



Unlike with many of Alex Monteith's other video projects, the critically slow pace of the event that forms the subject of her video work, *1020 metres in 26 minutes Waitangi Day Auckland Harbour Bridge Protest*, grounds the viewer in familiar territory, allowing the location and the subject of the video to be immediately unravelled.

Simultaneously however, the viewer is also drawn into the curious and somewhat dizzying landscape that is formed where the adjacent screens meet. Passages of the Harbour Bridge, segments of land, sky, clouds, sea and automobiles roll across two disparate yet intimately connected fields of vision.

Filed in 2008, *1020 metres in 26 minutes* details in real time the Waitangi Day go-slow vehicle protest that was staged on the Auckland Harbour Bridge that year. In 2008, Transit New Zealand decided that only the New Zealand flag would be flown from the Auckland harbour bridge and not the Tino Rangitiratanga flag, which sparked considerable outrage. As a result, a convoy of vehicles, many with the Tino Rangitiratanga flag flapping from their windows, occupied two lanes of the Auckland Harbour Bridge in protest and drove over it at walking pace. A red landrover that was part of the motorcade was saddled with two bullet-cameras

by Auckland artist Alex Monteith. Facing in opposite directions, one camera recorded material as it came towards the vehicle while the other one, mounted to the rear of the vehicle, tracked material as it was left behind.

Screened concurrently as a dual-channel video installation, the resultant footage has the potential to be completely disorientating and bewildering. However, Monteith avoids this by her pacing of the work which, rather than confusing the viewer, helps to create an oddly calm and syncopated rhythm between the adjacent frames.

Monteith is renowned for her penchant for extreme sports, dizzying speeds and dare-devil antics; *1020 metres in 26 minutes* is definitely one of her more serene works in terms of tempo. The central dividing line acts almost like a magnetic vortex as streams of traffic merge and the Harbour Bridge's iron pylons seemingly dissolve into one another. In contrast to this melting band, the right screen details cars inching slowly forward while more cars, complete with billowing flags, mark out the road ahead on the left screen.

Supremely clever in its simplicity, the footage offers an enchanting lyricism because of the wealth of visual interest that the piece contains. A key facet of the work is that it is filmed in real time with no cuts or editing. As a result *1020 metres in 26*

*minutes* uniquely documents an important piece of New Zealand political history objectively, and allows it to be revisited and re-experienced much as it unfolded second by second. Content aside, however, the work is also visually appealing as it rolls and eddies past the viewer.

Born in Belfast in Northern Ireland, Monteith immigrated to New Zealand in 1987. She later completed a Fine Arts degree majoring in Photography at Elam School of Fine Arts before moving to the Intermedia Department of Elam to complete both a masters degree and a doctorate.

*1020 metres in 26 minutes* is set to feature in the comprehensive exhibition of Monteith's work opening at the Govett-Brewster Gallery in New Plymouth on 25 September. Monteith is also one of four finalists for this year's prestigious Walters Prize at the Auckland Art Gallery, nominated for her piece *Passing Manoeuvre with Two Motorcycles and 584 Vehicles for Two-Channel Video*. The winner of the Walters Prize will be announced on 8 October.

Jemma Field

*1020 metres in 26 minutes Waitangi Day Auckland Harbour Bridge Protest 2008*

*Two-Channel Video*

*7 metres x 3 metres, 26min looping cycle*