

TWO WORLDS

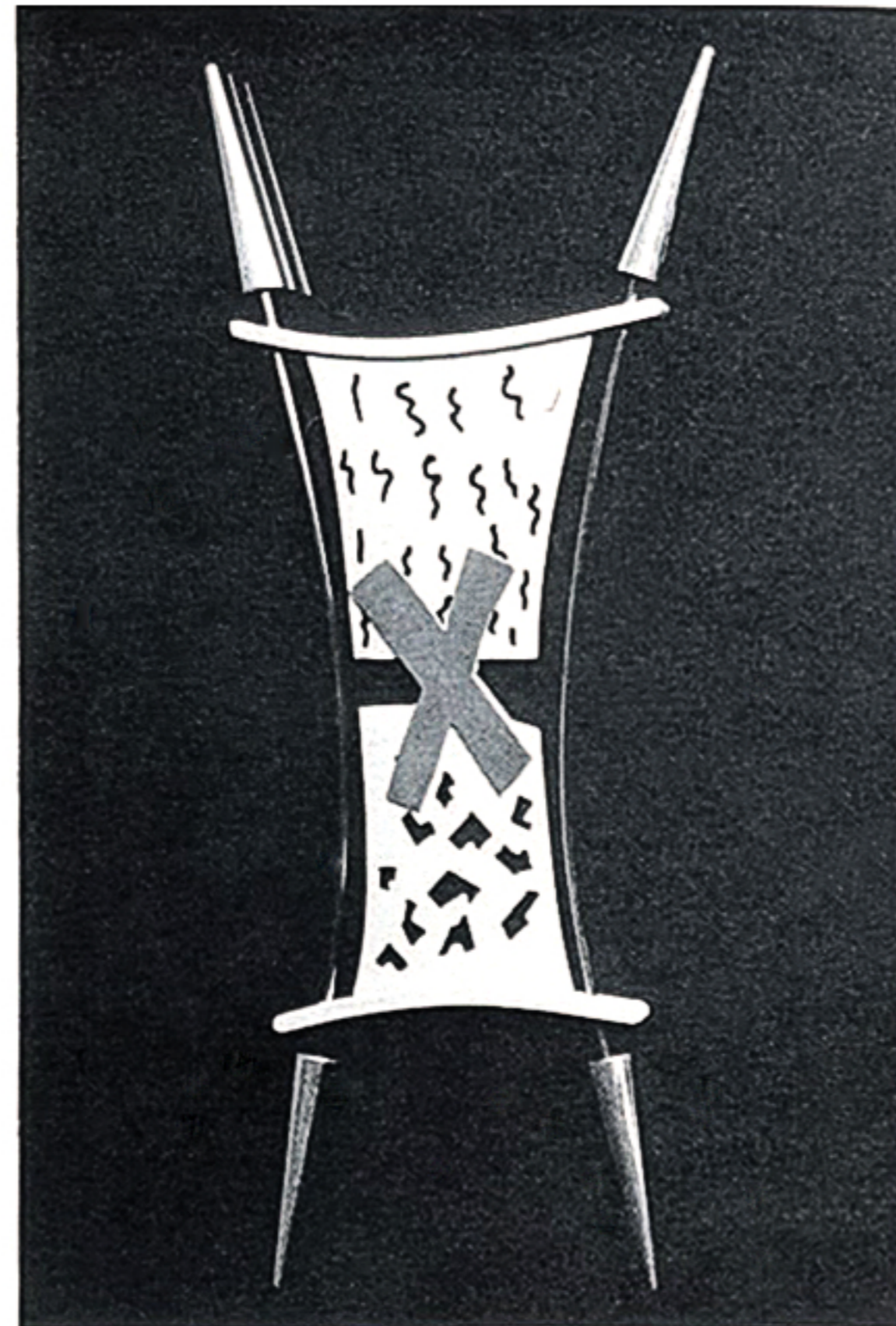
By Peter Deckers

In 1985 my wife Hilda Gascard and I emigrated from the Netherlands to New Zealand. We consider ourselves as pre-cold war and environmental refugees and we are very grateful that NZ has given us a chance to live and work in an unpolluted and democratic environment.

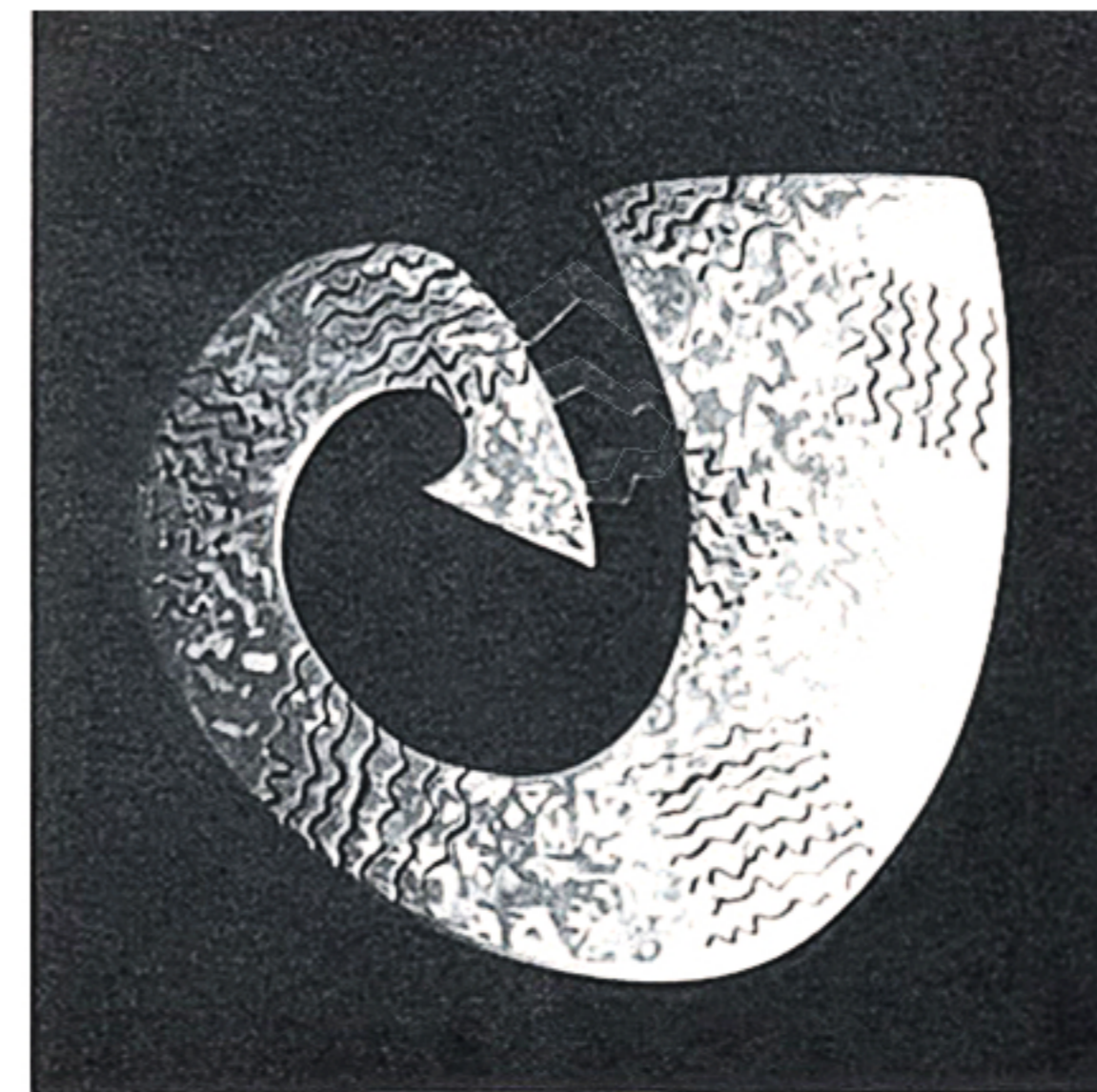
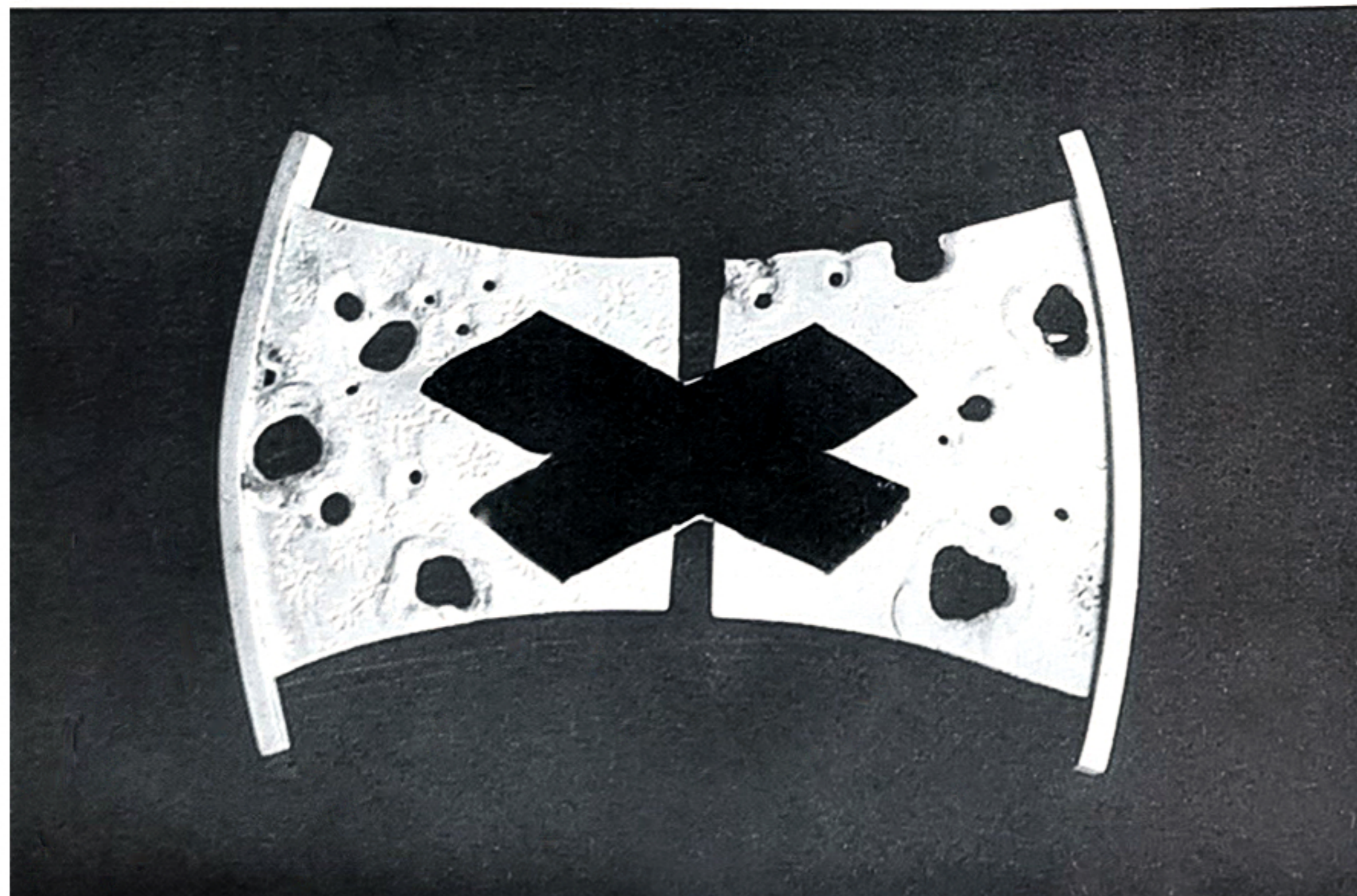
NZ has changed my work dramatically. From the early moments onwards, the land and the culture have absorbed my interest.

The way I was working in Europe could be described as abstract minimalism. Europe's culture is old, so its roots are disguised by the development. Working part time for Whitireia Polytechnic in Porirua, where Pacific and Celtic cultures are honoured, I became aware of my roots. The expression of that awareness has little or nothing in common with the expression of my ancestors. It is from the roots of human integrity and its fundamental natural existence. I observe the world and react on that in my work. I look at how the past meets the present and how its continuation will reflect on the future. A lot of political and non-political events, issues and decisions are reflected.

In 1989, my *Environmental Distortion* exhibition had to do with the reasons we came to this country. In that show, I made "offbeat tokens" reflecting the society and its natural and man-made disasters. For example, a reference to the cold war was a bomb-like hollow form, held by two tiny links. The piece was called *World Leaders Trust*. Other pieces expressed the indirect influence of telecommunications, or the holy grail of capitalism, economic growth, or the slow but devastating effect of humans on the environment.



Above; *Before the War*. Brooch, 925 silver, gold, stainless steel.
Below; *After the War*. Brooch, 925 silver, and oxidised copper/nickel alloy.
Both from *Environmental Distortions*, March, 1989.



Above; *Inflexible Democracy*. Necklace, 1992/93, 925 silver.
Left top; kitsch glass brooches, nylon.

Left top; *Beatifical Vision*, 1992/93; 925 silver, foilbacked glass, coloured glass beads.

Left bottom; *Treaty of Waitangi*, Brooch, 1989; 925 silver and oxidised copper/nickel alloy.

That show laid the foundation of my expression through my work. Since then I have continued to observe society and the way humans impact on it through their actions, behaviour and decisions. Often thin layers of veneer are placed over important issues (like lost spirituality).

I try to capture that in my work, making small (look through) containers with covers. Inside, or under the cover is the so called "value" of the subject matter.

All sorts of techniques and materials - for example, rust, fake glass stones, Victorian kitsch jewellery, pure gold and silver, other items like (gold) coins, stamps, replicas, fashion ikons and so on - are also used (as long as I can afford them).

My work is diverse, and I refuse to corner myself into one expression, technique, material or style. The concepts are tapped from my observations and the jewellery which follows should beautify and highlight the wearer's personality. That the concept is understood is only a bonus.

The 1991, the QEII Arts Council awarded me an access workshop grant, and after two years of intense building, Hilda and I have almost finished the project. We have done everything ourselves, from plans to building.

After travel and emigration, this project was our great adventure.

Together we have a small business with our jewellery and Hilda is trained as a classical pianist. The jewellery she makes is another expression of her characteristic mind. Her work is bold, strong, direct - almost like calligraphy.

Our work can be viewed in Wellington at Accolades and Avid, who will have a small show of my work in November.