

1 Dec – 18 Mar

2018 – 19

# Haegue Yang:

VIP's Union 2001/2018

## VIP’s Union 2001/2018

chairs and tables borrowed for the duration of the exhibition, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist

Haegue Yang’s conceptual work *VIP’s Union* (2001/2018) greets visitors in the exhibition’s first gallery. One of Yang’s formative works, it was first presented in 2001 in Berlin, and subsequently Bristol, Antwerp, Bonn, Seoul, Graz, Cologne, and now New Plymouth. Each exhibiting institution follows a strict procedure set by the artist, beginning with the institution compiling a list of important local people according to their own criteria following the artist’s advice. Letters of invitation and questionnaires are sent out, asking the addressees to lend a piece of furniture for the duration of the exhibition. Their furniture is then taken to the gallery where it is arranged according to functional criteria.

Leading local figures from different areas of society, including local government and non-government organisations, arts and culture, business, health, and education have loaned a piece of furniture from their homes or offices to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. Shaped through the generosity of the lenders, *VIP’s Union* at the Govett-Brewster stands in contrast to the usual furnishings found in art institutions, and subverts any expectations we have of designer, invite-only VIP rooms.

**Here is a collection of stories associated with each piece of furniture, in the words of their owners. You can match each piece of furniture with its floor number and its story below.**

### 1. CEO Taranaki Chamber of Commerce

This desk was used by the late Richard Williams, former CEO of the Taranaki Chamber of Commerce, from 2014 to 2017. It was passed on to the new CEO Arun Chaudhari in June 2017 and was exchanged in favour of a standing desk in late 2017. It now is used by the Chamber Team for displaying various items in the office.

### 2. M BHASKAR – BOON Team Architects

Simple aesthetic, strong monolithic form, soft curved edges makes this chair both pleasing to the eye and really comfortable to sit on. It rests as a piece of sculpture when not being sat on.

### 3. Taranaki District Health Board

Chair originally from dining room, nurses hostel, Barrett Street Hospital. Historic.

### 4. Suzanne Porter

No text

### 5. Jamie & Suzy Allen

Much loved, well travelled, bit battered, going strong – this coffee table is somewhat like its owners. Zimbabwe, UK, NZ, home Kainga Tūtru, over its 100 or so years! It reminds us to take time out, enjoy company and coffee, just as you are.

### 6. Kararaina Te Ira

Those who were raised in a pā would socialise within the wharekai. This tradition continued in the dining room of my whānau homestead, where both my whānau and our manuhiri would often hui. The dining room was where I developed my understanding of history, philosophies, politics and cognitive processes. It has shaped all that I am today.

This dining chair is one of six from my whānau dining room. Throughout the years it has seated a range of prominent people – a privilege to witness first-hand. When no-one was around I would go to this chair and study. I had a desk but I chose to study here believing that the wairua of my whānau and our manuhiri would permeate through me. In some sense I hoped this action would help me study better.

### 7. Teresa Turner

This chair was made for my great grandfather in a market in town in Worcestershire – four generations later it was transported to New Zealand and now Taranaki, a connection to my Tupuna.

### 8. Reuben Paterson

This side table holds memories and stories very close to my heart. It was inherited from my grandmother who purchased this piece with my grandfather in Berchtesgaden, Germany. My grandparents only made one visit there, and my grandfather passed away there – they were visiting Erich Rochel whose life my grandfather saved in World War II – although they were supposed to be enemies they created and maintained a long friendship at ends to the purpose of war.

### 9. Neil Holdom

Inherited as part of the Mayoral office and takes pride of place in the waiting area. This chair welcomes visitors with its bright colour adding cheer and brightness for our visitors.

### 10. Jim Hickey

Made in the 1920s, it is a reproduction Louis XIV carved parlour chair (1600s) which was my late Aunty’s (Mary O’Donnell).

### 11. Anonymous

This chair was a present from my wife not long after we were married in the 80s. It was my favourite spot to relax and watch TV. I have fond memories of my young children snuggled up with me on this.

### 12. Wharehoka Wano

*He Tēpu Herenga Whānau’ – ‘Table that brings us together’*

This tēpu was gifted to my wife and I on our wedding day by a cousin and his son who hand crafted it. It is made of reused rimu. The tēpu has been used by my whānau in various ways but primarily as a coffee table where we sit together informally to catch up to share food and conversation. The tēpu has been a part of our big whānau decisions, our sad and happy times. It is built to last not like the flimsy, mass production, shop purchased coffee tables we buy that last no time.

I still recall my cousin and his son walking down my driveway with the unwrapped table slung over his shoulder like a hunter-gatherer carrying a leg of wild pork, dropping it in front of me like he was laying a koha, giving me a hongī and awhi, and grabbing a beer.

### 13. Colleen Mullin

This rather ordinary box has been with me for nearly 40 years. I have changed addresses dozens of times and lived my life between Australia and New Zealand. But no matter where my domestic work space has been, or what it looked like, this box has been there. In it I keep something that represents my past, present and future. This reminds me that none of these can be avoided and that the work of life is to make the most of now.

### 14. Peter Peryer (1941–2018)

Designed and built by French designer Philippe Starck, this little chair has been in my possession for nearly twenty years. It’s actually a stacking chair but in spite of it still being available I have been happy with just this one.

Even though it is built on a diminutive scale it is not altogether uncomfortable. I invite you to try it for yourself.

### 15. Len Lye Foundation

This stool is part of the Len Lye Foundation Collection held at the Govett Brewster. It came from Len Lye’s New York studio in 1980, following his death, along with many other artworks and personal items.

### 16. Fiona Clark

This stool was a gift and an exchange from Len Lye in 1977. ‘Every artist needs to sit and create work.’ The exchange was to keep creating work.

### 17. Taranaki Rugby Football Union

With the Yarrow Stadium East and West Stands closed to the public owing to potential earthquake risk, the Taranaki Rugby Football Union has lost its home and is in the process of relocating to a new site. This stool assists staff in our temporary offices during this time. The sticker suggests elements of trace, but also signifies its identity of the iconic Yarrows Taranaki Bulls logo which has represented the union since 2014.

### 18. Jonathan Young

I purchased this table from a collector in Wellington many years ago. Its past is unknown, but certainly for me its value is held not only in its obvious history but in its practicality and beautiful craftsmanship. It is usually located in my study as a reading table, and so carries a very practical purpose. It’s great to use such a beautiful piece of furniture in my everyday work.

### 19. Tū Tama Wahine o Taranaki

Ko te kai o te rangatira, he kōrero. Heoi anō, he aha te tohu o te rangatira? He mahi! This is a chair from our main wānanga room, where we meet, scheme, converse, plan, and strategise the reclamation of our homelands.

### 20. Donna Cooper

From New Delhi, India, where my husband and I lived for several years and got married. It’s great for relaxing and carries happy memories of exciting adventures with special people in a vibrant country.

### 21. Terry Parkes

I bought this after purchasing my first business, plus it felt like ‘the King of the Castle’. Over the years, it’s been eaten on, sat on, drunk on, read on, contemplated on, smoked on, weed on, and probably shagged on.

### 22. Maata Wharehoka

The original colour of the chair was green, almost a sea green. It was purchased second-hand in excellent condition around 1998 after my husband Te Ru was diagnosed with diabetes. The chair was to serve as a relaxation chair, and it did, but it often became his bed. One way to deal with that was to hide the lever. In 2005 we had two La-Z-Boys covered hot pink. This particular model was dated and the upholsterer offered us another which was coral pink and in perfect condition. We have two hot pink chairs that live in our whareniui. They both remain on raised castors.

### 23. Taranaki Women’s Refuge

This chair is one of a pair and was donated to the Women’s Refuge. It was used in our safe house for several years before it was brought to use in our community office. The crochet blanket was also a donation. Both together offer comfort to the user.

24. **Elizabeth Smither**

Child's antique chair, provenance unknown.  
Thought to be French.

Original tapestry seat. Bought at an auction by Sarah's grandmother.

Children are forbidden to sit or climb on it though they really want to.

25. **Joyce Driver**

Made by Don Driver when in rehabilitation after a major stroke (occupational therapy to help restore use of the paralyzed right side of his body).

26. **Howie Tamati**

This seat has sat outside on my deck for over 20 years.

It is one of a pair made by the same man who helped build my house, Glen Rangitonga. The koru designs carved into each end of the legs of the two seats were by Hemi Sundgren.

This is the seat I prefer of the two. They were gifted to me by my brother-in-law Ruakere Hond. All three are men gifted with special talents and I have the greatest respect for.

It has always been outside, through storms, rain, wind, and shine. I have sat there for many hours over the years enjoying its sturdy strength. While having a hard surface I'm comfortable and relaxed on it. Over the years I have had many discussions with family and friends, read books, enjoyed barbeques, and sunbathed. It's my seat; it suits me. Maybe it's a reflection of me?

It's not flash but its value is not in its appearance. The koru design represents to me the unfurling of the Fern, of growth, understanding and knowledge. I value my seat.

27. **Hancock Family**

The stool was made by my mother-in-law in woodwork classes she attended in the 1960s. It changed colour, to reflect the changes of paint in the kitchen. After she died, my father in law moved into hospital care accompanied by the stool. There were many and varied conversations with him, with usually someone perched on the stool.

28. **Beauden Barrett**

Beauden and Hannah's friend who grew up in Taumarunui and owns Forma made this custom velvet ottoman. It will be donated to charity after the exhibition.

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