



*Orangina*

Chiara Corbelletto, Italy/New Zealand

## TE PAPA TONGAREWA

### *QUI TUTTO BENE: THE ITALIANS IN NEW ZEALAND*

November 2004 – March 2007

#### CHIARA CORBELLETTO: AN ITALIAN ARTIST IN NEW ZEALAND

This beautiful work by Italian artist [Chiara Corbelletto](#) is full of rhythm and movement. In its repetition of abstract forms and in its materials, it is very much a contemporary work. But behind it there lies a centuries-old practice in classical Italian architecture, of decorating surfaces from floor to ceiling with rich and ornate patterning.

Chiara's childhood was steeped in artistic tradition. She was born in northern Italy, in Biella, a city famous for high quality wool textiles, and she grew up with parents keenly interested in museums and archaeology. She graduated from the Modigliani Art School and then from Architecture School at the University of Milan.

'Art history was always woven into the experience of growing up in Italy, because it was constantly around us. In art school we were learning about the meaning of being a contemporary artist in a place that is layered with amazing, significant art from the past.

'A major focus was the study of all the examples of master works around us in Italy, particularly learning about techniques, materials, how to represent, how to draw perfectly, how to model, how to do chiaroscuro, using light and shadow to create a sense of depth, with a great range of tone. It was quite an academic art education, meaning that a lot of emphasis was on acquiring skills rather than developing new ideas to express the creative process.'

In that way, art school left unanswered the question: what did it mean to be a young artist in contemporary society? And particularly for an artist like Chiara coming to New Zealand, a country so distant both geographically and culturally from her home. 'For a start, I couldn't rely so much on verbal communication because it was still gradually developing. Also, English is not my mother tongue and only with your mother tongue you can reach a certain level of poetical expression. But those things forced me to prioritise on visual communication.'

A distinctive feature of Chiara's work over the last decade has been her repetition of forms and patterns in symmetrical compositions. The forms she uses often have a sculptural quality, and from them she creates dynamic compositions that are sometimes simple, sometimes very intricate. She uses a wide range of materials and production methods, including commercial processes. Her work has included solo exhibitions in public and commercial galleries, sculptural installations, public and corporate commissions, and collaboration on architectural and civic projects.

*Orangina* is made from 120 semi-transparent identical units which overlap and intersect. As the viewer looks at it from different angles, it changes, as though within one work there is a whole series of works. It's a kaleidoscope of light and colour.