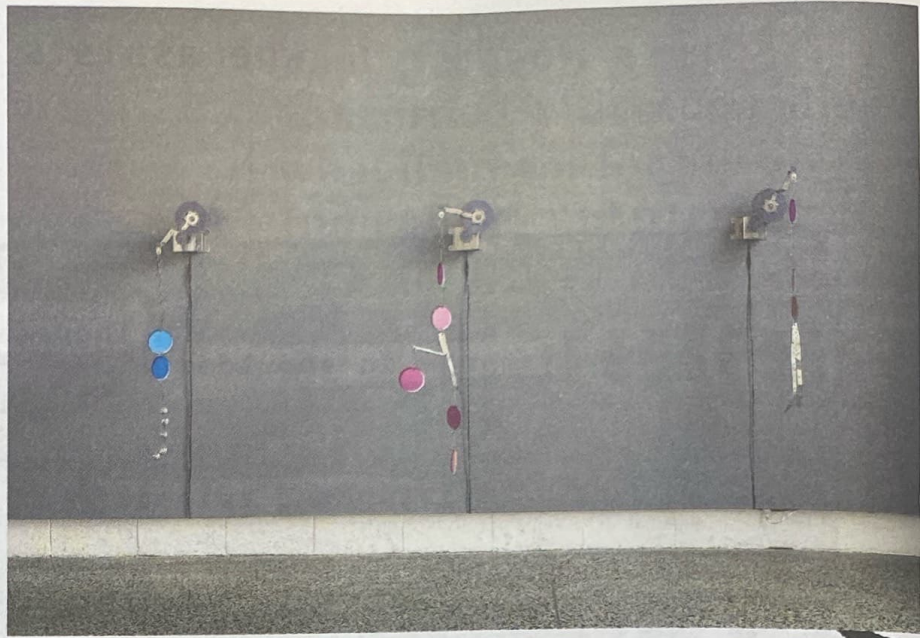


# Form Follows Function



Jack Hadley, *Round Round*, 2022, installation view: *Round Round*, Objectspace, Auckland. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

## Jack Hadley

Coined by American architect Louis Sullivan in 1896, 'form follows function' is one of the best-known design maxims. Jack Hadley's approach to this dogma is playful, not an act of direct subversion but provocative compliance. In *PFS-T* and *PFS-R*, both 2024, form does follow function, but function runs amok, dashing around form in a mischievous game of tag.

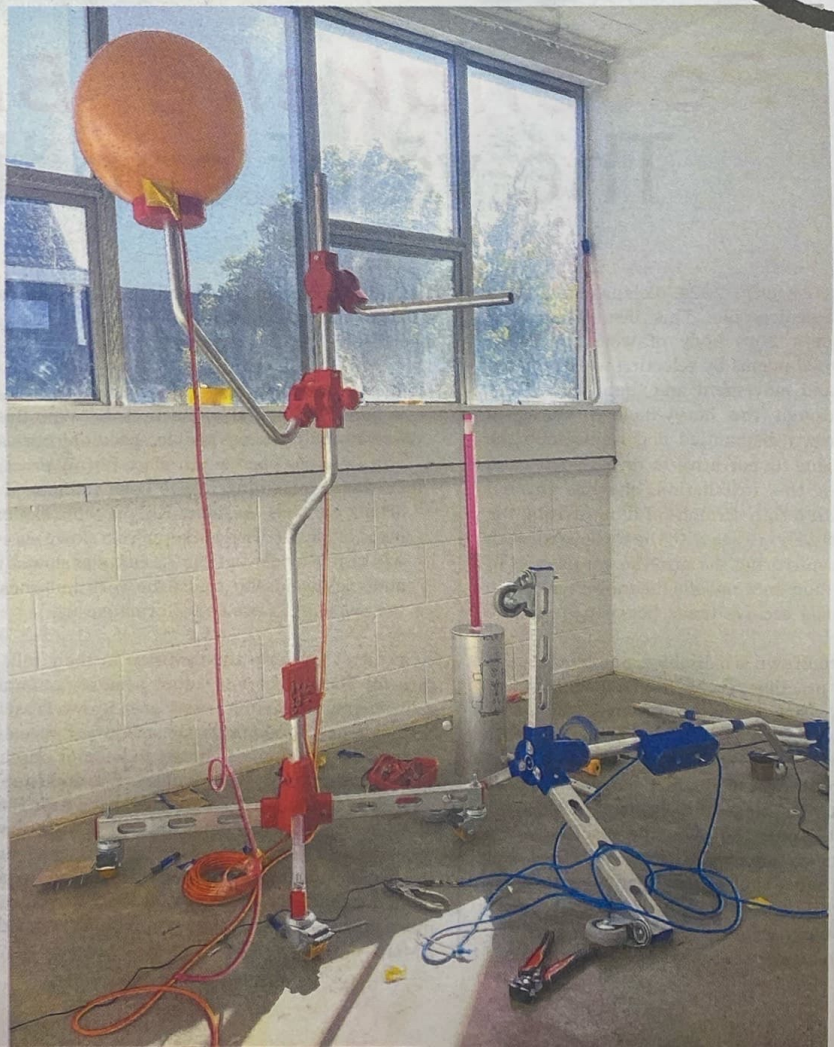
Hadley's playful approach extends on the legacy of the Memphis design group, active in the 1980s. Founded by Italian architect Ettore Sottsass, the collective positioned itself against the streamlined, sleek Modernist aesthetic that dismissed ornamentalism as an unnecessary luxury! With an affinity for simple geometric shapes and electrically vibrant colours, Memphis designs were produced from cheap MDF and kitsch plastic laminates, symbolising an ironic challenge to the functionalist status quo.

While Hadley adopts the whimsical excess of Memphis design, his practice is more than a stylistic quotation of shapes and colours. His mode of subversion is particularly interesting because its excess is still guided by function. None of the elements are purely decorative – he borrows industrial design features that were created with practicality over aesthetics in mind. The exposed joints mimic adjustable crutches and the wheeled bases seem more suitable for sterile IV poles than domestic lighting. Each plastic joint is custom-3D-printed, and the sculptures' modular constructions hint at many possible configurations. The lights are also used for pedestrian crossings and the plastic beading of the electrical cords invoke swimming pool lane lines. But the features' streamlined and optimised quality is obscured once Hadley plucks them from their context of usefulness and repurposes them in his creations, combining elements of everyday material culture into an impractical bounty of functionalities.

*PFS-T* and *PFS-R* are lamps with minds of their own, not obeying the user but listening to each other in a closed sequence of radio transmissions. Hadley has played with the ideas of call and response before in his work, but never this explicitly. While to some art lovers the flashing may recall Martin Creed's notorious *The lights going on and off*, 2000, the inspiration here is drawn from a much more familiar phenomenon – sitting at a red light. Hadley recounts the slow drive through roadworks to the Karekare Residency earlier this year, finding humour in the frustration at seemingly arbitrarily

timed stop lights. As if aware of the supposed function, Hadley's lamps taunt the viewer with a game of piggy in the middle, throwing the light back and forth. They seem to tease the late Louis Sullivan, too, stretching his maxim to its extremes and exposing the gaps left in between. Yes, form follows function. Maybe next time, we let form lead? RMH

1. John Thackara, 'Beyond the Object in Design', in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object*, John Thackara (ed), Thames and Hudson, London, 1988, pp 11–34.



Jack Hadley's studio, work in progress. Photo courtesy of the artist.