapes and meticulously painted animals and porcelain bowls is not so easily digested.

It is difficult to laugh at the play on words of the source/sauce of the environmental impact of the introduced rabbit.

Fieldes' works are set in a continuous landscape in which a series of historical narratives play out in nine independent paintings. They work best as diptychs or as one complete work because the animals, confined within meticulously painted canopic jars, appear to confront each other in an almost menacing way.

This reveals the deeper message that both artists are keen to convey; the aggressive and demanding magpies in one painting that challenge the more subtle and muted colours of the kiwi, dressed in a cloak of his own feathers, is a reminder of the present treaty conflicts.

Maguire's clay jars with their fanciful lids and cartoonish characters act as a medium for her playful collection of fragments of conversation. Have you seen my sock? - a question more revealing than the answer - has its visual counterpart in a rather feeble looking chap in grey underwear wearing a single sock, confronted accusingly by a glaring and boldly painted young woman.

The containers are skilful and meticulous, perfect receptacles for such telling tales.

This exhibition about the art of communication by two accomplished artists is well worth a visit. The need to communicate has never been clearer; the medium with which each artist works speaks for itself.