

# Philip Jarvis



**RDS GALLERY**

**2020**

**RDS GALLERY,  
6 CASTLE STREET, DUNEDIN**

**LIFE PUZZLE  
IN TECHNICOLOR**

**Philip Jarvis**

Cover Image:

*Unknown 3* (Philip Jarvis, 2020, raw clay, paint, tape, pins, green screen, found object, 60cm high, 24cm wide, 24cm depth)

© image, Philip Jarvis

© text, Hilary Radner

© format and editorial material, RDS Gallery

*Published April 2020 by RDS Gallery, on the occasion of the exhibition 'Life Puzzle – in Technicolor': Work by Felix Harris, Philip Jarvis, and Pete Wheeler, 3 April – 25 April 2020, RDS Gallery, 6 Castle Street, Dunedin.*

## Philip Jarvis and the Creative Process

Philip Jarvis's projects are best described as '3-D work that crosses a range of disciplines'. His current practice draws on his engagement with 'clay,' incorporating found objects (ready-mades – including industrial ceramic pipes) as well hand-formed objects.

His relationship with his art is grounded in a process that he sees as akin to his experience running a marathon. The first stage entails a degree of reflection, of comparison with past and on-going projects, but also an assessment of the physical limitations inherent in any practice, of technique and mastery (a sense of judgment) with regard to the medium, gained over time. For Philip, this initial stage depends upon imagination, a capacity that he developed in response to issues he encountered as a child facing a rigid educational system. He comments, 'You make up things in your head all the time.' His work thus begins with a precise form 'imagined' in its three-dimensionality that evolves through drawing, and then takes a material shape in a second phase equivalent to the period in which a runner is actually engaged in the race. The reality of the object begins to manifest itself and evolve in new unanticipated directions. Philip explains that this is the 'best part – you are "in the moment" – that's why you do it – it's not very long. You get the "buzz" in the studio'.

For Philip, the final stage of the creation is like the end of a race, the timeframe in which the runner approaches the finish line. Physical reality impinges on the artist's consciousness – 'the reality of clay, it can break'. Philip meditates on these moments: 'Your brain is high as a kite . . . you are in pain . . . there's an addiction coming through . . . why do I need it? . . . out of your comfort zone . . . last six K's of the marathon . . . your stomach is turned outside out . . . somehow you leave it late . . . fearful you will never get it again.'

Note: Philip responded to the exhibition title because he felt it recalled these three stages. For Philip, 'Life' is the initial moment, followed by 'Puzzle', or the working-through. The penultimate stage is 'in Technicolor', because of the intensity of conflicting emotions that are at stake in these final throes of creation, as the artist confronts the completion of the work and its eventual longed for, yet terrifying, unveiling.

Hilary Radner in conversation with Philip Jarvis and Marie Strauss  
Dunedin, April 2020

**Philip Jarvis** (b. 1968) completed a BA at the Camberwell School of Art (1987-1990). Born in Winchester, U.K., he has spent the last 24 years making art in Dunedin, which he considers his home. He has been awarded numerous residencies, including the Cowwarr Art Space (2016, Victoria, Australia), the Lochmara Lodge Artist Residency (2012, Marlborough), Wild Creations (2011, DOCO/CNZ Rotorua Lakes), Sturt Craft Centre (2009, Mittagong, NSW), AIR-Vallauris (1997, Vallauris, France). The Museum of New Zealand/Te Papa Tongarewa, the James Wallace Trust, the Frans Hal Museum (the Netherlands), A.I.R. Vallauris (France), the Shepparton Art Gallery (Australia), the Canterbury Museum, and the Otago Museum are among the institutions that own examples of his works. He has a reputation as an artist with a singular vision, but has also worked collaboratively in the past with Madeleine Child. Their joint-work has earned them a Portage Ceramics Premier Award (shared with Jim Cooper) in 2009 and a Sidney Myer Fund Premier Art Award in 2000. Recent exhibitions in Dunedin include 'Toothpaste Tubes Doing Parkour' (Rear Window, DPAG, 2017) and 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Cactus' (White Box, Fringe HQ, 2019). He also runs marathons.

References:

<https://nzartsite.com/artists/phillip-jarvis.html>

<https://www.odt.co.nz/entertainment/arts/art-seen-124>

<https://www.odt.co.nz/entertainment/arts/art-seen-october-16>

**Hilary Radner** began her career as a video artist in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with work shown at MOMA (1981), and the Biennale of Sydney (1982). In 1988, she completed a PhD at the University of Texas, Austin and was awarded the position of Assistant Professor, and later Associate Professor (1995), at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. In 2002 she was appointed Foundation Professor of Film and Media Studies at the University of Otago. She currently holds the title of Professor Emeritus, University of Otago, and has published widely in the areas of visual culture and cinema studies, most recently *Raymond Bellour: Cinema and the Moving Image*, with Alistair Fox (Edinburgh UP, 2018). With Marie Strauss, she currently directs RDS Gallery, Dunedin.



