

***Don Driver and Colin McCahon: An eco-critical perspective.* ROOM: WG808**

Don Driver (1930-2011) is considered to be one of New Zealand's foremost assemblage artists. In this paper we intend to explore some of the threads connecting his works, focusing on reading his assemblage sculptures and installations within the context of ecology and animal studies. From this perspective it is clear that Driver was engaging with the conditions of industrial capitalism on a number of levels, exploring the contemporary psyche, our relationship to the natural environment and the rituals of our anthropocentric culture. The visual aspects of Driver's local New Plymouth, an industrialized, international port, surfaced in his art and led to a preoccupation with energy, creating complex works that can be read as metaphors for the post-modern condition and with powerful premonitions of ecological crisis. His installation 'Burnt Out' at the Adelaide Festival Centre, 1985, addressed issues of weather and temperature increase, its effects on flora and fauna and its metaphorical connection to the human condition. His final work, *Elephants For Sale*, 2010, is evocative of our relationship with animals and deals with enormous questions such as the reality of extinction and the concept of our responsibility for life on this planet. Excerpts from the film 'Don Driver Magician', made by the presenters, will be used to illustrate the main points. Driver's work will be placed within the context of NZ art, specifically Colin McCahon and the work of Australian artists such as Rosalie Gascoigne.

**PAUL JUDGE**

Co-Producer Don Driver: Magician

**BRIDGET SUTHERLAND**

Co-Producer Don Driver: Magician