

# STARKWHITE



***Billy Apple® | Divine Proportion***

Curated by John McCormack

Starkwhite, Auckland

23 February to 31 March 2023

After 20 years on Auckland's Karangahape Road, Starkwhite is moving to a new space on Newton Road. Curated by John McCormack, *Billy Apple®: Divine Proportion* is the last exhibition at the gallery's K Rd location.

Divine Proportion is an alternative name for the Golden Ratio, which Billy Apple famously applied to the composition, pricing and placement of his works. His trademark use of the Golden Ratio (1: 1.618) is seen here in three works – two variations of *AC/DC (Artist's Cut / Dealer's Cut)* and *The Artist Has to Live Like Everybody Else*.

Apple's first use of the Golden Ratio was in 1986 when he represented art business as percentages in *AC/DC (Artist's Cut / Dealer's Cut)*, a small hand painted (by Apple) canvas divided into 61.8% and 38.2% by its dotted line. The painting is part of Apple's *Art Transactions* series of text-based works that investigated art world relationships between artist-dealer-collector. In 2007 he produced a newer version of *AC/DC*, this time using the

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Golden Ratio to scale the text so that AC is 61.8% larger than DC. This adjustment is typical of the refinement that exemplifies Apple's life-long pursuit of perfection.

In 2015 Apple created a site-specific version of AC/DC for an exhibition at Starkwhite, dividing two columns up into artist's cut and dealer's cut percentages. Starkwhite's share is white and remains part of the gallery architecture, while Apple demonstrated his by painting it cadmium yellow medium, much like a 3-D bar graph. Titled *AC/DC (Artist's Cut / Dealer's Cut)* the work is restaged in *Divine Proportion*, highlighting the intrinsic relationship between artist and gallerist that is the conceptual support structure of any dealer art gallery. Apple had a long history of working with gallery spaces and his first use of columns was in his 1975 work *Circular Subtraction* at Martha Jackson West, New York, where he removed a strip of paint from around a central column with a belt sander. His first painted pillar was a 1979 red censure – a critique of its intrusion into the exhibition space at the Bosshard Galleries in Dunedin.

The third work in the exhibition, *The Artist Has To Live Like Everybody Else*, employs the famous catchphrase Billy Apple and Wystan Curnow devised in 1985 after Apple began looking into cost-of-living indices in 1984 to determine how much money an artist needed to achieve the average standard of living. Here the Golden Ratio is used to determine both the dimensions and price. The canvas measures 618mm (h) x 1000mm (w) and the price is calculated at 61.8% of the price for the larger 1000mm x 1618mm canvas exhibited at London's The Mayor Gallery in 2018. The catchphrase also appears in Apple's PAID series (1987-2021) with invoices from Apple's daily life were selected by collectors, paid for and mounted on Apple's PAID document. Collectively they profile the life of the artist in the form of a paper portrait of invoices.

*Billy Apple®: Divine Proportion* runs at Starkwhite from 23 February to 31 March, 2023.

Starkwhite was launched by Dominic Feuchs and John McCormack in 2002 as a creative consultancy located in The Old South British Insurance Building in Auckland's CBD. The Bull & O'Sullivan-designed offices included a gallery space, where the directors presented a programme of artists' projects and curated exhibitions. After checking the dimensions of the gallery space prior to the opening, Apple proposed a site-specific *Alteration* – that the end wall by the entrance be moved one meter into the space. This became a work in his ongoing series *Alterations: The Given As An Art-Political Statement* and was documented as WALL FOR STARKWHITE in the 2003 exhibition *Billy Apple: Business As Usual*, curated by Wystan Curnow.

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In 2003 Starkwhite relocated to a two-story building on Karangahape Road. Once again, the new gallery space opened with an exhibition by Billy Apple. Titled *The Art Circuit*, it was both an exhibition with a big sound component and a proposition put forward for the 2005 Auckland Arts Festival. The ambitious work was to be performed by six vehicles from the Billy Apple Historic and Classic Racing Collections with three grand prix motorcycles: AJS 7R (1960), Matchless G50 (1961) and Norton Manx (1962), and two racing cars: Cooper T85 Formula 3 racing car (1967) and Lola T212 Group 6 sports racing car (1971) along with his Porsche 911S (1975) running as the safety car. They were to be ridden and driven around Auckland's midtown 'art track' starting at the Auckland Art Gallery.

Over the past two decades Billy Apple has presented many solo exhibitions and been curated into group exhibitions at Starkwhite including:

**WALL FOR STARKWHITE (2002)**

*Billy Apple: Business As Usual* (2002), curated by Wystan Curnow

*Collaborative Exchanges* (with Marco Fusinato, John Nixon, Rose Nolan), Starkwhite, Auckland (2003)

*Billy Apple: The Art Circuit* (2003)

*Billy Apple's Promissory Notes* (2004)

*The Immortalisation of Billy Apple®*, a project by artist Billy Apple and artist/scientist Craig Hilton (2010)

*Billy Apple®: \$23,610 Top Up*, a Starkwhite project presented at Minter Ellison Rudd Watts (2011)

*History of the Brand* (2011)

*Port/Starboard: Billy Apple®* (2012)

*The Immortalisation of Billy Apple® (Part 2)* (2012)

*Billy Apple is 50* (2012)

*Billy Apple®: \$9,020 and \$5,750 Top Ups*, a Starkwhite project presented at Minter Ellison Rudd Watts (2013)

*The Analysis of Billy Apple®* (2014)

*TOTEM: Arnold Manaaki Wilson and Billy Apple®*, curated by Mary Morrison (2015)

*For Pink Pussy Cat Club*, curated by Adnan Yildiz (2016)

*Billy Apple®: Art Transactions* (2017)

*On the Grounds*, co-conceived by Bridget Riggir-Cuddy and Misal Adnan Yidiz (2017)

*Billy Apple® is N=One: Microbiome and Genome* (2019)

*Flagged: Billy Apple® and Tame Iti* (2019)

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The gallery has also presented works by Billy Apple at many international art fairs, including a solo project titled *The Immortalisation of Billy Apple® (Part 3)* at the inaugural edition of Art Basel Hong Kong (2013), and *Apple to Zavros: Billy Apple and Michael Zavros at Art Los Angeles Contemporary* (2019).

## Billy Apple, 1935-2021 (NZ, USA)

Billy Apple was created as a work about identity when the artist changed his name in a self-branding exercise shortly after graduating from London's Royal College of Art in 1962. His six-decade art career began in London amidst the pioneers of pop art with a solo exhibition at Gallery One before moving to New York where he exhibited in the legendary *American Supermarket*, 1964 installation (including Jasper Johns, Claus Oldenburg, Andy Warhol etc). He rapidly established himself as a key figure in the development of conceptual art with his focus on a de-materialised, site-specific, art/life and activity based art practice, as well as setting up APPLE, his not-for-profit space (1969-1973). He exhibited in New York's museum, dealer gallery and alternative art scenes (including Leo Castelli, Howard Wise, Bianchini and Multiples Galleries as well as the Clocktower (PS1), 112 Greene St [where he was director for a year], APPLE and New Museum). In the 1980s his text-based works drew attention to art's system of relationships especially in his *Art Transaction* and *Promissory Notes* series. In 2007 Billy Apple® became a registered trademark in eight classes, formalising his art-brand status while he investigated the legal concept of intellectual property in relation to his art projects. In 2011 he completed three large-scale public art works to mark the 2011 Rugby World Cup. In the last ten or so years his practice moved towards art-science collaborations where his genome, microbiome and immortalised somatic cells were scrutinised; and he was able to determine that the centre of the extended continental shelf of Te Riu-a-Māui / Zealandia, the fifth largest mostly underwater continent, was in on land. All the while, his early works were garnering attention and his contribution to art history was being recognised through institutional survey exhibitions such as *Pop Art: A New Vernacular* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2021); *Constellations: Highlights from the Nations Collection of Modern Art: Cindy Sherman Room* (Tate Liverpool, 2019); *Last Look Before BREXIT* (PIASA Paris, 2019); *The Avant Garde in Auckland: 1971 -79* (Auckland Art Gallery, 2018); *International Pop* (Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2016); *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s-1980s* (Queens Museum, New York, 1999). He has had survey exhibitions at Auckland Art Gallery curated by Christina Barton (2015); Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art curated by Nicholas Schafhausen and Zoë Gray, Rotterdam (2009); and the Serpentine Gallery, London (1974).

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Billy Apple's work is held in public collections such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Metropolitan Museum of Art and Corning Museum of Glass, New York; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit; The Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia; Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, Pasadena; Boise Art Museum, Idaho; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; the Tate Britain, London and Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh as well as the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. His work is represented in New Zealand's institutions, Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand; Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki; Govett-Brewster Art Gallery; Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery; and in corporate collections such as the Wesfarmers Arts, Perth; and the BNZ Collection, Auckland.

## Recent Publications

Christina Barton, *Billy Apple® Life/Work*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2020

Anthony Byrt, *The Mirror Seemed Over: Love and Pop in London, 1962*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2020

Thomas Crow, *The Hidden Mod in Modern Art: London 1957-1969*, Paul Mellon Centre, London, 2020

Christina Barton, *Rainbows 1965*, The Mayor Gallery, London, 2022

Billy Apple's works are represented by Starkwhite, Auckland; Hamish McKay, Wellington; 1301SW, Melbourne, Rossi & Rossi, Hong Kong and The Mayor Gallery, London.

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