

## 213.157 Art Lab Exhibition Review and Report Template

The exhibition I went to was *Breaking The Bronze Ceiling* at The Dowse in Lower Hutt.

October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<https://dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/breaking-the-bronze-ceiling>

*Bringing together everything from bronze and ceramics to duct tape and wool, this exhibition reflects on the relationship between women and sculptural practice with artworks from The Dowse Collection.*

*The term bronze ceiling is a play on the earlier expression glass ceiling – the latter referring to the invisible social barriers that prevent women and minorities from climbing the corporate ladder. Today, the bronze ceiling references the lack of female representation in statues and more recently, women making public sculpture: both issues currently being addressed by initiatives around the globe.*

*Breaking The Bronze Ceiling will break through the assumption that sculpture is a predominantly masculine domain: assessing the materials woman have used, the themes they have explored, and—in keeping with The Dowse’s unique history—how these elements show a cross-over between fine art and craft practices.*

*Artists featured in this exhibition are Andrea Gardner, Ann Verdcourt, Emily Siddell, Joan Calvert, Judy McIntosh-Wilson, Kate Newby, Lisa Walker, Lonnie Hutchinson, Marte Szirmay, Mary-Louise Browne, Niki Hastings-McFall, Ruth Buchanan, Ruth Castle, Shelley Norton, Shona Rapira-Davies, Sue Clifford and Tanya Ashken.*

*Breaking the Bronze Ceiling is part of The Dowse Art Museum’s 50th Anniversary programme. It’s the second in a series of exhibitions in 2021 that explores different aspects from The Collection, as explored in such projects as Solid Ground (2019) and Short Traditions: Abstraction from The Dowse Collection (2014).*

*Breaking The Bronze Ceiling | The Dowse Art Museum.*

<https://dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/breaking-the-bronze-ceiling>. Accessed 6 Oct. 2021.

Image of exhibition



Brief description of artwork presented and its method of presentation

This is a group exhibition with a variety of sculptural works.

I was aware that there is a lack of equitable representation of female artists in the major art auctions, but I did not know that this is particularly true in sculptural works.

The works on display varied from a substantial bronze figurative work, *Kōtuku* (1972) by Tanya Ashken, to a small, tape-wrapped piece of driftwood, *Brooch* (2007), by Lisa Walker.

I felt the pieces fit the small space quite well, but I do think I was lucky in that it was a very quiet morning at the gallery. There were a few kids there, and although it's good for them to interact with art, some pieces appeared quite fragile, and I don't think this exhibition and gallery space would work well with a lot more people and activity in it. The bronze in particular is tall and narrow, and I very much hope it's tied down to the floor!

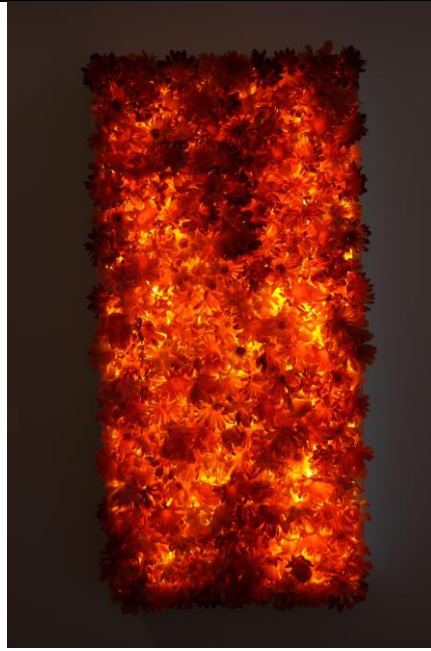
The works were primarily sculptural, although several were wall-mounted, and it was to these that I was drawn. I was particularly interested in how the pieces worked both as two-dimensional artworks, but could also provide an alternative and evolving experience as the viewer approaches their textural and sculptural elements.

I became interested in the pieces based on lei – typically items meant to be worn. The idea of a lei made from sharp glass shards – elements could undoubtedly damage a person if worn – is a pretty cool concept.



Emily Siddell, *Lei* (1995)

Analysis of impact of the artwork



I have not previously considered the use of artificial light in my work. The piece, *Large Orange Lei-Light* (2002), by Niki Hastings-McFall and shown above, showed how this can bring an extra dimension to a work.



Evaluation of relevance to your practice

A key takeaway has to be that these pieces are all by women artists, and as a man I'm at an unfair advantage in the art market. How can I represent that? Perhaps an underlying painting by a women artist overlaid with a layer by me that could be picked away at and destroyed by the viewer, to get at the art below?

I have also been considering how I might build on my prototype work - where underlying brightly coloured layers are revealed through a broken or torn upper surface. Perhaps I could experiment with an illuminated

	<p>lower layer. I had already thought about using a deliberately fractured plaster surface, which should be opaque enough to block light. This might be too complex to try In the time available.</p>
<p>Other notes</p>	<p>A team of researchers from the Netherlands, Australia, and the United States <a href="#">studied</a> over 2.6 million artworks sold at auction from 2000-2017 at 1,800 top auction houses, and found that <b>women are entirely absent from the top strata of art sales, where 42 male artists enjoy 40% of sale values</b>. Just one female artist, Joan Mitchell, cracks the top 50.</p> <p>These numbers are particularly damning given that roughly even numbers of men and women pursue degrees in fine arts.</p> <p>The study found other dismaying statistics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women’s artwork makes up 3-5% of major permanent art collections in the U.S. and Europe.</li> <li>• In sales over \$1 million, male artwork sells for 18% more than female artwork.</li> <li>• 5% of the 116,000 artists with work on display at major galleries and up for auction are female. Of those making contemporary art, 9.3% are female, while 2.9% of “old masters” are female artists.</li> </ul> <p>Cohen, Arianne. ‘You’ll Be Shocked by the Percentage of Women Artists in Top Art Auctions’. <i>Fast Company</i>, 17 Mar. 2021, <a href="https://www.fastcompany.com/90616083/youll-be-shocked-by-the-percentage-of-women-artists-in-top-art-auctions">https://www.fastcompany.com/90616083/youll-be-shocked-by-the-percentage-of-women-artists-in-top-art-auctions</a>.</p>