

# TE PUNA O WAIWHETU CHRISTCHURCH ART GALLERY

## Audio Tours

Works from the Collections, narrated by Sam Neill and Miranda Harcourt



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Fiona Pardington

Mauria mai, tono ano

2001

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In the late 1990s photographer Fiona Pardington turned her attention and her camera to collections of Māori taonga or treasure held in New Zealand museums. She would visit these collections, spend time with the precious objects, and slowly photograph them.

The heitiki, or greenstone pendants, shown in this series of photographs are all held in the collection of the Auckland Museum. All seven heitiki however originally came from the South Island, and are all connected to Pardington's own Ngāi Tahu iwi, or tribe. It took Pardington eighteen months to consult with hapu, or sub-tribes, and gain permission to photograph the pieces.

Traditionally worn around the neck and sitting close to the heart, heitiki hold strong spiritual significance for Māori. They are symbols of fertility, and strongly connected with life and death. Pardington does not simply record the physical appearance of the heitiki; she also draws out the emotional resonance of the carvings in her photographs, and brings out their power to make connections between the past and the present.

'Mauria mai, tono ano' translates from Māori into English as 'to bring to light, to claim again'. Māori believe that light is held inside greenstone, and Pardington's photographs, with their rich dark tones and silvery highlights, seem to coax out light from within the heitiki. These are not factual or documentary photographs. Instead, the photographs keep something of the dark secret places where the heitiki are stored, and glimmer in a way that suggests that they are coming back to life. And in a sense – in being lovingly handled and respectfully presented again to the world outside the museum's storehouse – they are.



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Charles Goldie

Ena te Papatahi: A Ngapuhi Chieftainess  
1902

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Ena Te Papatahi, of the Ngapuhi iwi, or tribe, had moved to Auckland from the Hokianga in 1886. From 1900 she lived at Waipapa, the Māori hostel in Mechanics Bay.

Waipapa was a short walk from the studio of Charles Frederick Goldie, who at this time was rapidly establishing a reputation of as one of Auckland's leading artists. Ena Te Papatahi first posed for Goldie in 1902. She became one of his favourite models, and he painted her approximately twenty times. Ena's cousin Harata Rewiri Tarapata, who also lived at Waipapa, was another important model for Goldie, and it is possible that Ena assisted Goldie in persuading other models to pose for him.

Goldie's career had begun in earnest in 1900. His artistic talent had been evident from an early age, and he first began showing his work when he was only in his mid-teens. In 1893, aged twenty-two, he travelled to Paris to study, returning to New Zealand in 1898. In 1900 he showed six portraits, of both Māori and Pākehā, or New Zealanders of European descent, at the Auckland Society of Arts. A newspaper critic wrote of his work:

'Nothing better has been seen here, and it is abundantly evident that in this gentleman we have an artist who in this branch of his profession may reach any height.'

Goldie was applauded for the realism and extraordinary detail of his painting, and his portraits of Māori subjects were exceptionally popular. His contemporaries saw these portraits as more than just good likenesses. They were described as representing 'types', in the sense of specimens that needed collecting before it was too late. As one journalist put it:

'It is of real importance, apart from picture-making, that the types here so ably delineated should be preserved. The originals are fast disappearing.'

The popular conception of Māori as a dying race was contradicted by the fact that the Māori population was actually increasing in the early 1900s. Goldie's often sentimental portraits are now seen by some people as relics of colonial racism.

At the time, Māori viewers valued Goldie's portraits. As depictions of named individuals, they commanded respect and evoked pride. Today, the descendants of his subjects regard the portraits as taonga, or precious treasures, which provide a vital link to their ancestors.



Samuel Butler

Self portrait

1873

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Like many young English men in the mid nineteenth century, Samuel Butler came to New Zealand to make his fortune.

Butler also came to New Zealand to escape family expectations. The son and grandson of clergymen, Butler was expected to enter the church in due course. After studying at Cambridge he lived and worked in a London parish, preparing to be ordained. During this time however he began to question some of the principles of Christianity, and appealed to his father to support him to return to Cambridge to study towards becoming a professional artist.

Butler's refusal to be ordained met with his family's disapproval. It was decided that the best thing would be to send him off to New Zealand – a conveniently distant destination.

In a letter home Butler bluntly stated that the only reason people emigrated to New Zealand was to make money. After his arrival in early 1860 he set about doing just that. By October, after months of criss-crossing the Canterbury backcountry in horseback, Butler had claimed 55,000 acres of land, and established the sheep farm he named Mesopotamia.

When Butler returned to England four years later, it was with a healthy profit from his farming activities that made him independent from his family. Settling in Cambridge he was able to pursue his artistic career, studying at art schools and exhibiting at the Royal Academy. This self-portrait, painted in 1873, is very much in the disciplined realist style favoured by the Academy.

However, it is for his writing rather than his painting that Butler is best remembered. In 1872, the year before this self-portrait was made, Butler published his most famous work, the satirical novel *Erewhon*.

*Erewhon* tells the tale of a traveller in a faraway land who encounters an upside-down society where sickness is punishable and crime an illness, the church is mocked and machines are banned for fear they will one day supersede humans. The descriptions of the land of Erewhon strongly recall the Canterbury high country Butler lived in and explored. As he writes in the book's opening chapter:

'I am there now, as I write; I fancy that I can see the downs, the huts, the plain, and the river-bed – that torrent pathway of desolation, with its distant roar of waters. Oh, wonderful! wonderful! So lonely and so solemn, with the sad grey clouds above, and no sound save a lost lamb bleating upon the mountainside, as though its little heart were breaking.'



Petrus van der Velden

Mountain Stream, Otira Gorge

1893

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For Petrus van der Velden, painting nature seems to have come close to a kind of worship; he once said: 'The aim of our existence is nothing else than to study nature and with so doing to understand how grand and pure [it] is.'

Born in Rotterdam in 1837, Van der Velden was 53, and an artist of considerable reputation when he and his family emigrated to Christchurch in 1890. In Holland Van der Velden had been associated with the Hague School, a group of artists who shared a strong interest in the moods of nature, the effects of light on the landscape, the depiction of the land in a way that captured both its reality and its capacity to be awe-inspiring.

In January 1891 Van der Velden made his first visit to the Otira region.

The Otira Gorge was a well-known scenic attraction and a popular subject for artists, but Van der Velden was not interested in painting a pretty tourist scene. Legend has it that Van der Velden puzzled the Otira locals deeply. They were not used to painters who dozed in the sun when the weather was fine, but sprang into action when a storm approached.

Whether this is true or not, his paintings of the Otira Gorge reveal the drama of the stormy landscape. Van der Velden seems to place himself head-on to the river: standing in his place, we feel as if a bright torrent of water is about to rush down and engulf us.

When visiting Otira, Van der Velden worked out of doors, making quick sketches that recorded the changing effects of the light and shadows on the landscape. Back in his studio he would transform these into large oil paintings. To save money he occasionally painted over his own earlier works – *Mountain Stream, Otira Gorge* is painted over a work entitled *The Convalescent* that he had brought with him from Holland.



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Gerrit Dou

The Physician

1653

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The window surround that Gerrit Dou has used in this painting enhances the illusion that we are looking into a miniature living world.

In the foreground of the painting an impressively robed doctor holds a flask up to the light, examining its contents. The liquid is not the result of some feat of chemistry, however, in fact it is urine, and it is likely the doctor is conducting a pregnancy test, either for the woman in the background or another person in her care. The symbolic objects that Dou has included in the work suggest a positive result might not altogether be happy news. The cherubs playing with goats in the sculpture beneath the window ledge symbolise sinful pleasure, and the birdcage in the background of the work represents imprisoned love.

Dou was one of the first artists in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Holland to depict the everyday life of the middle classes, a theme known as genre painting. *The Physician* is a particularly fine example of his speciality, paintings in which well-dressed figures stand in windows or carved niches, occupied by mundane activities: reading, preparing food, watering flowers, sharpening pens, playing music or pulling teeth.

Dou was also a leading figure in a group of artists in Leiden known as *fijnschilders*, or fine painters, whose work was characterised by fine detail and very precise painting. Dou himself worked with the very finest of material, including brushes with only three hairs, and painted on wood or copper panels, because these had a smoother surface than canvas.

Dou's works were sought after by collectors throughout Europe, including Queen Christina in Stockholm and Cosimo III de Medici in Florence. King Charles II of England even offered him the post of court painter, which he refused. Despite his international reputation, Dou rarely left his native Leiden.

*The Physician* is the oldest and most important work in the Christchurch Art Gallery's international collection. It was brought to Canterbury in the second half of the 19th century by Ernest Gray, a farmer who established Coldstream station in south Canterbury. The work was bequeathed to the Gallery in 1964 by Gray's descendant Heathcote Helmore, a prominent Christchurch architect.



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Henri Fantin-Latour

Still Life

1893

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'You're going to have fun with this!' ninety year old Cantabrian Frank White joked about his will shortly before he died. And indeed nothing prepared the trustees of his estate for the amazingly eclectic art collection they found in his home in Silverwood, a small town in Canterbury.

This still life by French painter Henri Fantin-Latour is one of eleven works acquired by the Christchurch Art Gallery in 2000 from Frank White's estate. The eleven works joined the many others in the collection that have been generously donated or bequeathed to the Gallery by groups, artists and private individuals.

White had emigrated to New Zealand in 1927, aged 18, from his family home in Somerset, England. In 1938 he inherited most of his parents' estate, and had more than a tonne of carefully documented heirlooms and household items shipped to Canterbury.

Following White's death, the trustees of his estate invited the Gallery to have first choice of the works of art from his bequest. This proved to be a rare opportunity for the Gallery to acquire some significant works to complement and extend its international collection.

Fantin-Latour's *Still Life* is the stand-out painting from the works the Gallery selected. Before this, the Gallery owned only a minor work by this important 19<sup>th</sup>-century painter, famed for his flower paintings.

Although he kept a studio in Paris, many of Fantin-Latour's paintings were made at his wife's country cottage in Normandy, where the garden provided a wide range of potential still life subjects. He was linked to the Impressionist painters of the late 19th century, and his work shows a sensitivity to light found in Impressionist paintings. However, unlike his contemporaries he had a horror of painting out of doors, and preferred to work within the more controllable environment of the studio.

This still life is a good example of Fantin-Latour's style. He often used the shape of a pyramid as a compositional device in his still lifes, and here he marries an accurate depiction of each of the parts of the work – roses, peaches and grapes – with beautifully modulated colour and a light-soaked warmth.



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Frederic Leighton

Teresina  
c.1874

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This small yet exquisite study of an Italian girl is one of the treasures of the Gallery's Victorian painting collection.

*Teresina* is one of a number of portraits of young women painted by Lord Leighton in the 1870s. The models for the paintings were English, Spanish or Italian women, who posed for Leighton in peasant dress or other costumes. The lovely subjects have equally poetic names: Teresina, Serefina, Catarina. It is likely that this study is a preparatory work for one of the large and dramatic paintings that Leighton was famous for.

*Teresina* is a very good example of the kind of idealised painting produced in the late 19th century by artists inspired by the artists of the Renaissance. These Neo-Classical painters favoured classical subjects, such as Greek and Roman myths and religious scenes, and were inspired by the painting of great artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Titian.

*Teresina* presents an idealised beauty. Leighton uses the plain brown background, simple blue dress and white blouse to set off the model's creamy skin, and the warm glow of her cheeks and lips. The work is beautifully painted, with barely visible brushstrokes. Leighton's artistry is most apparent around the edges of the face, which meld softly into the girl's hair.

*Teresina* was painted when Leighton was at the peak of popularity, two years before he was made president of the Royal Academy. The work was shown at the Royal Academy in 1876, and came to New Zealand in 1906 as part of the International Exhibition in Christchurch, where it was purchased by the Canterbury Society of Arts. The Society presented *Teresina* to the Gallery in 1932.



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George Dunlop Leslie

*In the wizard's garden*  
c.1904

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A beautiful, if sad, young woman stands lost in thought in George Dunlop Leslie's majestic painting. She holds her skirts up before her, suggesting she is on the brink of moving; the stream behind her forms a threshold she might cross. Will she walk towards the sinister man in black who guards the entrance to the light filled garden beyond? And if she does, will he let her through, or block her path?

Although painted at the beginning of the twentieth century, *In the wizard's garden* is a typically Victorian narrative work, with a serious moral lesson underlying its decorative surface. The symbols in the work suggest that matter the young woman so earnestly contemplates is that of her virginity: her dress is scarlet, the colour that signifies the fallen women; the shears have their open blades facing towards her; the garden she stands in, with its cut reeds and fallen leaves, seems caught in winter's hold, even if the garden beyond the wall appears full of green leaves and bathed in sunlight.

Born in London in 1835, George Dunlop Leslie was the son of artist CR Leslie, a prominent member of the Royal Academy. George Leslie followed in his father's footsteps, studying at the Royal Academy School, showing at the Academy, and elected an Associate Royal Academician in 1868.

Early in his life Leslie was a member of the St John's Wood Clique, a small, well-off community of artists who lived in St John's Wood in London. Although the members of the club were seen to live somewhat bohemian lifestyles, artistically they were highly conservative. Most of the Clique belonged to the Royal Academy, and they favoured moralising scenes, often with a dash of sentimentality, or worthy episodes from English history and Shakespearean drama.

In 1884 Leslie moved to Wallingford-on-Thames, where later he would paint *In the wizard's garden*. While earlier in his career Leslie had painted contemporary scenes of affluent middle-class life, by this time he was specialising in studies of women and children in romantic and historical settings, explaining the medieval look of the costumes shown here. Although conservative, Leslie had a solid reputation in England and this work was selected for the New Zealand International Exhibition in Christchurch in 1906, from which the painting was purchased and made its way into the Gallery.



Margaret Stoddart

An introduction to her watercolours

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Margaret Stoddart was part of the first generation of New Zealand artists who were born and educated in this country and went on to succeed as professional artists. In a career that spanned fifty years she achieved critical and popular success, and found a ready market for her work.

In 1936, the year following her death, a tribute to Stoddart was published in the newly-established magazine *Art in New Zealand*. The authors wrote:

'For half a century Miss Stoddart gave a guiding hand to the art life of the community... her name will go down as one of the great battlers for true art in the consolidating period of Canterbury's development.'

Born in Christchurch in 1865, in 1882 Stoddart became one of the earliest students to enrol at the Canterbury College School of Art. Among the subjects she was taught were botanical drawings and flower painting.

Stoddart quickly earned a reputation as a leading flower painter. Her early career offered her considerable freedom for a woman at this time. She made frequent trips into the Canterbury backcountry, making studies of plants and flowers, and travelled twice to the remote Chatham Islands, 800 kilometres east of the South Island.

At the end of the 19th century in New Zealand, a trip to Europe was seen as essential for an artist's development. In 1898 Stoddart travelled to Europe and based herself in the artist colony of St Ives, Cornwall. Freed from the constraints of home, she had greater freedom to work as an artist, and was determined to compete as a professional painter in the British art world.

Stoddart spent nine years travelling and painting in Europe, during which time she explored new subjects with an increasing focus on landscape, and developed a freer and looser way of working in watercolour.

In 1907 she returned to Christchurch, and worked consistently until her death in 1934. Her later paintings capture the many faces of the Canterbury region: brightly coloured suburban gardens, the scrub, tussock and wide sky of the hills and plains, the seasonal changes of the Avon River, shingly riverbeds and imposing mountain ranges. A critic writing in 1929 observed:

'She surprises us anew every year with her strong and biting grip on the essentials of things. In her landscapes she has long thrown aside the search for prettiness, and has evolved herself a method by which the very primeval elements nature seem to be laid bare – the very stones seem instinct with a life and purpose of their own...'



Sydney Lough Thompson

Horses on the quay

c.1920

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Sydney Lough Thompson was one of New Zealand's most successful expatriate artists of the early to mid twentieth century. Unlike fellow expatriates Frances Hodgkins and Raymond McIntyre, Thompson divided his time between New Zealand and Europe, sustaining a serious career in both places.

Thompson grew up on a farm on the edge of the Canterbury Plains; later, a critic would attribute his 'friendly rendering' of horses to the artist's emotional connection with farming life. His father encouraged Thompson to go to art school, and he attended Canterbury College School of Art, while also taking lessons from the Dutch immigrant painter Petrus van der Velden.

Thompson was in his early twenties when in 1900 he travelled to Europe, visiting London and studying in Paris. Mastering technique was extremely important to Thompson, who believed that only after artists had thoroughly conquered technique could they forget about *how* they were painting, and really begin to express themselves.

It was not until the early 1920s, when he was painting in the small seaside town of Concarneau in Brittany, that Thompson felt he had truly reached this point in his own work. During this time Thompson's painting became stronger, freer and bolder. Simple scenes like *Horses on the quay*, which shows returning fishermen loading their catch onto carts, with the swirling sky anchored by the solid dark masses of the patient horses, captured the powerful connection Thompson sensed existed between the French fisher families and the environment in which they lived and worked.

Thompson's work found favour in Europe and in New Zealand. He was described in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* in 1920 as 'a vibrant painter, gay, truthful, full of life, who has rendered in broad lively strokes all the aspects of Concarneau.' He continued to show in New Zealand, and in the 1920s was one of the country's most celebrated artists. Although his style fell out of favour in artistic circles in New Zealand and Europe from the 1930s, Thompson's appeal to his audience held strong. He had a long career as a professional artist and was still painting in his late eighties.



Raymond McIntyre

Suzette and Ruth

both c.1914

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When Raymond McIntyre left Christchurch for London he was thirty years old and probably had few regrets. He had been exhibiting in Christchurch for ten years, and had achieved some small local success, but stylistic leanings away from the realistic and academic and towards the impressionistic were not warmly received.

In London McIntyre studied briefly under some of the leading painters of the day, and in 1911 began exhibiting with the Goupil Gallery, a noted contemporary art gallery. In England McIntyre's style became freer, looser and more stylised, and his cropped and off-centre compositions reflected the widespread interest in Japanese print-making and photography.

*Suzette* and *Ruth* belong to a series of portrait heads McIntyre produced just before World War One. Although often individually named, the works are usually based on a single woman, an actress named Phyllis Cavendish. Cavendish was McIntyre's favoured model: in a letter home to his brother he noted her 'very refined interesting pale face' and described her as 'very conscientious'.

With their extremely simplified compositions, strongly drawn lines and sparing use of colour, these portraits are stylistically the boldest works McIntyre produced. Though intimate in size and aspect – the viewer comes face to face with the women – *Suzette* and *Ruth* seem more like fashion photographs than character studies.

In fact, in another letter home McIntyre made fun of an artist who visited his studio and was very admiring of Miss Cavendish as he saw her depicted in McIntyre's portraits. 'Really, I have invented her type,' McIntyre wrote, and went on to describe how he would change his model's appearance to create the formal effect he wanted. Even the hairstyle was carefully chosen; like almost all of the works in this series, the young women *Suzette* and *Ruth* have their hair coiled over their ears, a style McIntyre had seen girls wearing on visits to France. McIntyre favoured this rather severe style because it emphasised the shape of the head.

These stylish and intriguing portraits are generally seen as the high point in McIntyre's career. Although moderately successful in London, McIntyre seemed more interested in enjoying the artistic, musical, literary and theatrical circles he was part of than in pushing his painting career. Throughout the 1920s he worked steadily as an art critic and in 1926 he stopped exhibiting. McIntyre died suddenly in London in 1933, aged fifty-four.



Frances Hodgkins

Zipp  
1945

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When World War II began in September 1939 Frances Hodgkins was seventy, and had already lived through one World War. Less resilient than earlier in life, she found the hardships of wartime England hard to bear. At the beginning of the war she was living in a quiet village in Dorset that was suddenly full of military activity; gunfire on the coast made the windows of her studio rattle. One of her patrons made his country house, The Croft, in Somerset available to her and she sought refuge here.

Peace at The Croft was short-lived, however, as German bombers began flying overhead. In a letter to her brother William, she wrote, 'this new pilot horror makes us feel rather desperate, especially at nights – overhead both day and night doing their damndest to keep one awake and guessing – you no doubt wonder why I stay? So do I.'

Hodgkins returned to Dorset, although she continued to visit The Croft. On one of these visits a family of evacuees stole some of her clothes, and according to The Croft's housekeeper, this incident inspired *Zipp*.

Hodgkins is known for her works like *Zipp*, which use a collection of personal items to form a self-portrait of the artist. Hodgkins' earlier still-life cum self-portraits are usually filled with light and extravagant colours. In *Zipp* however a collection of darkly toned objects, including the snaking zip of the painting's title, seem to swirl in black void. The streaks of pale paint that outline her signature and the date of the work stand out like searchlights.

When she painted *Zipp* Hodgkins had been making art for nearly sixty years. She came to prominence quite late in life, and was in her sixties when she became recognised as a leading member of the British artistic avant-garde in the 1930s.

Hodgkins worked up until a few months before her death in May 1947. She continued to receive acclaim and recognition in the final years of her life: her large exhibition at the Lefevre Gallery in London in November 1946 was enthusiastically received, and *Zipp* was shown in the *Artists of Fame and Promise* exhibition at the Leicester Gallery in London earlier that year.

Following her death, Hodgkins' reputation continued to grow, and New Zealand soon began to claim her as its most important international artist.



Frances Hodgkins

Belgian Refugees

1916

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New Zealand-born artist Frances Hodgkins was living and teaching in Concarneau in Brittany when Germany declared war on France in August 1914 and the country fell into turmoil. After several anxious weeks, Hodgkins crossed the Channel in September and reached England, where she based herself at St Ives in Cornwall for the war's duration.

When Germany declared war, it demanded free passage through neutral Belgium for German troops invading France. When Belgium refused it was harshly punished. Hundreds of thousands of Belgians were displaced, with over a million seeking refuge in Holland and a quarter of a million fleeing to Britain.

On 15 October 1914, Hodgkins wrote to her mother:

'It has been a black week. The fall of Antwerp a great blow ... The misery and horrors are too awful – Belgium is a mere skeleton of herself, two thirds of her population are flocking to England, penniless and starving ... We live from day to day ... normal life is quite upset[,] one's centre of gravity queerly shifted. I envy the people with something definite to do.'

The plight of Belgium became a patriotic subject, taken up by a number of artists in Britain. Hodgkins produced a small number of works on the subject, which was unusual for her as she rarely responded so directly to the events surrounding her. However, she approached the theme in her own distinctive way, with subjects that matched her long-held interest in depicting mother and child groupings.

In *Belgian Refugees*, a family huddles together against a bleak grey background. In this, one of her earliest oil paintings, Hodgkins' brushwork is free and distinctive. The bright red of the mother's jacket and the golden hair of the child she is nursing form the centre of the work, and contrast against the sober colours around them. *Belgian Refugees* strongly conveys the sadness of a small, lost family group adrift on the tides of war.



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Laurence Lowry

Factory at Widnes

1956

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In 1956, when he painted *Factory at Widnes*, Laurence Lowry was one of England's most famous artists. Reproductions of his paintings hung in houses and schools throughout the country.

However, while they knew his work, the public knew little about the artist. Lowry was a deeply secretive man, who presented a careful face to the media.

Although he told journalists that he was a full time painter, Lowry had actually worked in other jobs since he was a teenager. When he retired in 1952, he had worked for forty-two years as a clerk and rent collector at the same company. Lowry kept his day job a secret because he was worried he would not be taken seriously if people knew he only painted in his spare time.

In fact, it was his day-to-day work that inspired Lowry's paintings. 'All my material was on my doorstep,' he once said. He turned what he saw on his rent collecting trips in the towns surrounding Manchester into paintings; his subjects include accidents, arrests, evictions, fights and funerals.

Typically, Lowry's paintings show crowds of small figures – they're like matchstick men – rushing about in the industrial landscape. In *Factory at Widnes* there are only three figures. It is a sparser and more elegant work, with a very formal composition. The strong line of the path leads up into the painting, and the dark chimney soars outwards.

The Christchurch Art Gallery purchased *Factory at Widnes* in 1957. In the 1950s the Gallery was criticised for the lack of contemporary British and New Zealand painting in its collection. In an attempt to address this problem, local architect Heathcote Helmore visited the well-known Lefevre Gallery on a trip to London in 1956.

Helmore was impressed by Lowry's work, and in 1957 the artist allowed two of his paintings to be sent to Christchurch. They were shown in the Canterbury Society of Arts Autumn Exhibition, from which the Gallery purchased *Factory at Widnes*. The painting was one of the Gallery's most important acquisitions of the 1950s and remains the highlight of its collection of modern British art.



Gordon Walters

Untitled

1977

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
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ART GALLERY

Gordon Walters' interest in Māori art dated back to his childhood visits to the Colonial Museum in Wellington. Modern art was something he absorbed through books and magazines.

When he travelled to Europe in 1950 Walters realised what he had known all along, that modern art had learned important lessons from the arts of the Pacific.

'The penny dropped,' he then recalled. 'This was one way out of the dilemma of what to paint in New Zealand.'

Walters first began working with the koru motif in the mid 1950s. The koru, or fern bud, is a traditional Māori decorative form, used in rafter paintings in meeting houses, on incised gourds and in tattooing.

Walters adapted the koru motif, straightening and simplifying it to a circle and stripe. This simple motif would help drive his work for the next thirty years. It would also generate one of the most distinctive bodies of work in New Zealand art.

Walters' first experiments with the koru motif were small ink drawings. It wasn't until 1964 that he produced the first mature koru painting. After nearly ten years of testing and refining, Walters exhibited the koru works for the first time in 1966. They were immediately recognised as a major achievement in New Zealand painting.

Each koru work is the result of a painstaking process. In 1982 Walters described how they were created:

'After selecting one from a series of a small-scale studies I make a full-size drawing on paper, in outline, and then transfer it to stretched canvas. The canvas is primed, usually with three coats of acrylic gesso, lightly sanded, then given three or four coats (sometimes more) of white acrylic or PVA. After the image is transferred to the canvas it is outlined in acrylic with a very fine ruled line, then painted with four or five coats of whatever colour I am using.'

The visual power of the koru paintings lies in the studied arrangements of colour and shape. In 1966 Walters said, 'I believe that dynamic relations are most clearly expressed by the repetition of a few simple elements.' The few simple elements in this painting – the symmetry of the composition, the repetition of the stacked forms, the choice of subtle whites and greys – produce a calm and meditative work.



Bill Hammond

Living Large 6  
1995

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Bill Hammond's unique bird figures have been a constant feature of his paintings since a 1989 trip to the Subantarctic Auckland Islands. There, Hammond found a landscape that had never been settled or cultivated, brimming with bird life that had never been preyed on.

When researching the Islands, Hammond discovered Sir Walter Buller, the nineteenth-century authority on New Zealand's native birds. Buller's fascination with New Zealand's birds was such that he collected thousands upon thousands of specimens, and thus contributed to the extinction of many species.

Hammond was revolted by Buller's deadly passion. He began to create large paintings in rich, sombre colours, that place these lost species like ghosts or guardians in an older, wilder, lonelier version of New Zealand.

In *Living Large 6* the heads of the birds are modelled on the huia. The huia was treasured by Māori for its distinctive white-tipped tail feathers. After European settlement of New Zealand and the conversion of native bush to farmland the numbers of huia decreased, and the already rare bird became an extremely desirable addition to bird enthusiasts' collections. On one three-day trip alone in 1883 Buller shot and collected sixteen huia. The addition of the huia to a list of protected species did nothing to stop Buller; in one devious, tragic act, he quietly took two living birds intended for a bird sanctuary and sent them to a rich British collector.

Along with the iconic bird figures, music is another constant feature in Hammond's paintings; he has named works after song titles, and musical notes appear in floating scores in his paintings and decorate the bodies of the birds. One of the works in the Living Large series is actually painted on the large case made to transport a double bass. In *Living Large 6* the birds cluster around the mysterious figure of a horse, dressed in formal clothes, holding a cello at arm's length. The inky blue tones of the painting, the streaks of paint like running tears, the ghostly white bodies of the birds and the cold dark ocean combine to create a painting that is like a sad love song for a lost world.



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Bill Hammond

The Fall of Icarus  
1995

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

In *The Fall of Icarus* Bill Hammond gives us a picture of New Zealand as it might once have been.

The painting shows a wet, lush rainforest. Strange birdmen figures stand in the work, like guardians defending a final outpost against some threat. However, Hammond also suggests that the danger may already have arrived – empty bird skins hang from one tree and the birds seem to have undergone a transformation, growing arms and legs and patterned suits of clothes.

Hammond's inspiration for his unique bird figures came from a trip he made to the Sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands in 1989. Hammond has said:

'We would see groups of birds congregated on the shoreline, gazing out to sea. You could walk past yellow-eyed penguins with their heads back, eyes rolled up strangely, their wings raised, and then come back three hours later and they would still be there, in exactly the same position, in a beautiful trance-like state.'

*The Fall of Icarus* has a dreamlike, otherworldly feel, with its bird figures, fiery volcanoes and emerald-green light. Hammond has described the Auckland Islands as being like New Zealand before human settlement. He says:

'You feel like a time-traveller, as if you have just stumbled upon it – primeval forests, ratas like Walt Disney would make. It's a beautiful place, but it's also full of ghosts, shipwrecks, death...'

Icarus was a famous figure in Greek mythology, who fell to his death in the Icarian Sea after flying too close to the sun on a pair of artificial wings held together with wax. Hammond's painting is a response to another painting called *The Fall of Icarus*, by 16th-century Dutch artist Pieter Brueghel. In Brueghel's version Icarus plummets into the sea, unseen by peasants in the painting going about their daily lives. In Hammond's painting Icarus's fall is represented by a thick streak of waxy white paint that tumbles from the top of the work, as the birdmen watch on, unmoving.



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Colin McCahon

*Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is*  
1958-59

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

In 1972 Colin McCahon recalled a moment in the making of *Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is*:

'This was unfortunate in that it wouldn't go right, and I got madder and madder (which shows the childish mentality of painters). I hurled a whole lovely quart tin of black Dulux at the board and reconstructed the painting out of the mess.'

*Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is* was made in the very productive period following McCahon's 1958 trip to the United States. On the four month trip McCahon visited more than sixty museums and art galleries. He also gained first-hand knowledge of work of contemporary American abstract painters such as Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning, which suggested new ways of painting to him.

In *Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is* the landscape is simplified into four zones; a luminous sky, a dark ridgeline, a grey body suggesting water and a dark foreground. In an experiment to introduce texture into the work, McCahon mixed sand into the dark paint.

Plunging into the painting from the top left-hand corner is a dark diagonal rod, which creates a sense of movement in this otherwise serene work. It could be read as a pointer, or a threat, or as part of a cross – a reminder that the crucifixion is never far away in McCahon's work.

McCahon began incorporating words into his work in the 1940s. Often he used text drawn from the Bible, or from the work of New Zealand poets, or Māori sources. The words inscribed on this work are probably McCahon's own.

*Tomorrow will be the same but not as this is* was shown in an exhibition of McCahon's work at Gallery 91 in Christchurch in 1959. A group led by Christchurch City librarian Ron O'Reilly decided to start a subscription to raise money to purchase the work for the city's art collection. Despite the objections of the Gallery's director and outright condemnation of one of the city councillors, the work was eventually accepted into the Christchurch Art Gallery in 1962, where it is now a treasured part of its collection of McCahon's works.



Rita Angus

Cass

c.1936

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

In 2006 Rita Angus's *Cass* was voted New Zealand's greatest painting by viewers of a television arts programme. For such an icon, it had surprisingly humble beginnings.

In August 1936, Rita Angus and her friend and fellow artist Louise Henderson took a train trip to Cass in search of something to paint. Cass, 116 kilometres north-west of Christchurch, is a small settlement at the foot of the Southern Alps.

Angus and Henderson stayed at a field station run by Canterbury University College. They sketched every day. It was splendid and remote, and a bit forgotten. For Angus it was the perfect subject. It was, she wrote, 'all ready to be seen'.

In the 1930s New Zealand artists were searching for a way to communicate the essential truth of the New Zealand landscape. Like other artists at this time, especially those in Canterbury, Angus developed a style that emphasised simplicity and clarity. Critics at the time praised her for her unsentimentality.

Angus drew on a wide range of influences, including Egyptian art, Italian Renaissance painting, Japanese prints, Buddhism, and the French artist Paul Cézanne, who painted landscapes as a grouping of simplified geometrical forms.

In Angus's *Cass* we're drawn through the landscape translated into a series of repeated forms. At first triangles dominate – the mountains on each side of the painting forming two triangles and these overlap with the triangular stand of pine trees in the middle.

Then we hit the verticals – the power poles, the buildings, the trees – and, balancing them, the horizontals – the platform that runs across the centre of the work, the stacked timber. Angus's friend, the poet Denis Glover, said the pile of timber looked like cheese straws.

Contrasted with these straight lines are the swirling shapes of the trees, the hill shapes and the clouds, which give *Cass* a sense of movement, as if every part of it is somehow alive. Each part of the painting is treated with the same crisp attention and the whole thing hums with colour.

A pioneer of modern painting in New Zealand, Angus was strongly committed to her artistic practice, despite many years of ill health and financial struggle. A pacifist, an early feminist, with strong interest in Eastern religion and philosophy, in 1947 she summed up her attitude towards art in this way:

'As a woman painter, I work to represent love of humanity and faith in mankind in a world, which is to me, richly variable and infinitely beautiful.'



Rata Lovell-Smith

Hawkins

1933

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

From the mid 1920s Christchurch painter Rata Lovell-Smith and her husband, fellow artist Colin Lovell-Smith, made many painting trips into the Canterbury foothills and mountains. On one of these trips they happened upon the small farming settlement of Hawkins, which Rata Lovell-Smith later returned to paint.

*Hawkins* is a painting of great immediacy: it hits the eye at high speed. The tightly controlled design, simplified forms and the decorative effect of the crisp blocks of colour are characteristic of Lovell-Smith's painting in the 1920s and 1930s.

A newspaper critic writing in 1927 described Lovell-Smith's painting as 'on the whole too poster-ish'. Her paintings, with their strong lines, clear colours and matter of fact nature challenged the academic tradition of landscape painting in New Zealand, in which dramatic or scenic aspects of the landscape were depicted with academic aplomb.

However, Lovell-Smith was not interested in imitating nature. Instead, her work is in tune with contemporary British trends that favoured simple forms, blocks of colour, strong compositions and the use of clear light and bold shadow. Her use of colour is particularly sophisticated. Rather than using painted outlines to separate shapes, she lays flat areas of vivid, sometimes exaggerated colour against each other. By stripping every feature of the painting back to a simple form, then placing it carefully in the composition, Lovell-Smith created an attractive sense of order and clarity in her work.

While early critics may have thought her work was 'counter to good tradition', Lovell-Smith's depiction of a railway siding in a rural landscape anticipates a theme that became very popular amongst Canterbury artists in the 1930s and 1940s. Artists like Rita Angus and Bill Sutton depicted the gradual spread of industry and infrastructure throughout the countryside, using the same simplified approach to the landscape that Lovell-Smith pioneered.



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William (Bill) Sutton

Dry September  
1949

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

1949 was the year Bill Sutton got a motorbike.

'Instantly my horizons broadened,' he wrote in his diary. 'No more townscapes; the hills and open country become a happy hunting ground.'

Recently returned from a trip to Europe, in 1949 Sutton saw the Canterbury region with fresh eyes. He began to create his iconic paintings of Canterbury in which, by taking individual details from a range of places – a country church from here, some stringy trees from there – and building them into a composite he distilled the essence of the landscape.

Likewise, in *Dry September* Sutton has adapted the landscape to achieve the effect he desired. In his own words:

'The first time I set up a framework and fitted the subject into it was when I painted *Dry September*. The vertical on the right and the horizontals at the rear reflected the canvas shape, and I needed to adjust the background to conform; so having enough faith I moved Mount Horrible and Corner Knob into their new positions. The filaments of cirrus cloud along the top edge are echoed in the strands of gravel on the extreme right.'

Like fellow Christchurch artist Doris Lusk, Sutton was interested in the contrast between what he described as 'the permanence of the land and the temporary nature of man-made structures in it.' In *Dry September* the bridge railing is pressed up against the edge of the picture. Beyond it stretches the seemingly endless Canterbury backcountry of shingly riverbed, tussocky plains and distant mountains.

The Canterbury landscape was an enduring subject for Sutton throughout his long painting life. He believed passionately in the importance of the Canterbury painting tradition, proclaiming in one speech:

'Every time a Venetian painter raised his brush, that brush celebrated Venice, and I hope that I'm not being over-presumptuous in saying that something of the same sort has happened and *is* happening here in Canterbury. Here, if anywhere in New Zealand, a district has seized hold of the imagination of generations of painters. and this immense canvas has been presented to us with a few, but very bold marks upon it.'



Doris Lusk

Landscape, Overlooking Kaitawa, Waikaremoana  
1948

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Hydro-electric power generation has a long history in New Zealand; the first hydro-electric power plant was installed in Otago in 1885. Work on the vast Waikaremoana hydro-electric power scheme in the North Island began in 1920, and in 1929 the Tuai power station, was opened, followed by Piripaua in 1943.

Work began on the Kaitawa power station in the early 1930s but the station didn't start producing until 1948, the year that Christchurch painter Doris Lusk came to visit friends living in the harsh, remote settlement. She completed a small but important group of paintings relating to the Waikaremoana power development.

In *Landscape, Overlooking Kaitawa, Waikaremoana* we look down from a high viewpoint onto the construction village built to house workers. In the foreground we see the pipeline carrying water to the power station. The huts, water pipes and powerhouse seem to rest on the skin of the landscape, and the rows of hills enclose the settlement, creating a claustrophobic effect.

The intrusion of industry into the landscape is a strong theme in Lusk's work, and one that she shared with a number of contemporaries, including Colin McCahon, a close friend. Like McCahon, Lusk's paintings from the 1940s show the landscape stripped back to its bones. Here Lusk employs simple repeated shapes and dark shadow to give the hillsides a monumental feeling.

Lusk's landscape has a sense of power that is shared by the opening lines of an early poem by New Zealand poet James K. Baxter:

In this scarred country, this cold threshold land,  
The mountains crouch like tigers. By the sea  
Folk talk of them hid vaguely out of sight.  
But here they stand in massed solidity  
To seize upon the day and night horizon.

*Excerpt from 'The Mountains' by James K. Baxter, reproduced with permission from the estate of James K. Baxter.*



Colin McCahon

*The Crucifixion According to St Mark*

1947

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

For Colin McCahon, the New Zealand landscape was a place where great dramas could unfold.

In 1947 McCahon made his first paintings in which biblical scenes were translated into the New Zealand landscape. In this work, McCahon took his subject from St Mark's gospel, a narrative of Christ's death and resurrection that McCahon described as stark and cruel.

McCahon depicts the moment of Christ's death. Christ cries out 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?', or My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? His mother Mary and the apostle John stand on the left of the work; on the right-hand side, an onlooker offers up a sponge soaked in vinegar for Christ to drink, while saying 'Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.' In the background of the work the temple is torn in two by something that looks like an atomic explosion.

In placing this scene in the New Zealand landscape, McCahon was following a very old tradition. In the 14th century, early Renaissance painters had depicted religious narratives in a local European setting. The use of painted inscriptions from the Bible was also a feature of religious art at this time.

McCahon nevertheless gives this painting a very modern treatment. The figures are extremely simplified, almost brutal. Their speech bubbles are cartoon-like, and indeed, McCahon acknowledged the influence of comic books, and said that the style of his painted texts was influenced by the packaging on a brand of soap powder. The landscape is stripped back to a series of repeating shapes, and the yellow background, while recalling the gold leaf used in early religious paintings, is resolutely modern. Interestingly, McCahon includes himself in the work as an observer; his painted profile hovers just inside the right-hand side of the frame.

While these early religious works caused some consternation, they also had passionate supporters. A reviewer writing about the works' first public showing described them as a 'breathtaking shock'. He wrote:

'McCahon's pictures show an audacious and original vision in a tradition as old as religion itself... His raw crudity gives the same sledge-hammer force as the direct simplicity of the Biblical text... His sincerity, forthrightness and conviction, with his power to use symbols, are like a blast of fresh air.'

McCahon held *The Crucifixion According to St Mark* in high regard, describing it as the sum of all his early religious paintings. He gave the work to Ron O'Reilly, his close friend and a long-standing supporter, on the understanding that following O'Reilly's death the work would be given to the Christchurch Art Gallery. The painting entered the collection in 1982.



Louise Henderson

Portrait of Betty Curnow

1954

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Betty Curnow, wife of New Zealand poet Allen Curnow, was the subject of two fascinating and very different portraits.

In 1942 Curnow was depicted by Rita Angus as a housewife in her domestic environment, surrounded by pictures and objects that connected her to New Zealand's European settler heritage. The painting is an icon of New Zealand identity, and a high point in the regionalist style Canterbury painters like Angus were developing in the 1940s.

In contrast, Henderson's portrait of Curnow, painted twelve years later, shows a sophisticated and urbane woman who could be from anywhere. Where Angus had seen a wife and mother who could symbolise a generation of New Zealand women, Henderson saw Curnow as a Spanish dancer, and Curnow obligingly adopted this persona, her hair in a high bun, her lips painted deep red to match her dress, a dramatic shawl wrapped round her shoulders. She holds a white rose in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Curnow here is presented as an elegant, rather mysterious, very modern woman.

The cubist style of the painting is contributes to its modern feel. Although the basic outlines of Curnow's figure are not lost, the shape of her body and face are broken down into patches of strong colour, while the background is reduced to planes of soft and warm grey tones. Henderson's strong sense of design brings the two elements of figure and background into a harmonious overall composition.

Henderson was one of a number of painters in Auckland in the early 1950s working in this somewhat decorative cubist style that, although no longer seen as avant-garde overseas, was at the forefront of modernism in New Zealand. This portrait was painted not long after Henderson returned from a year spent in Paris, studying in the studio of the ageing but still significant cubist Jean Metzinger. On her return to Auckland Henderson was applauded for her intelligent grasp of the principles of modern painting, and a solo exhibition of her work at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1953 was seen as a sign of the growing maturity of New Zealand painting.



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Rita Angus

A goddess of mercy

1946/7

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Rita Angus saw her three goddess paintings – *Rutu*, *Sun goddess*, and the work we see here, *A goddess of mercy* – as the most important examples of her pacifist beliefs, and among the most significant works of her entire career.

Angus began attending pacifist meetings in Christchurch in the late 1930s. As well as appealing to her idealistic nature, she linked pacifism to her deeply held sense of artistic vocation: 'as an artist', she wrote in 1944, 'it is my work to create life and not to destroy'.

Angus began work on the goddess paintings shortly after the end of World War Two. She saw the three paintings as messengers she was sending out into the world; they carry her strong feelings about pacifism, womanhood and spirituality. As the world recovered from the shock and pain of war, Angus painstakingly crafted her messages of peace for the future.

*A goddess of mercy* is the first of the goddess paintings Angus completed. The work shows a serene young woman against a backdrop of farmland; that the woman is at one with nature is signalled by the trusting young deer that nestle against her and the willow branches that halo her head. In addition to her pacifist beliefs, Angus had a long-held interest in Buddhist teachings, and was drawn to Buddhist ideas about compassion and the interconnection of all living things. The title of *A goddess of mercy* and the pose of the young woman evoke the Buddhist goddess of mercy and compassion Kuan Yin, who is often depicted as a graceful woman making a gesture of blessing with her open palm.

Underlying *A goddess of mercy* is the painful loss Angus experienced in the first year of the war when her sister Edna died of an asthma attack. In 1947 she wrote to fellow artist Leo Bensemann: 'This year, I exhibit *A goddess of mercy* in memory of my sister, Edna, who died in December, 1939. Most of the idea of this painting was blocked in, just before and during, the week peace was declared in Europe. It is the pull between life and death, with the triumph of the living over the dead.'



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Tony Fomison

No!

1969-71

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

In a letter carefully housed in the Christchurch Art Gallery's archives, Tony Fomison tells the story of the making of this painting, the first of his works to be acquired for a public art gallery.

In the letter he details the houses he was living in while working on the painting, and where he bought the materials for it. Attached to the letter is a photocopy of an article and accompanying photograph published in an English newspaper in January 1966. Although the painting is based on the photograph, Fomison is careful to note it is not *about* the article or the event it describes.

You cannot read or hear these words without immediately wanting to know just what the article was about. Titled 'When 100,000 Cockneys go to Devon', the article describes plans to build satellite suburbs for Londoners in the Devonshire countryside. The photograph shows a man, his hand thrust towards the camera, his head pulled away, an angry and exasperated expression on his face. It is captioned 'The village blacksmith ... pulls a face at the thought of an invasion of townees'.

Fomison's early paintings often developed from photographs and illustrations that he chanced upon. He clipped this particular article from *The Sunday Times* when he was living in England, during an often-tumultuous three-year stint he spent in Europe that included three weeks in a Paris jail and three months in a London hospital.

*No!* is one of a series of portraits from photographs Fomison painted in the early 1970s. In these portraits dark, sombre colours and closely cropped compositions emphasise the intensity of the figures depicted, who were often prisoners, or people in mental asylums. Fomison said he was using the forms as metaphors for the way society treats the people on its margins. In *No!*, a defensive gesture made by a village blacksmith towards a newspaper photographer is transformed by Fomison into a larger statement about refusal, denial, and the distance we can create between ourselves.



Philip Clairmont

Fireplace

1971

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Philip Clairmont began painting domestic interiors while still at art school, and depictions of the rooms in which he spent time in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland are a significant part of the work he produced in his short career. Clairmont was attracted to the associations that these rooms had accumulated from the people who lived in them; he wrote in his fine arts dissertation 'A room contains within its four walls residue of human thoughts, actions and emotions, a visual catalyst of memories and associations past and present.'

The subject matter might be homely, but the works themselves are anything but domesticated. Acid colours and harsh bright lighting combine with anthropomorphised furnishings that leer, wink, and lurch towards the viewer.

In *Fireplace*, the grate has become a grinning mouth. Multiple eyes look back out at the viewer; the stone surround looks like giant's fingers reaching in towards the flames. Shots of blue and lavender add a hint of the unreal and magical to the work; Clairmont made notes in a workbook about his avoidance of natural colours, which enhanced the ambiguity and unsettling power of his paintings.

At the time of making this work Clairmont was immersed in student culture; the music of Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix, the psychedelic art of hippie culture and the plentiful presence of drugs and alcohol. Clairmont however was quick to note that he didn't work while under the influence – drugs were not conducive to his art making. In a 1980 interview he said:

'When I was smashed I would see things that reinforced what I was putting in my paintings. You can't actually work while you're taking the stuff. The thing is that drugs work both for and against creation. Anyway, they only reinforce things that must already exist in the artist.'

Clairmont was also strongly influenced by the German expressionists, particularly the painters Max Beckmann and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Reproductions of both artists' work were pinned to the walls of his studios. As Clairmont said:

'I found that the whole expressionist thing came closest to the core of the matter. It made more sense to me to paint in an expressionist way. If I paint a chair, my reaction to it and how I feel about it becomes part of the thing. So in a way each painting is a self portrait.'



Julia Morison

Tootoo  
2006

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

*Tootoo* is one of ten massive paintings, collectively titled *Gargantua's Petticoat*, that Christchurch artist Julia Morison produced for a major survey show of her work in 2006.

Fashion has often figured in Morison's work, as a collection of symbols and signs that can be creatively rearranged. Not only can clothing stand in for the human body, it can make statements about it; the way we make, wear and think about fashion says something about us as individuals and the culture we are part of.

While working on the series, Morison kept a small pile of source books in her studio. One of these was a vast history of fashion, often open at a section of elaborate hairstyles whose over-the-top constructions fascinated Morison. Another book, titled *Fashions of the Gilded Age*, contained page after page of detailed patterns for complicated garment underpinnings, from hoopskirts to corsets, designed to shape, contain and exaggerate the female figure.

Writer and curator Justin Paton has described the *Gargantua's Petticoat* paintings as 'part fashion parade, part war dance, part architectural frieze'. Paton also noted the furious but tightly controlled force of the works, the sense that the ripples and billows on the surface of the paintings are animated by a powerful bodily energy.

As a title, *Tootoo* summons up the iconic ballerina's costume, and the explosion of frills across the mid-section of the painting mimics the flurry of a dancer's skirt as she glides across the stage. From another angle, the tightly coiled tubes and swaying ruffles bring to mind a delicate aquatic creature, propelling itself effortlessly across the ocean floor.

*Tootoo* grew from a set of pencil sketches, turned into digital images to be manipulated on a computer screen, then made into vinyl stencils which were used to create the painting using shades of powdery and fleshy pink and deep satiny black. The final product reveals Morison's outstanding skill in bringing together the restraint of formal abstract painting with her rich imaginative power.



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Miranda Parkes

*Slumper*  
2006

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Slumped in the corner like a teenager at a party, this work by Miranda Parkes seems to be caught between two states. Is it a sculpture? Is it a painting? Where does one end and the other one start?

These are the kinds of questions that Parkes' art poses for us. She makes paintings that sit on the floor, or, like *Slumper*, fit into part of a room's architecture. While some abstract paintings might have a built up, brushy surface, Parkes's paintings push this further with their billowing, sagging, exuberant three-dimensions.

*Slumper* began with a piece of canvas, nine metres wide and three metres high. Parkes laid the canvas on the floor of the Invercargill studio she was occupying during her tenure as the William Hodges Fellow. The canvas was so big it had to be folded into thirds to fit onto the studio's floor. The canvas was painted, and then scrunched and crunched and arranged on the painting supports, which are too small to be up to the task of pulling the canvas out flat.

Stripes are a recurring feature in Parkes' paintings: she describes them as 'the simplest way of putting two colours together'. Interestingly, Bridget Riley, the British painter best known for her eye-dazzling black and white paintings of the 1960s, used stripes in her paintings for exactly the same reason. But where Riley's stripes are pristine, Parkes's stripes are warped and dissolved by the twists and bulges of the finished canvas's arrangements. Parkes is interested in the way that the scrunching of the canvas serves to undo or destroy any sense of a picture that might have been built up on it when it was flat.

Miranda Parkes is a recent graduate of the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts. She made *Slumper* specifically for the Christchurch Art Gallery, where it was shown in a 2006 exhibition entitled *Out of Erewhon*, which showcased the work of younger or emerging artists with links to the Canterbury region.



Judy Darragh

Cats and dogs

2003

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

From a distance, *Cats and dogs* looks like a burst of day-glo coloured sparks hovering in the Gallery. But get closer, and you can see how the brightly coloured bits and bobs of Lycra, fake fur and plastic tremble like raindrops from the ends of long springy piano wires. The swaying and dipping drops of colour bring out the pun in the title; it's raining cats and dogs in the gallery!

This shower of bright tacky colour brims with the cheerfulness that is so often part of Judy Darragh's work. In the 1980s Darragh became known as the Queen of Kitsch. Her personal collection of retro, sentimental and defiantly tacky items – from fake flowers to cake tins – often made its way into her works and from there into the gallery, creating a collision between high art and mass culture that questioned how decisions about taste and value are made.

Although she has consciously put aside the Queen of Kitsch title, Darragh continues to make work that blurs boundaries. The two-dollar shop has replaced the second-hand store as her favoured place to gather materials, bringing the thrill of the fast, cheap retail high to her work, alongside the 'sell sell sell' fluorescent colours that have become one of the signatures of Darragh's work. Together, they bring some of the manic nature of the marketplace into the cool, refined spaces of the art gallery.

Although the source material might be cheap and nasty, Darragh creates something beautiful and magical from it. Massed together and carefully suspended, the work as a whole is definitely more than the sum of its parts; happy, uplifting, proud.



Andrew Drummond

Device for Shadows and Reflection

2005

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Christchurch artist Andrew Drummond first became interested in kinetic, or moving, sculpture when he was introduced to expatriate New Zealander Len Lye's kinetic sculpture at teachers training college.

Studying art overseas in the mid 1970s, Drummond discovered more artists who were exploring new ways to make art, with technology and machines, through performances, and by using their own bodies. Drummond has described the experience as like 'being touched by an electric rod. It changed my life.'

After returning to New Zealand, in 1976 Drummond embarked on a series of performance works, which explored the relationship between humans and the land. His performances often involved ritual actions in which he drew attention to threats to the environment, or performed symbolic gestures that suggested cleansing or healing the landscape.

Since the 1990s, Drummond has moved towards working with objects, including kinetic sculptures. He has developed what one writer has called a personal periodic table of the elements; items that recur in his works include glass, bronze, slate, beeswax, copper, moss and coal.

Drummond's works explore what sculpture can be. Often he sets his sculptures to work, giving them tasks to perform: to pump water, to draw lines. *Device for Shadows and Reflection* is a meditative work with a quiet job, creating an ever-changing environment of light and shadow for the viewer to occupy.

'If there's one thing I want my art to do,' Andrew Drummond said in an interview in 2006, 'it is for people to look at it in a way that isn't about "understanding the idea". Rather, it's about allowing themselves to get lost in it. To stop long enough to be suspended in wonderment or disbelief.'



Ann Shelton

Doublet [After Heavenly Creatures]  
Parker/Hulme crime scene, Port Hills, Christchurch  
2001

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

In 1954 teenagers Pauline Parker and her best friend Juliet Hulme bludgeoned Pauline's mother Honora Parker to death on a path in the Port Hills, overlooking Christchurch, with a brick wrapped in a stocking. The two girls became known as the 'gymslip murderers'. The sensational crime had everything: teenage girls with a suspiciously close relationship, premeditated murder, a mother lured to her death.

It was stories like these, which grabbed the public's attention, that prompted photographer Ann Shelton begin a series of works in 2001 which she calls 'Public Places'.

The sites that Shelton visited when making 'Public Places' are locations where violent events – both fictional and real – have taken place. She's described the photographs in this series as 'anxious stories, full of panic and ghostly pitch'.

Shelton also describes these photographs as a combination of the documentary impulse mixed with bad detective work. Although she carefully researches her subjects, she can't always be entirely sure of the facts – in this work, for example, she is not absolutely sure that she has found the exact point on the path where the killing took place.

Shelton is interested in exploring how an ordinary scene can suddenly mean something very different when its history is revealed. For the 'Public Places' photographs she creates two mirror images, hung side by side but separated by a small gap. She says that the gap leaves room for people to wonder about what has happened in the photograph.

The Parker-Hulme crime has captured many imaginations, none more famously than that of New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson. His 1994 movie *Heavenly Creatures* told the story of the murder in a visually rich combination of fairytale and thriller. Shelton, interested in the way that stories like this move out into the world through books and films, acknowledges the importance of Jackson's film in the title of this work.



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Peter Robinson

Mission Statement:

*First We Take Island Bay Then We Take Berlin*

1997

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

You can't spend much time in the modern workplace without getting involved in mission statements or strategic plans. In this painting, Peter Robinson lays out a tongue-in-cheek strategy to take over the international art world.

*First We Take Island Bay Then We Take Berlin* is full of what appears to be Robinson's advice to artists who want to make it big. 'Kiss ass and grease as many palms as possible,' he suggests. 'If you don't have any ideas of your own, steal some'. Robinson's advice suggests that surface appearances and small talk are more important than substance in today's art scene.

Earlier in his career Robinson made a number of works that mockingly responded to the way the art market rushed to embrace the new generation of young Māori artists that he was part of. Strategy 6 in this painting suggests: 'Cash into fashionable contemporary dialogues such as ethnicity, marginalisation and globalism until the interest runs out.' Maco Poro, the face in the centre of the work, based on traditional Māori carved figures, draws attention to the sometimes condescending attitudes of the West towards the art of indigenous cultures.

It is almost as if Robinson is posing as a tourist in the art world. Another strategy suggests, 'Use language foreign to the locals. This will appeal to them because it sounds sexy and exotic.' *First We Take Island Bay Then We Take Berlin* includes sentences in Māori, which Robinson has taken from phrase books; the meaning is usually banal – 'I came by aeroplane' or 'What big teeth'. Robinson also includes phrases in European languages that are written phonetically so they are easier for an unfamiliar speaker to use.

Robinson is known for his cynical yet humorous commentary on the art world. He advises artists: 'Spread rumours and gossip about those who threaten your position even if you don't have any dirt.' Even we, the audience, are not out of his range: 'Allow your public to feel intelligent – provide references they can easily understand but are challenging.'



Ralph Hotere  
Malady Panels  
1971

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

'Everything Hotere touches turns to black,' one critic has written about Ralph Hotere.

In the late 1960s Hotere was working on an extended 'Black Series'. He painted with black shiny lacquer on board, creating a mirror-like surface, or with acrylic on canvas, which gave a softer matte effect. Colour appeared in these works, but only in thin bands, etched into the surface of the paintings.

At the same time, also in Dunedin, studying and tutoring at Otago University, was the young poet Bill Manhire. Hotere and Manhire formed a fruitful friendship, the basis of a number of collaborations.

Manhire recalls the beginning of the *Malady* collaboration in this way:

'I had written this concrete/pattern poem which was just three words – four words, actually, but three articulations: *malady ... melody ... my lady*. And I'd made them into a typewritten booklet – pages of word patterns. I must have given a copy of the *Malady* book to Ralph at some stage. He presumably flicked through it and started making the paintings which became the *Malady* series.'

Manhire's poem was a fertile starting point for Hotere, who took the words and set them free in paint and ink and pencil. In the *Malady* series Manhire's words swirl in circles, or float over lakes of black paint, or form geometric shapes. In the Christchurch Art Gallery's *Malady Panels* the stencilled words form rectangular blocks at the bottom of the seven panels, anchoring seven coloured circles, one in each colour of the spectrum of the rainbow.

Hotere is adamant that his works speak for themselves. In one of the few things he's ever said about his work, he says, in 1973, 'No object and certainly no painting is seen in the same way by everyone, yet most people want an unmistakable meaning which is accessible to all in a work of art, it is the spectator which provokes the change and meaning in these works.'



John Pule

Pokia, Pulenoa, Tokolonga Faoa E Loto Ne Misi  
1995

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

John Pule was born on the island of Niue in 1962. When he was three he and his mother, like many Pacific Islanders at this time, emigrated to New Zealand.

In the 1980s Pule was working as a labourer at a railway yard by day, and making sketches and writing poetry at night. This is how he describes the encounter that made him give up the day job:

When I was working at the railway station, an English guy came up to me and asked me what I was going to do with my life. I didn't know what he meant, and he said, "You see those people over there? All they do is cover wagons, every day, six days a week, fifty-two weeks every year." At that time I was starting to do sketches, and getting them framed and selling them. After work I'd go home, have dinner, and when everyone had gone to bed I would stay up till about three in the morning, and just sketch. Then I would go to work at seven. I think that's what he saw. He just said, "Think about your future. Why don't you leave?". Two weeks later I did, and my family thought I was crazy.'

Clearly he wasn't, because Pule has taken his place as an important New Zealand artist, poet, and novelist. Across these different art forms, he explores his own life story as a Pacific Islander growing up and living in New Zealand, and the story of his homeland, of the coming of European colonisers and western religion to the Pacific.

In the early 1990s Pule was looking for a new direction in which to take his artworks. He was inspired by the design of Niuean hiapo or bark cloth painting. Pule adapted the grids and circular structures of hiapo in his paintings and prints, and then populated them with open-mouthed eels, sharks and fish, birds, lizards, bird men, and humans who cry, make love, are crucified or display the stigmata. The images bring together powerful symbols, whether from Pacific Island culture or the artist's own experience. The titles of these three lithographs translate as Pokia (Together), Tokolonga faoa e loto ne misi (Many people in a dream), Pulenoa (Without consent).

To create a lithograph, the artist draws directly onto a flat stone from which the print is then made. It's a medium that suits Pule well, allowing it to retain the directness and expressiveness of his remarkable style.



Rachel Rakena

Rerehiko

2003

TE PUNA O WAIWHETU  
CHRISTCHURCH  
ART GALLERY

Rachel Rakena's *Rerehiko* uses a very modern form of making art – digital images and sound – to reflect on a very modern form of communication – email. The work looks at what this new way of communicating has meant for contemporary Māori culture.

*Rerehiko* was shown in *Te Puawai o Ngāi Tahu*, an exhibition held to mark the opening of the new Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu in 2003. The exhibition acknowledged the special relationship between the gallery and Ngāi Tahu, the South Island iwi or tribal group that is strongly associated with the Christchurch region, and celebrated the vibrancy of contemporary Ngāi Tahu art.

In *Rerehiko*, two large projections of swimming or dancing figures in water are overlaid with floating fragments of text, accompanied by a haunting soundtrack.

The texts are drawn from email conversations circulated among a group of Ngāi Tahu members that Rakena is a part of. Rakena suggests that email creates another way for people to come together as a community and korero, or talk, regardless of where they live. She says that through this pool of image and sound, she is creating an opportunity to 'allow emotions, life and death, business, cultural revitalisation, gossip, humour and information korero to show the living culture of contemporary iwi on email.'

The title of the work is a play on words. The Māori word for computer is 'rorohiko', which can be translated as 'electric brain'. Rakena substitutes the word 'rere', which has many meanings, including to flow, to fly, to be carried by the wind, to rise or escape – meanings which emphasise the fragmentary nature of the texts, and the fluid movements of the figures.

In Māori culture, the land, or whenua, is extremely important, as is the idea of turangawaewae, your place to stand, the place you come from. Talking about *Rerehiko* Rakena has said:

'I have continued to use images of swimmers immersed in water with no reference to land to explore the idea of shifting identities; of the freedom that might exist in an undefined space with no place to stand, no turanga.'



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