

SECRET POWER

Simon Denny

New Zealand Pavilion Venice Biennale
9 May – 22 November, 2015

New Zealand Pavilion

56th International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia

Artist: Simon Denny

Exhibition title: Secret Power

Commissioner: Heather Galbraith, Head, Whiti o Rehua School of Art, Massey University, Wellington for Creative New Zealand, Arts Council of New Zealand

Curator: Robert Leonard, Chief Curator, City Gallery Wellington

Venues: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana and Marco Polo Airport

<http://www.nzatvenice.com/>

Exhibition dates: 9 May – 22 November 2015

Preview days: 6, 7 and 8 May 2015

Press View: 10-1pm Tuesday 5 May 2015

Simon Denny has been commissioned by Creative New Zealand, Arts Council of New Zealand, to exhibit in the New Zealand pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia.

Simon Denny's project *Secret Power* will address the intersection of knowledge and geography in the post-Snowden world. It will investigate new and obsolete languages for describing geo-political space, focusing on the roles played by technology and design.

The 2015 New Zealand pavilion will be split across two sites: one modern, at the edge of Venice and one historical, at its heart.

Simon Denny will be the first Biennale artist to use the terminal at Marco Polo Airport, designed by architect Gian Paolo Mar. Here, people converge from all over the world. For most visitors, it is their first point of contact with Venice. Extending through the arrivals lounge, Denny's installation will operate between national borders, mixing the languages of commercial display, contemporary airport interior design, and historical representations of the value of knowledge.

The other half of the New Zealand pavilion will be the Marciana Library in Piazza San Marco, designed by Jacopo Sansovino during the Renaissance. Decorated with paintings by artists including Titian and Tintoretto, depicting philosophy and wisdom, the Library is an allegory for the benefits of acquiring knowledge. It also houses historical maps and globes, including Fra Mauro's early world map, containing information obtained by travellers, merchants and navigators including Marco Polo. It is one of the first European maps to depict Japan, for example. Here, Denny's installation will draw analogies between this spectacular but obsolete map and the way the world is mapped and managed today.

The exhibition takes its title from investigative journalist and author Nicky Hager's 1996 book *Secret Power*, an account of the role and international standing of New Zealand's intelligence work. Hager has extensively researched and written on the intelligence industry and is a specialist adviser to the New Zealand project for the Biennale Arte 2015.

As Denny says "we're at an unprecedented moment, where technology plays a really large part in our lives. And it becomes increasingly visible how much power is concentrated in the hands of those who define that technology... technology, now particularly, seems to be kind of a good window to look at where the concentration of power and wealth is in the world."

"Simon Denny is one of the most high-profile New Zealand artists working in the international contemporary art world today", says New Zealand Commissioner for the Biennale Arte 2015, Heather Galbraith. "His work is rich, intelligent and challenging. We are confident it will be very compelling within the context of la Biennale di Venezia."

Notes to Editors

New Zealand Pavilion at the 56th International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia

Commissioner: Heather Galbraith, Head, Whiti o Rehua School of Art, Massey University, Wellington
An established curator, writer and academic who has held senior curatorial and arts management roles in public galleries and museums in New Zealand, Heather Galbraith gained a MA in Arts Administration and Curatorship from Goldsmiths College, London in 1997 and was Exhibitions Organiser at Camden Arts Centre for seven years before her return to New Zealand in 2004. She was co-curator of Francis Upritchard's *Save Yourself*, at the Biennale Arte 2009, and Deputy Commissioner for New Zealand at the Biennale Arte 2009 and 2013.

Curator: Robert Leonard, Chief Curator, City Gallery Wellington

One of New Zealand's most experienced contemporary-art curators and writers, Robert Leonard has held curatorial positions at the National Art Gallery, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, and Auckland Art Gallery, and was Director of Artspace, Auckland. Having been Director of the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, since 2005, he recently returned to New Zealand to take up the role of Chief Curator at City Gallery Wellington.

Venues:

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana

Located in the Piazzetta San Marco and designed by Jacopo Sansovino, the Marciana Library holds many treasures including an exemplary early map of the world by fra Mauro (1448–53).

<http://marciana.venezia.sbn.it/>

Marco Polo Airport

Located to the north, on the outskirts of Venice, Marco Polo Airport was designed by architect Gian Paolo Mar. The installation will extend through the arrivals lounge. <http://www.veniceairport.it/en/>

New Zealand at Venice Website:

<http://www.nzatvenice.com/>

Simon Denny

Simon Denny studied at the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts and at Frankfurt's Städelschule, graduating in 2009. Born in Auckland, he is currently based in Berlin. Denny was a founding member of the Auckland artist-run space Gambia Castle. His work is regularly exhibited in New Zealand and is held in major public and private collections in New Zealand, including the

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, and Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Simon Denny's work has explored the culture of internet-technology firms, technological obsolescence, corporate culture, and contemporary constructions of national identity. He is interested in innovation as a driving force in business, in the rhetoric of Silicon Valley and tech start-ups, in technology's role in shaping global culture and in the ways information is controlled and shared. He investigates these ideas in installations that combine sculpture, graphics, and moving images.

Denny has been included in shows in major European and international art museums, including the ICA, London; Kunsthau Bregenz; KW Center for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Fridericianum, Kassel, Centre Pompidou, Paris, the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art in Beijing and the Aspen Art Museum. In 2013, he presented *All You Need Is Data: The DLD 2012 Conference Redux* at Kunstverein Munich, Petzel Gallery, New York and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (as one of four nominees for the 2013 Preis der Nationalgalerie für Junge Kunst). In 2013, he exhibited *The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom*, at MUMOK, Vienna, and, in 2014, at Firstsite, Colchester and the Adam Art Gallery, Wellington. In 2014 Denny presented *New Management* at the Portikus, Frankfurt. He was included in the 2008 Sydney Biennale and the 2008 Brussels Biennial.

In 2012, Simon Denny won the Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel. He has been the only New Zealand artist invited to exhibit in the curated show at la Biennale Arte di Venezia, which he did in 2013 and was shortlisted for the 2014 and 2012 Walters Prize in New Zealand.

From 3 April to 31 August 2015, MoMA PS1 in New York will present *The Innovator's Dilemma*, the first museum exhibition to survey a number of the artist's recent projects and the first large-scale US museum solo show of Simon Denny. The exhibition will adopt the architectural typology of an industry tradeshow, staging literal platforms for content drawn from various recent bodies of the artist's work.

Simon Denny's work has been extensively written about and reviewed including in the *New York Times*, *Focus*, *Frieze*, *Art Forum*, *Modern Painters*, *Monopol*, *Mousse* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Catalogue

There will be an illustrated new book to accompany the exhibition published by Mousse Publishing / Koenig Books.

Simon Denny Gallery Representation

Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin
Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand
Petzel Gallery, New York
T293, Naples

New Zealand at Venice - Past Years

New Zealand has exhibited at la Biennale di Venezia since 2001 with exhibitions by Peter Robinson and Jacqueline Fraser (2001), Michael Stevenson (2003), et al. (2005), Judy Millar and Francis Upritchard (2009), and Michael Parekowhai (2011), Bill Culbert (2013).

Creative New Zealand

New Zealand's arts development agency, Creative New Zealand, funds and leads New Zealand's presence at la Biennale di Venezia. Creative New Zealand acknowledges the support of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington City Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu Whare Toi and Massey University Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa in the realisation of the 2015 exhibition.

Press Images

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The initiative is also generously supported by the NZ at Venice Patrons, Galerie Buchholz, Michael Lett, Petzel Gallery, T293, Arounder.com/Vrway communication, Save S.p.A Group (Marco Polo Airport) and a number of private donors.