

# 12.

## Peter Gouge

Most emerging New Zealand artists drift towards Auckland, the country's epicentre of the art trade with the highest concentration of dealer galleries. **Peter Gouge** has gone in the other direction. The Aucklander moved to Wellington after completing his degree in painting at Unitec Institute of Technology and the capital has welcomed him. In 2012 he exhibited at the public City Gallery in the Hirschfield Gallery reserved for Wellington artists. In 2013 his work was displayed in giant light boxes along the main entertainment strip as part of *Against the Prevailing Winds*, a show presented by literary journal *Hue & Cry*. One of those pieces was named *T.S.D.D.H.*, taken from a line in a poem on the city's waterfront: "They speak differently down here". "I really like that as an Auckland artist, coming down here and seeing a different art scene," says Gouge.

Gouge returned to Auckland for his first solo show at Tim Melville Gallery in October 2013, which coincided with the final examination for his Masters degree from UNITEC. Initials featured in the titles of that show too. Often times he does not reveal or does not even remember what they stand for, preferring to keep the meaning ambiguous for the viewer. He does, however, recall where the exhibition's name comes from. *Never Calm* is a partial quote from 20th century composer **Arnold Schoenberg**, the father of the twelve-tone musical composition technique who said, "Never calm, always blatant."

"What I like about Schoenberg is that although

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he's got this system for making music that could be very formal, it's often very expressive. That confusion interests me," comments Gouge.

There is a tension between the formal and informal in Gouge's abstract paintings. His colourful acrylic works on jute are patterned in a way that evokes Islamic tiling, Peruvian carpets or even Soviet computer games, yet their rough surfaces and freehand lines add an intriguing imperfection to their initial precision. Gouge likes the element of irregularity and never uses tape to make his works: "If it was good enough for **Gordon Walters**, it's good enough for me." The jute paintings range from \$1500 to \$3000 NZD. Larger works on uneven pieces of carpet are priced at \$4,200 NZD. In these looser paintings Gouge is interested in how the textile affects the outcome, wrangling the carpet's knobby surface with layers of oil, enamel and spray paint.

*Frances Morton*

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From left:

Peter Gouge, *J.C.A., L.M.R., J.L.B.L., H.T.A.M., R.B.S.D.* (installation view, left to right), 2012 - 2013. Acrylic on jute, 25 x 20cm (each).

PHOTO: KALLAN MACLEOD  
 COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND

Peter Gouge, *B.R.B. (G.W.D.)*, 2013. Acrylic on jute, 50 x 40cm.

PHOTO: KALLAN MACLEOD  
 COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND TIM MELVILLE GALLERY, AUCKLAND



