



M o M e n t o

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Members Only Magazine : Issue 8 : May 2011 [v]erge Richard Smallfield, Hamish Macdonald, Jenny Tomlin

[v]erge

Quiet back roads, languid rivers and rampant grasses link works by three photographers: Hamish Macdonald, Richard Smallfield and Jenny Tomlin. Each is working within their regional environment and their shared concern is with commonplace subjects.

The physical place is less important in Macdonald's and Tomlin's work, which tends toward the poetic to evoke a state of mind, while Smallfield's is a documentary, yet personal take on country back roads. These complementary visions are quiet but confident, coming from a shared philosophy and commitment to clear, but understated commentary – of letting things speak for themselves.

The country back roads that Richard Smallfield focuses on – once potent icons of New Zealand's identity – are rapidly disappearing, although the idea of them (like Number 8 Wire) remains in our collective subconscious, along with the freedom and possibilities they promise. Here is a journey into the past, into a world not peopled, but where we imagine the likelihood of sighting a dog just around the corner. Against this is the realisation that these places are fast disappearing and being swallowed up by the demand for lifestyle developments. Like rural capillaries, these roads, hidden from clogged highways, head for Nowhere Much.

Hamish Macdonald's work is the most 'poetic' of the group. His titles reinforce his use of the landscape to reflect a state of mind, rather than documenting a specific locality. His intelligent use of colour and employment of fragments of phrases or lyrics as text set up new possibilities for the viewer, in an open-ended way. Like Smallfield's work, there is a sense that these are ephemeral, or remembered moments, signifying something more profound than is perceived from a superficial viewing. There is an underlying sense of pathos; a realisation that something has gone.

Jenny Tomlin's images of 'ordinary' objects are rendered as if in a state of transformation. There are anthropomorphic elements in some works, like her striding stick figure in *Shadbolt Park* and her *Tethered tree* image. The tree is artificial, but the juxtaposition resembles a circus animal straining on its chain. In *Shadehouse*, she was fascinated by the way in which the two-dimensional overlay of cloth renders the 'outside' landscape

ambiguous – and the artificial planting, more solid. This play of 2D/3D draws the eye first to the pathway and then around the picture, as one tries to understand how the space functions. There are undercurrents of whimsy and disquiet in the way these previously maintained spaces seem bent on adapting from, then erasing our human presence.

Overall, these are three differing, yet sympathetic interpretations emanating from immersion in the landscape.

[v]erge: a road edge, yes, but leaning more towards its use as a verb: to hover on the edge of a situation; a state of metamorphosis.

Jenny Tomlin and John B. Turner, March 2011

This issue of MoMento is based on the exhibition [v]erge held at Satellite Gallery, Auckland, 25 May to 12 June 2010, with text adapted from the catalogue and website: v-erge.co.nz

Front Cover: Richard Smallfield: *Tracks, Whangateau*

Back Cover: Jenny Tomlin: *Puketutu Island, Mangere*

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Hamish Macdonald: *You said something*

*How did we get here? To this point of living?
I held my breath
And you said something*

P.J. Harvey, 2000



Richard Smallfield: *Winter morning, Warkworth*



Richard Smallfield: *Pakiri morning*



Richard Smallfield: *Three bright potholes, Whangateau*



Richard Smallfield: *Climbing Pakiri Hill*



Hamish Macdonald: *Bill's dream*

*Is this a sound or just a dream?
In my world nothing is quite what it seems*

MC 900 foot Jesus (from the track Buried at Sea, 1994)



Hamish Macdonald: *Crisis* 2

*If not within the uplands or the furrow
Where has lost sanity a resting place?*

Mervyn Peake (from the poem May 1940)



Hamish Macdonald: *Lies are only wishes*

*Speaking of tomorrow, how will it ever come
All my lies are only wishes
I know I would die if I could come back new*

Wilco, 2002 (from the track Ashes of American Flags)



Hamish Macdonald: *These days*

*Morning seems strange, almost out of place.
Searched hard for you and your special ways.*

Ian Curtis – Joy Division, 1980



Jenny Tomlin: *Tethered tree, New Lynn*



Jenny Tomlin: *Shadbolt Park, New Lynn*



Jenny Tomlin: *Shadehouse, New Lynn*



Jenny Tomlin: *Swollen creek, Mt Wellington*

