

Art collecting stakes can be high, so who's a safe bet?

With thousands now attending Auckland's biennial contemporary Art Fair from both here and across the ditch, there's never been a better time to be a contemporary artist, collector or art lover says arts patron, consultant, writer and retired lawyer, Warwick Brown.

In our recent history never have there been more artists, more dealer galleries or more auction houses. Art is the new commerce, collecting the new passion.

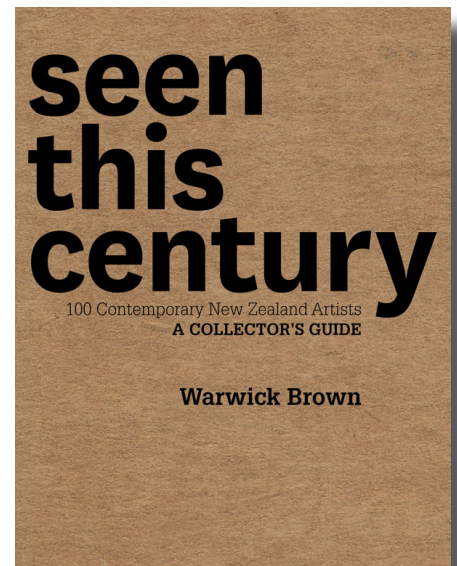
In his chunky new book, *Seen this Century* – out just ahead of May's Auckland Art Fair – Warwick Brown has audaciously come up with an up-to-the-minute list of the 100 “ones to watch” to have emerged in our contemporary art scene throughout the country since the turn of this century.

Brown's snap-shot gives the collector an invaluable tool by highlighting who is on the rise, who will become the next big thing and whose work should be bought now before prices skyrocket. It's also a great reference for people wanting to find out what's happening in the art scene around the country at the moment.

Brown's a list maker from way back and proud of it. He's done the hard yards casting his net and consulting widely to make sure he's on the money in picking who he thinks are the most exciting and collectible artists currently out there, but he's sure his list will also generate controversy. In fact, he'd be disappointed if it doesn't rankle with people, seeing it as all part of a healthy art debate.

The talk around lists is inevitably, and understandably, about who doesn't make the cut. Annoying people with his lists is familiar and fertile territory for Brown, who cites a friendly, long-standing stoush between him and his good friend Rodney Kirk Smith, the legendary art dealer, over another list of ‘121 New Zealand artists you should get to know’ Brown published in his Wellington newspaper art column 20 years ago.

He's also expecting some flack for his deliberate decision to not cover performance and video/DVD art, film and other work of specialist interest.



Title: *Seen this Century*

Author: Warwick Brown

RRP: \$55.00

Released: 17 April 2009

Imprint: Godwit



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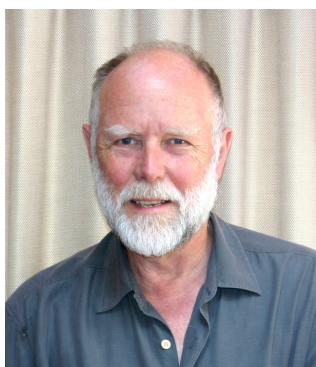
Brown's long had the collecting bug having set-up, with fellow art-lover Peter Webb, New Zealand's first art co-op in 1975. The concept, where a group of enthusiasts buy artworks from a combined fund to build an art collection, has flourished since with a number of such groups operating now throughout the country. He's the first to admit that, in the end, putting together a collection can be a bit of a gamble but says that, because emerging art is so affordable, if you get it wrong it's not a huge blow – unlike blue-chip collecting where the stakes are much higher. There are sure to be some on his list who may not be around in ten years time but this is what makes art collecting such a stimulating and enriching journey. In the end, it's such a rewarding experience you can never lose.

And, Brown's tips for fledgling collectors? He says people need to do their research, get out there and keep looking at art but in the end you have to go with your gut instinct. He firmly believes a good idea always sticks.

Random House publishing director, Nicola Legat, says it's such a thrill to publish a book which takes reasonably tough art to such a wide audience, but as a former newspaper art critic Warwick Brown was the one to do it. "Like any profession, people in the industry tend to use jargon a bit much, which can be intimidating for some people. Warwick skilfully discusses each artist and their work in such a warm and accessible way, the book's a real page-turner – but no one could accuse him of dumbing the work down.

"His writing style is so conversational, engaging and inclusive it really makes you immediately want to race out to the dealer galleries the very next Saturday to see what they've got up on the walls."

more about **WARWICK BROWN**



Warwick Brown has travelled widely in Europe, America and Australia looking at classic Modernism and contemporary art. He has been a contributor to Art New Zealand magazine and numerous catalogues and was art columnist for the *Dominion Sunday Times* from 1983 to 1993. His first two books, *100 New Zealand Paintings* (1995) and *Another 100 New Zealand Artists* (1996), were highly successful, and were followed by the monograph Ian Scott in 1998. After retiring as a lawyer in 1990, Brown directed dealer galleries in Auckland for 10 years and then became a practising artist himself.



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