



Bulletin

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

A bi-monthly publication containing news, views and reviews of activities at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

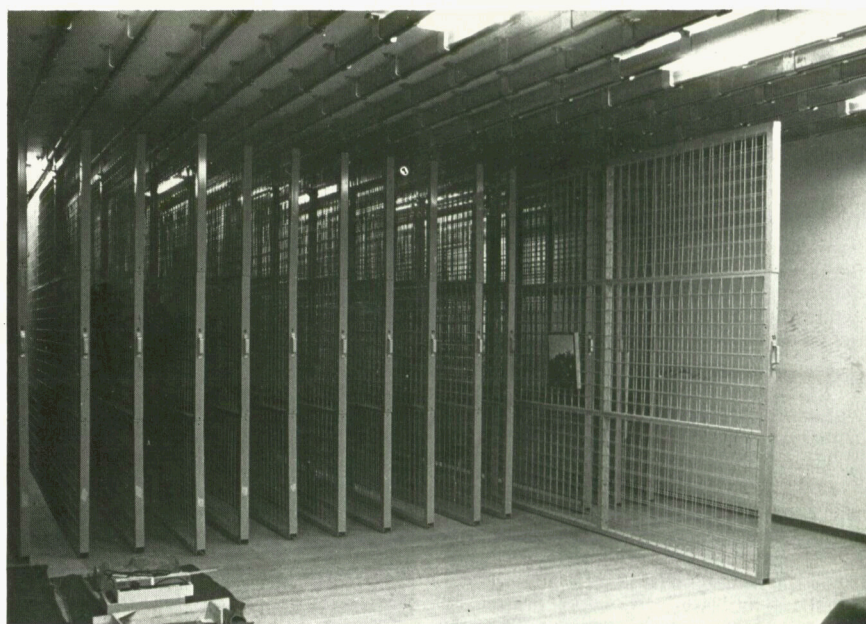
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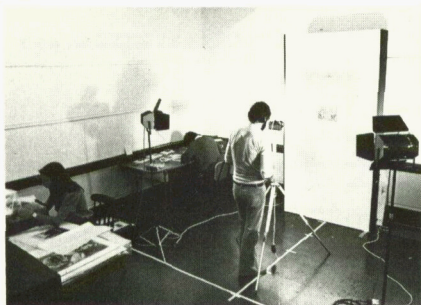
This is the first of what will become regular bi-monthly news sheets of activities, acquisitions, exhibitions and other programmes at the McDougall Art Gallery and will include other important visual arts news from Christchurch. It coincides with a strenuous membership drive aimed at increasing public awareness of activities and services at this our public art gallery and seeking support from an expanding membership. Some of you will be friends of old, supporters of the gallery whose membership and interest has long been held in the highest regard. Others will be members of the public who we believe would welcome the opportunity of joining the Society and offering their support. We appeal to established members to continue to offer their invaluable support; we appeal to potential new members to join and persuade others to do likewise. We have some surprising and exciting programmes in store for the next couple of years.

Since early November the permanent staff have been joined by a large team of energetic, capable and enthusiastic temporary workers and a great deal of work has been accomplished with their aid and is, indeed, still being accomplished. A team of Student Community Programme workers under the leadership of John Blanken have excavated some 140m³ of compacted earth from under the south end of the gallery to create a new, badly needed, storage space some 20 x 7 metres. In order to gain access to this space it was necessary to cut a double door hole through a 43 centimetre thick, solid concrete wall. This space is to be provided with a concrete floor, fluorescent lighting and connection to the heating and ventilating plant. In the next financial year we hope to add suspended steel and mesh frames (see illustration) the most commonly employed acceptable storage system. When this is completed each work, whether on display or in storage, will have an allotted space, dramatically reducing the possibility of misplacing works, and of course, virtually eliminating the possibility of damage. It should be stressed that this is but a first step towards providing adequate service space. Mark Dunstan and Tina Barton, under the leadership of Julian Bowron, have begun the monumental task of photographing the entire collection, attaching photographs to the accession cards and

checking all accession records. This has resulted in the accessioning of much unaccessioned material and considerable revision of existing files. To date some 900 odd works including the entire 'Works on Paper' collection have been processed and in the course of it many prints of exceptional quality have been brought to the fore. As a result, we have decided to mount ten one month exhibitions from the 'Works on Paper' collection (currently being matted by Bruce Robinson and John Harper) during 1979. These will explore certain themes e.g. 'The Rural Landscape', 'Views of London', 'Italian Cities', 'The Grand Tour', 'Dutch Printmaking', 'Hogarth-Cruikshank-Rowlandson', 'The Panoramic Landscape', etc. These will all be installed in the gallery beyond the Centre Court currently being refurbished as a print gallery by Philip Pigou and Graham Snowdon. John Harper, a trained conservator, has begun much needed conservation work on the collection, cleaning, revarnishing and restoring a number of oil paintings, and de-acidifying and cleaning many works from the 'Works on Paper' collection. We are hopeful that the McDougall will establish a small conservation facility in the near future which, when established, will accept a limited amount of private work in addition to the routine programme of caring for our own collection. Graham Snowdon has been restoring



Storage racks of the kind eventually to be installed in the new storage depot currently under construction.



Left to right, Tina Barton, Philip Pigou, and Mark Dunstan at work photographing the collection and checking the accession files.

sculptures by Carl Sydow (1940-1975) in preparation for the May, 'Carl Sydow Memorial Exhibition', and Dr. Peter Lineham has completed invaluable work in ordering both the data collected by Carl, and retrieved from newspapers, catalogues, the Peter McLeavey Gallery, C.S.A., etc. in preparation for our exhibition catalogue.

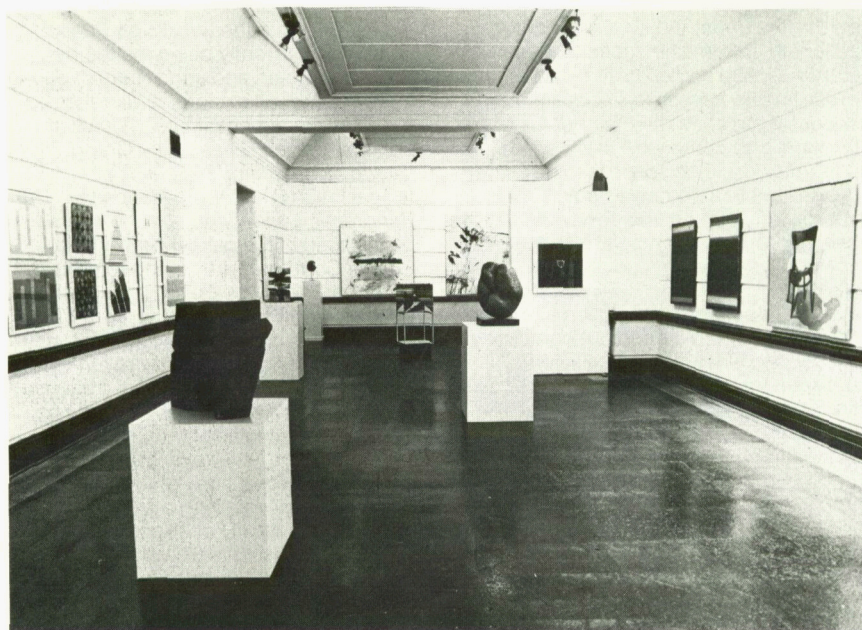
A new gallery map, a sign on the facade in the Botanical Gardens, gallery van signs, and a new foyer shop installation have been provided by Brent Friedauer and George Anderson. All in all thirteen temporary workers have been engaged through the generous provision of the Temporary Employment Programme and Student Community Programme. While we all lament the circumstances which have caused the current employment crisis the Government is to be congratulated for designing and implementing these schemes: without them and without the generous co-operation of the Department of Labour, these long overdue projects would have simply not been able to have been undertaken. I know that I speak for the permanent staff, and for the City Council, when I say how grateful we are for this assistance. It has been a period of hard work with a quite exceptional *esprit de corps*; a valuable experience for all concerned.

Robin Wade: DesRCA, FSIA

The Christchurch City Council, at its December 18 meeting confirmed a Cultural Committee recommendation to retain the services of the London-based consultant museum designer Mr Robin Wade. He will confer with the Director and interested parties and institutions in Christchurch, prior to producing a concept report on recommended future art gallery development. Mr Wade will visit Christchurch in the period March 20-24 and his travel expenses to New Zealand from Australia, where he will be on consultation, will be met by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

Mr Wade will bring with him a wealth of museum design experience. He operates a practice of ten museum designers in London, is a Visiting Lecturer at the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, on the Boards of Trustees of several British Museums, Fellow of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, Member of the Council for National Academic Awards (Three Dimensional and Design Board, Interior Design Panel) and can count among his major museum projects the 'Chinese Archaeological Finds Exhibition', Royal Academy London; 'Turner Exhibition', Royal Academy London; 'Iron Bridge Gorge Museum', which won the Museum of the Year Award in 1977; 'The Fox Talbot Museum at Lacock', which won the Pilgrim Trust Award in 1976; 'The British Museum Entrance Hall, Bookshop and Two Galleries'; and a study for the establishment of a 'National Museum for Jordan'. He is currently working on 20 projects including re-organisation of the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery at the British Museum, several United States Commissions and a major project in Venezuela.

We may be very certain that Mr Wade's report will combine the virtues of informed opinion and independence from local issues and will materially assist in reaching a solution to the critical space shortage and other problems at this, the country's smallest per capita, art gallery.

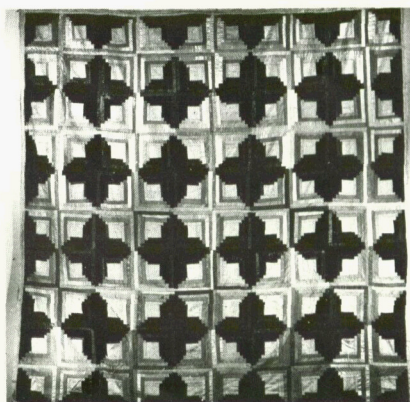


A view of the South Gallery showing a section of the recent Yugoslav Contemporary Exhibition.

Forthcoming Exhibitions

Bedspreads January 8-February 19

This exhibition of colonial bedspreads from the collection of the Otago Early Settlers Museum is the first of a planned series of historical applied arts exhibitions. Another — 'Glass' — exploring the craft of glass making, historical and contemporary, is planned for a later date. Here the superb standards of excellence achieved by pioneer women in the manufacture of quilts and bedspreads will be strikingly evident. Lovingly made as objects which transcend the merely useful, these bedspreads will expand our appreciation of that particularly New Zealand sensibility which has encouraged and produced the amazing post war crafts boom. A November Exhibition of Christchurch weaving will continue the theme of textile craft in the Gallery's programme.



A patchwork bedspread from the collection of the Otago Early Settlers Museum

Diane Arbus (1923-1971) January 20-February 19

In the last few years photography has come of age in New Zealand. Photographers have organised themselves, a regular journal has become a reality, both Art Schools and some Technical Institute Departments have organised photography courses and a new generation of artist-photographers have committed themselves to the medium. One of the most persuasive influences on this new generation has been the imagery of the American photographer, the late Diane Arbus. Diane Arbus was born in New York in 1923. After a somewhat protected childhood she married at the age of 18 and became, with her husband, a fashion photographer of some considerable standing. It was, however, only in 1959 when Arbus studied photography with Lisette Model



Diane Arbus, 'Lady at a masked ball with two roses on her dress'. New York City, 1967.

that her work began to take on its direct and uncompromising strength as seen in this exhibition.

In 1963 and 1966 she received Guggenheim Fellowships, and a year later wide acclaim for her work in a 3 photographer show at the Museum of Modern Art. Her work has since been included in the permanent collections of major museums and galleries internationally.

Diane Arbus committed suicide in July 1971. In 1972 hers was the first work of an American photographer to be shown at the Venice Biennale.

Her tragically short working life as a serious photographer makes her contribution to contemporary photography the more remarkable. In challenging the central concerns of photo-journalism the emphasis shifted

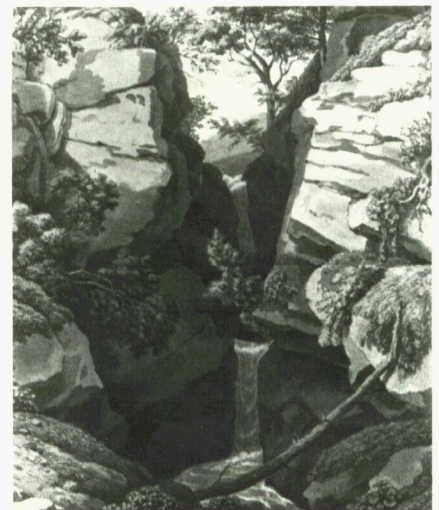
from social to private realities. Arbus' brave psychological portraits replaced formal statements of photographic convention.

'Her real subject is no less than the unique interior lives of those she photographed' John Szarhowski.

'What I'm trying to describe is that it's impossible to get out of your skin into somebody else's. And, that's what all this is a little bit about. That somebody else's tragedy is not the same as your own'. Diane Arbus.

This exhibition is an immense survey of her short career containing, among the 116 photographs included, all the images for which she has become justifiably famous.

When the English showed a section of 114 watercolours at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1855, the French critic Edmond About wrote 'I can pass without transition from oil to watercolour painting; these two genres are less distinct in England than with us. More than one English painting presents the paleness and the faded grace of the watercolour; more than one watercolour has the vigour of an oil painting. Watercolour is, for the English, a national art'. Certainly the technique of watercolour painting was more widely adopted by artists of the first importance in England by that time than was the case with their peers on the continent. This exhibition, the first of two watercolour collections from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery which we intend to show, surveys that great period of English watercolour painting, from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century. It also bears striking testimony to the depth of the Dunedin collection in this important area.



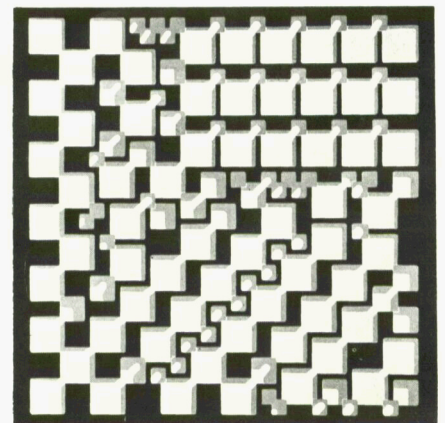
Francis Towne (1740-1816), 'The Waterfall' Pen and wash. Dunedin Public Art Gallery Collection. From the forthcoming exhibition 'English Watercolours'.

Computer Art February 20 - March 19

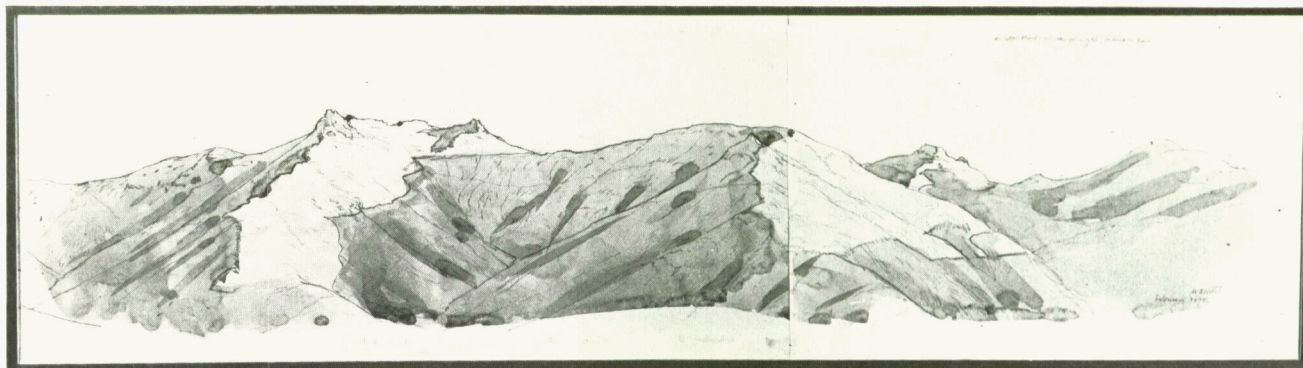
This will be the first New Zealand showing of an exhibition of contemporary German computer graphics which the McDougall Art Gallery is touring in this country on behalf of the Goethe Institute.

Featuring the work of ten German computer artists, Klaus Basset, Herbert W Franke, Hein Gravenhorst, Karl M Holzhauser, Gottfried Jaeger, Manfred Mohr, Frieder Nake, Georg Nees and Karl Siebig, this exhibition is an absorbing product of the marriage of science, technology and art. It is often not realised to what a large extent the computer is harnessed by teams of artists and technicians to solve design problems, but it should be stressed that this exhibition is not comprised of works produced by the computer according to strictly determined design criteria, but, instead of free graphics which probe the possibilities of

new programming methods and figural ideas, graphics where the computer has been used as a tool of artistic expression. A working display of graphics plotted on equipment from the University of Canterbury's Computer Centre will run during the period of the exhibition.



Digital graphic 59 by Georg Nees. Computer Art from Germany.



W A Sutton (b. 1917), Study from the 'Te Tihi O Kahukura and Sky' Series. Watercolour.

Gifts recently received include:

1

A large number of drawings and watercolours by W A Sutton, gifted by the artist. These fall into two categories.

(a) Work surrounding the 'Pleasure Garden Affair' and W A Sutton's now destroyed *Homage to Frances Hodgkins*, and including two sheets of compositional studies for *Homage to Frances Hodgkins*, together with separate sheets of squared-up drawings of each of the figures: Alan Brassington, W A Sutton, John Oakley, Olivia Spencer Bower, Beth Zanders, Margaret Frankel, R S Lonsdale, Colin McCahon, Heathcote Helmore and Doris Lusk.

(b) A large two sheet watercolour and pencil study from the *Te Tihi O Kahukura and Sky* series (*Illustrated*), two of the large paintings from which were purchased for the collection earlier in the year, plus eleven further watercolour and pencil studies and ten drawings from the same series. These are exceedingly valuable gifts and we are indebted to Mr Sutton for passing them over to us.

2

A large etching and engraving *Cathedral* by the American printmaker Gabor Peterdi whose work was the subject of an exhibition mounted by the Gallery towards the middle of last year. Again gifted by the artist, this is an important addition to our small holding of works by contemporary artists outside of New Zealand. It is especially gratifying when an artist of Peterdi's stature chooses to recognise the McDougall in this way. Mr Barry Cleavin's role, as an initiator of the exhibition, and friend of Peterdi, must also be gratefully acknowledged.

3

Mr John Coley responded to a letter to artists for archival material with a collection of multiple prints produced for the '20/20 Vision Print Exhibition' of 1968. This multiple project introduced the concept of multiple prints to New Zealand and represents an important milestone in Canterbury Art. Again we are grateful for this material, which, rather than enter an archival collection, will become part of our 'Works on Paper' collection.



Gabor Peterdi (b. 1915), 'Cathedral' 1958 Engraving and etching.

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Location
Botanical Gardens
Rolleston Avenue

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