

# RED

By John Logan

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the New Zealand premiere of John Logan's RED, the fourth play in our 2011 Territories of the Heart season. The subject of this Tony Award-winning play is Mark Rothko – one of the most important painters of post World War II modernism. In fact one of Rothko's works still holds the record for the highest priced sale at auction of any post World War II painter — \$US72 million.

Mark Rothko was one of a group of artists, loosely labelled Abstract Expressionists. Since the late nineteenth century Paris had been the centre of the Art World, which had been dominated by European currents. But Rothko and his colleagues (who included Willem De Kooning and Jackson Pollock) put paid to that; they were the first American artists to receive truly international recognition.

By all accounts Rothko was a difficult man: intense and intensely private, fiercely intellectual, serious and totally dedicated to his work. He said, "I am interested only in expressing basic human emotions – tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on. And the fact that people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I can communicate those basic human emotions. The people who weep before my paintings are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them".

Not the easiest character to recreate on stage then. But playing difficult artists is not strange territory to Michael Hurst, one of our finest actors; he's already played Charles Goldie and Toulouse Lautrec. Joining Michael onstage in his Auckland Theatre Company debut is Elliot Christensen-Yule – who brings a great

sensitivity and his own unique style the role of Ken. My huge thanks to them both.

Big thanks too to our stellar creative team: director Oliver Driver, set and costume designer John Parker, lighting designer Brad Gledhill (who so loved the play when he saw it on Broadway, he begged me to let him light it for us!); sound designer Claire Cowan and Paul Pachter for his Rothko reproductions.

So we invite you into Rothko's studio – and into one of the great minds and talents of 20th century modernism.

Enjoy!

*Colin*

Colin McColl

# RED

By John Logan

## CAST

Rothko – Michael Hurst Ken – Elliot Christensen-Yule

## CREATIVE

Director – Oliver Driver Set & Costume Design – John Parker

Lighting Design – Brad Gledhill Sound Design – Claire Cowan

Painting Coach and Rothko Reproductions – Paul Pachter

## PRODUCTION

Production Manager – Mark Gosling Technical Manager – Paul Nicoll

Senior Stage Manager – Fern Christie Stage Manager – Gabrielle Rhodes

Technical Operator – Rochelle Houghton Properties Master – Diana Kovacs

Wardrobe Supervisor – Sophie Ham Set Construction – 2 Construct

Rehearsal Photography – Amber McWilliams ASB Community Trust Emerging Artist

Apprentice – Jessika Verryt

RED premiered at the Donmar Warehouse Theatre, London (3 December 2009). Michael Grandage, Artistic Director  
Original Broadway Production Produced by Arielle Tepper Madover, Stephanie P. McClelland, Matthew Byam Shaw,  
Neal Street Productions, Fox Theatricals, Ruth Hendel/Barbara Whitman, Philip Hagemann/  
Murray Rosenthal and The Donmar Warehouse.

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR HELP WITH THIS PRODUCTION:  
Linda Tyler, Amber Olden, Richard Thomson, Robin Richmond, Corinna Lotz, A World To Win, Richard Jeffery, Cole Jenkins,  
International Art Centre, Mark Castle at the French Art Shop, Regina McMenamin at The Four Seasons.

RED is the fourth Auckland Theatre Company production for 2011 and opened on June 2nd.  
RED is approximately 90 minutes long. Please remember to switch off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*"We have Art that we may not perish from Truth" – Goya.*

I have worked with Michael Hurst many times throughout my career and there was nobody else in my mind who could capture Rothko. My thanks to him for allowing me to bully him into taking on this role and for working so hard with me to create the play you will see tonight. I saw many young actors while searching for Ken but Elliot stood out from his very first audition; there was something eminently watchable about him and luckily he is as hard and fast a worker as both Michael and I, which is no mean feat I can assure you. A play stands or falls on its casting and I could not be happier with my wonderful little cast.

Working with John Parker for the first time as a director has been an absolute treat. We wanted to take you inside Rothko's studio, to recreate

it as closely as we could, and John has managed to make you feel as if you really are transported back to the 50s, hiding in Rothko's studio, eavesdropping on history.

You can't do a play about Rothko without seeing his work up on stage and I thank God for New Zealand artist Paul Pachter, who not only recreated some of Rothko's works for us but taught us all about painting and painters. This production would not be what it is if he had not turned our rehearsal rooms into an actual painter's studio.

Rothko loved music and the play calls for a sound design that not only stays true to the music he loved but also underscores the story unfolding onstage.

Claire Cowan has created a soundtrack Rothko would be proud of.

Thanks also to my Stage Manager Gabrielle; this is her show now and I know it is in the safest of hands.

Finally, my heart felt thanks to Colin McColl for letting me direct this wonderful production. It has been an awfully long time since I worked for Auckland Theatre Company but it's good to be back.

**Oliver Driver**  
Director

# SYNOPSIS

1950s New York. In the dimly-lit sanctum of the artist's studio, abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko drinks, smokes and works. His project: a series of enormous red murals to grace the walls of a new restaurant in the Seagram Building.

Into this carefully controlled environment comes Rothko's new assistant, Ken, bringing with him Chinese takeaways, his own aspirations, and a new perspective on the changing outside world. Layer by layer the foundations of the paintings – and the relationship – are laid. Rothko's rants and revelations are punctuated and proved by Ken's insights. The past and future are brought together in the deepening hues that demonstrate the meaning of tragedy for both men.

As Rothko's contemplations on canvas draw near completion, Ken begins to challenge the painter's assumptions about his assistant and his art. Reading between the rough lines of colour, much is revealed about the messy art of living.

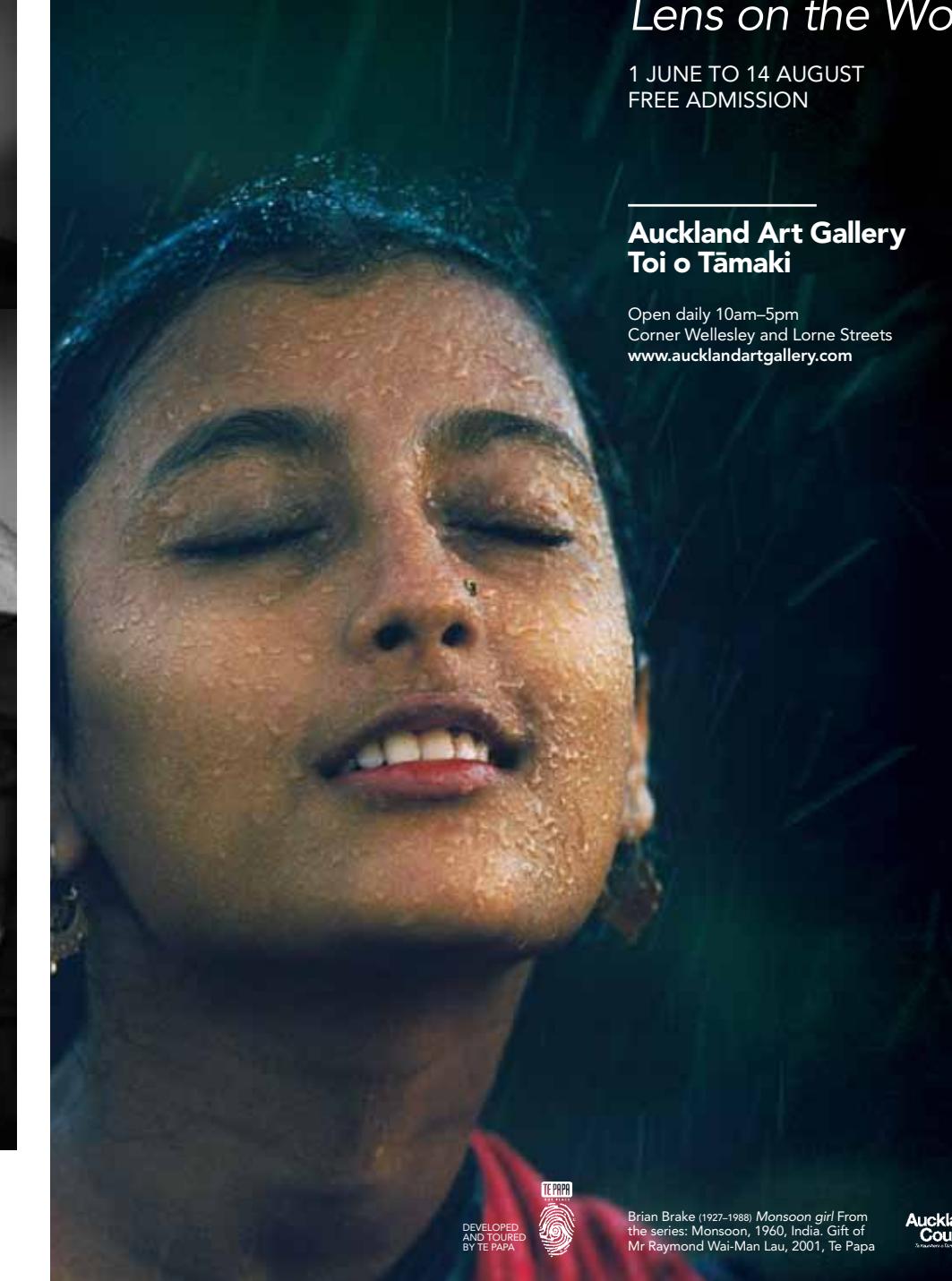


## Brian Brake *Lens on the World*

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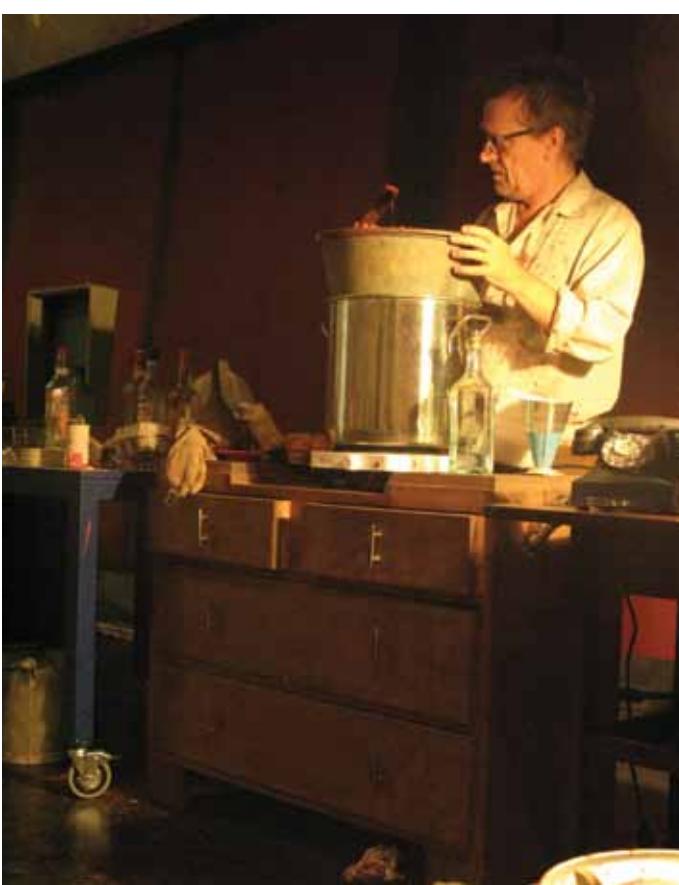
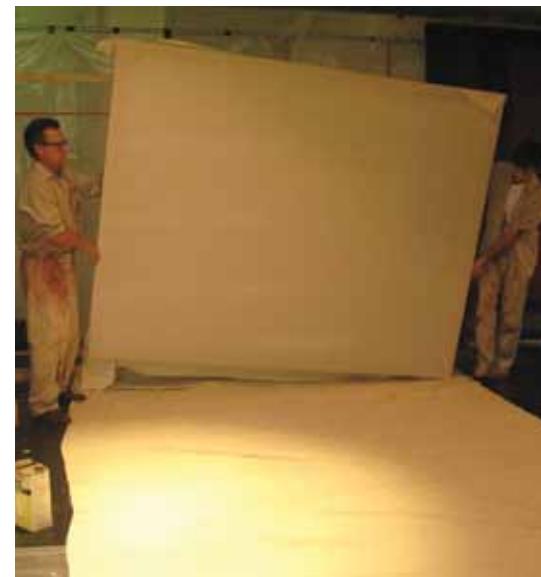


DEVELOPED  
AND TOURED  
BY TE PAPA

Brian Brake (1927–1988) *Monsoon girl* From the series: *Monsoon*, 1960, India. Gift of Mr Raymond Wai-Man Lau, 2001, Te Papa

Auckland  
Council

# REHEARSALS



# MARK ROTHKO (1903–1970)

By Linda Tyler

The name Mark Rothko is synonymous with Abstract Expressionism, an American art movement of the mid twentieth century, which deftly shifted the centre of artistic influence from Paris to New York, just in time for the Cold War.

Both in America and abroad, Rothko was the most widely acclaimed and exhibited artist of the New York School. Soaking his huge vertical format canvases with thinned oil paint applied in parallel rectangular blocks with softened edges – bright oranges, yellows, reds and magenta – he created whole environments of colour. Painting on a huge scale, he overwhelmed his viewers, who were used to physically controlling their encounters with art by walking up to something encased in a

frame, inspecting it and then moving away. Rothko's paintings were nearly three metres in height and over two metres wide, engendering in the viewer a sense of being suspended in space and immersed in the experience of the colour. "I paint large pictures because I want to create a state of intimacy. A large picture is an immediate transaction: it takes you into it."

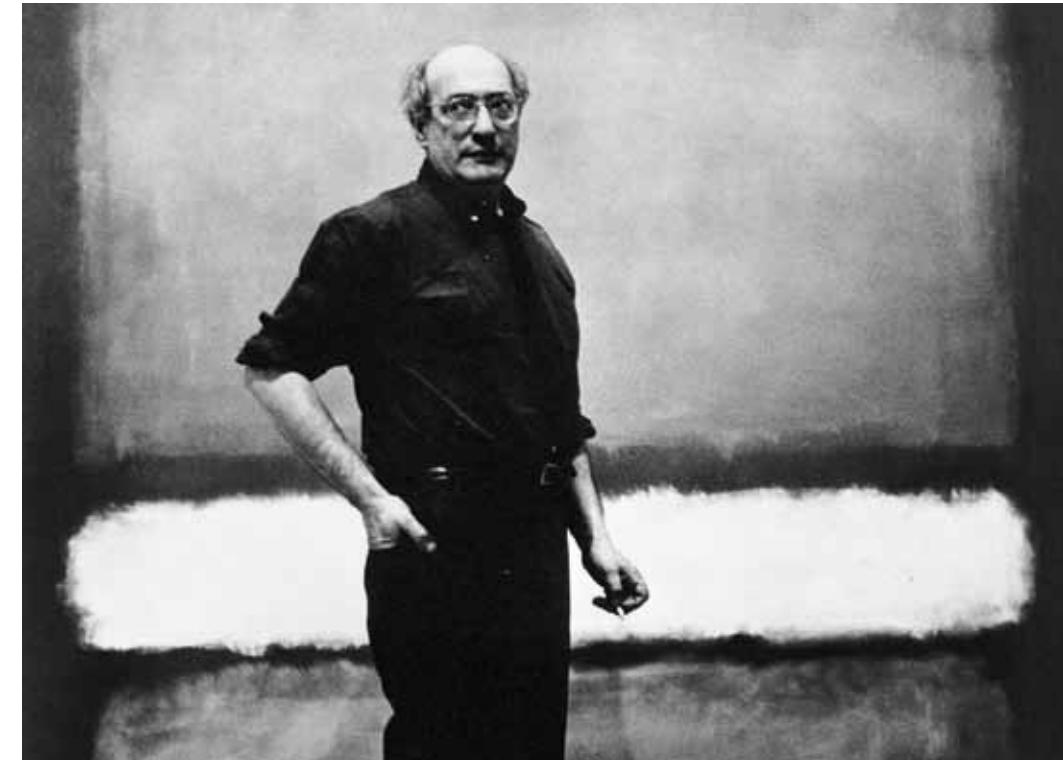
Rothko endured financial hardship for most of his life. He was the youngest of four children born in 1903 to Jakob Rothkovich, a pharmacist, and his wife Anna. As eight year old Marcus Rothkowitz, he emigrated from Dvinsk in Russia to Portland, Oregon in 1913. Seven months later his father died suddenly, and the ensuing poverty meant that Rothko had to get a newspaper delivery round to pay his school fees. An outstanding student, he graduated high school aged seventeen, and won a scholarship to Yale, which was offered as a loan rather than a grant because of anti-Semitism.

Undeterred, he paid his way through college, but dropped out in 1923 after only two years and found work in the garment district in New York as a pattern cutter. Painting classes at the Art Students'

League qualified him to become the art teacher at the Central Academy in Brooklyn, a parochial school attached to a synagogue in 1929. His teaching career was to sustain him for the next thirty years.

Rothko's first solo exhibition at the aptly-named Opportunity Gallery in New York was also in 1929. Two more shows followed in the early years of the Great Depression – one in New York and the other in Portland, Oregon and these qualified him for work with the Federal Art Project. While his marriage to jeweller Edith Sacher around this time was not a success, his weekly salary of \$23.50 in the easel-painting division of the FPA sustained the couple financially.

Work at the FPA brought him into contact with Adolph Gottlieb, with whom he founded "The Ten", a group of Expressionist artists who exhibited regularly together in New York, and even once in Paris. His painting shifted from dreamy Surrealist landscape themes to images of idealised Greek gods and goddesses and archaic symbols. He explained this change in subject matter thus: "Greek myths are the eternal symbols to which we must fall back to express basic psychological ideas.



They are the symbols of man's primitive fears and motivations, no matter which land or what time... And modern psychology finds them persisting still in our dreams, our vernacular, and our art, for all the changes in outward conditions of our life." In 1938 he received his citizenship papers and two years later officially shortened his name to Rothko. Soon after he divorced Edith and married Mary Alice (Mell) Beistle, a children's book illustrator ten years his junior.

At the end of WW2, Peggy Guggenheim presented Rothko's recent work in a solo show at her 'Art of This Century Gallery'. When that gallery closed, Betty Parsons became his New York dealer while he lived in California and

taught at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. His daughter Kate, was born in 1950 and the family moved back to New York, where he was mocked by the bohemian painters who inhabited the lofts of Greenwich Village. Despite this, his friendship with Alfred Barr, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, paid off hugely when Barr persuaded the architect Philip Johnson to donate a Rothko painting to MOMA. But the critical endorsement of his work didn't leverage into sales, and financial pressures led him to return to full-time teaching. After a stint at Tulane University in New Orleans, the Rothko's returned permanently to New York where a son, Christopher, was born in 1963.

Rothko was caustic in his criticism of public art institutions. He had been included in the Whitney Annual, an important public gallery survey in 1945, but had little respect for the Whitney curators. He refused to be in the 1947 Annual, saying that he had no wish to be shown "next to mediocrity". In 1952 he vetoed the sale of two paintings to the Whitney, which he referred to privately as "a junkshop". That year, he also fell out with Dorothy Miller, curator of Fifteen Americans, a group exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art by sending her many more paintings than those she had chosen, and interfering with the installation of the works. His relationships were better



*Seagram Murals, Rothko Room — Seven Murals, 1958*  
Interior Chiba-Ken, Japan, Kawamura Memorial Museum of Art

with West Coast public art museums: the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Santa Barbara Museum had shown his works from the late 1940s which were based on images of the New York subway — paintings he later referred to as "images from a tableau vivant of human incommunicability".

By 1947 the Surrealistic seascapes, subway scenes and Greek myths disappeared and Rothko launched what would become known as his mature style: abstractions with floating blocks of pure colour which lifted viewers away from the sights and sounds of modern life into a meditative space. The thinly painted, radiant surfaces

were reminiscent of the watercolours which he had painted in the 1930s, and he described this classic style as "the simple expression of complex thought". While his reputation and his earning power grew steadily throughout the 1950s, Rothko's competitiveness soured old friendships and he earned a reputation as self-centred, temperamental and ambitious. Barnett Newman was incensed when Rothko claimed that he had taught him how to paint, and Jackson Pollock was offended by Rothko's dismissal of Blue Poles during a private studio visit.

Selection as the American representative at the Venice

Biennale with Mark Tobey in 1958 fed his ambition, and three years later a full-scale retrospective of Rothko's work was curated at the Museum of Modern Art. Three challenging commissions to paint murals followed. In 1958, his forty red and brown paintings in three series for the Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson-designed Seagram Building on Park Avenue in New York were conceived, not as individual works, but as a coordinated installation complementary to the vertical architectural features of the interior. He later claimed that his aim with the Seagram murals was to paint "something that will ruin the appetite of every son-of-a-bitch who ever eats

in that room" – the luxury Four Seasons restaurant. In the end, he decided to return Seagram's money and keep the paintings himself on the grounds that the setting was too pretentious for his work. Subsequent commissions for murals from Harvard University and the St Thomas chapel in Houston meant that he no longer had financial worries. His new threat was the beginnings of Pop Art, whose practitioners he declared were "charlatans and opportunists...who are out to murder us". In the spring of 1968 he was diagnosed with an aortic aneurysm, which exacerbated his already morbid depression and made him impotent. He began

drinking heavily and taking both barbiturates and anti-depressants. Friends of the Rothko's recall the drunken brawling that preceded his desertion of his wife on New Year's Day in 1969. The creation of his seemingly tranquil paintings had come at huge cost.

The unhappy circumstances of the last year of his life resulted in radical departures in Rothko's art. His doctor had told him not to work on any surface larger than a yard in height, so he turned to work on paper, producing a series of dazzling acrylics. Dividing the picture into two unequal rectangular areas of uniformly luminous colour, he produced a separate series of small

black and grey canvases with stark white borders. Yet even these successes could not appease his dissatisfaction with life. Edward Lucie-Smith described his death, which was achieved by slashing the veins inside the crooks of his own arms on 25 February 1970, as "a messy end to an intolerably miserable existence".



Research Partner with  
Auckland Theatre Company

Linda Tyler is the Director at the Centre for New Zealand Art Research and Discovery.

# CAST



## MICHAEL HURST

In a career spanning more than three decades, Michael has become one of New Zealand's leading actors and directors. His theatre credits include AMADEUS, Riff-Raff in THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW and Widow Twankey in his own version of ALADDIN. His musical roles include Koko in THE MIKADO, Judge Turpin in SWEENEY TODD, Macheath and Tiger Brown in THE THREEPENNY OPERA, King Herod in JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR and the Emcee in three productions of CABARET.

Michael is also renowned for his interpretations of Shakespeare, including HAMLET, MACBETH, RICHARD III, Touchstone in AS YOU LIKE IT and The Fool in KING LEAR. In 1993 Michael was cast in the role of Iolaus and co-starred in the US television series HERCULES — THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS, which ran for eight years and played to a world-wide audience.

Directing credits include CABARET, SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER, HAMLET, MACBETH, KING LEAR, TWELFTH NIGHT, THE THREEPENNY OPERA, LOOT and HAPPY DAYS. He has also directed many episodes of the US television series HERCULES — THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS, XENA — WARRIOR PRINCESS, SPARTACUS — BLOOD AND SAND and SPARTACUS — GODS OF THE ARENA as well as the NZ feature film JUBILEE.

Michael was a founding member of Auckland's Watershed Theatre in 1990, and is now a patron of both Q Theatre and TAPAC (the Auckland Performing Arts Centre), a Trustee of the AUSA Outdoor Shakespeare Trust, a Trustee and member of the Advisory Council of The Actors' Program, a New Zealand Arts Laureate and an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM). He is a proud member of the NZ Actors Equity.



## ELLIOT CHRISTENSEN-YULE

Since achieving New Zealand's top Scholarship award for Drama in 2006, Elliot has gone on to build a respectable resumé on both stage and screen. As Posner for the Peach Theatre Company production of THE HISTORY BOYS in 2009, he was fortunate to work with, and learn from, some of New Zealand's most talented performers including George Henare, Annie Whittle and Bruce Phillips.

A member of The Outfit Theatre Company, Elliott has performed twice in their production of LITTLE WHITE MEN: for the Auckland Fringe Festival in 2009, and again for The Basement Theatre in 2010.

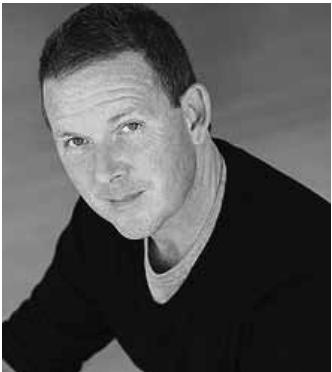
On screen, Elliot has played a diverse range of characters including Young Wolf in OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE, Jed in THIS IS NOT MY LIFE, and Tourette's syndrome patient Angus Phelps in SHORTLAND STREET, alongside roles in both

GO GIRLS and THE INSATIABLE MOON.

While a student at Northcote College, Elliot played The Fool in KING LEAR, Vladimir in WAITING FOR GODOT, and York in HENRY VI, for which he received the Dymocks Award for Special Individual Performance at the 2006 National Sheila Winn Shakespeare Festival.

This is Elliot's first production with Auckland Theatre Company, and he is both humbled and amazed by the opportunity to work with such titans as Oliver Driver and Michael Hurst.

# CREATIVE TEAM



## JOHN LOGAN PLAYWRIGHT

John Logan is an American screenwriter, playwright and film producer. His play *RED* about artist Mark Rothko, first produced by the Donmar Warehouse, transferred to Broadway, where it received six Tony Awards in 2010 including Best Play. Logan wrote *ANY GIVEN SUNDAY* and the television movie *RKO 281*, before gaining an Academy Award nomination for co-writing the Best Picture-winner, *GLADIATOR*, in 2000. He gained another nomination for writing 2004's *THE AVIATOR*. Other notable films written by Logan include *STAR TREK: NEMESIS*, *THE TIME MACHINE*, *THE LAST SAMURAI*, and Tim Burton—helmed musical, *SWEENEY TODD: THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET*. Other works include the screenplay adaptation of the vampire novel, *THE PASSAGE* and HBO's series pilot, *THE MIRACULOUS YEAR*.



## OLIVER DRIVER DIRECTOR

Oliver started out in improv and film before being cast in the TV2 drama *CITY LIFE*. His work on the show won him the award for best actor at the NZ Film and TV Awards and a core cast role in *SHORTLAND STREET*. Oliver began training as a theatre director while still working on *SHORTLAND STREET* and at the end of his two year contract went to work full time at Auckland Theatre Company.

While Associate Director and then Acting Artistic Director of the ATC, Oliver directed many productions including *THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES*, *THE BLUE ROOM* and *LADIES NIGHT* and starred in *SERIAL KILLERS*, *ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD*, *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW* and *CALIGULA*.

In his role as Associate Director he established the Audience Development programmes '2econd Unit', the 'Literary Unit', the 'Playreading Series', the 'Industry Training Programme', the 'Education Unit' and the 'ATC Ambassador Programme'. Oliver left ATC in 2004 to host

the newly created current affairs arts show *FRONTSEAT* at TVNZ.

As host of *FRONTSEAT* for over eighty episodes he interviewed many of New Zealand's leading artists and politicians and filed stories from around the country and overseas. Oliver then went on to run the independent music channel ALT TV before becoming the host of *Sunrise* for TV3.

Throughout this time he continued to both direct and star in theatre including such shows as *THE GOAT*, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, *ASSASSINS*, *THOM PAIN*, *BACK-STORY*, *BETRAYAL*, *RABBIT*, *GLIDE TIME*, *BASH*, *REUBEN GUTHRIE*, *BASED ON AUCKLAND* and *BARE*.

Oliver has appeared in numerous films including *SNAKESKIN*, *BLACK SHEEP* and *UNDER THE MOUNTAIN*. He has a regular radio show on Newstalk ZB and will next be directing *ONLY CHILD* for Silo Theatre.



## JOHN PARKER SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

John is an award winning set designer and is as well—

respected in the world of ceramics as he is in set design. He has a long history of designing for Auckland Theatre Company.

His set designs include *MARY STUART*, *STEPPING OUT*, *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*, *THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP*, *THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE*, *END OF THE RAINBOW*, *SWEET CHARITY*, *DOUBT*, *MUM'S CHOIR*, *TAKING OFF*, *EQUUS*, *CALIGULA*, *THE BACH*, *MIDDLE AGE SPREAD*, *THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW*, *NOISES OFF*, *WAITING FOR GODOT*, *ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD* and *INTO THE WOODS*.

Other works include *THE SCENE*, *CREDITORS*, *IL TROVATORE*, *TRUE WEST*, *THE THREEPENNY OPERA*, *CHESS*, *ROMEO AND JULIET*, *TITUS ANDRONICUS*, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, *F.I.L.T.H.*, *ASSASSINS*, *WAIORA*, *CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF*, *DECADENCE*, *ON THE RAZZLE*, *CHICAGO*, *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO*, *BARBER OF SEVILLE*, *COSI FAN TUTTE*, *EVITA* and *TRASH TO FASHION*.

John has also designed for The Louis Vuitton Ball and The America's Cup Ball, Bendon's Next To Nothing, Bellsouth Pharaohs, Precious Legacy and Peru: Gold and Sacrifice for the Auckland Museum. He is also the recipient of a Waitakere City Millennium Medal for services to the Community.



## BRAD GLEDHILL LIGHTING DESIGNER

*"Rothko liked to have control of the environment his painting's existed in, and this included light, so he boarded up all the windows in his studio as to remove any natural light to create a place to paint. This is what I have based my design upon. Using practical lamps as a starting point, I have built images around darkness letting the work eb and flow. There is a lot of word play around light and what it meant to Rothko, I have taken this as a language to start a conversation with space creating pictures within pictures."*

Brad designs and creates lighting and video imagery for theatre and events with the likes of Auckland Theatre Company, Nightsong Productions and Theatre Stampede, Silo Theatre, TAPAC, Tempo and Spotlight Systems. He also designs and lectures on the Performance Technology Programme for UNITEC Department of Performing and Screen Arts.

ATC production designs include *WELL HUNG*, *STEPPING OUT*,



## CLAIRE COWAN SOUND DESIGNER

*"The challenge in creating the perfect musical landscape for RED was in understanding Rothko's character at any given moment he decides to put a record on, or take one off. It becomes apparent in the play that classical music is both a comfort and an inspiration for Rothko. Rothko was a Mozart and Schubert fan, I've chosen to include some of his favourites and expand on that with music featuring the most soulful of melodies and instruments, focusing on strings and sparser piano works."*

Claire has a classical background which informs her work as a composer for film, theatre and television. Her compositions have been performed throughout New Zealand, Japan, UK, USA and Australia. She also performs as a cellist in various ensembles including the alt-country band Toad, and the Blackbird Ensemble (which she is the director).

THE WIFE WHO SPOKE JAPANESE IN HER SLEEP, THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS, YOUNG & HUNGRY FESTIVAL 09, WHO NEEDS SLEEP ANYWAY?, THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES, DESIGN FOR LIVING, MY NAME IS GARY COOPER, THE TUTOR, THE SHAPE OF THINGS, THE TALENTED MR RIPLEY, PLAY 2 and PLAY 2.03.

Other designs include '360' for the Wellington International Arts Festival, THE LOVER, SEXY RECESSION CABARET (TAPAC), PRIME CUTS 09 (Tempo), THE CUT (Silo), HEAD (AK07 + Wellington Season), ALADDIN (AK03), MEASURE FOR MEASURE (Unitec), MINIATURES (Malia Johnston), LASHINGS OF WHIPPED CREAM, KNOCK KNOCK TURN (Chris Jannides) and CORAM BOY (Unitec).

His works for the theatre/dance genre included creating work for UNITEC with Shona McCullough, Michael Parmenter, Michael Hurst, Leo Gene Peters, Cathy Downes, Malia Johnston, Simon Ellis, Daniel Belton, Raewyn Hill, Katie Burton and Chris Jannides.

Recent credits include WAITANGI – WHAT REALLY HAPPENED (TV1), PAPER SKY and CARNIVAL OF SOULS (Auckland Festival), MOONFISHING (Prod. Heather Henson, NY), EGO (HERE Arts Centre, NY) and THE KEEPERS (Thread Theatre Co.).

International Art Centre,  
Parnell, Auckland

# "ART'S BUYING-AND-SELLING MARKET, IS INDEED BIG BUSINESS"

By Richard Thomson

Having spent over a quarter of a century involved in the New Zealand and international art market, I have witnessed many changes. In the early 80s, the International Art Centre held three fine art auctions a year. In 2010 we held eight.

As a fine art auctioneer, recent highlights include an oil painting by Charles Frederick Goldie (1870-1947), titled 'Forty Winks' a portrait of Rutene te Uamairangi, a Kingite Warrior of Taupo. On the night of the auction no less than six parties had registered serious interest in the painting. Over 15 tense minutes I took some 70 bids resulting in a final sale price of \$573,000, the highest price paid for a single painting at a New Zealand auction in the



last 16 years. Last month we offered Les Deux Amies (The Two Friends), a modern masterpiece, by Dame Louise Henderson (1902-1994). This work received significant interest and finally sold for \$102,000, double the previous auction record for the artist.

In 2010 the New Zealand art market turned over approximately \$20 million at auction. On a global scale this seems inconsequential when compared with the New York art market, which alone turned over \$1.3 billion in the same period. But while the New Zealand art market is relatively small, it represents an important part of our national identity and heritage. On a personal level, artworks challenge us, represent a connection to our past and enhance our quality of life.

In New Zealand the art market is comprised of both primary and secondary markets. In the primary market, an artist either sells directly to the public or has an arrangement with a dealer (referred to as the "enemy" by Rothko in RED). Dealers

often represent a stable of contemporary artists. They maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the artist, exhibiting their works internationally at art fairs, working with museums and managing the artist's long term career. Dealers tread a difficult path supporting the artist's creative integrity while encouraging them to produce commercially viable work. This dichotomy is examined by John Logan within the text of RED.

Once ownership of the work has shifted from the artist to the buyer, the most common avenue for resale is a specialist art auction house that operates in the secondary art market. Art auctioneers act as a conduit between vendors and buyers.

Vendors sell for a variety of reasons, including tiring of an art work, cashing up, refocusing their collections or disposing of an unwanted inherited work. It is impossible to generalise about a typical profile of these vendors as they come from a cross section of society and socio-economic groups.



(1)

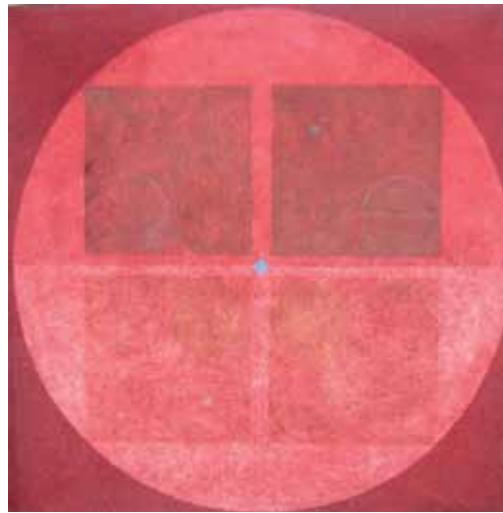
Auctioneers endeavour to present the best possible works to increasingly discerning collectors as well as the buying public. Hence not all works presented to auctioneers will be offered for sale.

## Works are selected according to a number of different factors including:

- Artist's reputation
- Technique
- Subject matter
- Condition
- Demand

Occasionally auction houses compete for works which are exemplary in all of the above factors. But in the majority of cases, vendors rely on the track record of the auction house and their relationship with it.

Buyers purchase for a variety of reasons, including



(2)

appreciation of the aesthetic value of the artwork, as part of a collection, fashion, investment and/or emotion. Unlike vendors it is possible to generalise about the profile of a typical buyer. They have disposable income and they generally have some appreciation for the skill involved in creating the work, the artist's practice or the subject matter.

Auctions and individual works are promoted via catalogues (both in hardcopy and online). Social media is increasingly being used to promote art works and artists. Like many industries, the advent of the internet has globalised the market with international buyers active in New Zealand. I had the pleasure of auctioning a postcard-size watercolour by old English master JMW Turner in 2006. This work garnered interest from around the globe and ultimately sold to an English collector for \$176,000 — a staggering \$3,000 per square centimetre.

Auctions can be emotionally charged as buyers compete for coveted art works. Within the New Zealand psyche, auctions have become an increasingly common method of exchange. Anecdotal evidence suggests that as the number of art auctions has increased in recent years, the number of dealer galleries who specialised in the secondary market has significantly decreased.

Having spent over quarter of a century involved in art auctions, I have seen many highs and lows of the market. After countless auctions and hours spent sourcing and researching art works, not a day goes by without a new discovery. The auction room is an ever-changing market place, in which art works change hands ready to be enjoyed by a new collector. As Rothko says in RED, "A picture lives by companionship."

I am currently cataloguing a major sale of 'Important,

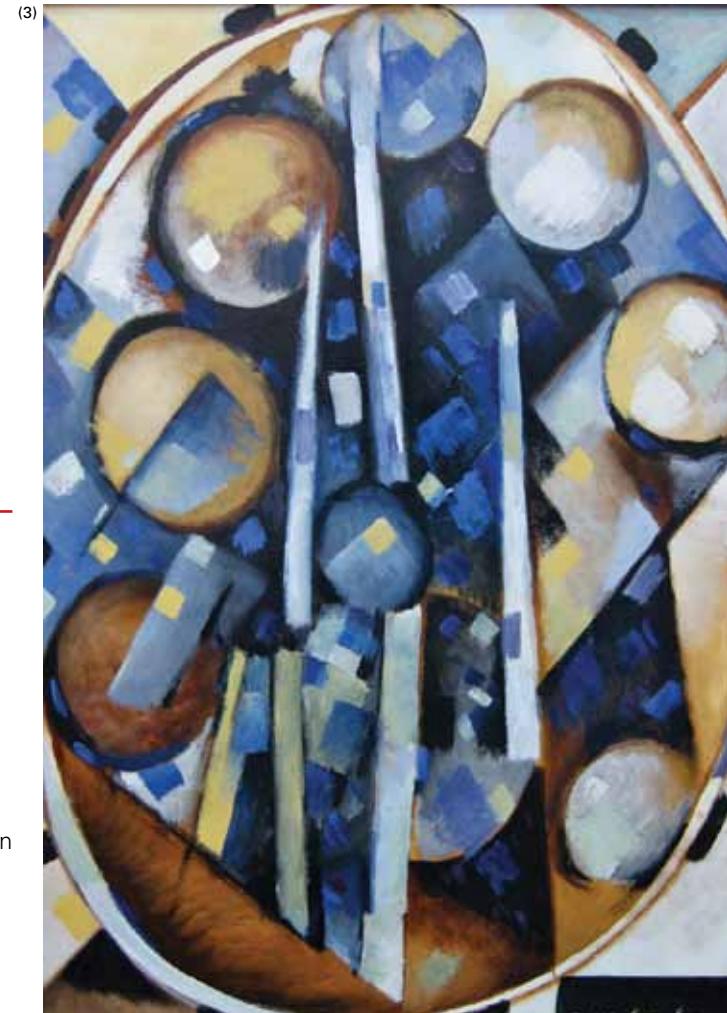
All to be sold by auction 14th July,  
images (1) to (4):

(1) Charles F Goldie  
*Serenity — Harata Rewiri Tarapata, Nga Puhi, Auckland 1904*  
Oil on canvas 55.5 x 47.9

(2) Milan Mrkusich  
*Centre with Three Elements*  
Oil on canvas

(3) Colin McCahon  
*Kauri*  
Oil on board 76 x 55

(4) Frances Hodgkins  
*Wheelwright, Solva*  
Gouache on paper 41 x 53.5  
Signed & dated 1941



(3)

Early and Rare' New Zealand paintings to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the International Art Centre. This sale includes fine examples by renowned artists such as Colin McCahon, Charles Frederick Goldie, Milan Mrkusich, Frances Hodgkins, Evelyn Page and Sydney Lough Thompson. The auction will be held on Thursday 14th July.

Richard Thomson is a Director of International Art Centre in Parnell, Auckland.

[www.internationalartcentre.co.nz](http://www.internationalartcentre.co.nz)



(4)



# SET & COSTUME DESIGNS

By John Parker

**Red is a subtle colour — it can be “scarlet, crimson, plum, mulberry, magenta, burgundy, salmon, carmine, carnelian or coral.”**

For the set design concept, we want to explore the emotional nature of colour and its perception and abstraction.

While there is no conscious intention of replicating Rothko's studio exactly in a 'living museum' way, we are suggesting the ambience of his functioning creative space.

His actual studio was in an old, voluminous indoor basketball court, but he was always aware of creating special spaces, chapels or planned architectural environments to show his work off to the best advantage.

Within the large studio, Rothko used to construct timber frame partitions defining the space his work would eventually be displayed in, and he would cover the frames with stapled brown paper. My set is a set within a set. He also made scale models out of cardboard, in much the same way a theatre designer does.

The costumes reference period photographs, with allowances for authentic 1959 accuracies that also have modern overtones. The hues are within a limited colour palette suggested by the Manila paper stapled to the false walls. In this way, the colour and all its implications is reserved totally for the art being created and discussed in the play.

As a further method of enhancing the movement and depth of field of his work in the best way, he always controlled the level of the artificial light in his studio.

We want to place the audience at the heart of the creative process, in the very moment where the private insights and decisions and self doubts of the artist are being formulated. The audience is so present and intimately involved in the conception that there is no element of voyeurism from a safe distance. The artwork being created is the fourth wall at the front of the stage. The audience will be part of the fluidity and the smell of paint. Much of the problem-solving of the design has been around the practical business required by the text. The audience will be in on the actual building of stretcher frames and their covering with canvas, as well as the alchemy of the mixing of the nuanced, elusive red.



# MARK ROTHKO STILL ROCKS NEW YORK

By Sweeney Vesty

A “lost” painting by Mark Rothko sold at Christies in New York in May for US\$33.5M, well above the pre-sale estimate of \$18–22M, injecting an unexpected shot of excitement into the current auction season. The abstract expressionist work, “Untitled No. 17”, features Rothko’s signature flat colour fields —in this case uneven horizontal blocks of red and pink on a gold background.

The 1961 work was originally bought directly from the artist by a private collector and had not been seen since 1965. It was thought that Rothko had created 835 works. Now, plus one.

In a twist that Rothko would have found distasteful, the top lot at Christies was a work by Andy Warhol. The 1963–64 ‘Self-Portrait,’ of four photo-booth-strip images of Warhol in different shades of blue, fetched \$38.4m after a torturous (some dealers said tedious) bidding war.

Where Warhol’s pop art reflects the Zeitgeist—Hollywood royalty, the iconography of Campbells and Coke or a dollar bill—Rothko uses abstract forms and colour to evoke the deepest human emotions or even

spiritual experiences. “These are paintings that seem to exist on the skin inside an eyelid,” writes *The Guardian*’s Jonathan Jones. “They are what you imagine might be the last lights, the final flickers of colour that register in a mind closing down.”

Rothko agreed in the late 1950s to a lucrative commission to paint huge murals for the Four Seasons restaurant in the Seagram building in New York, at the epicentre of New York society, celebrity, money, and power.

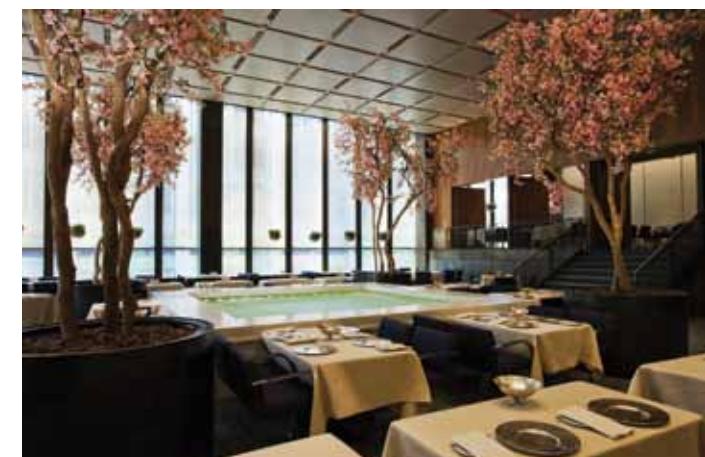
After a lifetime spent as an unknown, unsuccessful artist, Rothko had the chance to decorate the most expensive restaurant in New York. The outsider in him saw it as an opportunity for subversion. He told *Harper’s Magazine* editor John Fischer the restaurant was “a place where the richest bastards in New York will come to feed and show off”.

“I hope to ruin the appetite of every son of a bitch who ever eats in that room,” Rothko is said to have gloated, with paintings that will make diners “feel that they are trapped in a room where all the doors and windows are bricked up”.

But after Rothko visited the restaurant he backed out of the project, and repaid his advance, reportedly saying,

“Anybody who will eat that kind of food for those kind of prices will never look at a painting of mine.” (The four paintings hang in a dedicated space at the Tate Modern in London).

What followed is all part of an immortal story, and Rothko’s fears about the chattering classes would not be diminished in this current day. It’s Spring in New York and while the art auctions bloom the Four Seasons continues to pull in the city’s elite. In his column in *The New York Observer*, the restaurant’s co-owner and maître d’, the irrepressible Julian Niccolini chronicles the champagne, caviar and lobster he serves Martha Stewart, Henry Kissinger, Anna Wintour, Bill Clinton, George Soros, Jon Hunstman and other supernovas. Drunken diners and angry royalty are the order of the day. Life—and lunch—go on. And Mark Rothko is still of the moment.



© Jennifer Calais Smith, *The Four Seasons*, [www.fourseasonsrestaurant.com](http://www.fourseasonsrestaurant.com)

# PAINTING ON THE EDGE

**Mark Rothko has been a looming presence in Robin Richmond's work for many years. She reviews the major exhibition of his paintings at Tate Modern.**

As a painter, one's influences are unstable and sometimes inexplicable, viewed through the lens of time. For example, for the life of me I cannot remember anymore why I once loved Francis Bacon so passionately. I now find him mannered, repetitive and arbitrary. But there has been a reproduction of one Rothko or another in my studio since I first started painting. So I went to Tate Modern in a state of apprehension (might it let me down?) and exhilaration (might it give me a welcome push?).

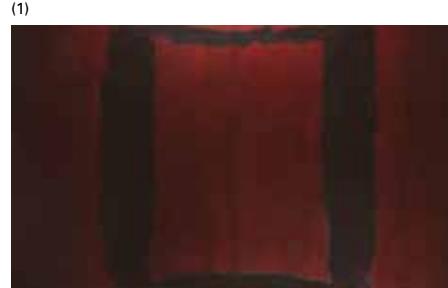
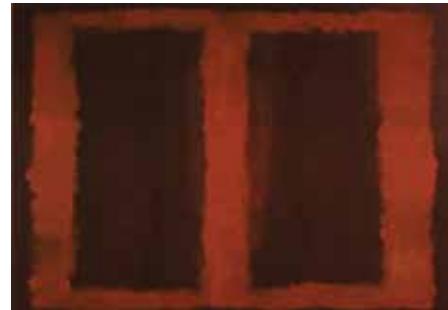
Henri Matisse's influence on Rothko has always interested me and he must have known the seminal painting *Open Window at Collioure*, painted in 1905, that introduced Fauvism to a wary world. Dominated as it is by two strong, fuzzy, vertical rectangles and lifted by a horizon glimpsed through the eponymous open window, it came to mind forcefully in the crepuscular rooms of a dimmed-down, hushed Tate Modern.

It is probably strange and even heretical to posit an advocate of painting who requires art to be "decorative" (a dirty word surely even from Matisse?) and "comfortable like a good armchair" against an austere apostle of art whose work, in Rothko's words is about "the human drama" and the "tragic". In a simplistic, reductionist way one tends to think about Matisse as the incarnation of an Unbearable Lightness of Being and Rothko as a High Priest of the Dark.

But you come away from this breathtaking show at Tate Modern with a very different

view of Rothko. The high wire act that walks the edge – the edge of the colour, the edge of the canvas, the edge of the light, the edge of sanity – is omnipresent in the works of both artists. Quavering bands of line bleed into areas of saturated colour that laps and drags into itself. There is a dynamic balance of what seems hardly there against strong, forceful shapes. There is a joy in this, and who would have thought joy could come from a Rothko show? His work requires a patient eye. It does not deliver the immediate punch of Matisse. He is admittedly often demanding company, but this is a show that Rothko's work richly deserves. It is beautifully hung, beautifully lit, and beautifully argued.

The central gallery gathers together many of the 30 paintings that Rothko painted for the *Four Seasons* restaurant in the Seagram building in New York. This ill-fated commission was originally only meant to consist of nine paintings. Its huge ambition makes one think of Michelangelo and the Sistine — another of Rothko's



(1)

(2)

(3)

heroes. And it terminally taxed Rothko's allergy to the elitist New Yorkers who would have dined under these huge, smouldering canvases.

He paid back his advance for these works, never delivered to our eternal gratitude, kept them, and now they belong to the world of museum goers, not ladies who lunch. Eight are now culled from the Tate collection; the others are a selection from the Kawamura Memorial Museum and the National Museum of Art in Washington. These works are ravishing. The eye loses focus and one's gaze melts into the canvases, only to be "awoken" by small, dangerous brush fires where one colour meets another.

In the last room, the *Black on Grey* paintings from 1970 – the year of his suicide – are a revelation. These supposedly minimalist paintings have an inner glow where "grey" meets "black" that is transcendent. Thinking about the "moon walk" two years before, these pictures seem to gaze out into the empty space of the universe from the brightly-lit surface of the moon. I think these ARE horizons. His is a truly human presence in a world empty of humans. He may have lived on the edge – and maybe this is the stuff of myth – but here in this final gallery we see a beautifully crafted and subtly calibrated balance of emotion and thought. This is the show of the year.

(1) Mark Rothko Sketch for "Mural No.4" (Orange on Maroon) 1958  
(2) Mark Rothko Mural, Section 3 (Black on Maroon) 1959  
(3) Mark Rothko Untitled (Black on Grey) 1969/70

Published with permission from A WORLD TO WIN ([www.aworldtwin.net](http://www.aworldtwin.net)) and Robin Richmond ([www.staff.city.ac.uk/hamptonrichmond/index.htm](http://www.staff.city.ac.uk/hamptonrichmond/index.htm))

First published on September 27, 2008.

# WHAT'S ON IN THEATRES AROUND THE COUNTRY?

## AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

ON THE UPSIDE-DOWN OF  
THE WORLD

By Arthur Meek  
Concert Chamber  
Auckland Town Hall  
30 Jun – 16 July

A crippled English woman arrives in a savage land charged with civilising the natives and, instead, discovers the key to her liberation. Ann Martin came to New Zealand in 1841, the young wife of New Zealand's first chief justice. Intrepid, intelligent and possessing a great sense of humour, she disregarded her personal disability, set about learning Te Reo, established a makeshift hospital for Maori on the beach at Judges Bay and dared to dream of all that was possible in this brave new world.

## SILO THEATRE

THE BROTHERS SIZE  
By Tarell Alvin McCraney

Herald Theatre

27 May – 18 Jun

Backed by live drumming and a score which mashes up soul, hip-hop and R&B, few plays move with such a distinctive beat. Folding together slangy vernacular with bursts of glorious heartfelt poetry, McCraney's play tests the fraternal ties of two brothers when ex-con Elegba shows up with his own claims of brotherhood.

## ATC YOUNG & HUNGRY FESTIVAL OF NEW THEATRE

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## THE BASEMENT

23 Jul – 6 Aug  
Book: 09 309 3395

A girl and her dream face opposition from an unlikely mob in the absurdist black comedy COW by Jo Randerson; a slacker flat is torn apart by the wild animals within in the thriller TIGERPLAY by Gary Henderson; and Auckland is under threat by the undead in the apocalyptic zombie adventure DISORDER by Thomas Sainsbury.

## CENTREPOINT THEATRE

Palmerston North

FLIPSIDE

By Ken Duncum

28 May – 2 Jul

An epic yarn scripted by Ken Duncum twelve years ago based on real events, FLIPSIDE is the dramatic story of the Rose Noelle's crew and their heroic struggle for survival on the Pacific Ocean following its capsise in 1989. The story layers include existentialism, human spirit, relationships, purpose and priorities.

## BATS THEATRE

Wellington

SHEEP

By Arthur Meek

25 May – 11 Jun

24 young actors perform seven short snapshots linked by family and the journey of wool from sheep's back to wearable product. Starting in a Canterbury whorehouse in 1862, and ending in Christchurch in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake, SHEEP addresses the issue of an increasingly complex relationship between technology and biology.

## CIRCA THEATRE

Wellington

MEET THE CHURCHILLS

By Paul Baker

17 Jun – 16 Jul

Randolph Churchill is holding a party to celebrate the 88th birthday of his admired but estranged father, Sir Winston. Dr Jenkins, assistant to Randolph, jumps on the opportunity to pursue his own agenda and forms a surprising bond with the wily Winston. Secrets are revealed, resentments released and new understandings formed, in this fresh and funny perspective on an iconic and larger-than-life family.

## DOWNSTAGE THEATRE

Wellington

C'MON BLACK!

By Roger Hall

8 Jun – 2 Jul

Not simply a play about rugby, C'MON BLACK! cements itself as a poignant snapshot of our history, identity and maturity as a nation. Leaving behind his beloved cows (and wife), Dickie's trip is a voyage of discovery where he encounters the realities of poverty, racism and the big world beyond the paddock as he heads to the Rugby World Cup in South Africa to watch the All Blacks take on the world.

## FORTUNE THEATRE

Dunedin

THE TUTOR

By Dave Armstrong

8 – 30 Jul

John Sellars is a self-made millionaire who figures that if money can't buy happiness, at least it can keep his kid in line. Nathan is a smart-mouthed fifteen-year-old who's just been expelled from his third school this year. When John hires a washed-out, Daihatsu driving hippy to save Nathan's Maths grades, three opposing mindsets go head-to-head in a comedy of (bad) manners, modern education and parenthood.

## COURT THEATRE

Christchurch

FIVE WOMEN WEARING THE  
SAME DRESS

By Alan Ball

Aurora Centre

14 – 23 Jul

From the writer of AMERICAN BEAUTY, SIX FEET UNDER and TRUE BLOOD, comes this superb comedy that never loses its charming spirit. Five bridesmaids hide out during the reception of an overblown Southern wedding to discover that they have more in common than just a hideous dress.

To find out what else is going on in Auckland be sure to read the latest copy of

**Metro**  
Magazine

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**HAMILTON**

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**TAURANGA**

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