

# Since the Great Depression





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a Raised by Wolves publication



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Auckland: Sam Rountree-Williams and Holly Willson at Window Gallery.  
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Text © Amy Howden-Chapman and Bidy Livesey

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Raised by Wolves performing recreation of the Patterson brothers' handshake.  
The New Zealand Film Archive, Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua, Wellington

## Wasting a Crisis

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Biddy had this idea that we should do a performance in every port. Like a woman in every port, but instead of one woman, it would be two of us and instead of lying around being romanced by sailors we would be performing. She imagined us bribing our way into shipyards and unloading areas, and toasting each other with port – the setting sun shining through glasses of red liquid – in Lyttleton, Dunedin, Tauranga, New Plymouth, Napier... We are keen on travel.

Despite our soft spot for sea walls and shipwrecks we never made it to a single major maritime port, but we did get to the major airports of Auckland and Christchurch, and gathered ourselves and an audience together in Wellington. By then the financial crisis had hit home. Ports and sailors (planes and airline hosties) seemed less pressing than depressions, recessions, money mania and 'eureka' job creation schemes past and future. We changed our tour of towns from a series of images to illustrate a bad one-liner to a more investigative tour, comparing the reflexes and reactions of different cities to the crisis. And another form of comparison was becoming increasingly prominent. Every second comment on the current recession would conclude with the alarming phrase, that this was the biggest/worst/lowest/highest/scariest/most important [insert economic phenomenon here] 'since the Great Depression.' It seemed there was no way for anyone to look around them and understand what was going on without looking back to what had gone on in the 1930s.

But 1929 was 80 years ago. In the Great Depression, our grandparents (now all gone) were under the age of ten. Biddy and I realised we had little idea what the 1930s really felt like, and if the 1929–2009 comparison was justified at all. To find out, we began to catalogue all the things that we could see had happened since the Great Depression.

In Auckland we looked out the tall decorative windows of Roy A. Lippincott's Clock Tower (finished 1928) at The University of Auckland and talked about every building on the campus that had been built since. We found stories of what had happened in those buildings, in times of crisis and times of calm. In Christchurch we uncovered a stalled 1930s job creation plan to dam the Avon River and create a new central-city swimming pool. We kayaked the river, investigating the proposed site and considering whether the plan was still viable. In Wellington we immersed ourselves in home movies from the period and found ourselves dragged into saga of the Patterson family. Reading and re-reading the biography of the Patterson brothers and telling stories of New Zealand cities in the Great Depression years we kept wondering, does understanding that time help us better understand now?

That was then, before we each sailed off to our own current ports. Biddy in Rotterdam, home to Europoort, the largest port in Europe. And me in Los Angeles, host of LAX, the seventh busiest airport in the world. From our points on the globe, we talk on the phone about everything that has happened since the Great Depression. We report to each other on how the recession has affected the cities we now inhabit. About how recession

has hit our cities (like a tornado) and about how our cities have fallen into recession (like falling pregnant). We try to figure out what we should be looking back at—or around at—to explain the vulnerability and the resilience we see in these cities we find ourselves in now.

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**I said to Biddy:** I keep making assumptions about Los Angeles, blanket statements just to try and express what I'm seeing. Like, 'it never rains in this place'. Or 'there is never any water in that river, it's basically not even a river anymore'. And then a few months go past and it rains for days and days and the river swells and I realise I don't know enough about what's happened here before to know what's happening now. Who knows, maybe the noise from building sites used to be deafening, but died with the credit crunch. Or maybe there hasn't been a noise for fifty years.

**Biddy said:** People always try and tell the future from what we know now. Carlos told me that the word 'speculation' comes from the idea of holding up a mirror (a speculum) to see the future. But a mirror only reflects what is there now, not what will be there. I read a column by this guy Larry Elliot, and he was laying it all out, everything that hasn't happened yet. He announced: 'The big economic themes of 2010 are clear. It will be a year of recovery, a year of banker bashing, a year of debt reduction and a year of growing protectionist pressure. And it will be a year of two distinct halves, with fears growing about the durability of the pick-up as the months roll by.'<sup>1</sup> Pick-up, like pick-up truck?

**Joan Didion said:** To understand what was going on it is perhaps necessary to have participated in the freeway experience. Mere driving on the freeway is in no way the same as participating in it. Anyone can 'drive' on the freeway, and many people with no vocation for it do, hesitating here and resisting there, losing the rhythm of the lane change, thinking about where they came from and where they are going. Actual participation requires a total surrender, a concentration so intense as to seem a kind of narcosis, a rapture-of-the-freeway. The mind goes clean. The rhythm takes over. A distortion of time occurs.<sup>2</sup>

**Biddy said:** Here in Rotterdam I am reminded of the recession because there are buildings everywhere bearing the names of banks that hit the news. ABN AMRO is one of the big Dutch banks that was bailed out by the government. They have a huge building with a neon sign right in the centre of town. Maybe people are becoming more aware of money, of what makes money and what makes it disappear. Willem told me: I lived in a huge squat house for ten years. Recently, the owners decided to lease it to a 'Fit for Free' organisation—a new phenomenon where gym equipment is installed in a building but no attempts are made to do up the interior of the building. The gym can then charge minimal joining fees (about nine euro a month). You can see how this would become popular, particularly right now.'

**I said:** I met this guy at a bar the other night who said he was an actor or a comedian or something but he was kind of just crazy and he kept talking to me about this kind of persona he has where he pretends (though I got the feeling he really kind of believed) that he's half man and half mirror. He was like, 'I

see the landscape reflected in my finger nails.' It was kind of a little bit hippy and a little bit just Los Angeles. He was like, 'I like to consider the things around me through the ideas that other people have about what is around us. You can't see ideas, and that means they can't be reflected in me. Not in my elbows, not across my forehead, ideas are more relaxing than what's actually there.'

**Biddy said:** Remember when you told that guy Simon you were moving to Los Angeles, and he was like, you won't meet a single person in that city who's not lying.

**I said:** I love listening to the radio when I'm driving, it's one of the only ways I feel like I know what is going on out there in this crazy city. It's also where I get all my news about what's happening in the rest of the world. There was a segment on financial reform, and the tag line for the report asked: a wasted crisis?

**Mervyn King said:** The origins of the crisis lay in our inability to cope with the consequences of the entry into the world trading system of countries such as China, India, and the former Soviet empire—in a word, globalisation. The benefits in terms of trade were visible; the costs of the implied capital flows were not.<sup>3</sup>

**Laura Finiski said:** But you know all of that only became officially dysfunctional recently. People were just acting like this kind of development, and that kind of landscaping could just go on forever, and you know because the population keeps rising—for a lot of reasons, also because now some of the sources are drying up, and that is because of the development in Las Vegas

and Nevada – mainly it's because population growth has put a huge strain on the whole water supply. It's going to be slow I think, but people are going to have to give up their lawns. It'll look like Tucson maybe.

**I said:** Driving on the freeway from Santa Clarita towards Los Angeles you can see a giant pipe squirming up the hill and next to it a cascade of water contained in a concrete trench. The housing development next to this flow of water is called 'Cascade' or perhaps 'The Cascades'.

**Biddy said:** I hear that in the tracts of abandoned houses in the United States, no-one is mowing the lawns. Lawn money is one of the first things to go. It's like what David Byrne sang.

**David Byrne sang:**

There was a factory, now there are mountains and rivers

*(you got it, you got it)*

We caught a rattlesnake, now we got something for dinner

*(we got it, we got it)*

There was a shopping mall, now it's all covered with flowers

*(you've got it, you've got it)*

If this is paradise, I wish I had a lawnmower

*(you've got it, you've got it)<sup>4</sup>*

**I said:** Last night I heard a man that looked and dressed like a politician, but was actually a journalist who covered politicians, say: 'California isn't Nevada. We have water, we just have to get it from the north.' The journalist said: 'Water is not water, it is land use, it is storing, conveying, pricing.'

**Biddy said:** I was really afraid that we would find a body in the Avon in Christchurch, when we were paddling down it looking for the site of the dam. I was afraid we would accidentally touch it with our paddles.

**I said:** On the way home from the pool the other day I walked past a Haiti benefit concert in Echo Park. It was just a small stage with this band and a woman in a great outfit singing, and a few people dancing and a tent where you could donate to the earthquake relief effort. It made me realise that this is the first public event that I've seen the whole time I've lived in my neighbourhood. Maybe it's just that I live in the wrong kind of neighbourhood, or maybe there's no funding for that kind of thing in California anymore. The swimming pool doesn't open till 3pm during the week and I noticed yesterday that the mirror pool in the Sculpture Garden outside the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has no water in it. It's just a whole lot of sculptures hovering above some black tiles. What are they lacking? Money or water?

**Biddy said:** I've found a swimming pool in Rotterdam that was built during the 1930s. It has beautiful primary-coloured tiles everywhere and big windows. It is always busy— it is always open but the times are very strictly allocated to different users. On Sunday between 10am and 11am: women only. Lane swimming? Monday 6–7pm, Tuesday 4–5pm, Thursday 3–4pm and also 5.30–6.30pm. Outside the big windows I can see a summer pool that is empty but looks idyllic. I've been speculating that in summer, more space for swimming in the outdoor pool will mean there will be less people wanting to swim in the indoor pool, and then

both pools will be emptier. Or maybe people in Rotterdam are secret summer swimmers, and both pools will be fuller. Or maybe there is another factor: maybe people in Rotterdam are secret summer swimmers who don't like to swim in times of crisis.

**Larry Elliot said:** Unless this recovery breaks with historical precedent, some words of caution are in order. In the past, severe crises in the global economy have persisted for several years and gone through distinct phases. America during the Great Depression, for example, saw a deep plunge in output after the Wall Street Crash, followed by a fairly brisk recovery in the mid-1930s and then a further serious setback in 1937. The economy only really returned to permanent health when the US went to war in 1941.

**Biddy said:** He seems to be saying that we suffer in cycles. While one sector suffers—say, real estate agents—others might bloom (bars, hotels, gaming rooms). It could be the economic equivalent of what ecologists call a 'mast year'. In a mast year, an over-abundance of fruit is produced, and whatever eats the fruit (say, mice) have a very good time. Because the mice have eaten so well, they produce more young than normal. But because mating takes time, and gestation takes time, the new generation of young mice (a baby-boom born from super-abundance) are born after the plants have stopped fruiting. There is very little to eat, and the trees lose many of their fruits to predation. The mice eat poorly and so this generation of mice may produce very few offspring per capita, and the population returns to normal. Until there is a mast year, and the whole cycle starts again. So,

super-abundance is followed by super-abundance, followed by poverty and poverty, followed by super-abundance and super-abundance. The lag between generations means that life is always uncomfortable for someone—either the mice or the fruit.

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**Biddy said:** My favourite part was finding out about the anti-Depression cheer-up festivals. The Venetian Carnival beside the Avon in September 1933, where they dammed the river to provide deeper water for the displays. During Prosperity Week in Wellington in 1933 the fire department went around to Oriental Bay at night and 'played their hoses on the water'; the electricity department shone coloured searchlights onto the harbour; there was dancing in Oriental Parade and singing in the Wellington Town Hall at lunchtimes. The idea was if you could get people to forget their troubles and regain their confidence, the Depression would disappear<sup>5</sup>.

**I said:** The guy who claimed he was half human-half mirror told me a whole bunch of stuff. To paraphrase: This is how it is; I feel most at home in the water because there my edges aren't so harsh. The rest of the time there is such clarity about my surface. When I can't get to a swimming pool or the sea, I like to splash in puddles. I eat tinfoil. I'm 2-D and I'm 3-D; I have an ass but when people look at me they don't see my contours, they see themselves. They see themselves flat, they see themselves framed; when they see themselves in me they see themselves as more coherent. Their actions when reflected by me seem

less arbitrary to them. But peoples' actions have always seemed arbitrary to me.

**I said:** Remember those accidents in the mid-nineties when the roofs of swimming pools in the ex-Soviet Union collapsed? Huge glass domes giving in to the snow and falling in on themselves. Broken glass everywhere, people in swimming costumes, so vulnerable to the snow, the glass, the ice, the water. So safe and warm, and then so vulnerable.

**Biddy asked:** How would you know if the city was suffering?

**I answered:** Maybe if there was a really intense city sickness then the freeways would be empty. There's that analogy of roads in a city being like arteries. If that analogy is true anywhere it will be here in Los Angeles. If your arteries are blocked you can have a heart attack. There are always warning signs, and I have started to compile a list of all the things that are blocking traffic as I hear them reported on the radio. Mainly the reports are of stalled or crashed cars, but I also heard on one occasion that three labradors were blocking the southbound 405; on another occasion, a large bag of tree clippings and once, a table.

**I asked Biddy:** And you, is your new city in good health?

**Biddy answered:** It's hard to know a city when you've only just moved there, because I'm not sure what to look at to measure the health of the city. In Auckland we talked about how seeing cranes in the sky means that things are changing, and about how

the amount of concrete a city is using at any time could also be a signal of change. Maybe I could count the broken windows. A broken window is a dangerous object in itself, but it is also a door—an entry door or an exit door for people who may live there uninvited. There are a number of broken windows in a huge building across the canal from where we are staying tonight. But these gaps are somewhat balanced by other windows painted bright red, yellow or blue—Piet Mondrian-style. The building is broken, but cheerfully broken. No single theory fits the facts.

**I said:** Nicholson Baker seems to be asking the right kinds of questions. He asks things like: 'How is it that whole cultures and civilizations can change their "minds"?'<sup>6</sup>

**Nicholson Baker said:** From the distance of the historian of ideas, things blur nicely: one sees a dogma and its vocabulary seeping from discipline to disciplines, from class to class; if you squint away specificity you can make out splinter groups, groundswells of opposition, rival and revival schools of thought. The smoothness and sweep is breathtaking; the metaphors are all ready made....I don't want the story of the feared-but-loved teacher, the book that hit like a thunderclap, the years of severe study followed by a visionary breakdown, the clench of repentance.'

**Biddy said:** I read on Larry Eliot's blog that the short-term picture is certainly better than it was twelve months ago. Then I heard Randall Kroszner say: 'Think about the alternative world in which we didn't act, and we're back in the Great Depression again.'<sup>7</sup>

**Nicholson Baker said:** I want each sequential change of mind in its true, knotted, clotted, viny multifariousness, with all of the colourful streamers of intelligence still taped on and flapping in the wind.<sup>7</sup>

### **Amy Howden-Chapman & Biddy Livesey**

Los Angeles / Rotterdam, February 2010

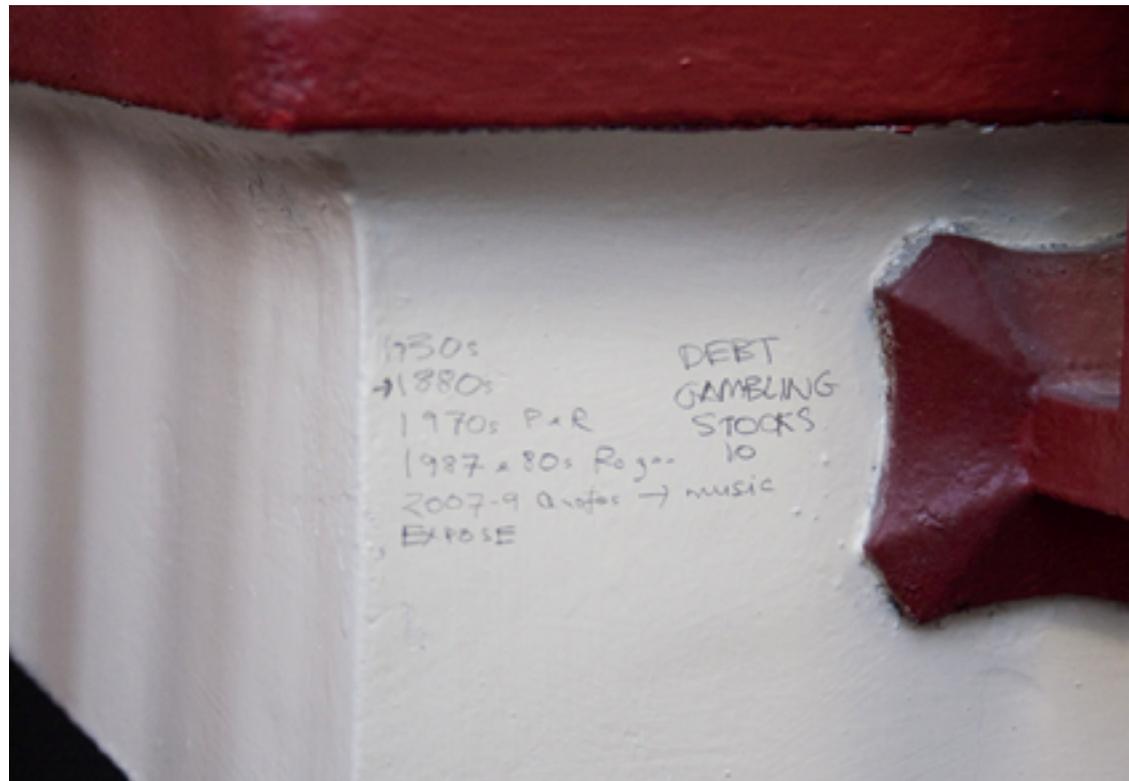


*Los Angeles from Underwater.*  
Photographic Slide. Amy Howden-Chapman, 2010.



*Maersk Line Cargo Ship, Rotterdam.*  
Digital Photograph. Biddy Livesey, 2010.

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## Wellington

The New Zealand Film Archive

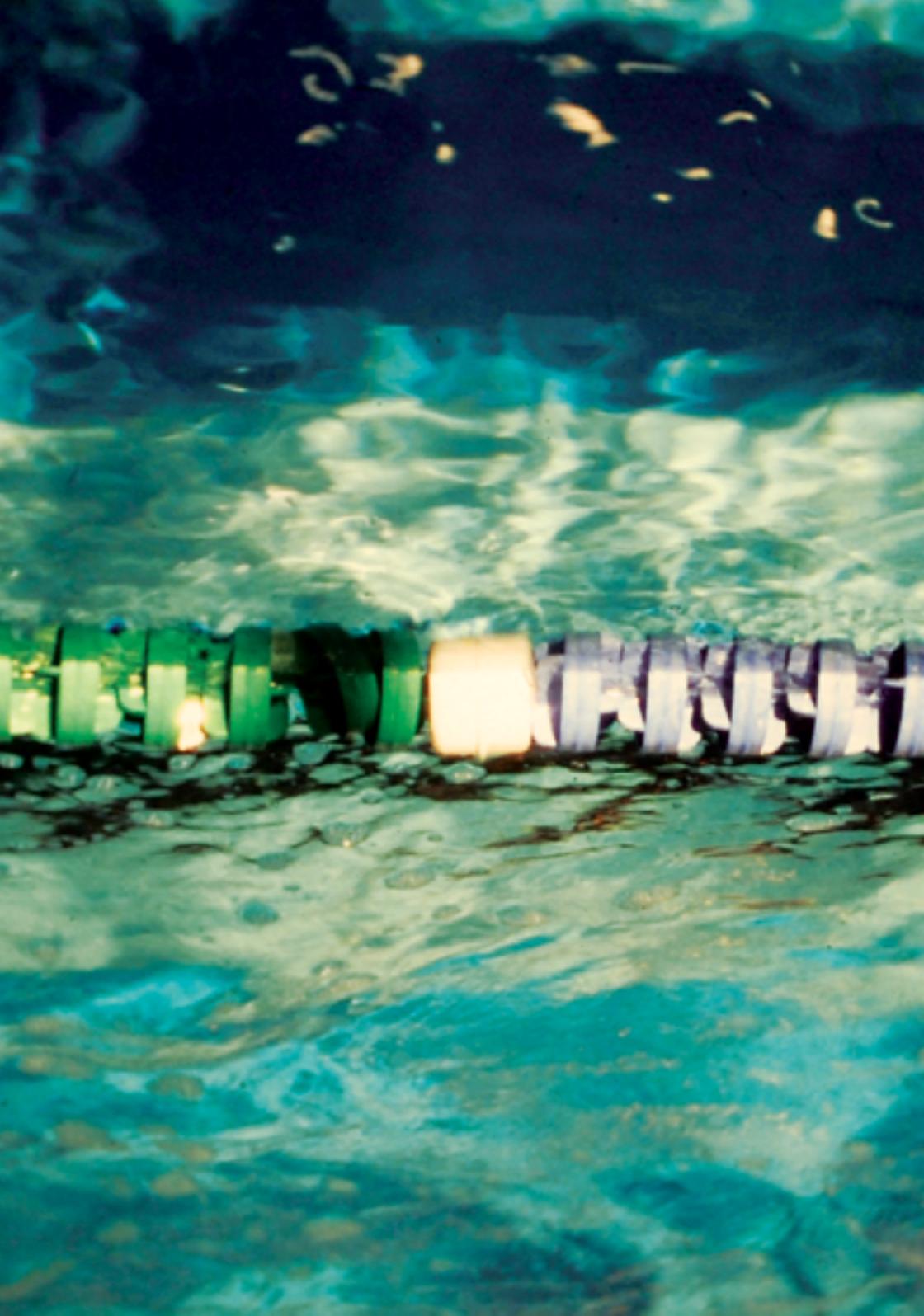
Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua





**Christchurch**  
The Physics Room





# Inaugurating Histories: Raised by Wolves and the 2008 Credit Crunch

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Staged in the wake of the credit crisis of late 2008, *Since the Great Depression* was a series of three performances by Raised by Wolves in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch that attempted to weave together the stories of loss, rejuvenation and perseverance that the “inevitable” benchmarking of the “Great” Depression entails. Beginning with their guided ascent of the University of Auckland’s Clock Tower, a heritage-listed, neo-classical dandy of a building, the three performances unfolded as a series of historical vignettes in which the discrepancies and continuities that range across one era to another could be seen. To some extent these disjunctures could be observed in the city-wide views from the tower’s various parapets, but the social narratives in which such environments are actually lived out fell to Raised by Wolves’ subsequent performances in Wellington and Christchurch. Their performance at The New Zealand Film Archive Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua in Wellington mixed home movie footage and biography to trace the effects of the Great Depression on three brothers born in New Zealand during the 1930s. Refusing to consolidate a dominating trend of frugality, this narrative composed a fractious and multiplying story responding to an equally turbulent era in which society’s matrix changed enormously. Their final performance, at The Physics Room in Christchurch, adopted the guise of the slide evening, tracing the history of Christchurch’s Avon River, promoting

the rejuvenation of the economy via public work enterprises, dams and public swimming pools. Together the performances contextualise the hysteria which has accompanied the most recent credit crisis, tracing out the histories entwined within the respective social contexts of the three material forms—the Clock Tower, the films, the river.

The period 1929–2009 signposts the historical shift during which society turned from the productive axioms of the blue-collar industrial worker to focus instead on the inflated wage-purchaser of the consummate consumer citizen. Dubbed by Hardt and Negri as a transition to a ‘disciplinary’ form of governance that invests ‘social relations in their entirety’,<sup>1</sup> this period of empowerment piggybacked significantly on America’s New Deal, a stimulus package designed in the wake of the Great Depression to motivate consumer spending. Spurring the arrival of suburbia as the dominant settlement trend of the post-war era,<sup>2</sup> this new initiative turned the suburban home into an idealised repository for consumer goods, with houses becoming, as Scott Donaldson suggests, mere display cases catering to ‘the most up-to-date in mass cultural products’.<sup>3</sup> Following the Second World War and the depression that preceded it, such prosperity triumphed as capitalism’s greater good, nowhere better evinced than in the Kitchen Debate of Khrushchev and Nixon.<sup>4</sup> And yet, such prosperity rested on fragile grounds, as the refusals of the 1960s counter-cultures and the economic crisis of the 1970s would uncover, ushering in a complete suffusion of the speculative consumer. Newly minted in the crucible of the neo-conservative values of the 1980s, this consumer would emerge as the epitome of a self-reliant community.<sup>5</sup> As Hardt and Negri explain:

The restructuring of production, from Fordism to post-Fordism, from modernisation to postmodernisation, was anticipated by the rise of a new subjectivity. The passage from the phase of perfecting the disciplinary regime to the successive phase of shifting the productive paradigm was driven from below, by a proletariat whose composition had already changed. Capital did not need to invent a new paradigm (even if it were capable of doing so) because *the truly creative moment had already taken place*. Capital’s problem was rather to dominate a new composition that had already been produced autonomously... The only configurations of capital able to thrive in the new world will be those that adapt to and govern the new immaterial, cooperative, communicative, and affective composition of labour power.<sup>6</sup>

This transition can be described as a turn to an informational society, in which service economies and out-sourced labour reflect the prevalence of mobility and flexibility as the favoured terms of employment. While the wage contract gives way to the idealised prescience of the entrepreneur, what becomes increasingly apparent is the circuitry through which all this affective labour reduces life itself to a mere performance through consumption. Take the following indignation from the authors of *The Coming Insurrection* before Reebok’s recent sloganeering:

“I AM WHAT I AM.” This is marketing’s latest offering to the world, the final stage in the development of advertising, far beyond all the exhortations to be different, to be oneself and drink Pepsi. Decades of concepts in order to get where we are, to arrive at pure tautology. I = I. He’s running on a treadmill

in front of the mirror in his gym. She's coming back from work behind the wheel of her Smart car... "I AM WHAT I AM." My body belongs to me. I am me, you are you, and *something's* wrong. Mass personalisation. Individualisation of all conditions.<sup>7</sup>

This idea of managed identity alerts Nigel Thrift to the transformation of consumer society through an 'ethology of senses', in which life itself is 'laid bare and anatomized, and put together again as saleable, immersive experiences'.<sup>8</sup> The current economic era marks a radical embrace of the speculative individual, who has emerged from an individualising regime where principles of personal responsibility enable the very volatility through which capital expands. That such modes of recuperation have been completely embedded within the mandate of life itself is perhaps best seen in Giuliani's and Bush's infamous exhortations to "return to shopping" in the wake of 9/11.

If these officialising histories draw a line of convenience between one era and another, then it's telling that *Raised by Wolves'* performance series began in the Auckland University's Clock Tower. Constructed out of Mt Summers stone in a neo-classical baroque style, the Clock Tower is an imposing and reverential site championed for its traditionalised and grandiloquent monumentality. Standing testament to older values, its aspirations imbibe the classical faith in progress as civilisations' trajectory. More so because the actual function of the building as public clock, as keeper of time, winds it into that linear unfolding of history as a series of great deeds. However, this story of 'universal progress' comes afoul in the post-Depression

era, not only in the aftermath of the Third Reich's civilisation rhetoric which commandeered classicism as a foundational and valedictory exegesis, but also due to those counter-culture refusals which exposed the brazenness with which a "white" heterosexual middle-class advanced mass-consumer society as capitalism's greatest good.

The myth of a classless society has always weighed heavy on New Zealand's consciousness, so it is unsurprising that the Clock Tower continues to represent 'progress'—to hoist this most convenient of flags. Seen in contrast to University of Auckland's latest architectural icon, the newly built Owen Glenn Building (host to the university's business school), the Clock Tower may be a passive iconographic tribute, as anachronistic as its analogue decoration, but it continues to act as the foundational fulcrum upon which the enduring continuum of history relies. Indeed, its tribute to the doctrines of art, history and civilisation is to an extent the hallowed ground upon which the expansive and tumultuous corridors of the Glenn Centre are allowed to range.

And yet, in the wake of 2009's economic pessimism such succession seems shaky at best. *Raised by Wolves'* sketching of the city's environs depicted a modest version of civilisation's prowess, but the higher they ascended the stairs of the Clock Tower, the more the building's interior was strangely uninhabited, significantly defunct and under-utilised zones that seemed to mock Auckland's rhetoric of innovation and creative commercial endeavour. Climbing past accumulated boxes and stacks of surplus furniture, the tour made obvious how superfluous the

interior of this grand building had become - reminding us again that the historicising impulse is usually only about consolidating the appearance of continuity.

The Clock Tower may have grounded the trajectory of economic recuperation from the inaugurating economic crisis but its fleshing out fell to Raised by Wolves' second performance at Wellington's Film Archive where they presented the story of the Patterson brothers, Archie, Julian and Shemay. Modelled on an Oprah Winfrey-style book club, the performance mingled home-video footage with the historicising efforts of Dorothea Williams' book, *Since the Great Depression*, to tell the story of three brothers' upbringing during the Great Depression. Shunning a single story line in which the Depression moulds either a coercive parsimony or the unhindered pursuit of mass-consumption, what emerges is instead a fractious story in which differing values are folded together. Shemay, convinced of the need to help other people and serve his country to the best of his ability, becomes a prominent member of New Zealand's medical establishment. This may seem to embody the communitarian ethic of a people emerging from economic uncertainty, but in the eyes of his brothers, Shemay becomes a timid victim of an era of frugality, too crippled and uncertain to make be anything other than a big fish in a small pond. In contrast, Julian personifies the everyman rhetoric of the adventurer, who lies about his age in order to join the navy as an escape ticket from New Zealand's provincial culture of the 1950s. Nothing signals this more than Julian's perception of the mobilisation of the unemployed during the depression era, not as an outpouring of the disgruntled but rather as an

exciting event that stimulates his awareness and curiosity in the wider world. He confides:

I remember seeing a march which my mother told me was the unemployed. There was this endless, endless stream of people marching along the end of Lambton Quay into Parliament grounds... It was the cheerfulness of them too, that although there was something threatening and menacing to a small boy with a large crowd of males, there was a sort of cheerfulness about them, there were banners and they were singing. I can't remember what they were singing. It was the first demonstration I had ever witnessed and I associated it with the sort of pictures you saw of the French Revolution – this was something really big going on and terribly impressive.<sup>9</sup>

While this experience led Julian to a life of opportunism and fleet-footedness, eventually settling in Florida and managing the building of super-yachts, the Depression created a completely different type of spirit in Archie. Bolstered by the recuperation of the economy through state funding for suburban houses, Archie takes on the history that the University of Auckland's Clock Tower founds. Equating prosperity with material development, Archie concretises the historical continuity of settlement as a series of built entities, by erecting monumental architecture modelled on Dunedin's neo-classical nineteenth-century architecture. But this narrative also twists, as Archie becomes enamoured with the fluid movement of global finance. Inverting the Protestant ethic of his parents, Archie eventually settles in South Africa determined to make his money work for him through investment in the turbulent stock-market of the 1980s. As he relates in a letter to Shemay:

There is only one thing about money that interests me, and that is its power to separate those who have from those who don't have. Money, in truth, is nothing – numbers in a bank's computer system, with scarcely any relation to items of value held in the vault or basement of a bank. But in that way, citizenship is nothing – just a little book and a list of names. Marriage is nothing – just a certificate and three signatures. I am interested in playing "the money game" – I want to find out the rules and take home the winnings – at least once.<sup>10</sup>

The differences between the three brothers' lives add to a competitive fraternity that constantly spurs them on to actively shape their own personal and independent histories. Such a fractured fraternity disputes the legitimacy of a consequential history which seeks to shape episodic moments into linear stories that unfold in predictable ways. And yet still that phrase "since the Great Depression" continues to act as a bench-mark against which the cyclical upheavals of global finance are measured, a comparator of one financial emergency to another.

Raised by Wolves' final performance, which occurred at Christchurch's The Physics Room, adapted the illustrated slide talk to document a canoe voyage the duo took down Christchurch's main water tributary, the Avon River. Crucial to the founding of Christchurch, the Avon is today an often overlooked aspect of the city. Undertaken in the spirit of the public works carried out in response to the Great Depression at a time when the government looked to electrical dams as investments that would get the economy and its populace working again, Raised

by Wolves' navigation of the Avon considered the potential for the river to contribute to New Zealand's revitalisation in the wake of the 2008 credit crunch. Bearing down on the river's potential for damming, the talk quickly linked economic recuperation efforts to the leisure pursuits of the tourist economy that drives the Avon's identification as a major amenity of Christchurch. From one bend to another, the river became a locus for citing the city differently, envisioning its parks and sequestered spots as the potential site for recreational or utilitarian diversions – in this case, a dam-cum-swimming pool. In light of current local issues such as the public protest and bureaucratic mismanagement over the closure of Christchurch's Edgware Pool, the wider disinclination to include swimming lessons in public education through the nation at large and the deteriorating quality of Christchurch's water supply, Raised by Wolves' suggestion that an economic stimulus package could provide a new recreational facility for water sports takes on an entirely new sense of pragmatism. And yet, Christchurch's urban plan makes only superficial mention of water tributaries, unless as picturesque sites of urban renewal for café alfresco domains and the re-enchanted suburban developments of obsolescing factory-zones. Jostling in the mind as well is the man-made lake at Pegasus Town, a new ex-urban settlement on the fringes of Canterbury, which performs exactly the type of economic stimulus Nevertheless, hinted at. Raised by Wolves underlined their proposal to utilise the new potential of the Avon as an economic source, by enacting a sort of mock-swimming using a bowl of water to submerge their heads while stroking their arms through the air—proving that ingenuity can find a way no matter what—and then subsequently drinking the bowl, so as not to waste a drop.

Raised by Wolves' *Since the Great Depression* can be seen as a series of three micro-histories. The first began with that stereotyped version of a linear history in which a clock tower stood tall as the sentinel light guiding over an expanse of historical development. The second gave life to this history, portraying the conflicting histories of three brothers growing up in the years following the Great Depression as a diverse and contradictory range of experiences and motives that occur against specific economic backdrops. Their final performance concluded by focusing on the role of the state and its judicial and financial clout in determining the types of urban-environment we inherit and inhabit, but it also showed the ways in which we can, and do, live as often against the grain as with it.

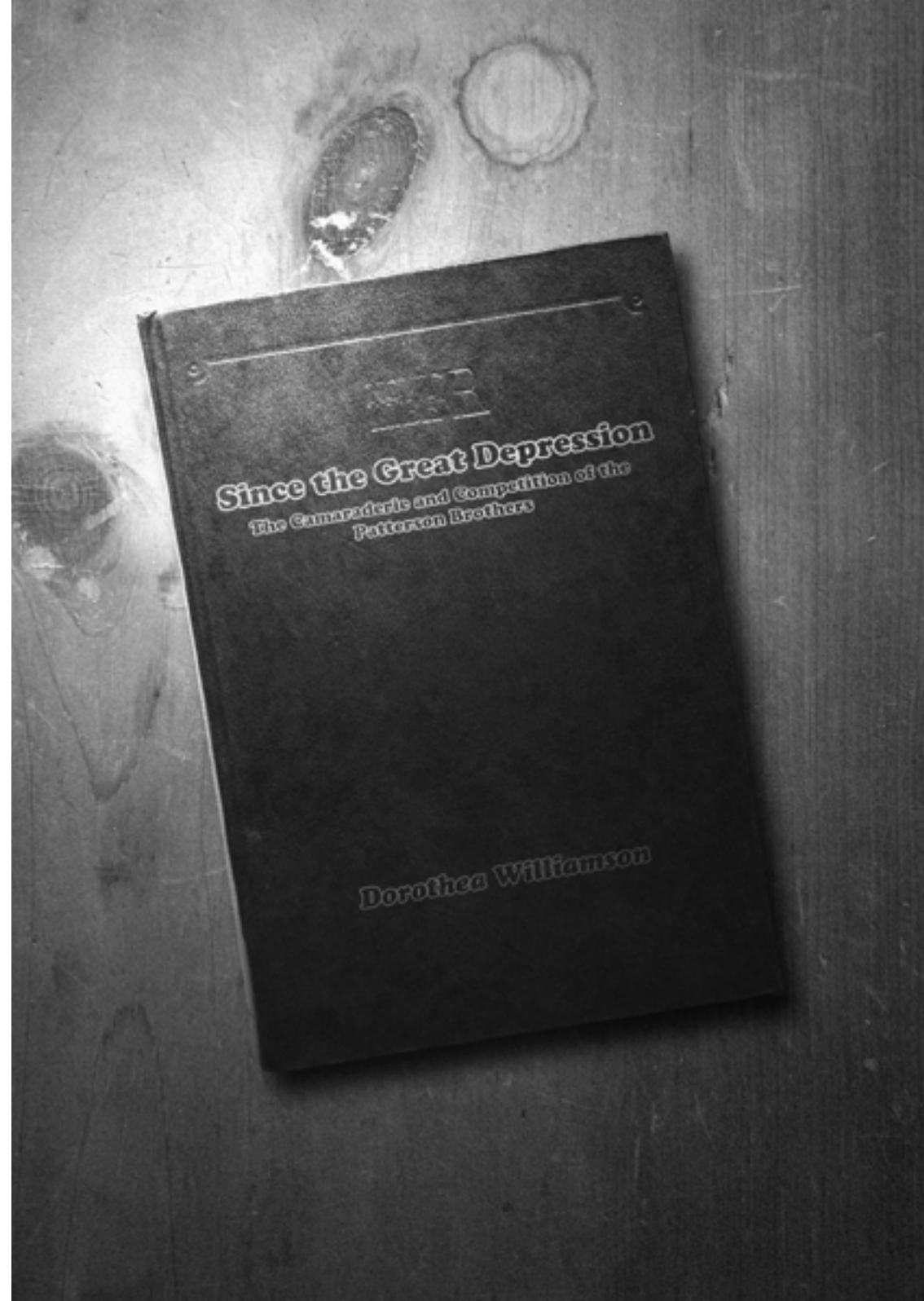
Together these histories compose a kind of crumpled choreography in which the flesh of history comes to life in all its tumultuous and circumventing routes. On one hand, this can be envisioned as a performative rite in which history itself becomes an assemblage of heterogeneous actors and events, in some sense indicative of the changes that have occurred within capitalism "since the Great Depression". But on the other hand, if the contemporary situation is seen as a mode of affective labour in which the "ethology of the senses" becomes the guiding force of life, then there's still provision to allow the contradictory and subjective modes which life is enriched by. In short, if you are what you consume, then the inhabitations and habits we occupy are more strategic than ever. Raised by Wolves' performances were acutely aware of this. After all, these were histories they chose to weave together, not in an attempt to elucidate a convincing line of progress as "history" but rather as a

shifting terrain in which history is composed intermittently, often weaving back and over itself as much as going forward. Couched in performance, in which action enlivens narratives, Raised by Wolves picked apart the traces of both material (the Clock Tower, the Avon River) and social (the Patterson brothers) forms in order to find a locus for the present moment. Garnered by kayaking down rivers, foraging through archives and climbing stairs, and subsequently presented in the form of home-video nights, illustrated slide-talks and guided tours, the three performances were themselves durable materialisations, events saturated in acts, in which the multiplicity of history is interleaved with the present era to form a dynamic and contradictory mesh-work.. Radically open, as much revisionist as future-oriented, these histories were precisely the types of speculative announcements we so desperately need. Just as Raised by Wolves were planning a water-washed Christchurch, New Zealand's prime minister was pledging millions to the formation of his own personal vision in which a tourist friendly cycleway would run the entire length of the South Island as the recuperative re-dress of our current economic pessimism. That's the sort of inhabited sense of history *Since the Great Depression* enacted, the possibilities of which, more than economic stimulus plans or the histrionics of comparison, enable us to continue and pursue our burrowed paths even in the face of economic uncertainty.

### **Harold Gieves**

Christchurch, March 2010

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1. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge London: Harvard University Press, 2000; 242.2.
  2. For instance, Margaret Marsh argues, 'the policies of the national government during the New Deal – its spending for highway building, its mortgage guarantees, and the greenbelt communities – institutionalised the process of suburbanization for middle-class, white Americans' (155).
  3. Scott Donaldson, *The Suburban Myth*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1969; p 74. Lizabeth Cohen has also made this point, suggesting that the purchase of new suburban homes 'motivated consumers to purchase things to put in them' propelling the 'crucial consumer durables market' in which 'billions of dollars were transacted in the sale of household appliances and furnishings'. See, *A Consumers' Republic, The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York: Vintage Books, 2004; p 123.
  4. This debate occurred in the context of American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow (July 1959) where a full scale replica of a suburban house plus accruements evinced the social-democratic "greater-good" of the mass-consumer model.
  5. Benchmarked of course by the upsurge in social organisations' re-evaluation of the patient, beneficiary, student or indigent as client.
  6. Hardt and Negri, p 276.
  7. The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009; p 29.
  8. Thrift points to a range of tactics through which the thematic construction of experiences adduces the performance-laden tropes of the contemporary consumer experience. Suggesting these form a 'sophisticated means of interpellation', Thrift – as shown how the contemporary consumer mantle is enacted through 'a politics of enhancement' motivated by the 'revitalisation of the body'. See, Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory, Space, Politics, Affect*, London, New York: Routledge, 2008; 70/73.
  9. Transcript of Raised By Wolves' performance, The New Zealand Film Archive Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngā Taonā Whitiāhua, Wednesday, 8 April, 2009.
  10. Ibid.



# List of Works

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|-------------|---|-------------|--|
| <b>2010</b> | <b>Chasing Losses</b><br>Half Juni, Rotterdam   | <b>2007</b> | <b>Terracotta Erotica</b><br>Howltearoa, Wellington  |
| <b>2009</b> | <b>Since the Great Depression</b><br>Window Gallery, Auckland<br>The New Zealand Film Archive, Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngā<br>Taonga Whitiāhua<br>The Physics Room, Christchurch | <b>2007</b> | <b>Strange Parade and the Gift of Hills</b><br>Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne |
| <b>2009</b> | <b>Tropical Fish Experience</b><br>Camp A Low Hum music festival, Wellington  | <b>2007</b> | <b>Mall Wall Walk Talk Task Bask Bark Park</b><br>ARTSPACE, Auckland                       |
| <b>2009</b> | <b>The Biter Bit</b><br>Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington<br>Newcall Gallery, Auckland (2008)  | <b>2007</b> | <b>Swimming Stories</b><br>Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington                            |
| <b>2008</b> | <b>Popping the Tent</b><br>Programme on New Artland, Television Spaceman.<br>Screened May 2008  | <b>2006</b> | <b>Cutlery Dance</b><br>San Francisco Bath House, Wellington                               |
| <b>2008</b> | <b>The Evolution of Camping</b><br>Camp A Low Hum music festival, Kapiti Coast  | <b>2006</b> | <b>Channel Chants</b><br>Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington                              |
| <b>2008</b> | <b>Jammy Canoe</b><br>Camp A Low Hum music festival, Kapiti Coast   | <b>2006</b> | <b>Core for a Cause</b><br>Happy Bar, Wellington   |
| <b>2007</b> | <b>I'm Breathless (video)</b><br>Square2, City Gallery Wellington<br>'Forced Fields', Conical Gallery, Melbourne  | <b>2006</b> | <b>History of an Unknown Civilisation</b><br>Private residence, Wellington                 |
|             |   | <b>2005</b> | <b>Piano for a Falling Man</b><br>Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington                     |

Raised by Wolves are:

**Amy Howden-Chapman**  
**Biddy Livesey**

**Amy Howden-Chapman** holds degrees in Art History and Creative Writing from Victoria University of Wellington. She is currently completing an MFA at California Institute of the Arts. Selected solo projects include *Banners for Queen Victoria*, Eight Veil Gallery, Los Angeles (2010); *I Understand there is Great Passion and Discontent Amongst Those of You Who Gather Here Today*, CalArts (2010); *I Used to Think The Only Lonely Place Was On the Moon*, NewCall Gallery, Auckland (2009); *The Flood My Chanting*, a One Day Sculpture Project commissioned by City Gallery Wellington (2009) and *The Story of Three Sentences*, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington (2004). Group shows include *E.P.A.(Environmental Performance Actions)*, Exit Art, New York (2008); *Earth Matters*, Auckland City Art Gallery (2008) and *The Water Show*, The Physics Room, Christchurch (2008).

**Biddy Livesey** has a BA in Te Reo Māori, and a BSc in Ecology and Biodiversity. She is currently studying towards a MSc in Urban Management and Development at the Institute of Housing and Urban Development, Erasmus University Rotterdam. She will undertake the CK12 residency at Hommes Gallery, Rotterdam in 2010/11.



a  
Raised  
by Wolves  
publication

