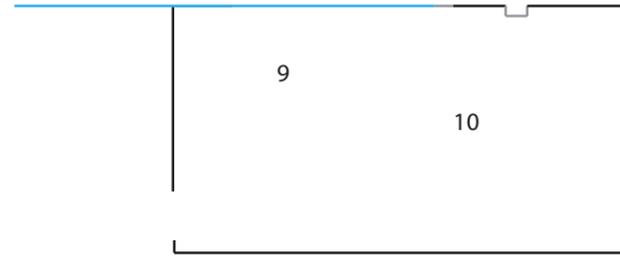
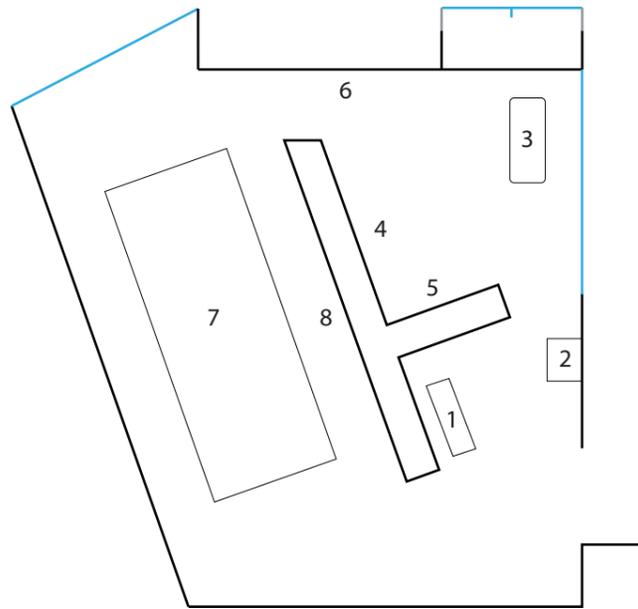


# PAUL CULLEN BUILDING STRUCTURES +

CURATED BY MARCUS MOORE AND ALLAN SMITH  
WITH FOXCIRCLE ARCHIVE

24 NOVEMBER – 15 DECEMBER 2018  
ST PAUL ST GALLERY, AUT



## List of Works

### Gallery One

- 1 Original 1979 structures, notes and images, and workbooks
- 2 Marquettes, 1979
- 3 Tabletop constructions, 1981–83
- 4 Wall pieces, 1991
- 5 Ink drawing, c. 2002
- 6 Ink drawings, c. 2002
- 7 2018 reconstruction of the 1979 *Building Structures* exhibition at Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland
- 8 Pen and ink drawings, 1975

### Gallery Two

- 9 *Fainting Couch*, 2012
- 10 Art works and studio materials, 1975–2017

In 1979, artist Paul Cullen installed 30 quasi-architectural balsa wood models around the walls, ceilings, and floor of Auckland's empty, ready-to-close, Barry Lett Galleries. The exhibition was called *Building Structures*. In May this year, Wellington curator Marcus Moore partially re-constructed this exhibition in Massey University's The Engine Room. For St Paul St Gallery, Moore and Auckland curator Allan Smith have collaborated on an extension of Moore's Engine Room project to scope something of the late Paul Cullen's preoccupation with the languages and materials of speculative construction.

The balsa models replicated by Moore of the 1979 originals form the conceptual genesis point of our current exhibition. A selection of original maquettes that have survived the decades, assembled from balsa, cedar, tissue paper and fine wire mesh, provide an archival glimpse into the daedal materiality of the artist's work from that period. The work included in this exhibition ranges from fragile models on the floor which could easily be crushed underfoot, to a hefty old sofa suspended from the ceiling.

Also from the 1970s, some of the artist's earliest ink drawings of unidentifiable geological formations, numbered stones, pieces of heavily grained timber, warping window frames, exquisite detritus, and enigmatic annotations, show how Cullen's dissection of the world could be whimsically poetic. Right from the start, Cullen was in the business of putting together a lexicon of visual and physical forms that could be continually adapted in a metaphysical play of disassembly and reconstruction.

Diagrams, model-making, and various forms of temporary support structures pre-occupied Cullen for almost forty years. He was drawn to the systematic—to a world of organised complexity and accented difference—but also to scenarios of near collapse and precarious contrivance. This pre-occupation with objects, their modes of representation, and their perilous lives in time, coloured the artist's interest in methods of carpentry and makeshift repair, landscape design, technological illustration, systems of measurement, furniture, falsework and philosophical fictions in which things and spaces tell strange stories of inversion, suspension and irrational propagation.

Cullen often cut or copied images from vintage scientific textbooks and encyclopaedias. Through manuals,

I te tau 1979, i tāuta a Paul Cullen e 30 ngā tauira hoahoa āwhiwhiwhi rākau balsa i ngā pātū, ngā tuanui, me te papa o ngā whare toi o Barry Lett, e tū tahanga ana, e tata mutu ana i Tāmaki Makaurau. Ko *Building Structures* te whakaaturanga. I te marama o Mei o tēnei tau, i whakahouhou hukihuki taua whakaaturanga a Marcus Moore ki roto i te whare toi o Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa, ko The Engine Room. Mō te whare toi o St Paul Street, i mahi tahi a Moore rāua ko Allan Smith, he kaikowhiri nō Tāmaki Makaurau, kia kumea ai te hinonga a Moore - ko te kaupapa ki te whakaatu te māharahara a Paul Cullen mō ngā reo me ngā rawa o te waihanga kohuki.

Ko ngā tauira rākau balsa i tukuruatia e Moore nā ngā mea tūturu o 1979 ko te timatanga ariā mō tēnei whakaaturanga. He tīpakanga o ngā tauira tūturu i mōrehurehu mō ngā ngahurutanga ka hangaia i te balsa, te kawaka, te rauangiangi, me te waea raumata, ka whāiroiro ki te mahi whakaputunga o te kaitoi i taua wā. Ko te mahi toi ki roto i tēnei whakaaturanga ka whakawhānuitia i ngā tauira marore e tū paraheahea ana ki te kopenu mā raro i te papa, tae atu ki tētahi hōpa tāwhito i whakawerewerengia mai i te tuanui.

Waihoki, mai i ngā tau 1970, ētahi o ngā pikitia waituhi o ngā hanganga mātāi aronuku, ngā pōhatu whai tau, ngā rākau matanui, ngā whakawai kokohu, ngā parahanga ātanga, me ngā tākupu mangamanga, ka whakaatu mai e pēhea te tuakitanga o te ao ka tae atu ki te āhua toikupu korokē tā Cullen. Mai i te timatanga, ka hanga a Cullen tētahi papakupu reo ataata, reo kikokiko hoki, ka taea te urutau ki ngā taunekeneketanga rapunga whakaaro, o te whakahoronga me te whakahouhoutanga.

I māharahara a Cullen e pā ana ngā hoahoa, te hanga tauira, ngā momo wharau taupua hoki, tata ki te whā tekau tau. I tāpara a ia ki ngā mea nahanaha, ki ngā āhuatanga matatini, te whānoke miramira - otirā ki ngā tūāhua tata tanuku, pūrere tikoki hoki. Ko tēnei māharahara mō ngā rawa, ā rātou momo whakaahuahanga me ō rātou oranga kopī, i aweawetia ngā aro o te kaitoi i ngā pēwhetanga o te kāmura me te tapitapi taupua, te mahi hoahoa horanuku, te whakaahuatanga hangarau, ngā pūnaha inenga, ngā rawa whare, ngā pou tarāwaho taupua me ngā kōrero paki o te rapunga whakaaro, ka kōrero autaiā ngā mea me ngā kauhanga mo te huripokinga, te werewere, me te whakamakuru wairangi.

catalogues, or magazines he followed the language of instructional illustration and the depiction of moving parts in astronomy, carpentry, chemistry, and cartography. A favourite book for source imagery was Siegfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command: a contribution to an anonymous history* (1948). Giedion's book discusses the impact of mechanisation and industrialisation on the design of slaughterhouses, locks, bathrooms, kitchens, mobile furniture, and camera guns. Perhaps a memory of Giedion's illustration of an 1840 invalid couch, with its split structure tilted up by hand winches, still haunts Cullen's 2012 work *Fainting Couch* in this exhibition.

Whatever the original contexts of Cullen's borrowed diagrams and building structures, once translated into his art, this source material becomes something else—open-ended, somewhat mysterious, and full of possibility. Cullen's diagrams and improvisational structures are almost joyfully tentative and propositional. An aura of utopian delight imbues the early surreal ink drawings of floating objects, with the dotted lines of the diagram, registration marks, and graphic conventions hinting at the movement of fluids and transfers of energy. While a more fluid manner characterises the large diagram drawings he made across the last years of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st, the same fascination with the radiance of graphic inscription and cryptic signification prevails.

To get close to the essence of Cullen's deliberately paradoxical art, we need to picture the perversely elaborate mechanisms and contraptions in a Rube Goldberg or Heath Robinson drawing, for instance, with all its 'teetering complexity' of ropes, pulleys, levers, and buckets, alongside the explanatory diagrams of a specialised text book, and to then imagine the mad humour of the former parodying, and undermining, the hard science of the latter. The Greek origins of the word 'diagram' contain the idea of the structure or operation of something marked out by lines, but also of something crossed-out, or struck through. The diagram, then, is intrinsically provisional, essentially makeshift and transitory; it knows its own limits.

You could say Cullen's overall project plots both the unfolding and the unravelling of a romance with the European Enlightenment, with the rhetoric and paraphernalia of a scientific and rationalistic optimism. For Cullen, this romance always retained its original sense of wonder, even as any optimistic faith in reason, discovery, invention, and the ability of applied scientific method to solve the world's problems has been seriously, if not fatally, wounded by the damage scientific technology has done to the planet. Considering the devastating legacy of Enlightenment rationalism and modern scientism, the gentle provisionality and speculative experimentation at the heart of Cullen's art offer us an alternative, and more sustainable mindset.

Because Cullen was so interested in systems of storage, with inventories and ways of cataloguing the world, we have stocked two shelving units with art works, objects, and miscellaneous content from his studio. These two tiered

Putuputu noa a Cullen te tapahi whakaahua, te kape whakaahua rānei mai i ngā pukapuka tāwhito ō te mātauranga pūtaiao me ngā mātāpunenga. Mā ngā pukapuka aratohu, ngā whakarārangi, ngā makahīni rānei i whai atu a ia i te reo o te whakaahuatanga tohutohu me te whakatauiria o ngā rino i roto i te mātai arorangi, te kāmura, te mātai matū, me te mahi mahere. Ko te tino ukapuka mo ngā mātātuhi takenga ko *Mechanization Takes Command: a contribution to an anonymous history*, nā Siegfried Giedion (1948). Kei te pukapuka o Giedion e matapakitia ana te whakaaweawetia mai i te ahumahi me te mihinitia i runga i te hoahoa o ngā whare patu kau, ngā raka, ngā ruma horoi, ngā kihini, ngā rawa whakaangi o te whare, ngā pū kāmera. Tērā pea i tēnei whakaaturanga e kuku ana te mahi a Cullen, ko 'Fainting Couch' 2012 mā te maumaharatanga o tētahi whakaahuatanga nā Giedion, he nohonga tūroro wāhi rua mai i 1840 i hiki i ngā tauru.

Ahakoia ngā horopaki tūturu o ngā hoahoa mino me ngā hangatanga a Cullen ina ka whakamāori kau ana ki tana mahi toi, ko ngā rawa takenga ka puakina ai te ahua porehu, kī ana i te tūmanakotanga. E hākirikiri ana ngā hoahoa whakakaupapa me ngā hangatanga ohia a Cullen. Kua tomo mai te kōhauhau whakapai ake ki ngā pikitia waituhi moemoeā o ngā wā o mua o ngā mea pūrewa. Ko ngā rārangi ira, ngā tohu rēhita, me ngā tikanga whakanikoniko e tūwhiri ana i te māringi wē me te huringa pūngao. Ahakoa hoki, he ahua pari tā ōnā hoahoanui i hangaia e a ia i ngā tau mutunga o te rautau rua tekau me ngā tau timatanga o te rautau rua tekau ma tahi, ko te manawarū ki te atāahua o te tohu whakanikoniko me te kupu whakarite e tūtonutia.

Kia kātata ki te ngako o tēnei toi rongorua a Cullen, ina koa me matea tātou ki te titiro ki ngā mihini whakapaipai parori, ngā atuaia hoki ki roto i tētahi pikitia nā Rube Goldberg, Heath Robinson rānei, 'tūtukinga pīroiroi' - o ngā taura, ngā tauru, ngā whakatiriwhana, ngā pākete hoki ki te taha o ngā hoahoa whakamārama nā tetahi pukapuka matua, kātahi me pohewa te whakakata porangi o te mea tōmua e tāwhai ana, e whakahawea ana te mātai pūtaiao o te mea tōmuri. Ko te hua tūturu o te kupu 'diagram' i te reo Kariki, e komokomo ana te whakaaro o te hangatanga, te whakahaere o tetahi mea e hua ana mā rārangi, otirā he mea tāroto. Nā reira, ka taupua, ka rangitahi te hoahoa; ka mōhiotia āna ake tepenga.

Te kaupapa matua a Cullen ka kōrero ana mo te māroharohatia, te wetekina mai o tōrere European Enlightenment, mā te pūkōrero me ngā taputapu o te ngākau rorotu mātauranga pūtaiao me te ngākau rorotu whakaakoranga pū whakakaupapa. Hei tā Cullen, ko tēnei tōrere e pūmau tonu ana ki tana manawa reka tūturu, he whakaponoro rorotu ngātahi ki rō tākunetanga, tūhuratanga, auaha, me te āheitanga o te tūmahī pūtaiao ki te hīraurau i ngā raru o te ao ka tāmoa mā te whakaakoranga pū hangarau pūtaiao e patu nei ki te taiao. Me whaiwhakaaro te whakareretanga whakamōti o te whakaakoranga pū whakakaupapa me te whakaakoranga pū pūtaiao hou, te heipūtanga kāwatawata me te tūponotanga whakamātau ki te ngako o te mahi toi a Cullen tuku mai tētahi waiaro kē, he waiaro toitū.

slabs of material are like ladders of the artist's abundant imagination; a cross-section of the artist's brain as warehouse; busy pantries from which he might take ingredients to concoct further ensembles of sculptural and graphic intrigue. The shelves represent a compression of a rich and busy life spent making and thinking. The other works in the exhibition show how merely one selection of Cullen's objects-in-waiting might be sampled and arranged together. How one interpretive thread can be unspooled from the totality of the whole project.

— Allan Smith

Nā te aro mai a Cullen ki ngā pūnaha putunga me ngā rārangi taputapu, ngā momo whakarārangi hoki, kua putunga i a mātou e rua ngā paenga raupapa me ngā mahi toi, ngā rawa, me ngā mea whakaehu mai tāna taupuni mahi toi. Ko ēnei paenga rua e āhua rite ki te pātaka kī ana i te pohewatanga huhua o te kaitoi; he topenga o te roro o te kaitoi hei whatanga; ngā pātaka pōwawai ka tango mai pea e a ia ngā kinaki hei whakatū tira āhuareka me te tāraitanga, te whakanikoniko rānei. He tohu ngā paenga mo te kōpeketao o tōna oranga pōwawai e noho whakaaro noa, e hanga noa. Ko ērā atu mahi toi i roto i te whakaaturanga ka āhei te whakakite i te kōwhiringa kōtahi noa iho o ngā rawa o Cullen me tīpako ngātahi ana, me rārangi ngātahi ana. He aho whakamāramatanga kotahi ka āhei te mātoha mai i te kōtahitanga o te whakaaturanga.

— Trans. Poata Alvie McKree

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### Kupu

**rākau**  
(noun) tree, stick, timber, wood, spar, mast, plant

**waihanga**  
(verb) (-tia) to make, build, construct, erect, create, develop, generate

**kohuki**  
(verb) (-a,-tia) to think over, consider, speculate

**kawaka**  
(noun) New Zealand cedar, *Libocedrus plumosa* - a tall native tree with a cone-shaped head of heavy, almost horizontally spreading branches

**Whakaaturanga**  
(noun) exhibition, television programme, expo, demonstration, pageant, production, publicity, display, presentation, performance, show.  
(noun) notice, notification.  
(noun) testimony, evidence, description.