

Virginia Leonard New Zealand b. 1965

'A resolved work for Leonard is a piece that is suspended in the slim interstice between her will and the clay's refusal of it. A work might crack in the kiln, requiring a surgical procedure of resins, glazes and lustre, the application of which – as thick and as craggy as possible – provides another opportunity for her to approach the form's limits; the point at which it seems to be heaving under its own extravagance.'

- Connie Brown



Installation view of Virginia Leonard works **Unforgettable Character**, 2023; **How can you order Dinner without a Menu**, 2023 and **The Brain is Plastic**, 2023 at **Go | Between**, Cromwell Place, 2023

January 2024

Taste Contemporary

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Virginia Leonard Biography

The emotional, emotive and intensely personal ceramic works created by artist Virginia Leonard are powerful self-portraits that address her bodily scarring and experiences of chronic pain - the result of injuries obtained in a serious motorbike accident in London in 1986, which left her hospitalised for two years.

The maturity of these works belies the fact that Leonard only began working with clay in 2013. However, her ceramic practice has followed a successful painting career in her native New Zealand. Her painterly approach is evident in her current work in which she moves clay as she would have moved paint on a canvas, making the material gestural as she builds her constructions. Chronic pain has no biological value, modern medicine cannot reliably treat it; it lacks both language and voice. For Leonard the language of the clay is an attempt to rid her body of trauma and reduce her level of chronic pain. Clay is visceral, oozy and clumpy. It resembles bodily scarring but is also a precarious medium, which serves as a reminder of the fragility of her body.

Leonard's recent ceramic works evolve from a process of stacking, in which the artist piles random individual pieces on top of one another, a methodology she refers to as "building precarious towers resembling my human form". Virginia Leonard lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand.

Education

2001	Master of Fine Arts, Whitecliffe College of Arts, Auckland, New Zealand
1990	Bachelor of Arts, Whitecliffe College of Arts, Auckland, New Zealand

Selected Collections

Chatwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand
Suter Art Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū, Nelson, New Zealand
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
Musée Ariana, Geneva, Switzerland
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton, Australia
Rigo-Saitta Collection, Geneva, Switzerland
James Wallace Arts Trust, Auckland, New Zealand
Bill Gautreaux Collection, Kansas, USA
Ann Tennenbaum Collection, New York, USA
Girls Club Collection, Miami, USA

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Selected Exhibitions | Solo

2023	Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, US
2022	Hastings City Gallery, Hastings, New Zealand <i>No One Will See Me Walk to Deny Me Grace</i> , Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2021	Golden Legs and Other Bits, Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, US
2020	<i>Breath Holder</i> , Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2019	Gloria, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, Australia
2018	artgenève [presented by Taste Contemporary], Geneva, Switzerland Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, USA <i>Two Rooms</i> , Auckland, New Zealand Installation, Objectspace, Auckland, New Zealand Melbourne Art Fair, Solo Installation, Paul Nache, Melbourne, Australia Auckland Art Fair, Solo Installation, Paul Nache, Auckland, New Zealand
2017	Galerie Wolfsen, Denmark
2009	Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2008	Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2007	Palette Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2003	Barrows Gallery, Martinborough, New Zealand Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
2002	Oedipus Rex, Auckland, New Zealand
2001	Oedipus Rex, Auckland, New Zealand

Selected Exhibitions | Group

2024	artgenève, [represented by Taste Contemporary] Geneva, Switzerland
2023	Go Between, Two Person exhibition with Marcello Barceló [presented by Taste Contemporary], Cromwell Place, London, UK <i>Jugs</i> , Craft Victoria, Melbourne, Australia Design Miami/Podium Shanghai, Side Gallery, Shanghai, China Felix Art Fair, Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles, US <i>Friends & Family</i> , Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles, US
2022	Splash! [presented by Taste Contemporary], Basel, Switzerland Design Miami, Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, US Canberra Art Biennial, Contour 556, Canberra, Australia Design Miami/Paris, Side Gallery, Paris, France artgenève [presented by Taste Contemporary], Geneva, Switzerland Australian Ceramics Triennale, Alice Springs, Australia <i>Sabotaje estético</i> , Yusto/Giner, Madrid, Spain <i>Exposed Material</i> , Side Gallery, Barcelona, Spain <i>Sculpture on the Gulf</i> , Waiheke Island, New Zealand

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- 2021 Group Exhibition, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
Distorted Duets, [presented by Taste Contemporary], Usine Kugler, Geneva, Switzerland
MIART [presented by Taste Contemporary], Milan, Italy
Odd and Even – A Collection, Maison Louis Carré, [represented by Taste Contemporary], Paris, France
artgenève [represented by Taste Contemporary], Geneva, Switzerland
 Art Project, Megeve, France
 Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
- 2020 Paul Nache, Summer Exhibition, Gisborne, New Zealand
 Design Miami / Basel, Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, USA
 Sydney Contemporary, Gow Langsford Gallery & Paul Nache, Sydney, Australia
MIART online, [presented by Taste Contemporary]
 Auckland Art Fair, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
The Backbone of Things, Te Auaha, Wellington, New Zealand
Ladies Bits, Mindy Solomon Gallery, Miami, USA
The Cook and Her Driver, Gertrude Glasshouse, Melbourne, Australia (Residency Exhibition)
- 2019 *Hot Mess*, Bowerbank Ninow, Auckland, New Zealand
 The Dowse Art Museum, Dirty Ceramics, Wellington, New Zealand
 International Biennial of Contemporary Ceramics 2019, Geneva, Switzerland
 Sydney Contemporary, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, Australia
 Autumn Exhibition, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney, Australia
 Trans-Pacific Dialogue, NCECA, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
National Treasures, Contemporary Ceramics from Australia and New Zealand, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
Open to Art, Officine Saffi, Milan, Italy
Beau-laid [presented by Rear Window], London, UK
Five Cubed [presented by Taste Contemporary], Usine Kugler, Geneva, Switzerland
MIART two person show [represented by Taste Contemporary], Milan, Italy
artgenève [represented by Taste Contemporary], Geneva, Switzerland
 NCECA, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
- 2018 MIART, Erastudio Apartment Gallery, Milan, Italy
 Collective Design Fair, Mindy Solomon Gallery, New York, USA
 Exodus, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2017 Pulse Art Fair, [represented by Mindy Solomon Gallery], Miami Beach, US
 Installation Contemporary, Sydney Contemporary, Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia
 Wallace Art Awards Travelling Show [finalist], Auckland, New Zealand
 Farvestralende Keramik, Guldagergaard, Denmark
 40, Galerie Wolfsen, Denmark
Village huha, Paul Nache, Gisborne, New Zealand

- 2016 *HANDBUILT made in clay*, Two Rooms, Auckland, New Zealand
 Christmas Time at Middlemore, Corbans Estate Arts Centre, Auckland, New Zealand
 Wallace Art Awards Travelling Show [finalist], Auckland, New Zealand
Spring 1883, Paul Nache, The Hotel Windsor, Melbourne, Australia
MUD, Galerie Wolfsen, Denmark
Curiosity: 5 Artists / 5 Artworks / 5 Tools, Wallace Gallery, Morrinsville, New Zealand
 Graffiti Lounge, Paul Nache, Gisborne, New Zealand
- 2015 Wallace Art Awards Travelling Show [finalist], Auckland, New Zealand
 The Assemblage Show, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
 Potters & Painters, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2014 *The Effects of Crack*, Objectspace, Auckland, New Zealand
 Wallace Art Awards Travelling Show [finalist], Auckland, New Zealand
Foursome, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
The Flower Show, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2013 *The Small Show*, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
The Local Show, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
 Wallace Art Awards Travelling Show [finalist], Auckland, New Zealand
Virginia Leonard & Louise McRae, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
 The Landscape Show, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
 The January Group Show, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2012 The Opening Show, The Vivian, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2011 Matakana Valley Road Group Show, Finline Gallery, Matakana, New Zealand
 The Mahurangi Group Show, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2010 The Mahurangi Group Show, Matakana, New Zealand
 Art in the Woolshed Group Show, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2009 Auckland Art Fair, New Zealand
 Matakana Valley Road Group Show, Fine Line Gallery, Matakana, New Zealand
- 2007 Group exhibition Oedipus Rex, Auckland, New Zealand
- 2003 Graduate Masters Students exhibition, Randolph Street Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
- 2002 Group exhibition Barrows Gallery, Martinborough, New Zealand
 Group exhibition, Oedipus Rex Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand
- 2001 Group exhibition Barrows Gallery, Martinborough, New Zealand
- 2000 Post-graduation exhibition, Auckland, New Zealand

Awards

- 2021 Winner, Main Prize, Officine Saffi Awards, Milan, Italy
- 2020 First Runner-Up, Wallace Art Awards, Auckland, New Zealand

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2019	Winner, Artist-in-Residence Prize, Finland, Open to Art Ceramic Award, Officine Saffi, Milan.
2018	Finalist, Wallace Art Awards, Auckland, New Zealand
2017	Finalist, Portage Ceramic Awards, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland
2016	Finalist, Wallace Art Awards, Auckland, New Zealand, Travelling Show Finalist, Molly Morpeth Canaday 3D Award, Te Kōputu a te whanga a Toi - Whakatane Library and Exhibition Centre, Whakatane, New Zealand Finalist, Waiheke Small Sculpture Prize, Waiheke Art Gallery, Waiheke, New Zealand
2015	Merit Award Portage Ceramic Awards, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand Finalist, National Contemporary Art Award, Waikato Museum, Hamilton, New Zealand Finalist, Waiheke Small Sculpture Prize, Waiheke Art Gallery, Waiheke, New Zealand
2014	Finalist, Molly Morpeth Canaday 3D Award, Te Kōputu a te whanga a Toi - Whakatane Library and Exhibition Centre, Whakatane, New Zealand Finalist, National Contemporary Art Award, Waikato Museum, Hamilton, New Zealand Finalist, Waiheke Small Sculpture Prize, Waiheke Art Gallery, Waiheke, New Zealand
2013	Finalist, Waikato Painting and Printmaking Art Award, Hamilton, New Zealand
2012	Finalist, Waikato Painting and Printmaking Art Award, Hamilton, New Zealand Winner Molly Morpeth Canady Art Award, Whakatane, New Zealand
2011	Winner, Walker and Hall Waiheke Art Award, Waiheke Art Gallery, Waiheke, New Zealand Finalist, Molly Morpeth Art Award, Whakatane, New Zealand
2010	Finalist, Molly Morpeth Art Award, Whakatane, New Zealand
2009	Finalist, Waiheke Art Awards, Waiheke Art Gallery, Waiheke, New Zealand
2008	Finalist, Waiheke Art Awards, Waiheke Art Gallery, Waiheke, New Zealand
2007	Waiheke Art Awards - Zinni Douglas Merit Award, Waiheke Art Gallery, New Zealand Finalist, Norsewear Art Awards, Hawkes Bay, New Zealand
2003	Finalist, Wallace Art Awards, Auckland, New Zealand

Residency

2019	Glass House/Stone House, Chenaud, France
2017	Guldagergaard - International Ceramic Research Centre, Denmark

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Publications

Contemporary Hum [online]

The Journal of Australian Ceramics

Art Link

Art Collector

Art Zone

100 Sculptures of Tomorrow, Thames & Hudson

Ceramics Art + Perception #113

Ceramics New Zealand, Volume 1 issue 2, Essay by Kim Paton

The Journal of Australian Ceramics, Vol 57 No1, Essay by Anna Briers

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