



Christchurch City Council



# The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

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Robert McDougall Art Gallery  
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*Philippa Blair at work in her studio*

## "A TREE HAS ITS HEART IN ITS ROOTS"

**Works by Philippa Blair**  
28 January to 2 March

In these, her latest works, Philippa Blair, in returning home, explores the tree form as a symbol of life, illustrating metaphorically — growth, change, birth and death.

The works for this exhibition were made between February and November 1985 while the artist was in Christchurch spending the year as a visiting lecturer in Painting in the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts. This was the first time she had spent so long in her home town over the last twenty years. Her work is a celebration of the four seasons unfolding through a labyrinth of organic forms. Both symbols and objects mysterious revelations torn by the roots from the imagination — a documentation of a creative process involving body, mind, spirit, and heart. It is clear that the content of this work is inextricably woven in Philippa Blair's homecoming.

The idea for the installation 'Sailing in Hagley Park' grew from photographs of trees and memory sketches of sailing, Hagley Park and snakes and ladders. This work is the catalyst and the other paintings and constructions develop from this initial triggering of childhood memories and also from the "Canberra Snakes and Circles" labyrinth works painted in Canberra in 1984.

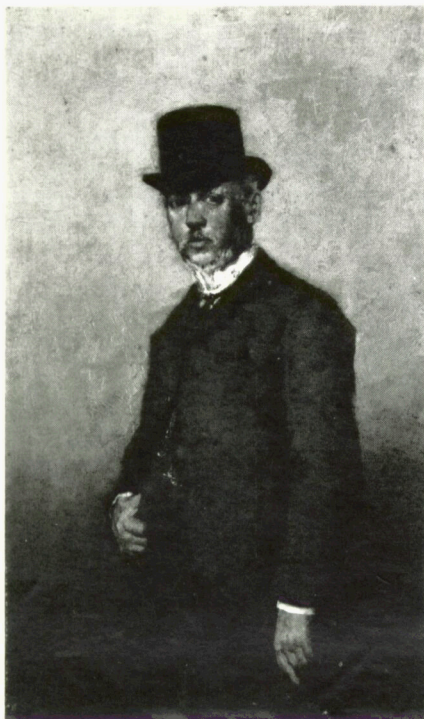
In these recent works there is a polarity between the constructive (growth/trees) and the destructive (bomb/symbols). Her multi-media approach works well in her search to express myths, organic forms in a constant state of flux, and the dynamics of nature — with reference to human forms. Philippa Blair's work projects great physical energy — dances in a drama, exploring rhythms and tight springs of energy. The darting, sweeping lines and hues have an almost futuristic dynamism, the artist concentrating here on colour and rhythmic force as basic expressions of nature's spiritual force. Thus, objective and subjective feelings are fused.

Apart from the direct response to the environment Philippa Blair has been inspired by reading Jorge Luis Borges 'Labyrinths' and Len Lye's 'Figures in Motion'. The latter with its obsession with movement provided the artist with the fable "A Tree Has Its Heart in Its Roots". This short story has ecological overtones and concludes, "Today when people stand up straight and still on the hills and feel the earth with their feet they are most like a tree — because a tree has its heart in its roots".

Aptly, this extract sums up the inspiration for this exhibition, a physical and spiritual 'homecoming'.

art  
life  
art





*Portrait of William Mathew Hodgkins  
by Girolamo Pieri Nerli.*

### **William Mathew Hodgkins and His Circle**

11 February to 23 March

This is an exhibition toured by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery to mark the Centennial of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, October 1984.

The object of the exhibition is to examine, in some degree to re-examine, the activity and achievement of William Mathew Hodgkins. And because Hodgkins was not only a painter but also one who organised and encouraged other artists, it seeks to review the activities and achievements of his associates in two generations of New Zealand artists.

The lives and works of Hodgkins and nine other artists of his circle are reviewed individually in the excellent catalogue and works by John Gully, George O'Brien, Girolamo Pieri Nerli, Grace Joel, Frances Hodgkins, Isabel Field, John Halliday Scott, Laurence William Wilson, Alfred Henry O'Keefe, and William Mathew Hodgkins are included in the exhibition.

This is an exhibition of great importance and interest and should not be missed.

### **ART WORKS: A Closer Acquaintance**

Last year we launched what turned out to be a most successful and highly enjoyable introductory art appreciation course for adults. The programme, 'Art Works: A Closer Acquaintance', was conducted by the Gallery Guides who took a small group of 10 adults for four, two hourly, sessions. Using works currently exhibited in the gallery as the basis for discussion the aim was to extend the

understanding of the course members so that they felt more relaxed and aware of the main principles behind traditional and contemporary art styles.

This year our first course will begin in February with sessions 10.30-12.30 on Saturday mornings and 1.30-3.30 Wednesday afternoons. The course is restricted to a group of 10 and the fee is \$12.00. If you would like to enrol would you please advise the Gallery leaving your name, address and telephone number. We are sure you will enjoy both the company and the chance to make an even closer 'acquaintance' with the art exhibited at our Gallery.

The dates for our first 'Art Works: A Closer Acquaintance' courses this year will be:

Wednesdays — February 26, March 5, 12, 26 at 1.30-3.30pm

Saturdays — March 8, 15, 22 and April 12 at 10.30-12.30.

### **The Robert McDougall Art Gallery**

#### **Archives**

Most New Zealand Art Galleries have accumulated, as a result of their general operations, files of correspondence on their collection, exhibitions and other gallery activities. The Robert McDougall Art Gallery is no exception. It has maintained records since 1932 and of exhibitions since 1949.

In 1979 spurred on by the obvious lack of retrieval of Canterbury artists' documents and records by Christchurch Libraries, it was decided to set in place a policy to acquire as much original material on Canterbury art and artists as possible to complement its more general art library.

Although slow in growth and still small in scale the Robert McDougall Art Gallery's Canterbury Artist Archive now contains original documents and papers on many artists of importance who have worked in the region since 1890.

The deposit and collection of original papers now includes boxes of material on Van der Velden, Leonard Booth, Sydney Thompson, Maud Sherwood, Cecil and Elizabeth Kelly, Russell Clark, Raymond McIntyre, Olivia Spencer-Bower, Carl Sydow, Rosemary Johnson, and others. These files contain, in many instances, correspondence, diaries, notes, catalogues, news clippings, sketch books and photographs. In addition the archive holds a number of audio tapes of interviews with contemporary Canterbury artists.

Currently this gallery is moving towards completion of an index of references on Canterbury Art and Artists from 1850 on which will form a valuable addition to the research catalogue files that have

been built up. We view our collection of archives as being in no way in competition with either the Canterbury Museum, Canterbury Public Library, or the University of Canterbury Library archive collections, but rather a specialist adjunct to those collections.

The gallery is also in a real sense preparing for the day when it will become a major art library resource in the Canterbury area. From the outset the archive has developed to maintain its well defined policy to collect and therefore become custodians of only original material related to the Canterbury region. We are committed to the view that archives belong in the region in which they were created and should not be centralised.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that there is a need to reinforce confidence in our archive collection and encourage artists and others to deposit material with us. At least two important collections of papers belonging to Canterbury artists were rescued in time from the incinerator but often we do not hear of them until too late. The Curator heard of the recent destruction of several diaries and papers of the artist Margaret Stoddart, items considered by relatives to be of no importance. What may seem trivia to many may prove to be treasure to the researcher.

The consciousness of our past as a result of what we have lost is more apparent today than in perhaps any generation in New Zealand's history. This in itself is encouraging as we can feel confident that more original material will now survive into the future.

#### **Acquisitions**

The following works have been recently purchased.

##### **Gordon Crook**

Totem with Kiwi Soul Bird  
Screenprint 6/12

##### **Greer Twiss**

Tools of the Trade I 1985  
Lead & Wood

##### **Philippa Blair**

Canberra Spirit Woman  
Acrylic on Canvas

##### **George Kojis**

Otamatea Platform Series  
Stoneware

##### **Walter Crane**

The Deluge  
Pen/Ink

##### **Richard Wallwork**

Bab el Zwela Cairo  
Etching 12/50

##### **Jeffrey Harris**

Lenningrad 1941  
Oil on Hardboard





*The Deluge, Walter Crane*

**Chris Booth**

Hei Hakari Me Aramoana  
Manuka Bones and Shells

**Patti Meads**

Plate Shadow Play  
Smoked Porcelain

**Paul Dibble**

Earth Relics 1984  
Mixed Media Steel Cement Fondue

**Marylyn Tweedie**

Pagework/A Baby is a womans best friend  
1, 2, 3  
Cibachrome Photograph/hand coloured

**Bing Dawe**

Still keeping his Balance he used the  
Umbrella as a Safety Net- Image of a man  
with Missile  
Wood/Steel/Stone

The following works were recently presented to the Gallery by Mrs B Lonsdale.

**William Reed**

Still Life  
Oil Ink on Plywood

**Andrea Brooke**

Auckland Harbour  
Oil on Board

**Edith Blanch Blunt**

A Courtyard Slaying Sussex  
Watercolour

**Bobbie Cameron-Smith**

Bertrams Fair c1941  
Oil on Canvas Board

**JOINING THE TEAM OF GALLERY GUIDES**

At the beginning of each year we are pleased to accept new volunteers for our team of Gallery Guides. The Guides have a demanding but also a very interesting and stimulating time at the Gallery giving at least 3 days each month.

We need a team of around 30 Guides to operate our busy school and adult programmes and so each year we accept

another small group of new volunteers. The recruits we are looking for are not necessarily people with extensive formal art training; rather we find our best and most successful Guides come from among those with a real interest and enthusiasm for art, either as painters or as exhibition viewers.

Their training begins with a fairly intensive basic training programme which we do as a block course 10am to 3pm for 10 days. This year our Basic Training programme will be held early April and interviews with those who wish to be selected for the programme will begin in February. After training our 'graduate' guides can usually manage to keep abreast of exhibition changes with the regular monthly training session. These monthly keep-up sessions are always held on Tuesday afternoon and all guides need to be free to attend these.

If you would be interested in joining the Gallery Guide team or in finding out a little more about the programme please leave your name and phone number at the Gallery or contact Ann Betts, the Gallery Education Officer. We would be pleased to hear from you.

**Record Attendances**

1985 will go into the records as a phenomenal year for visits made to the gallery. Annual attendances have increased steadily in recent years with 1984 seeing a fifty-three year old record broken with 132,259 visits counted.

In 1985, however, that record has been shattered. No single month's recorded attendance fell below five figures and the 100,000 target was met in June.

The notable achievement of reaching 200,000 visits for the year occurred on Monday November 18 at 11.10am when Mrs Riet Vandenburg crossed the Gallery threshold to make the lucky 200,000th visit clicked up on the automatic counter since January 1st. Cr Rex Arbuckle, Chairman of the Cultural and Public Relations Committee of the Christchurch City Council and the Gallery's Director, John Coley, were on hand to present Mrs Vandenburg with two handsome books. Mrs Vandenburg a Diamond Harbour resident, was surprised and delighted at finding herself making a very special visit. She informed us that she is a regular visitor, coming to the gallery about 12 times a year.







## "FRIENDS TOGETHER"

The second seminar of Friends of Galleries was held at the National Art Gallery in Wellington over the weekend of 11-13 October, and I attended as your representative. Sir Michael Fowler opened the seminar, and then James Mack, the Director of the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt spoke provocatively and challengingly about the purpose of Friends' organisations. His remarks — that the community needs to be regularly reminded of the Friends' identity; that our identity needs to be regularly projected; that the distinction between art galleries and museums is an artificial one; that we all have a responsibility towards young people — provided fruitful subjects for discussion during the two days of the seminar. It was interesting for me to see how the various Friends' groups throughout New Zealand regarded their roles; almost all of us felt that our prime task was not to raise funds for the purchase of works, but rather to maintain support for our galleries by making the public aware of what they can offer. This supportive role was strongly emphasised by Paton Forster, the Secretary of the National Gallery Society of Victoria, Australia, in his address on the relationship between Gallery and Friends. He felt it important that members must feel that

## COFFEE MORNINGS

The first coffee morning for 1986 will be held in the gallery at 10.30 on Wednesday, 19 February, when Dr Patrick Evans of the English Department at the University of Canterbury will talk about the work of Keri Hulme whose novel *The Bone People* recently won the prestigious Booker Prize.

## ANCIENT CELEBRATIONS

A Grecian Festivity was held for Friends on 24 November to celebrate the opening by Professor Lee of the summer exhibition at the McDougall. To mark the importance of this show which comprises fifty ancient Greek vases from the collection of the Classics Department at the University, the Committee had planned for a festive mood. The evening was a great success and well attended. Nearly three hundred Friends came together to eat drink and be merry. The celebration closed with a display by Costa Kerdemelidos and his dancers. Friends captured by the spirit of rejoicing, joined in and the evening ended in the central marble hall with the sounds of Greece celebrated by dancing.

## COMING EVENTS

- January**
- 1 **Ancient Celebrations** until 2 February
  - Neil Dawson sculptures until 8 March
  - Harbour and Plain** — Canterbury Historical paintings from the collection until 8 March
  - 26 **Gallery Concert** Christchurch Harpsichord Ensemble 3pm
  - 28 **The Tree has its Heart in its Roots** — recent works by Philippa Blair until 2 March Preview 7.45pm
- February**
- 1 **Harbour and Plain** Canterbury Historical works until 8 March
  - The Tree has its Heart in its Roots** until 2 March
  - Neil Dawson sculptures until 8 March
  - Saturday Group** 10.30am
  - 9 **Gallery Concert** — Poetry reading R. Whyte 3pm
  - 11 **W. M. Hodgkins & His Circle** to 23 March
  - 16 **Gallery Concert** — Humanimals performance 3pm
  - 19 **Friends Coffee Morning** — Patrick Evans will talk about the work of Keri Hulme whose novel "The Bone People" recently won the prestigious Booker prize.
  - 19 **Wednesday Group** 1.30pm
  - 26 **Art Works: A Closer Acquaintance** — a new midweek course begins today 1.30pm
  - 27 **Art Club for Disabled visitors** 10.30am

they are contributing to the life and work of the gallery, and that it was essential to provide a variety of activities to cater for wide interest groups. Luit Beiringa, the Director of the National Art Gallery, talked about ways in which Friends' organisations could be instrumental in encouraging gifts and donations; other topics we discussed were ways we might encourage corporate membership (no-one

has found this easy), the relationship between our organisations and the administrative staff of our galleries, and the implications of the Goods and Services Tax. For the 40 or so of us who attended, the weekend was thoroughly worthwhile; it provided a valuable opportunity to share our common interests and experiences.

Robert Erwin  
*President*

