

## From the collection



Seung Yul Oh (b.1981), *Oddooki*, 2010 (left)  
and *Oioio*, 2010 (right)  
Two-part automotive paint on fibreglass  
The University of Auckland Art Collection

Seung Yul Oh graduated Master of Fine Arts from Elam School of Fine Arts in 2005, one of a new generation of migrants drawn to study in New Zealand from South Korea, also including Jeena Shin, Hye Rim Lee and Jae Hoon Lee (no relation).

Oh moved to New Zealand in 1997 and, at time of writing, has just opened his first solo exhibition in his home town of Seoul, where he is currently undertaking a residency in an artist-run space founded and managed by

well-known artist Choi Jeong Hwa, who shares Oh's playful sensibility.

It has been an eventful year for Oh. Last February he opened a solo public gallery exhibition, *Bogle Bogle*, at the Dowse Art Museum in Porirua as part of the Wellington Arts Festival, and in June his first public sculptures were unveiled in Newmarket. In December he was awarded the Harriet Friedlander New York Residency, an all-expenses paid eight months in New York City, which he

will take up later this year. And early last month he had his first Wellington commercial gallery exhibition, *oiOiOiOio*, which develops the highly finished egg forms he is now renowned for.

In the midst of this activity, The University of Auckland purchased a pair of Oh's sculptures, based on a commission he produced for Te Papa in 2009. The five pieces he produced for Te Papa's wind-blown sculpture terrace are named *Oddooki* after weighted self-righting toys he remembers from Korea. Their forms are part-bird, part-egg, recalling the conundrum over whether chickens or eggs came first, and contain a bell that jingles when the sculpture is rocked.

Hidden workings and folksy motifs are recurring designs for Oh, exemplified by jingling eggs and vibrating boxes. Oh's works celebrate the joy of creativity and surprise. Sometimes messy, usually bright and boisterous, they recall folk-art, DIY or children's toys. It is this mix of familiarity and fun that captures the viewer's imagination. His recent works may appear as simple, streamlined forms with a highly-polished finish but, despite the complex processes that go into their production, it is their effortless appearance that provides a very immediate appeal.

One explosive video work captured the uncontrollable glee of people blowing up balloons until they burst, an activity he had the well-heeled audience repeat to conclude the Art Foundation's ceremony when he was awarded the Friedlander residency. This was a request that needed little encouragement.

*Oddooki* and *Oioio* feature in the Gus Fisher Gallery exhibition, *Top Ten: new acquisitions for The University of Auckland Art Collection*, which concludes on Saturday 5 March with a celebration of ten years of the Gus Fisher Gallery.

Andrew Clifford