

# ONE DAY SCULPTURE

A NEW ZEALAND-WIDE SERIES OF TEMPORARY PUBLIC ARTWORKS

## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release: Thursday 28 May 2009

## PAREKOWHAI ARTWORK OPEN IN WELLINGTON, CLOSES ONE DAY SCULPTURE SERIES



**Michael Parekowhai, *Yes We Are*, 2009**

**TODAY ONLY: Thursday 28 May 2009, 05.00 – 22.00**

Multiple locations across Wellington

First location (5am): Interislander Marshalling Yard (view from SH1 driving south into city)

Final location (9pm): Mount Victoria lookout

Commissioned by Litmus Research Initiative, Massey University

Celebrated New Zealand artist Michael Parekowhai brings his unique blend of wit and seductive sculptural object-making to Wellington today as he transports his newest public artwork – a huge neon sign that spells out the word 'OPEN' – around the city.

Wellingtonians will remember Parekowhai for his towering inflatable rabbit, *Cosmo*, (shown as part of the Jim and Mary Barr Collection, City Gallery, 2008), *The Big O.E* VW Kombi van atop Te Papa, and his *P□k□h□* (*the security guard*), currently on show at the New Dowse. Described by one critic as “expanding the mind and seducing the eye”, Poriria-born Parekowhai began thinking about his contribution to the nationwide One Day Sculpture series as the final work – “a question mark to hang off the end”.

The work consists of a 4.6 metre-high neon sign, mounted on the back of a truck, which spells out the word 'OPEN'. The sign will be installed temporarily at a series of locations across the city from 5am to 10pm today, Thursday 28 May. The first location of the work was the Interislander Marshalling Yard, where it was installed from 5am this morning, visible to ferry passengers and commuters driving south into the city. It has since appeared outside the National War memorial on Buckle St and in Manners Mall, and is spending lunchtime on Cuba St. It will move on to a variety of undisclosed locations throughout the remainder of the day, arriving at its final location, the Mount Victoria lookout tonight at 9pm.

Claire Doherty, Curatorial Director of One Day Sculpture describes the sign's design as "part-retro, part-Vegas, the sign will accrue different meanings as it travels from place to place across the day – from the dark, early morning light of a deserted ferry terminal seen from afar, to the frenzy of the commercial district in broad daylight."

The title of the artwork refers explicitly to the convention of shops signs which substitute 'Yes We Are' for 'Open' – an assertive and optimistic response to a potential enquiry.

Parekowhai will move his bold, new sculptural 'readymade' across a variety of sites and contexts during the day. By not allowing us to know a predetermined route for the work, but simply indicating where the work will start and finish, the artist coaxes us to think about the terms of which we encounter a work of art. What does it mean to encounter this sign unexpectedly, how open are we to such new encounters and how does our understanding of this sign operate if we see it in a number of locations? Parekowhai is particularly interested in the potential of the term 'open' and what such a disembodied sign might indicate about the future of public art.

Now based in Auckland, Parekowhai is travelling with the sculpture and is keen for people to seek out the temporary artwork at the top of Mt Vic during its final hour. "9-10pm tonight is the final hour of this year-long public art series. This is a great opportunity to be there in the final moments of an internationally acclaimed series and celebrate how all 27 participating artists have opened our eyes to the possibilities of public sculpture", says Curatorial Director Claire Doherty.

#### PUBLIC TALK

**The artist will discuss his approach to *Yes We Are* on Friday evening, 29 May, from 5.30pm at Massey University:** Room 4B06, Block 4, entrance off Gates A, B or C, Wallace St, Mt Cook, Wellington. He will be joined in conversation by Ian Wedde and Massey's David Cross.

#### ENDS

#### MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For high-res images of the work or to request an interview, please contact:

Tracey Monastra, One Day Sculpture Media Liaison

E: [t.l.monastra@massey.ac.nz](mailto:t.l.monastra@massey.ac.nz)

T: + 64 21 385 880

**IMAGE CREDITS:** Michael Parekowhai, *Yes We Are*, Wellington, 28 May 2009. (L-R: in situ at Manners Mall; the Interislander Marshalling Yard). Photos: Stephen Rowe

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Michael Parekowhai

Michael Parekowhai was born in Porirua and is of Nga-Ariki, Ngati Whakarongo and European decent. Parekowhai holds a masters degree from the University of Auckland School of Fine Arts and was awarded a New Zealand Arts Foundation Laureate Award in 2001. He currently lives and works in Auckland.

Parekowhai uses satire in his works to address political and social issues. His practice engages with a range of European artists and movements, from Marcel Duchamp to Minimalism and Pop, using them as a frame in which to consider the place of Maori culture within pakeha society. Parekowhai is best known for striking, large-scale sculptural works that have a refined and seductive presence. His work often appropriates the forms of familiar things, such as toys and animals, placing them in intriguing relationships that purposely invite a wide variety of interpretations relevant to the cultural context of New Zealand and beyond.

Selected solo exhibitions include *The Big O.E.*, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, (2006), *Michael Parekowhai: Consolation of philosophy Piko nei te matenga*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (2004) and the acclaimed touring exhibition *Patriot: Ten Guitars*, Artspace, Auckland (1999). Selected group exhibitions include *The 5th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* (2006), *High Tide: currents in contemporary New Zealand & Australian Art*, Zacheta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2006), *Remember New Zealand*, Sao Paulo Biennale (2004), *The 13th Sydney Biennale* (2002) and *Flight Patterns*, MOCA The Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles (2000).

### One Day Sculpture – [www.onedaysculpture.org.nz](http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz)

One Day Sculpture is a series of temporary public artworks by leading New Zealand-based and international artists. It is first event of its kind to happen, both locally and internationally. The year-long series takes place across five cities in New Zealand and involves the creation of more than 20 new artworks, each of which will last no longer than 24 hours. The one-day artworks will all be located in the public domain – beyond conventional galleries or museums – and occur within their own discrete 24-hour period.

One Day Sculpture is led by the Litmus Research Initiative, Massey University with UK curator Claire Doherty and realised in partnership with arts organisations across New Zealand.

For more information on all the projects in the series, please see our website:

[www.onedaysculpture.org.nz](http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz)

### Acknowledgements

Michael Parekowhai *Yes We Are* is commissioned by Litmus Research Initiative, Massey University. Realised with generous funding support from the Wellington City Council Public Art Fund, Creative New Zealand, Massey University Foundation and Massey University College of Creative Arts.

One Day Sculpture is a Massey University College of Creative Arts, School of Fine Arts, Litmus Research Initiative.