

# A R T S P A C E

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## THE BIG BANG THEORY

an exhibition by Julian Dashper

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16 June - 9 July 1993

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The Big Bang Theory brings together five separate installations which Auckland artist Julian Dashper presented in different centres around New Zealand. Dashper, a recipient of an inaugural fellowship grant from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council in 1992, has already exhibited regularly at Artspace. He regards The Big Bang Theory as his most major exhibition to date.

The 'big bang' referred to in the title is the resounding noise of a drum being beaten - for each installation consisted of a full drum kit. On the bass drum of each kit, the name of a famous New Zealand artist is inscribed, translated into the format of a pop band's insignia.

Most of the original installations were presented in a centre closely associated with the chosen artist: 'The Hoteres' at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 'The Drivers' at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, and 'The Anguses' at Smith's Bookshop in Christchurch. 'The Woollastons' was presented as a performance work (with fellow artist John Reynolds) at the National Art Gallery during its retrospective exhibition of Toss Woollaston's work.

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Dashper was determined that 'The Colin McCahons' be installed at the Auckland City Art Gallery, with which McCahon has been so closely associated, both in life and in death. He knew that it was unlikely that he'd get permission to install the drum kit within the exhibition space, so, in the spirit of user-pays, he hired the auditorium and, unbeknownst to the gallery's curators, set up the work, had it photographed and its presence 'officially' verified by an independent observer.

This 'secret' installation now comes out of hiding and takes its place, along with the rest of the drum kit installations, at another Auckland venue, Artspace in Quay Street.

One of Dashper's concerns in The Big Bang Theory is the issue of regionalism in New Zealand culture. Artists are often identified with a particular region - the more so as they become nationally recognised! But, as the similarity between the five drum kits suggests, they also operate within common parameters and on common ground.

The Big Bang Theory presents the artist as a major player, not just in the world of art but in the wider world. Dashper sees the artists he's selected as rhythm-keepers, setting the beat for New Zealand culture. One could say he silently applauds their performance through his chosen instrument - the unplayed drums.

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