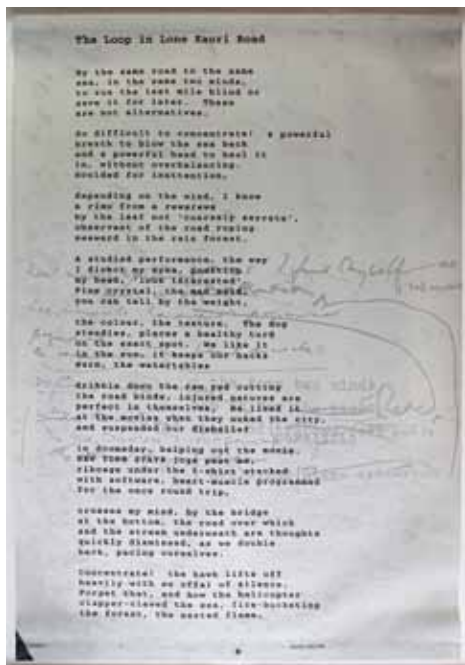


From the collection



In 1986 Auckland University Press published (jointly with Oxford University Press) a collection of ten poems by Allen Curnow titled *The Loop in Lone Kauri Road* (poems 1983-5). The cover illustration echoes the title and features a circular gleam of blurred metal in motion. The image is in fact a photo of Len Lye's kinetic sculpture Roundhead, which includes a whirling wedding band at the centre.

Curnow would have seen Roundhead (a version of which now resides in The University of Auckland Art Collection) when he visited Lye's 1980 retrospective exhibition at the Auckland

Art Gallery. Curnow himself notes experiencing another kinetic sound sculpture at the Auckland Art Gallery – American composer Alvin Lucier's *Music on a Long Thin Wire*, which was on show in 1984 and is perhaps a kindred spirit for the cover illustration. In the poem "Blind Man's Holiday", Curnow tells Lucier how his long wire "sings/ to the oscillator, end over end, glistens/ in your dark gallery."

The eponymous poem that concludes *The Loop in Lone Kauri Road* takes its name from the road where Curnow and his wife Jeny Curnow, to whom the collection is dedicated, built a holiday and weekend home near Karekare Beach in the early 1960s. After living in Christchurch and abroad, he became one of the country's leading writers and had returned to Auckland, taking up a teaching post in 1951 at The University of Auckland where he had once studied. It was in this West Coast setting that he is said to have found his "second wind", and the surroundings became a prominent feature of his work from the 1970s.

In 1995 Lopdell House Gallery in Titirangi held a tribute exhibition for Curnow, translating his texts to a large photographic installation of images with the help of artist Gail Haffern and SUMO Design. Also titled *The Loop in Lone Kauri Road*, the exhibition included a photo of the actual tree that gave the road (and subsequent poem, publications and exhibition) its name, taken by Dick Scott. As Professor Peter Simpson noted in the exhibition's publication, the tree is said to have been milled in the 1920s, not long before Curnow first visited the coast as a 20-year-old student and poet. At this stage, what

was left of the West Coast's grand kauri forests would have been not much more than the seeds of the recently felled trees, now predecessors to a significantly regenerated landscape. It is around these circular motifs of return, regrowth and repetition that Simpson traces his essay, also observing that Lone Kauri Road's loop returns from the coast to the Piha Road under a different name, as Karekare Road.

From this exhibition, The University of Auckland acquired the title work, which is overlaid with the poet's own jottings and a wet texture that reinforces the text's damp imagery. Another text enlarged for the exhibition is "A Fellow Being", which is printed with the texture of kauri bark in the background. Just as the West Coast's Kauri Forests were also influential on Colin McCahon in the 1950s, these same locations continue to provide an evocative setting for a new generation of artists with Alex Monteith and Sarah Munro now living on Lone Kauri Road and many others, including Joyce Campbell, living not far away.

Andrew Clifford

Allen Curnow (1911-2001), The Loop in Lone Kauri Road, 1995
Photographic image produced by Gail Haffern, 1420 x 970mm
The University of Auckland Art Collection