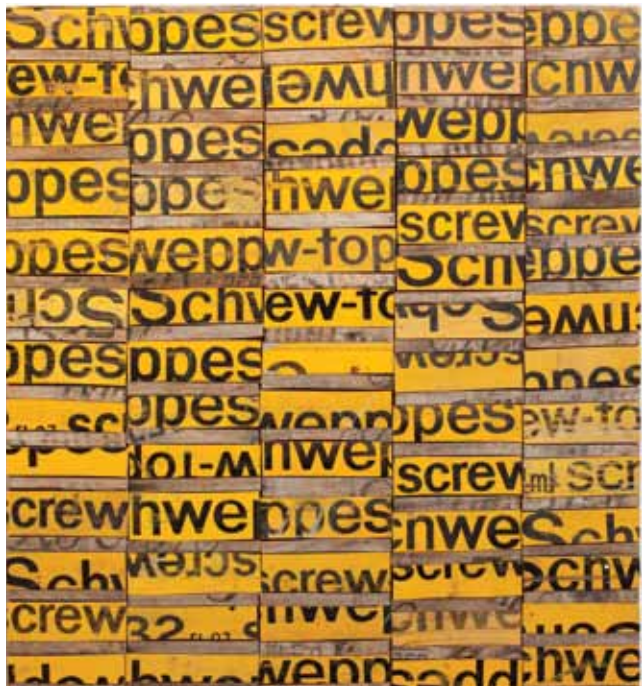


## From the collection



Titling her work after the building method beloved by immigrant pioneers in the outback of Australia, Rosalie Gascoigne weaves text-laden soft drink crate wood into a grid of yellow and black.

Like her retro-reflective road sign works of the previous decade, this work gives a nod to the work of her fellow New Zealander, Colin McCahon, who was influenced to introduce text to his work by watching a signwriter at work on a shop window in Highgate, Dunedin, where he grew up. Gascoigne took the business of text in art one step further than McCahon. Rather than writing her own, she collected it, readymade and replete with advertising messages, as she scavenged for materials around her home in Australia's capital of Canberra.

Gascoigne made the epic move from dried-flower arrangement to art in the late 1960s after experiencing the work created during a visit to Australia by Sofu Teshigahara, a master of the Sogetsu School of ikebana. Sogetsu eschews dinky flower arrangements for bigger and more brutal deployment of materials. Dancing around with broom-sized brushes in the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1967, Sofu Teshigahara produced supersized calligraphy and whipped a pile of bare branches into a two-metre tall ikebana woodpile. Gascoigne was impressed, writing to her son, "I remember Sofu doing his vast dragon calligraphy and think that I could well do a

visible whisper out of feathers".

In the 1960s, Ogilvy & Mather developed a catchy marketing campaign for the oldest soft drink in the world, Schweppes Tonic Water (first produced in Switzerland in 1771). It made much of the similarity between the name of the developer of carbonated mineral water, Johan Jacob Schuppe and the sound of the gas escaping from a newly opened bottle of the product: Schhh...weppes. Mascot for the advertising campaign on Australasian television was veteran of the South Pacific campaign during World War Two, British naval officer, Commander Whitehead who commended the product's effervescence as Schweppervescence, plugging tonic water as the perfect mixer for gin in the tropics in his 1977 autobiography, *How to*

*Live the Good Life: The Commander Tells You How.*

Rosalie Gascoigne revels in these pop culture references, like the generation of American pop artists before her, but also draws attention to the weirdly beautiful effects of weathering on the branded yellow of the tonic water boxes through repetition. The yellows are same, same but different. Recycling materials to make her art, she jumps into a space between still life and landscape, making reference to the vast unchanging horizon of the Australian outback, and the bric-a-brac of everyday life. In wattle and daub building, the wattle, a woven lattice of wooden strips for an exterior wall is daubed with a composite mortar comprising wet soil, animal dung, straw and clay. Like making art from waste, it is a sustainable practice, used for thousands of years, and a way of building which the artist saw as analogous to her own art practice.

After studying English, French, Latin, Greek and Mathematics at The University of Auckland in the 1930s, Rosalie Gascoigne taught at Auckland Girls' Grammar. She lived with her astronomer husband Ben at Mount Stromlo Observatory near Canberra until 1969 when they moved to the suburb of Pearce and she began to be commissioned to make works for the Academy of Sciences and Japanese Embassy. Rosalie Gascoigne was made a member of the Order of Australia for services to Art in 1994, and died five years later in Canberra, aged 82, having spent only the last 30 years of her life making the assemblages which won her international acclaim. Linda Tyler

*Rosalie Gascoigne (1917-1999), Wattle and Daub, 1992, sawn and split soft drink crates on plywood, 715 x 650mm*