

ASCENT

G.S.A.

A JOURNAL OF THE ARTS IN NEW ZEALAND

VOL 1 NO 1 NOVEMBER 1967

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ONE DOLLAR FIFTY CENTS

COVER: M. T. WOOLLASTON. LEFT OF THE MOUNTAIN. Wash drawing. 1967. 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins.

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CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND



EDITED BY LEO BENSEMANN ASSISTANT EDITOR BARBARA BROOKE

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M. T. WOOLLASTON. YELLOW BAYLY'S HILL. Oil, 1967. 35½ x 47½ ins.

The Woollaston Country

A PARTISAN REVIEW



JOHN SUMMERS

That truth is the prerogative of the objective mind is an assumption I'm cagey about, and nowhere more so than in the arts which are distinctively personal. The great painters are crowned with laurels provided by a consensus of informed opinion liable to wild and sudden fluctuations. Thus if Raphael was our grandfathers' pigeon Piero della Francesca is ours.

It is no accident then, that propinquity is a contributing factor to my liking for M. T. Woollaston's work. I remember rather suspiciously contemplating a charcoal drawing of a wide-eyed boy over a Dunedin mantelpiece in 1937 and being told by a girl that its draughtsman, Woollaston, was 'the coming man'. That was in my pre-Van Gogh days, pre-Renaissance, pre-Raph., O well, pre-everything days. However, for many years I've endorsed the girl's opinion of a painter so unique that while contrast may be fruitful, comparison with others in New Zealand is not.

It isn't that I've 'talked myself into' liking Woollaston's work, but that I've exposed myself to it long enough to learn his language, as I had already done, in common with thousands, with the Impressionists and their predecessors, and not, let's stress it, by any

teeth gritting act of will. This is, for the most part, and within the boundaries of one's own temperament, precisely the way the good is established and the poor discarded. But a problem about painting is that seeing is taken for granted. Can it be?

In *The Hidden Sources of Art* we learn of a man of 50 to whom surgery gave sight. Within a few years he died chronically depressed by the unequal task of mastering the 'drab' world of colour, and visual form. Having lost the rich haptic world of his blindness he felt, no doubt, intolerably deprived in his new half chaotic world.

During Ehrenzweig's youth, i.e. prior to the dominance of the camera's mechanical vision, he escorted a Japanese lawyer through the galleries of Vienna and was astonished to hear him describe all European art from traditional to Post-Impressionistic as 'stylised' until it dawned on Ehrenzweig 'that only Japanese art could be realistic to him'.

From such stories one deduces that seeing can exist at three levels: (a) as in infants, or the case cited, where an undifferentiated mass of sense data is experienced; (b) at the utilitarian level which serves

our practical every-day needs: (c) at the aesthetic level where we actively begin to enjoy and relate part to part and colour to colour in what we see. We also deduce that though for practical purposes we no doubt use distinctively Western clichés (say to pick up a hammer) there is nothing absolutely fixed about the way a certain people carve up the visual world. It is as susceptible to alternative arrangements as sterling is to the pound or dollar treatment.

Descending rapidly to Blake's beloved 'minute particulars', in our usual way of seeing cumulus cloud it resembles the billowing sails of a barque and as such is as boring as a preacher's 'yea verily'. Now, in a Woollaston painting they as often as not hang down as in 'Taramakau' shown at the Little Woodware Shop (June 11th-30th). It is a question of emphasis. Coming home from an earlier Woollaston exhibition I was as astonished to see a sky full of clouds flattened along the bottom edge as, after Renoir, people were to observe examples of 'pure Renoir' girls. And this process, this gift of conferring new vision is in line with a catalogue remark by Dr Charles Brasch to the effect that it is impossible to look at Woollaston country and not now see it in his way.

The beauty of a great painting, most discernible in what I shall here call subjective landscapes, lies in the total individual logic of their *Gestalt* or patterning, e.g. in a Rembrandt landscape where one seems to enter into the extraordinarily rich glooms of the painter's soul; all is known yet all strangely altered. Woollaston's alterations are of this order with the editing, suppressing, heightening touched on in *The Far-away Hills*.*

Aesthetically, what is the Woollaston country and what are its revelations?

In private and public statements, Cézanne is the name most invoked by the painter, yet Kokoschka, or even Constable of the famous oil sketches, rise easier in the mind of the viewer of these tumbled masses of land or the arabesqued rhetoric of 'Bayley's Hill' (one of which is illustrated) that crowds and squeezes the sky. Yet there is no more contradiction here than that the romantic should avoid Shelley and Keats to learn from the crisp and witty compactness of the Elizabethans. At any rate the revelation of the Woollaston country, its truth, is that in its suggestions—for identifiable flora or other objects scarcely exist—wild Irishman, odd hunks of barbed wire, erosion, fearful bluffs, dead branches,

rivers and all are not tamed, not the victim of some frightened Hitler of sensibility who must have obvious order at all costs. It is the antithesis of the walled Medieval garden, the rigidities of the Renaissance, and is even to the lea of the art of the *already ordered* French landscape of Woollaston's admired Cézanne. Our country is new, primeval, sparsely inhabited, and its problems are therefore unsolved. The paintings, by the same token are at once regional and modern. It is again no accident that motoring through the actual Woollaston territory Mr Woollaston's guest gathered his coat about him, his ears seemed to stick up and he said to the painter 'It's shaggy isn't it?'

Yet though the vast, untidy, lonely landscape threatens any living soul who casts himself upon it unaided by companionship or the smaller inhibiting busynesses of men—farm jobs or a fast car—art of this kind is a direct encounter in which the painter tries to master it by finding its *order* in his soul, his mind. Empathy reaches out to enter and somehow encompass the heart of the wild. Art *is* in fact *the* busyness, *the* practical activity of your sensitive. Beneath the apparent, blowsy, sprawling images of our land as apprehended by Woollaston, it will not be surprising therefore to find at least some of those elements of an armature or skeleton without which a painting cannot exist.

And the first and foremost element of order here then, surely, is Woollaston's palette whose yellow ochre, light red, Indian red, cobalt and Prussian blue applied with more turps and less oil than usual gives us his characteristically flat finish, and has not changed in 30 years. Order implies selection and exclusion. Despite his Nelson sojourn there are no clear skies for Woollaston but only the shifting teals foretelling storm. And development for the painter, with one exception, has not meant an extension of his palette but a greater complexity in his handling of it.

Though we have been warned against the old-time analyses of paintings in terms of simple geometric shapes approximating to the main masses because as abstracted from a work they might as readily be found in inferior paintings, or because in certain artists a seemingly undifferentiated but intuitively painted surface offers no such convenient handle, nevertheless such simple rhythmic forms discreetly mentioned may yield a few clues as to how what looks like a riot is in fact ordered.

In the recent show then, the brush drawing of 'Kumara' is hung upon the spider-like form of ridges running out from a common centre. In 'Washing

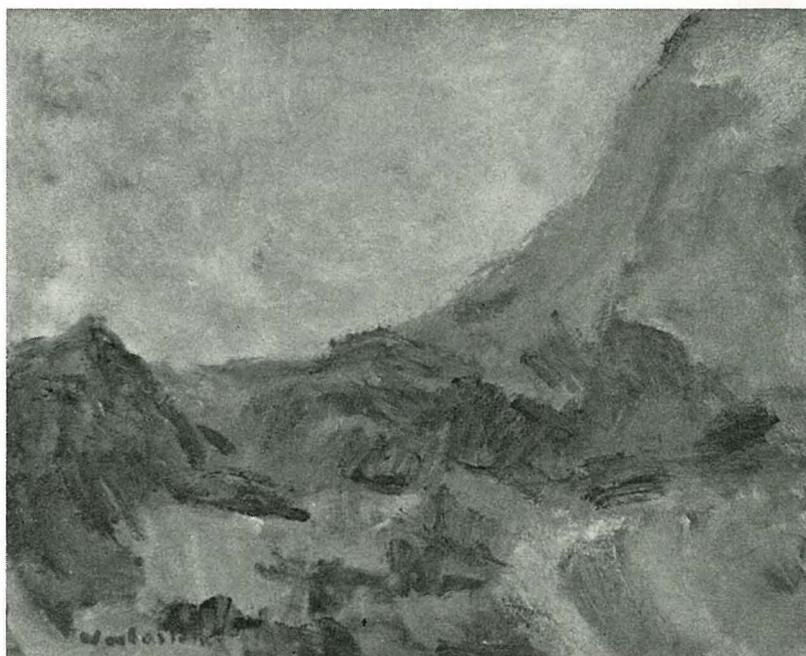
* THE FAR-AWAY HILLS. M. T. Woollaston. *Auckland Gallery Associates (Inc.) 1960.*



M. T. WOOLLASTON

Above: BAYLY'S HILL
AND VALLEY. Oil, 1967.
35 x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins.

At right: LEFT OF THE
MOUNTAIN. Oil, 1967.
15 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins.





M. T. WOOLLASTON. RICH MT DAVEY. Oil, 1967. 23¼ x 31¼ins.

Day Mapua' the landscape is stacked on spokes comprising a row of hills and the washing line itself which radiates from an indeterminate form (or hub) at the extreme right of the painting. Though this form is no doubt as intuitively arrived at as are the discernible rhythms in a passionate rising voice, it is also a typical Woollaston structure discernible elsewhere; felt rather than calculated, such forms are appropriate to the massive sketch-like approach of the artist's aesthetics. In the satisfying 'Blackball' oil, with its new emphasis on yellow, black and red; triangles each with apex towards the centre simultaneously bind and give vibrancy to the soft opposing colours, while 'Mt. Egmont' is an essay in a fresh slipware or comblike patterning throughout, compatible with mass and suggestive of the slight greeny translucence of ice. This painting interestingly complements Heaphy and Perkins and is, obviously, the interpretation which I prefer.

Indeed what delighted me most in the recent exhibition was that it witnessed to the rising tide of the artist's invention. In his book the painter comments on the difficulty of coping with the all-dominating green of his early environment. Now, both Mt Egmont and Bayley's Hill are in Taranaki and painting them, therefore, necessitated a greater use of green, though not in the latter with complete success. It is green's coming out party. She's a little loud perhaps, a little gauche, but what can you expect at that age?

Years ago the painter was accused of having 'Mapua mud' in his paintings. In the earliest landscapes I've been able to borrow (1944-47) there is no trace of this. Three of the landscapes are light and airy in effect, if rich and low toned in key, lacking only the amplitude and complexity of his work in the last decade. Knowing that, in any case, black was more sparingly used by the painter then than now, one wonders whether the adjustment is within oneself: whether it is a further mark of his triumph that he has taught me to see his paintings as the Impressionists taught their generation to 'read across' a painting rather than round outlines within it.

One other noticeable thing is that neither these three landscapes nor *The Far-away Hills* hint at numinous aspect of our landscape which I have stressed as evident in the recent paintings. It seems to have been coming up ever since the painter's move from Mapua whose L'Estaque-like look inspired many paintings which a trifle more obviously leaned upon Cézanne, and to have burst into gigantic bloom via the challenge of the larger painting surface

adopted in 1958. It's as if the more ordered Mapua orchard land provided a limbering up area for these later heights. I once, to Toss's annoyance, called Mapua 'bosky' or 'dell-like', but who could begin to say such a thing of the Taramakau whose differing levels, so awkward to the eye, are well conveyed in the painting.

During successive visits to the recent exhibition I saw several people who stayed barely five minutes apiece. One man spoke to me about his 'difficulty' with Woollastons, but during this time, his direct will-full attention being withdrawn, he himself noticed how the oil 'To the Left of the Mountain' began to come up. The mind's eye, no less than the physical, needs time to dilate when one leaves the bright objective day behind to look at paintings.

Do I consider then, that the painter is perfect?

If an artist is not meeting new challenges he starts painting to the recipes of early successes as did Canaletto in later years. But in this 'sullen or reluctant art' (as all arts are) each painting is a risk, a walk in the dark. When painters fail, some fall back on a visual cliché for a fill in, some have areas of dead pigment. Cézanne, almost alone, left white patches where conception waned. Woollaston, having as he says 'no competence', sometimes shovels in pigment when he cannot find the exact visual 'objective correlative' of his interpretation.

An entirely spontaneous and airy gesture by the painter towards a circular squiggle in 'Takaka Valley' owned by me, seemed to indicate his awareness of an unsolved problem. I feel that definition falters in the line of hills above the Taramakau, and that there is an empty area to the right of 'Green Bayley's Hill'. If this was a work of hapiography I'd avoid comment, as is customary. Neither, on the other hand, do I wish to seem to destroy what I most admire and respect through a niggling and pedantic enumeration of faults, of which in the arts we have already had too much. After all, most painters in this country still don't even arrive at the point where Woollaston's problems begin to have relevance.

Lastly, though the modern temper despises attempts to deal with paintings other than in the formal language of criticism, the devices through which Woollaston personally mirrors his country arise with him in an attempt 'to paint the sunlight—but after it has been absorbed into the earth'. In considering such work it is fitting to refer back to that passive mother of their being, the earth, without whom, as I have heard the painter say, the pictures could not have come into existence.



M. T. WOOLLASTON. TARAMAKAU. Oil, 1967. 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ ins.

What is Art supposed to do?



DOUGLAS MACDIARMID

To begin with, what do I mean by art?

I mean particular human skills, as opposed to natural activity. And then why? Why art of any sort? For even in the caves of prehistory there is evidence that eating, hunting, possessing and breeding were not enough to satisfy the clamouring of the mind. The imagination. This is perhaps the greatest single human force when you reflect that it has no limits, that neither progress nor understanding is possible without imaginative activity. In order to measure time it was first necessary to imagine the possibility. Likewise harnessing animals, transporting weights, and perhaps more important still, the development within society of morality, which at its best is imagining the results of one's actions on other people.

Some of the earliest alliances of art and imagination in Europe are the cave drawings of Lascaux in the south-west of France. Unfortunately visiting may no longer be possible owing to the deleterious effect on the cave walls of the breathing of crowds of people. But while the caves were still open to the public you could wander through subtly lit

yellowish clay-coloured caverns leading and flowing one to another, the images of ancient hunted animals flowing and superimposed along roof and walls. It gave the impression of a simultaneous view of several periods of use, and whatever final interpretation is given these great drawings, it matters less than the fact of their being early expressions of man's imagination.

As well as setting up harmful humidity, the concentrated breathing in that stale air brought one to a state of near hallucination. It became an effort to maintain a sense of reality, and so a shock suddenly at the mouth of the cave, back in fresh air and daylight to see away down in the valley a horse and cart moving together in the harvest. The mind reeled at having to adapt from the mysterious fleeting presences within, rather overwhelmed by the sense of time and effort that must have passed before the possibility of this simple farm scene, involving actual wheels on a cart drawn by a domesticated horse.

It next became obvious that three hideous Nordic Trolls had taken this opportunity of sneaking out

of the innermost dark to join our group and escape into the world. I couldn't possibly have overlooked such unusually ugly tourists on the way in. Which brings us quite naturally to the dangers of imagination. For we must not forget, as an example, that at a time when man was patiently accumulating cathedrals to the glory of his faith, he was also capable of finding unfortunate physical differences reason enough for roasting many a witch.

It is a matter for debate whether progress in twentieth century imagination is either sudden or great. Things may have just been carried forward a bit in certain fields, the credit belonging to the momentum of time past—as well as the cursed way we still react to colours of skin, or opposing ideologies, and the sort of slaughter we condone in war at this very minute. We may not see it, but are none the less involved.

Whether for good or evil, imagination has naturally been served by art. And in terms of art, good and evil can both be transcended. Take for instance a painting of a saint being hacked up for some religious end. It is a sight of complex barbarity, yet we can actually enjoy the picture as a work of art. Likewise, for me, Francis Bacon's handling of paint is such as to allow me to accept and even appreciate his tortured vision.

In any case, art is not a moral matter. Both art and morals require imagination, but then also water can be used for drinking or washing, and they are hard times indeed when either of these separate uses is forced to become one.

The 'Cobra' group of expressionist painters, founded in about 1940, developed the principle that 'the act of creation is more important in itself than the thing created. . .'. The idea of representation is no longer even under discussion. What is aimed at through spontaneity of feeling and execution, is to get at nearly forgotten beginnings in the memory. And here a link is found with modern poetry, concerned with states of anxiety, pain rather than pleasure, means of demonstrating that forms—like words—can mask the truth.

Thus art provides a meeting point for the imagination. A means of expression, with all that is implied of cumulative experience and result. And the very nature of imagination allows its links in art to be stronger—in the long run—than efforts to stifle or direct or forbid. Likewise to guarantee success. Expression of the imagination contains the essence of freedom itself. And a civilization whose links with the imagination are unlimited is likely to

be a lively civilization, where arts and sciences flourish—in spite of William Blake's 'The Tree of Art is the Tree of Life; The Tree of Science is the Tree of Death.' He arrived at that conclusion because he imagined science to be the enemy of imagination. In fact, the arts and sciences share a similar activity involving different materials.

It is important to stress the nature of art as an imaginative link. Because somewhere down the road arose the idea that art should concern itself with what is pretty, nice, comfortable—pictures of ladies of the sort your mother could approve of, or gentlemen fishing, smoking a pipe or winning a battle. The sort of art you choose may be the consolation you are looking for. It may also be the only world where you find justice, where you get back something of what you put in and receive what you deserve, be it intensification or escape. If the soul has a mirror it may indeed be here.

But exclusive insistence on canons of beauty or escape can only become a limitation. For art cannot remain exclusively preoccupied with beauty any more than life can. Art is concerned with what comes strongest and dearest to the imagination, which might put liberty first on the list for some, and explain why artists are often politically committed to one cause or another, specially in youth. The real surprise should be that mankind ever has anything beautiful to express. The answer may be that liberty is an optimistic ideal, and that nearly as strong as liberty as a force, is sensuality, in both frank and sublimated forms. For once man's physical and moral needs are more or less respected, he begins dreaming of enjoyment to follow, and art has no difficulty in passing to considerations of pleasure, of enrichment of the mind, on keeping the mind open and exercised and eager.

This, at any rate, has become a blessing in many countries in our time. For princes and churches in the past did not encourage the imagination to flourish. Far from it. They more often required illustration for some official system. Thanks to which artists have done a vast job of reporting on figures and events of each age. We also have plenty of descriptions filtering through to show the progress of the soul from the caves out to the long-last achieved wish to fly about in the air. At this point it is not unreasonable that photography should take over the reporting. It can manage it faster and more accurately, and in some hands as dazzlingly as anyone could desire. Painters are free to penetrate regions of the spirit where the camera cannot fol-

low. They are also free to go on reporting, and must be free to express what they want. For whether they paint what they see on the spot or take away a memory to work on, they have made a choice, and this becomes the point of their commentary.

A molecular age has brought particular repercussions on the imagination. A world more physically open, explained, visited, has meant that adventurous spirits are driven increasingly inward for territory to explore. The process has meant a revelation in texture, design, individual vision. And not the least important, admission that he who expresses what he sees is not necessarily more right than he who expresses what he knows. The past has left us a wealth of pictures dealing with things as they look. It would be ungrateful to quarrel now with generations whose aim is to express the spirit of things. Following the Cubists, the Abstract movement has served to get the bones of painting out into the clear—after all something had to happen at the end of last century, clogged as it was with detail and literature. And in spite of the present perplexity, there is evidence enough that serious painters are concerned with putting the bones back into twentieth century flesh.

No one wishing to be present consciously in the twentieth century can afford to ignore what twentieth century imagination is trying to express. The task would be easier if the imagination were as reliable as a hammer or a knife—remembering that a hammer can slip and crush a finger and a knife break and cut a hand. Scarcely surprising then if the imagination sometimes flies wide of the mark, or serves up a salad of hitherto hidden confusion and horror. You can't have liberty one way without the other.

It is at least important to recognize that the imagination of the period is striving to honour its responsibility. To come to terms with our congested civilization and cities, our perplexity, offering everything from penetrating accusation to enthusiastic escape. In all of which it would be narrow-sighted to dismiss Op or Pop extravagances as worthless. Society has always suffered from the need for a good clown, and from tensions of societies as highly organized as ours, some unreasoning, Dionysian release is the more urgent.

Difficulties in following and understanding arise because standards of criticism of liberty are hard to establish. And there are further complications and temptations to cheat when fashion rewards what passes for audacity and originality at the expense of

more patient, less showy research. In our unparalleled liberty the individual responsibility is increased correspondingly, which in turn presupposes improved individuals—far from being necessarily the case among artists or anyone else.

Then the difficulty of establishing standards of comparison has meant that perhaps never before has the merely cunning artist had such golden chances. Once, an artist drew on the whole of his skill and knowledge, which was relatively complete enough to give an impression of integrity to the result. And continuity. But since the boundaries of possible knowledge have been pushed so much further, individual understanding has been obliged to break up into specialization, and the artist has often specialized himself, with results both good and bad. For unless he is a very big man, fertile in invention, he falls into repetition or incoherence or both. He is focussed on his fascinating interior and sometimes can produce no more than one species of design, which he changes in terms of colour to spin the business out a bit. And when that wears thin or won't sell, he adopts a new trick.

The dealers may be partly to blame for this. They have a tendency to bind painters with the sort of contract that requires so many oils, so many gouaches for such and such a regular date in order to have a show and keep sales up and speculation lively. You can't bully the imagination like that and get away with it entirely. It dies out into obvious commercial posturing. Like Bernard Buffet. What's the fun of being rich and famous if you can't feel that you died some time ago?

Perhaps no period has been more concerned with the challenge of freedom than our own. But it's a test for the individual, being free, and the results are fierce in contrast. On one hand, the mind is elated and stimulated by the expression of freedom exploding everywhere, whether above the artistic surface or below the political. On the other hand such pretentiousness now exists that the mind boggles at it. Surely stupidity and vanity have never had such champions since the gods and giants of old were donging each other on the head.

Such a burst of pretentiousness may be due to a gradual change of attitude towards artists. They are no longer slightly despised servants of tyrants. Nowadays every artist worth his salt *knows* that he is a message-bearing genius—some appear vaguely uncertain as to what exactly their message will turn out to be by the time future ages have straightened them out, but others have got it gloriously clear into

one little brush-stroke on an enormous canvas, or just the ideal hunk ripped off a sheet of metal.

In actual fact, an artist has no lack of reasons for being humble. If he's honest, he's constantly having to face up to the limit of his powers, constantly obliged to try to extend them. In the process he can become agonizingly lost. He can wake up one morning and for no definable reason have forgotten what he thought he knew. There's no choice but begin feeling and thinking things out afresh. If that were not enough, he has also to contend with the capricious and independent energies of his materials—for writers, words get out of hand, and Dali has illustrated the worries of at least one composer of music, whose notes have become biggish black ants and rushed into the centre of the page, while a luminous bubble-head of Lenin has appeared at the keyboard of the piano at intervals of an octave. Certainly for painters, one touch of colour can be enough to light up or extinguish the intention of a composition.

Try the experiment yourself. Cover a surface with colours—get them on fast enough for your subconscious to have played a major part. The result will have something of a sense of rhythm, or direction, emotional impact of some kind entirely apart from efforts or accidents of representation. Next try to control what you're about, take a precise aim, and you'll see what I mean. The artist is forever baffled by control—how to gain it—how to lose it—either way, in his own eyes, the ideal balance is still to come with the next picture. That may be what keeps him going, even creating a sense of distance from fellow creatures who do not pursue any vision in particular. Perhaps in some cases, only those who get far enough away from a certain balance and proportion manage to look back and obtain glimpses of any clarity. Is it permissible to wonder if only fundamentally unsatisfied people work up tensions enough to give point to their expression? Does one paint from what one has, or what one wants? The nature of vision is more likely to be nourished by the second.

Ideally, the painter is involved in all the complexity of a view into our strained, precariously poised relationship with the universe. And ideally, modern painting continues to give you this—plunges you into the contemporary adventure. It's salutary to get a little lost—to ramble rather than hunt through the forests of the interior, free for experience and not dependent on finding one more animal to kill.

A word of comparison on the possibilities of open-mindedness in New Zealand and, say, France. It is not necessary not to have a complex just on the score of living in New Zealand. There could be advantages too. For example, the number of French who feel the need to go further than the comfort of traditions from the extreme richness of their past, is certainly exceeded by the number of those who, for many reasons can not. For this majority, nothing that the contemporary period has to offer can compare with some period safely past (electricity, plumbing, and gadgets that can be hidden, of course excepted). Furniture plays a decisive role in this attitude, and furniture largely indicates fortune, taste, political opinions and the sort of pictures that will fit.

I think it safe to say that the majority of French are still straining for the reconstitution of some past century—rather less Louis XV now that there are few attics that have not been ransacked, and few bargains possible as a result. The slightly severer Louis XVI is still fairly popular, and Napoléon III (Queen Victoria for us) has stopped being quaint and dowdy and been cleaned up and made attractive and comfortable. Recently the rage has tended more towards Louis XIII (our Stuart period), though furniture of this vintage is of a necessity only for those rich enough to be able to play up the ego more than convenience and comfort. (Here I salute in passing a Queen Anne table very prettily married to this French haute époque. It is a handsome table in terms of wood and colour and labyrinthine rhythm, but sitting at it is misery. These pretty wooden legs occupy nearly all the space beneath.)

All of which is part of something permanently crazy in human society. Which period of Assyrian history was it during which you simply could not receive the So-and-So's unless you had Egyptian furniture of the time of Thutmoses 9th, or some other worthy old mummy.

The design of the past is above all valuable when it inspires present day adaptations and improvements for our sort of living. It becomes complicated of course when much contemporary stuff is mass produced and plain ugly. And if you happen to have some good furniture to begin with, you will not want to throw it away and begin from scratch. What is encouraging among the very rich and bright, is how they can put the best of all worlds together. It can be managed if your likes are strong enough

to liberate your taste, and produce results that are exciting.

In New Zealand the weight of the past should not be hard to bear, but encourage favourable use of present resources. Surely the more people who work towards a contemporary responsibility, the more contemporary satisfaction there would be. The point I wish to make is that people who want to be thoroughly alive in France have an effort to make which is similar to the struggle not to be dead in New Zealand. Either way such people will be a minority (of benefit to the whole country), because of that initial effort. Getting the mind open a fraction means work. You have to go out and give yourself trouble, come home and go on taking pains. Nothing of great quality will come to you like a bee to the flower. And why should it? Of course, eventually in 100 years or so something of what the active minority are about manages to seep through. It is up to everyone to decide for himself how long he can wait for fresh food.

As things stand in New Zealand there is danger of national insipidity. In too many cases one can observe the whole mental mechanism involved in trying to be thought nice, but doing nothing to *be clear*. Which might go some way toward explaining why the average New Zealander is afraid of colour, whether, for the eyes or in the personality. Colour is relegated to the painting of the roof, for the maximum disharmony of our largely hideous towns.

Most of our problems arise from our unadmitted smallnesses and fear. New Zealanders tend to resent and resist outside standards that are difficult to compete with, and as a result remain closed in. Closed in and friendly. Because we are a genuinely, touchingly neighbourly people, and this is not enough. We need to get clearer in our friendliness, and instead of accepting 'near enough' and shoddy shanty-town functional, we must become better friends with the things we make before they can become the best we are capable of.

A mixture of timidity and laziness also prevents too many New Zealanders from being clear friends to word by word of their speech. New Zealand speech is notoriously unclear, as if communication between human beings were not already sufficiently difficult without that! This strikes me as the worst of faults. Not to co-operate energetically towards human communication. Not to have the guts to love one's language enough to use it in a way that works. To be on this earth for such a short time and to

mumble it away in half-hearted mediocrity. We're blind and dull with so-called friendliness.

What's to be done? Somehow get conscious of actions and surroundings. Seize all opportunities to compare. Avoid mindless repetition. Get at the heart of reasoning—which is to say, insist on what you *really want*. Insist with courage. Useless to accept this or that just so as not to be different from other people—as useless as trying to impress them. That only leads to the silly game of going one better.

I think a lot of us were brought up not to be inquisitive and exacting, whereas in order to be fair to everything from the ordinary to the unfamiliar, it's not possible to be too inquisitive, too inquiring. Surely it is better to get the most of what's presented and possible, instead of letting the mind shut with a snap out of habit, or fright, or the feeling of not knowing enough. Who does know all he needs?

If the contemporary variety (and confusion) were to be examined with fairness and feeling, the process could lead to significant change and solid achievement. But we have to want these things. Whole-hearted wanting is the only corrective open to New Zealand.

I don't know how much is left of a certain self-conscious striving to be New Zealanders that I remember in my youth. Like any natural growth, this is not to be rushed. Surely if we strove just to be individuals of the highest capacity we would be better New Zealanders into the bargain. You don't stop being a New Zealander, by which I mean, cut years and experiences out of your life, just by wanting to, or by living somewhere else. I am specially well placed to give assurance of that.

Patrick Hanly's *Pacific Icons*



GORDON H. BROWN

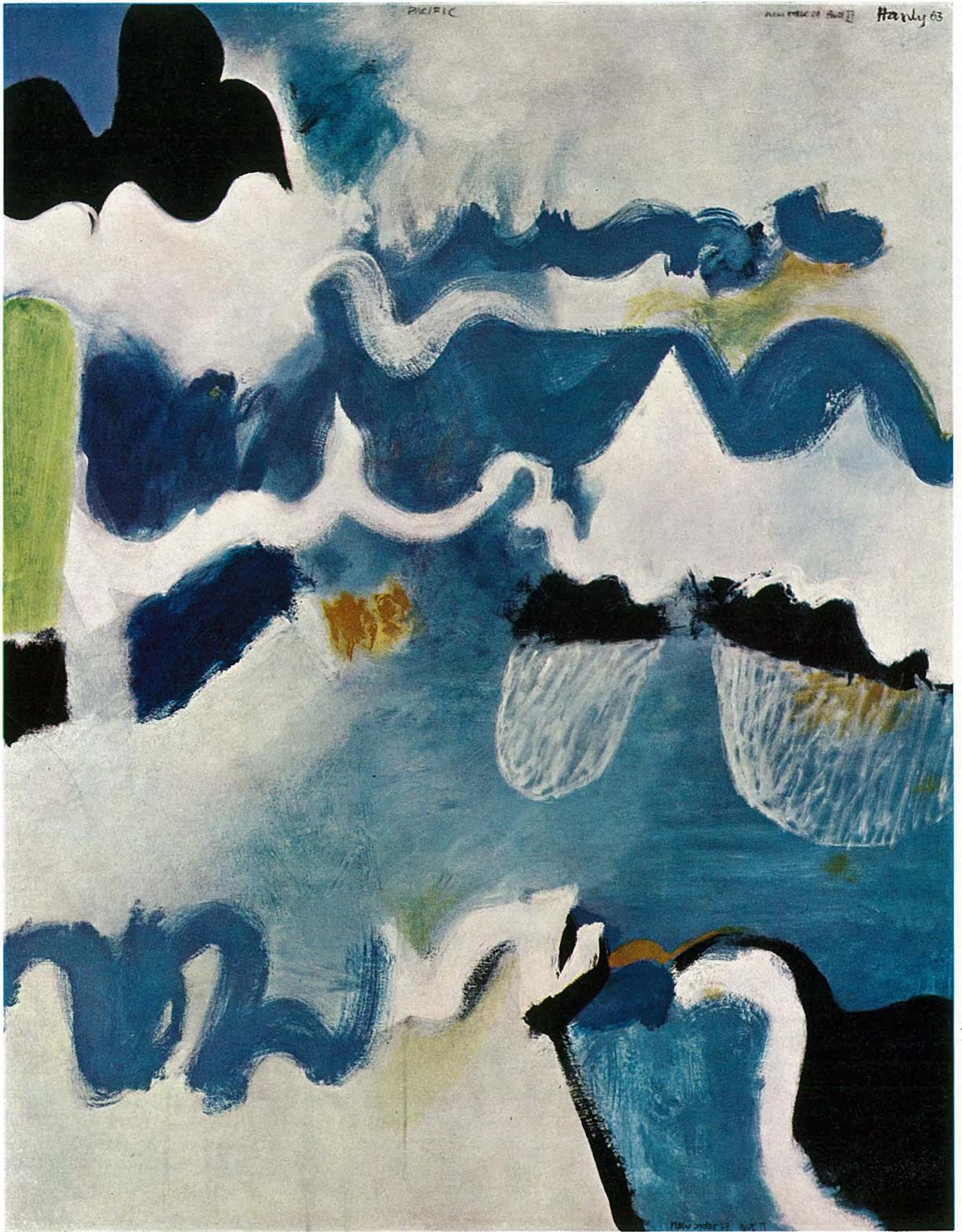
PATRICK HANLY'S most recently completed series of paintings have the unifying title *Pacific Icons*. If a starting point can be designated then the series originated from the exhibition of Sengai scroll paintings on view in the Auckland City Art Gallery during May and June, 1966. While Hanly was immediately impressed with Sengai's qualities as an artist, the after-image established in his thoughts took some time to assert itself before suggesting ideas that could possibly be relevant to his own painting and environment. Almost a month passed from the time the exhibition left Auckland until Hanly was prompted to record in his journal (kept to jot down his own progress and ideas on painting) that 'Sengai is quite superbly normal'.

To Hanly each scroll by Sengai was a painting complete within itself where Sengai had discovered for himself a philosophical and artistic certainty which lay at the calm centre of a roaring cyclone: a cyclone seething with discontent and doubt. Although Hanly admired the humanity distilled in Sengai's outlook on the world, the aspect that interested him more was the artistic means whereby this was

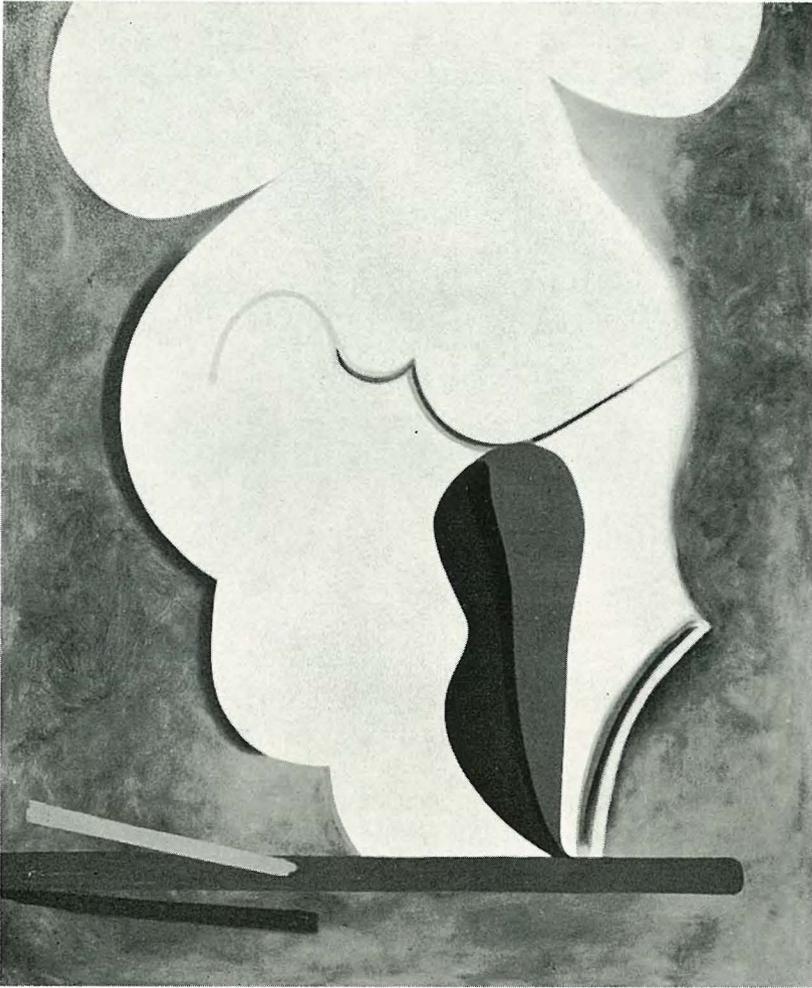
achieved. In particular came the realization that paintings of real consequence could be produced through using very simple imagery, and where any ambiguity could be avoided by stripping the images of all but their barest essentials.

Looking back on the Sengai exhibition with the *Pacific Icons* in mind, the scrolls that seem to have asserted a direct influence on Hanly, irrespective of whether or not he was conscious of this, were *The Moon*, *Mount Fiji*, *The Spoon* and most of all *The Universe*, a picture created out of a circle, a triangle and a square, whose very simplicity went a long way towards supplying Hanly with his initial theme. In connection with the title of the series Hanly was aware that Sengai had also been an artist living in a country bordering the Pacific; but to enlarge upon this simple fact by attaching to it a greater regional significance would be misleading.

If Sengai supplied the way into the *Pacific Icons*, it would be incorrect, however, to give the impression that these works were painted in isolation from his previous work. While Hanly had tried to break away from the recognizable human element found in his



NEW ORDER 29, PART 2, PACIFIC 1963. Oil. 53½ x 41½ ins.

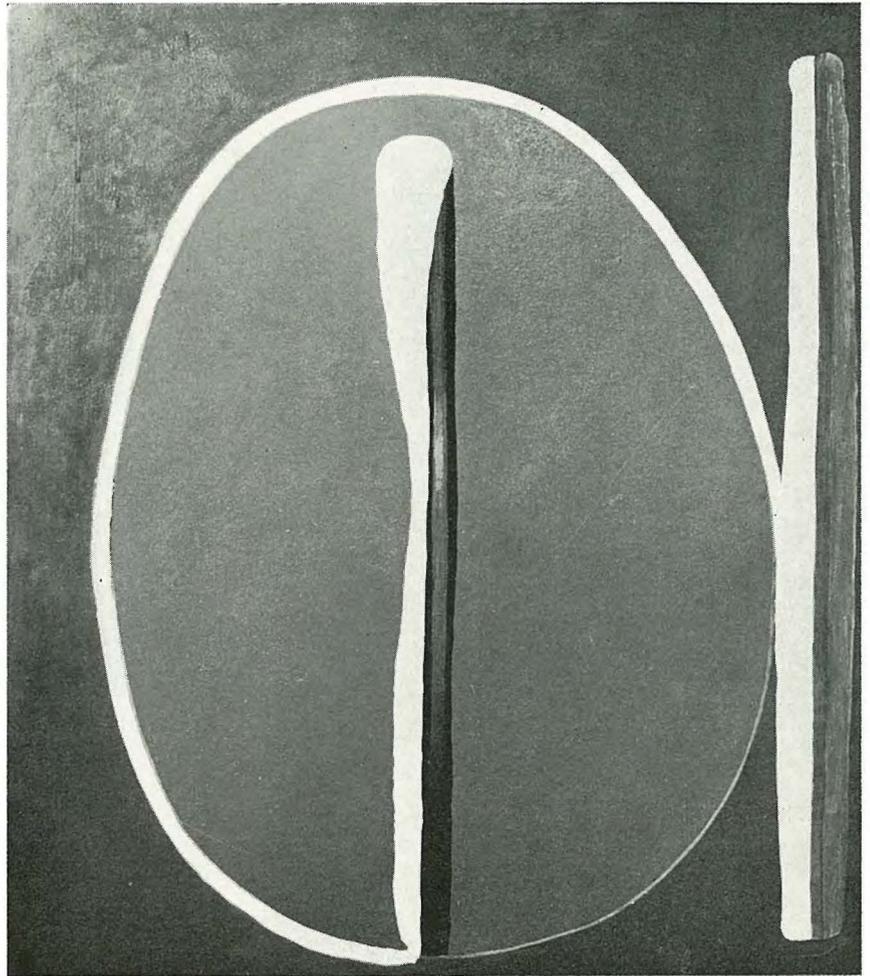


PACIFIC ICON L34. Oil on canvas, 1966. 60 x 50ins.

two preceding series, *Figures in Light* and *Girl Asleep*, there are occasional hints reflecting stylistic echoes from these two series, but because the intention differs in the *Pacific Icons*, they are not always obvious. The clearest reflection from the *Figures in Light* paintings can be observed in the bottom left of *Pacific Icon L34* where, floating above the main horizontal form, is a light blue strip from which, an inch or two below, a shadow appears to be cast that is suggestive of the strong light used in the earlier series to illuminate the figures. Similarly the strong dark-against-light contrast seen in some of the *Pacific Icons* hint at this same aspect. The open type composition typical of the best *Figures in Light* paintings is largely ignored—but the rather closed composition, with its highly formal arrangement of lines, used in the latter (though less successful) *Girl Asleep* paintings is more clearly observable. In the

Pacific Icons this formalism has the advantage over the latter *Girl Asleep* paintings, for where the image of the sleeping girl had been reduced to an over stylized pattern, this limitation is not nearly so prevalent in the *Pacific Icons*. Rather than these two figurative series, the paintings which seem to have a more direct relationship to the *Pacific Icons* come from the second *New Order* series. If the *New Order* and *Pacific Icon* paintings differ stylistically from each other to a greater extent, they share a similar approach to subject matter. This subject involves the exploration of spacial qualities associated with our environment: the dominance of undisturbed land-forms, the sky, the sea, the intense isolation that can be experienced here coupled with the absence of any prolonged occupation of the land. But whereas the *New Order* paintings were concerned with conventional or real space, the *Pacific Icons* aim at

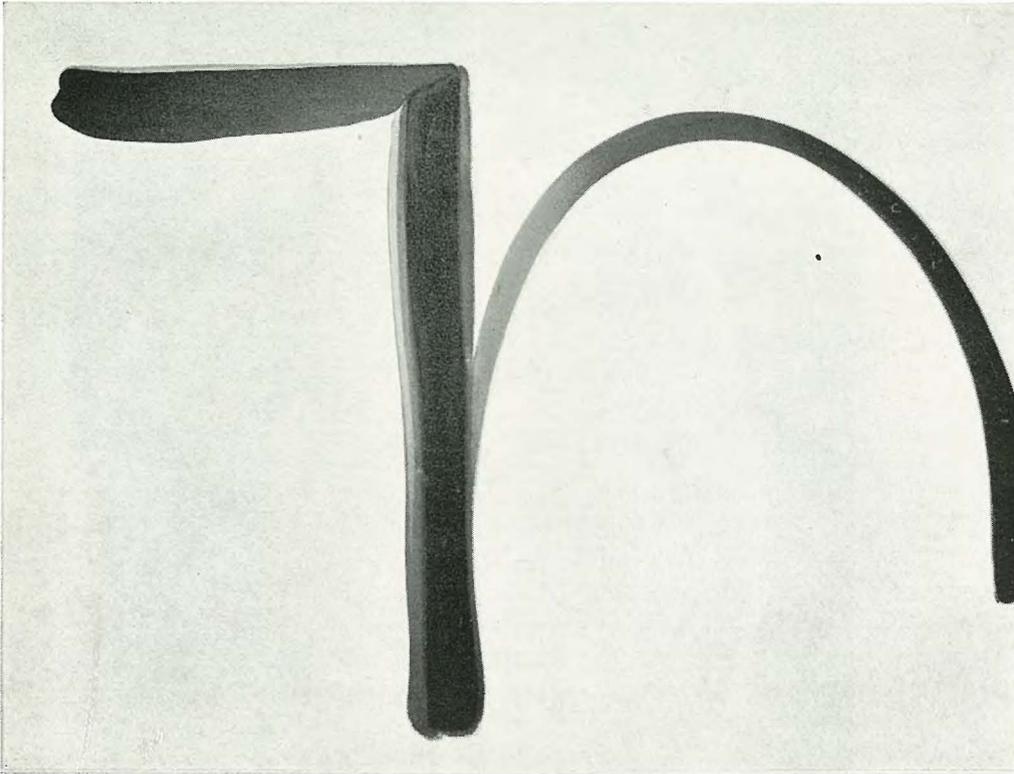
PACIFIC ICON L20. Oil on canvas, 1966. 62 x 53ins.



rendering a metaphysical realization of this space. Paintings like *Pacific Icons L24, L34* and *K2* have been organized within a scheme not dissimilar to certain works in the *New Order* series, but the free-wheeling, and at times, wild brush work of the earlier paintings have no place in the recent works. The natural exuberance and abundance indicated in the *New Order* paintings are alien to the calmer atmosphere intended for the *Pacific Icons*.

During the early stages of work on the *Pacific Icons*, Hanly saw them as a means whereby he could clarify his own position in relation to his paintings, for at that time he was trying to escape from a rather uncertain situation with regard to his own work of the previous year into one that offered greater artistic equilibrium. Towards the end of July he jotted down the following note: 'Got to develop up to making the right statement, if possible, FIRST

time—do drawings—a stage of clarity and right feeling . . .' As yet these ideas were not specifically thought about as *Pacific Icons* for his ideas were still endeavouring to seek the appropriate visual form. Indeed, the first month spent on this series was almost entirely confined to doing numerous working drawings in which he concentrated on defining the basic elements in the simplest terms of line and mass. Only after this stage was any consideration given to paint and canvas and to finding the 'absolute' colour for each shape. By the end of the month the way was becoming clearer, and on the 1st of August Hanly wrote this about the paintings in hand: '. . . must take great care with these, everything must be equated over and over again. These are intended "ultimates". The whole thing is superbly thrilling and risky, a high wire situation.' By the middle of November Hanly felt that a high point had been



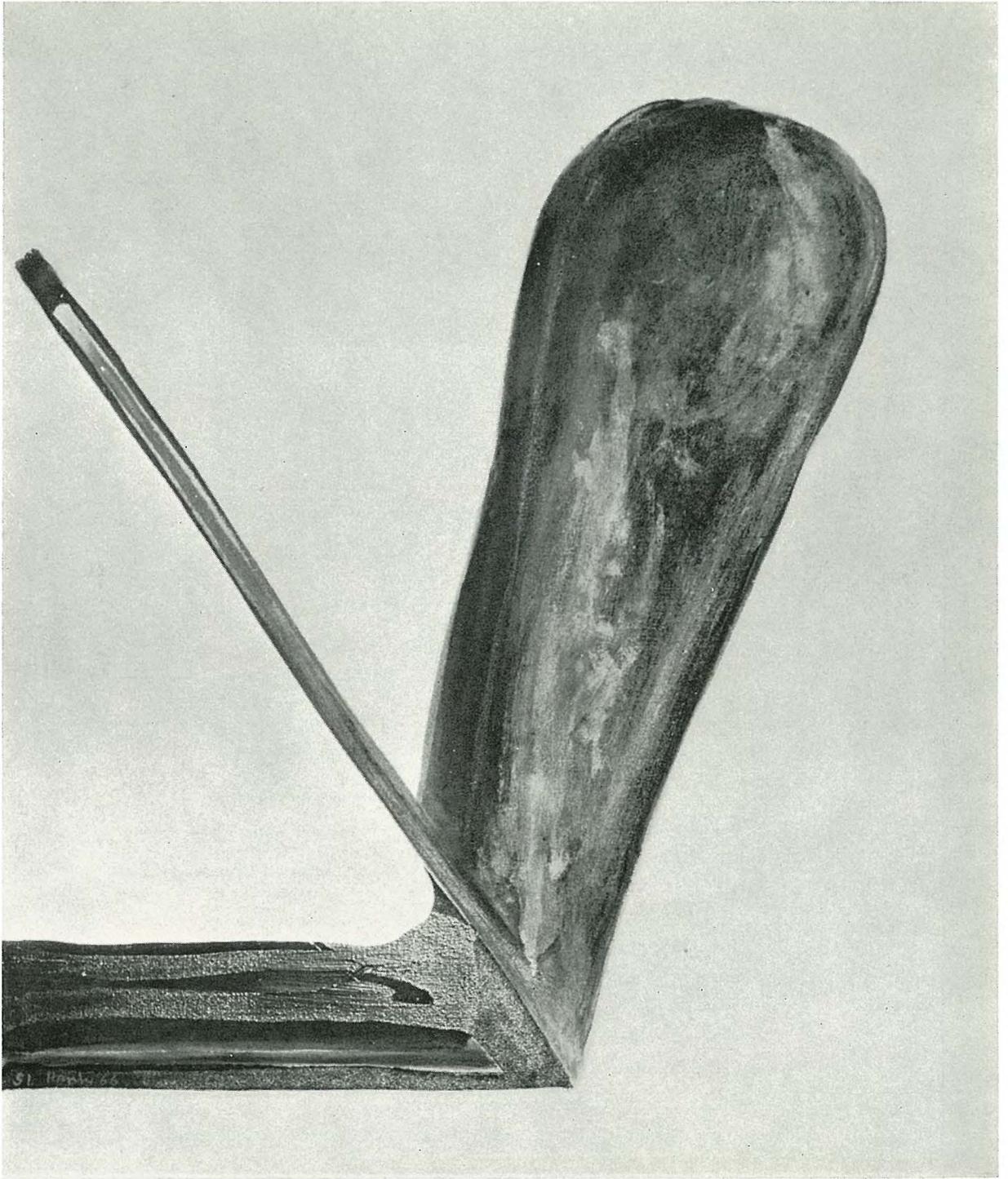
PACIFIC ICON M22. Oil on canvas, 1966. 44 x 59ins.

reached. He wrote: 'Painting M7 "Pacific Icon" is complete and I feel it is pretty fine. It is one of the few works which are finally concluded of this attempt at "new ultimates" of PACIFIC rather than European elements and traditions. Still about 15 works only—continually reworking most of them and this seems to really help to bring a work on. Taking much time looking and adding or finally destroying the real failures.' Early in the new year the series were ready for exhibition. Two of them, *Pacific Icon M7* and *S1* were already on public view, being included in the Auckland City Art Gallery's *New Zealand Painting 1966* exhibition. In the latter half of April 1967 twelve paintings comprising the completed *Pacific Icons* series (including *M7* but not *S1*) were shown at the Barry Lett Galleries.

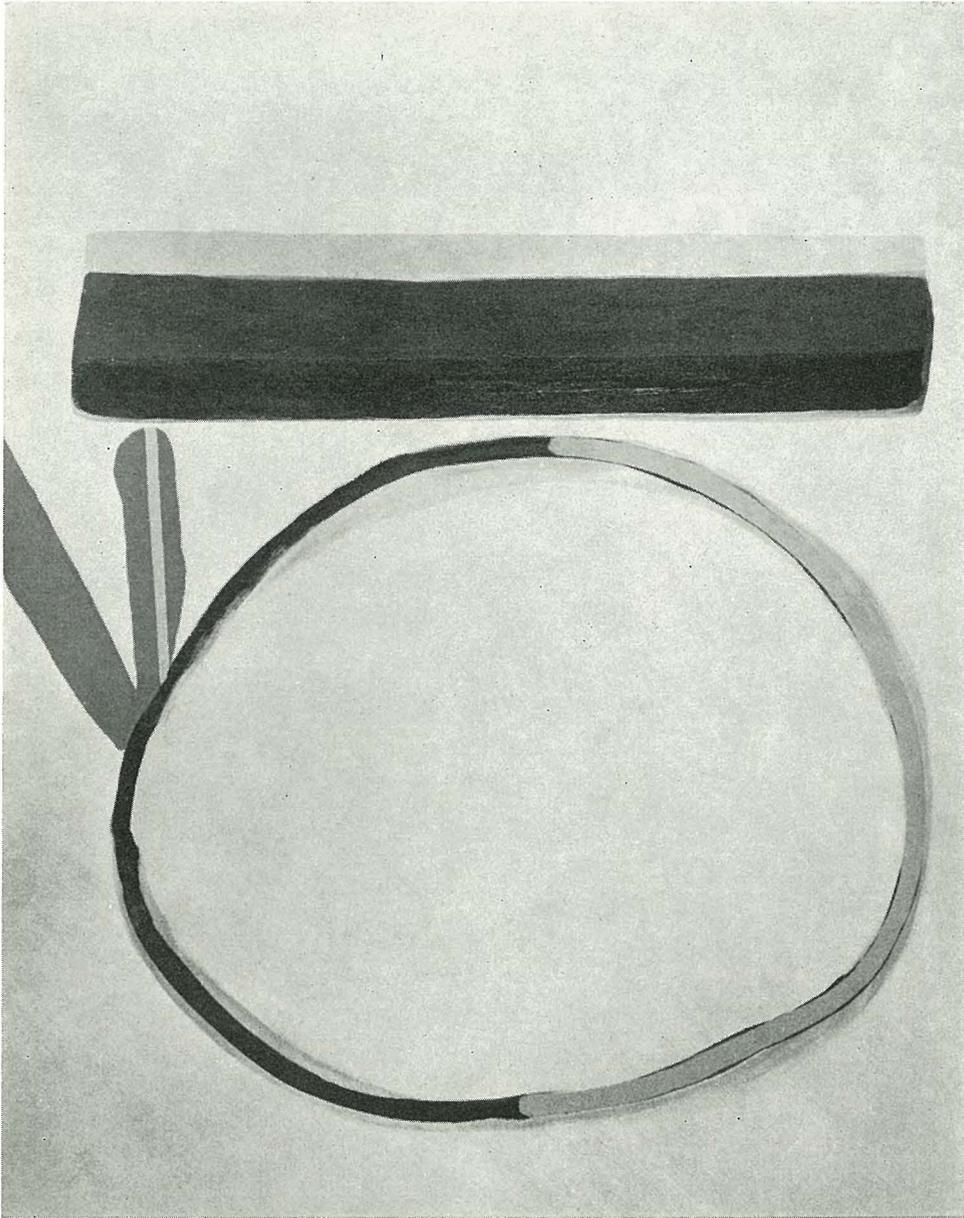
Before this exhibition took place, however, the great moment of recognition had turned into doubt. Hanly had reconsidered the implications behind the whole series and had come to the conclusion that

paintings could not be arranged and created in such a way.

Because of the painter's own dissatisfaction with the series as a whole, the paintings must be considered in greater detail if we are to uncover an explanation for this discontent. In considering the series one has to admit that of the thirteen paintings making up the *Pacific Icons* only three (some may add a possible fourth) survive as both satisfactory and complete works in the fullest sense, while the majority, containing works offering some interesting painterly propositions, either squat on the borderline of success or fall just under it. Others, like *Pacific Icon L34* and *G16* are a mixture of success and failure, with those which remain, including *Pacific Icon L24* and *B5*, constitute the weakest in the series. From the middle group *Pacific Icon K2*, *S1* and *M7* all possess admirable qualities but in one way or another fall short of their artistic goal. There may be a good deal of assurance in the way *Pacific Icon K2* is



PACIFIC ICON S1. Oil on canvas, 1966. 41 x 34ins.



PACIFIC ICON P30. Oil on canvas, 1966. 62 x 48ins.

handled, but this assurance belongs more to the designer than to the painter with real conviction. In this respect the C shaped object in the bottom right tends to give the composition away, for there is a slightly contrived rather than a natural look about it, especially in relation to the figure 8 like shape. Much the same can be said about *Pacific Icon M23*, although once again, there are some very admirable qualities about this work. *Pacific Icon S1* and *M7* present a different story for one feels, particularly in *M7*, that the theme embodied in these works has more substance. What prevents them from being truly successful are the areas bordering on uncertainty which, though they may be slight, affect the total visual impression and therefore the meaning gained from them as paintings. In each one the main shape has an ungainliness that induces a feeling of uneasiness. *M7* also suffers from an over-dominant background blue, thus tending to stifle the white central shape. Despite the obvious defects in this painting the white shape does possess a natural flow suggestive of water or clouds and it is probably this conceptional success that has caused the artist himself to regard this painting as the most important work in the whole series.

There seems little room for doubt that the most convincing paintings in the series are *Pacific Icon P30*, *L20* and *M22*. These three works possess a directness and clarity largely due to the simpler yet bolder use of imagery aided by the clean manner in which the forms have been painted. Undoubtedly the images were carefully calculated but they also have a natural spontaneous look that contrasts favourably with the overpainted heaviness found in *Pacific Icon B5*. This impression of paintings that seem to have just happened accounts largely for their success and for the fact that they achieve a greater degree of equilibrium in relation to the images used and to their ultimate meaning as paintings than do other works in the series. In these three paintings the control over the pictorial space surrounding, or enclosed by the images has been given a meaning greater than the actual physical space seen by the eye. It must be admitted however that these paintings do not raise the level of feeling to any great height for the images operate on a level akin to a rhetorical simile rather than being transformed into a metaphor. Although these works fail to attain the dimensions applicable to a symbol, they do possess a sincerity and depth that today is rare amongst this type of painting.

Whether or not the painter comes close to any of

his ultimate aims in creating the *Pacific Icons* must be left for him to decide. In one respect, however, Hanly failed to attain, what was for him, an important goal, for the break away he sought from the traditional European approach to painting did not occur. More than anything else, this probably explains why he rejected many of the implications associated with the *Pacific Icons* as a series. The mistake lay in that the major decisions important for the creation of the *Pacific Icons* were in essence compositional decisions rather than conceptional ones. This is where the real lesson taught by Sengai was not properly understood.

Art Galleries and the Arts Council



CHARLES BRASCH

I have long thought that the four chief art galleries need to work out some co-ordination of policy in buying painting and sculpture from abroad. So far as New Zealand work is concerned, it is good for the galleries to be in a state of rivalry, each intent on building up the best collection possible. Rivalry may be desirable too over Australian work—that is arguable. But with European art, where the range is so huge that one gallery cannot hope to do more than touch the fringes here and there, I think it would be sensible for each gallery to concentrate on different schools and artists, so that the four together may give us an impression (it can hardly be more, in original work) of as many of these as possible. The same goes for Indian, Chinese and Japanese art. The smaller galleries would of course in various ways help to fill out that impression.

It may be that Auckland, with its long professional start and its larger resources, can hope to assemble groups of work from a number of the greater and lesser schools of several European countries; yet it too will be very restricted. Think how meagre Melbourne's collection is, by world stand-

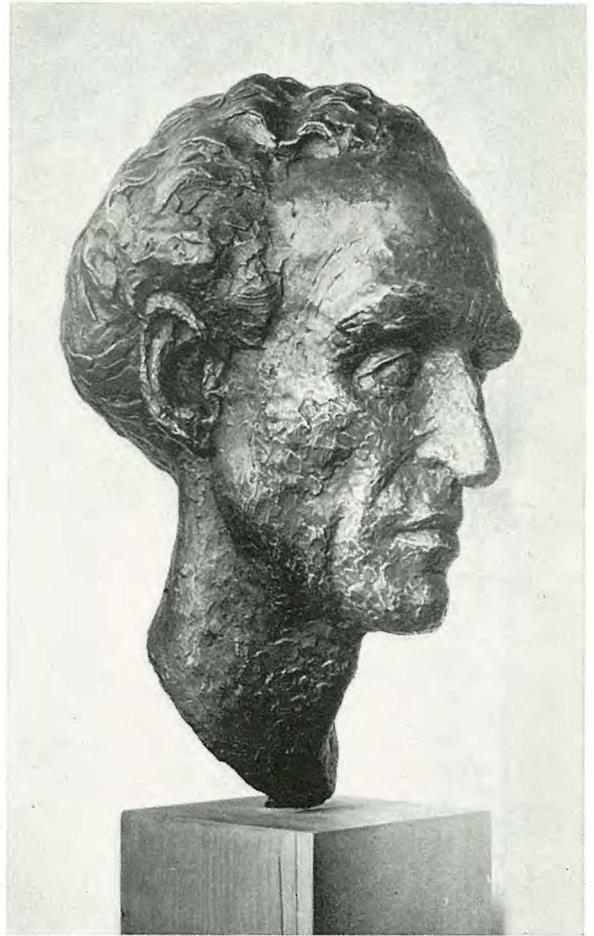
ards, even after sixty years of buying from the enormous Felton Bequest. Perhaps even Melbourne was not well advised to attempt a collection of world standard on such a scale. In this country, at any rate, such standards are simply not relevant. Yet it is perfectly possible to build up first-rate coherent collections of fine but lesser work without great resources; what is required is wide knowledge, sound advice, judgment—and the ability to act on them decisively. This is possible, I repeat, in New Zealand. Such a collection is already taking shape in the group of twentieth-century sculpture at Auckland Art Gallery.

So long as galleries were buying quite independently, reason alone might have induced them to co-operate. But now that they get grants from the Arts Council to help them buy works costing more than \$2,000, I think the Council should require each gallery to buy such works only in certain distinct fields, so that no two galleries are buying with public money in the same field, unless for very good reason. Since Auckland began a Gothic collection and acquired, with the Council's help, its

fifteenth-century Spanish wooden figure of Christ in Majesty, other galleries should not be given grants to buy in that field. Since Dunedin, with the Council's help, bought its predella of the Dance of Salome by Cozzarelli, other galleries should not be given grants to buy Sieneese work of that (if of any) period. Galleries will of course still be free to buy what they wish out of their own funds—in accordance, one hopes, with a rational policy taking account of the policies of other galleries. I propose only that the Arts Council should ensure that public money granted by it is spent in different fields by each gallery.

Every gallery will choose a field or fields in which it has foundations already laid or in which it gets a chance not only to start, but to follow up its start. Dunedin for example might try to add to its charming le Sidaner some other late Impressionist work of comparable quality, carefully chosen. It should try to enlarge its group of work by William Rothenstein, W. W. Russell, Steer, Sickert, John and McEvoy. That Auckland has much more work (oils and drawings both) by painters of roughly the same period (and by some of the same painters) need not be regretted, but may call for caution by both galleries—and by the Arts Council in helping them. The McDougall might try to build on its few French paintings. Most galleries to be sure still have to learn the rudiments of professionalism in buying, in showing, in thinking about works of art, a matter in which their catalogues are revealing. Compare Auckland's well-presented *Summary Catalogue* of 1964 with Dunedin's untitled handbook (so-called) of the same year, a shoddy job that might have been spawned by the Government Tourist Department, ill-conceived, thick with mis-spellings, useful only as a horrid warning.

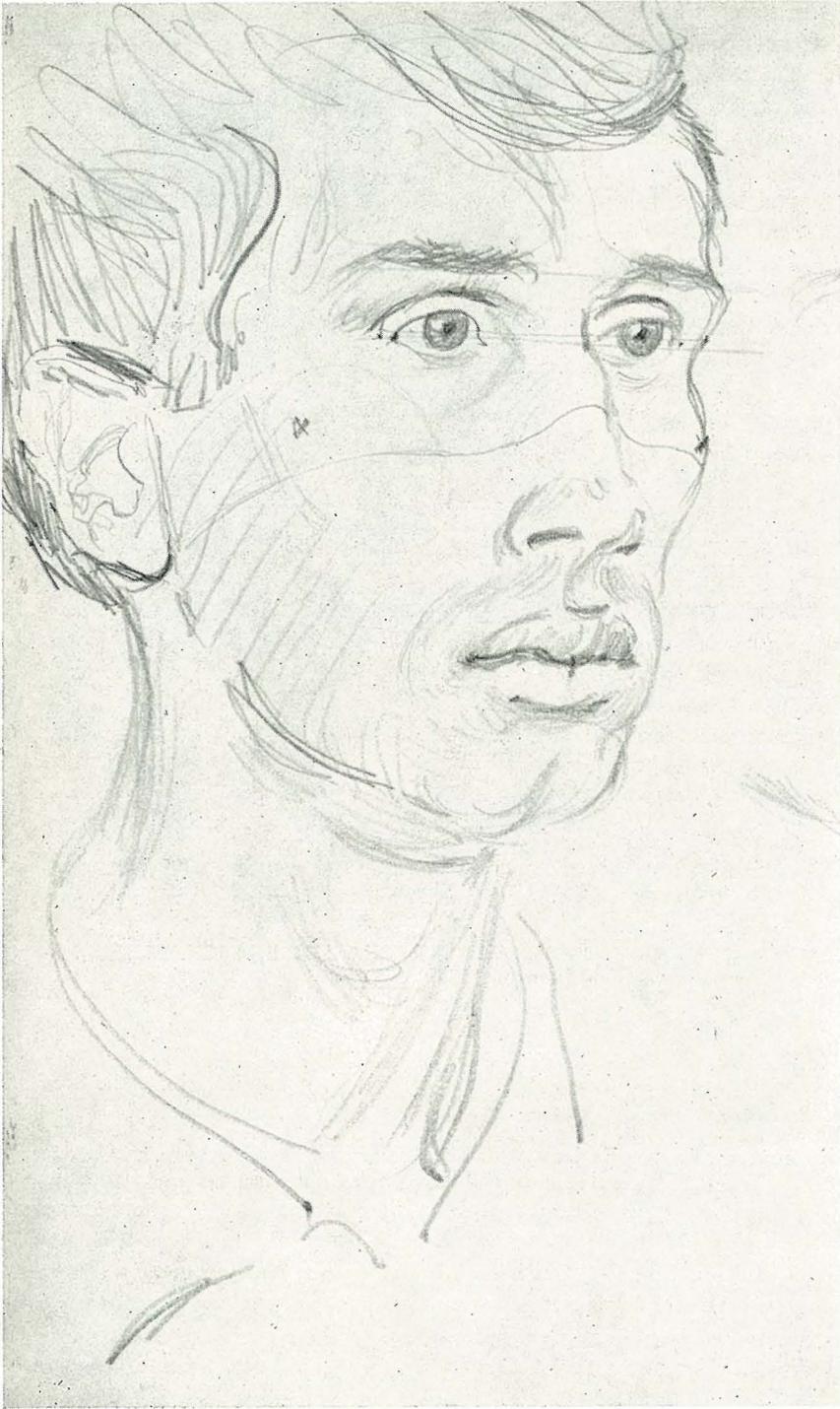
Works that come by gift are a different matter, and no gallery will refuse good gifts. Every isolated fine work *can* be given a meaningful place in a well-ordered collection. But galleries that consist only of isolated, that is unrelated, fine works of many different schools are at a great disadvantage, and may seem disorderly and even abstract. It is all very well to have one's soul ravished by masterpieces. But works of art are not inexplicable momentary flashes of lightning; they are growths, they grow on the tree of man, and if they are to work on us properly we must not be swept away and blinded by them but try to live with and understand them—to see the context of their growths, how they are related to and how they diverge from earlier and



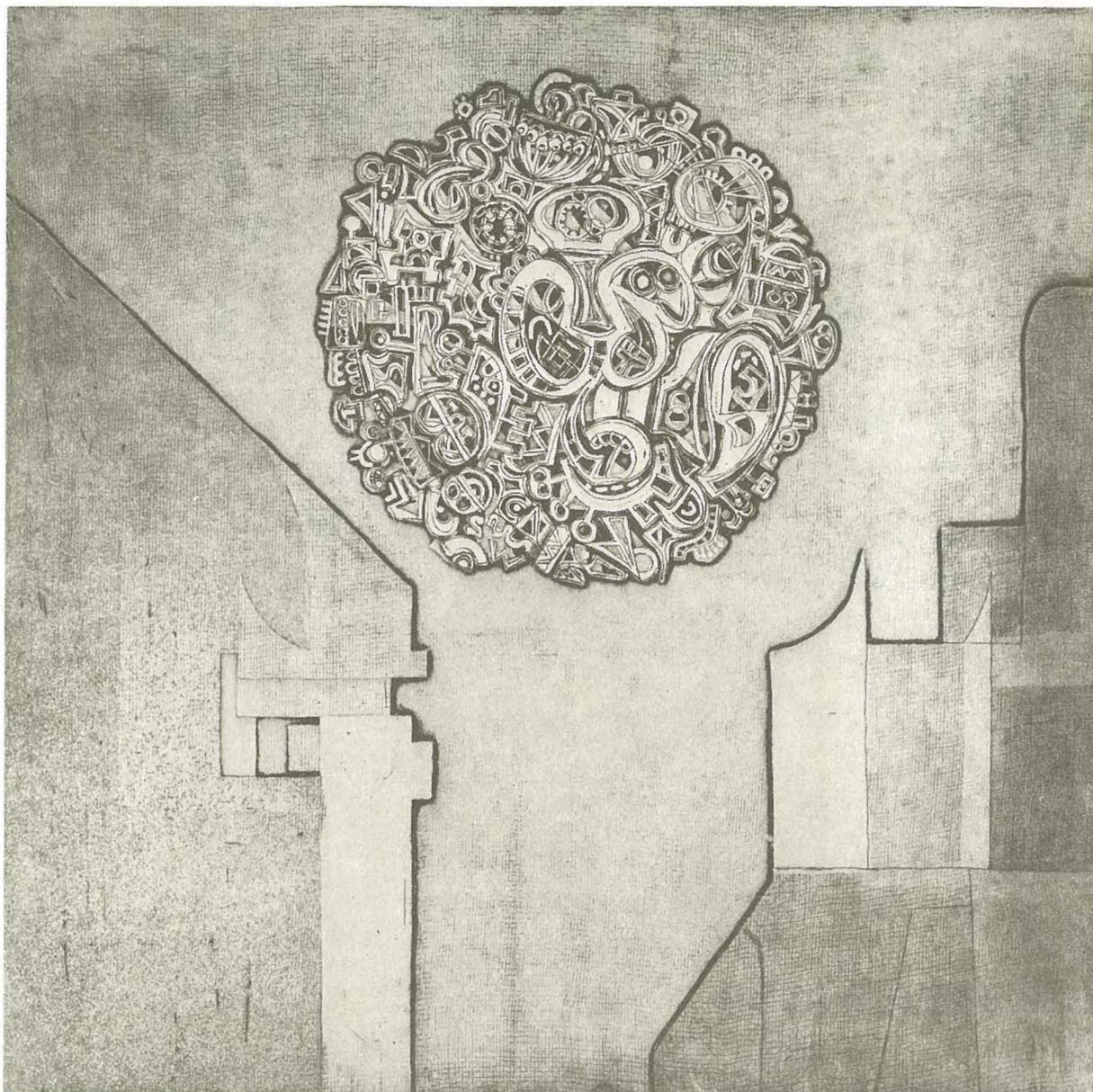
PAUL BEADLE. CHARLES BRASCH. Plaster for bronze, 1966.

contemporary work, how they illuminate the life and ideas of their period.

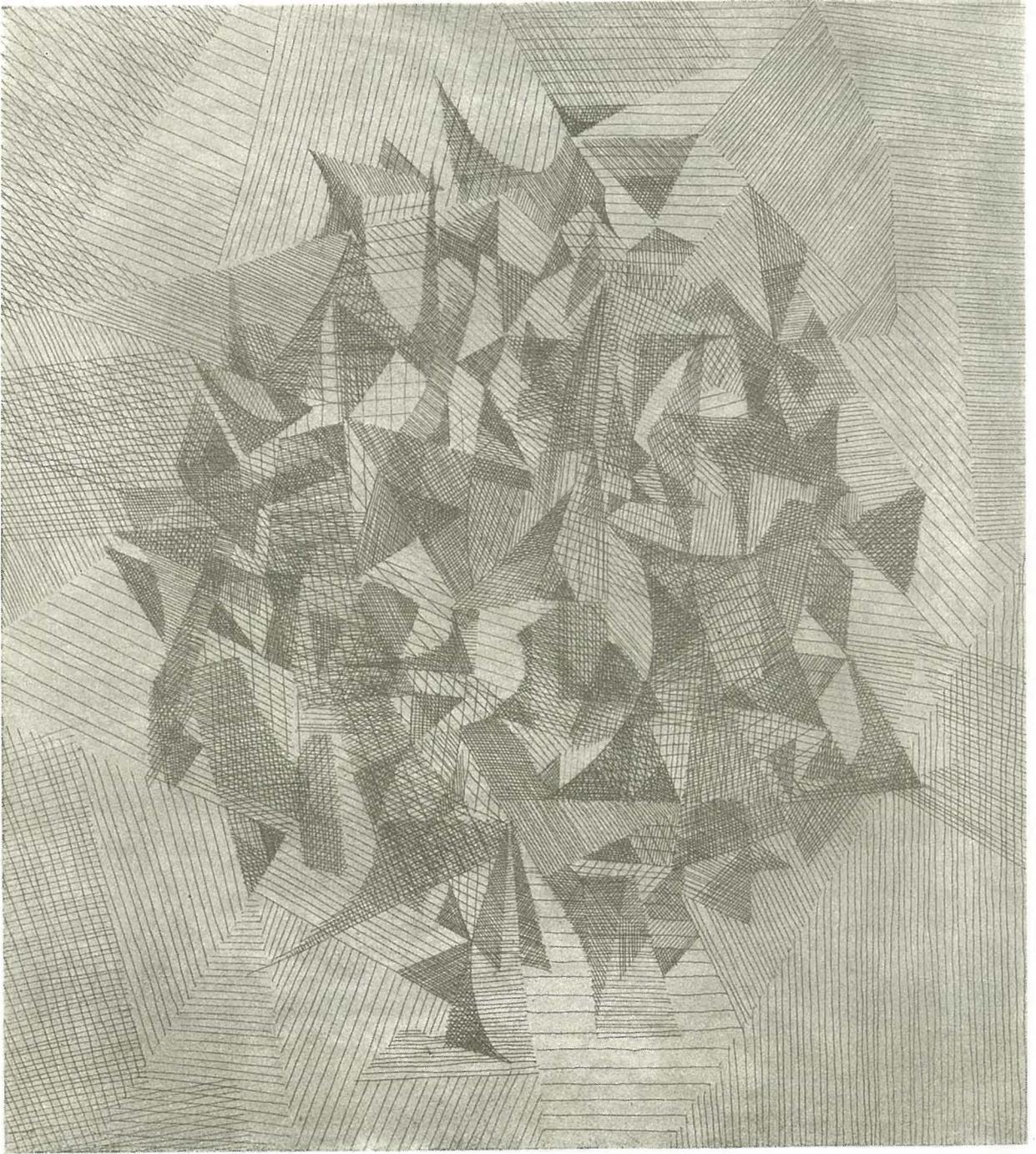
This means explanation. I think every gallery should keep space for showing even one painting or sculpture at a time surrounded by photographs of work related to it—work by the same artist, work which influenced it, work on the same or congruent themes, with well-documented, well-written notes. This is immensely valuable in showing us aspects of the work that we would otherwise miss, no matter how well-known it may be, and in helping us to see the artist's aims, models, ideas, development. It will give the galleries, in time, a far more appreciative and alert public. It will also oblige them to think out their policies more fully than most have yet done (and 'to buy the best pictures available' is not a policy); from which co-ordination of policies between themselves will more readily follow.



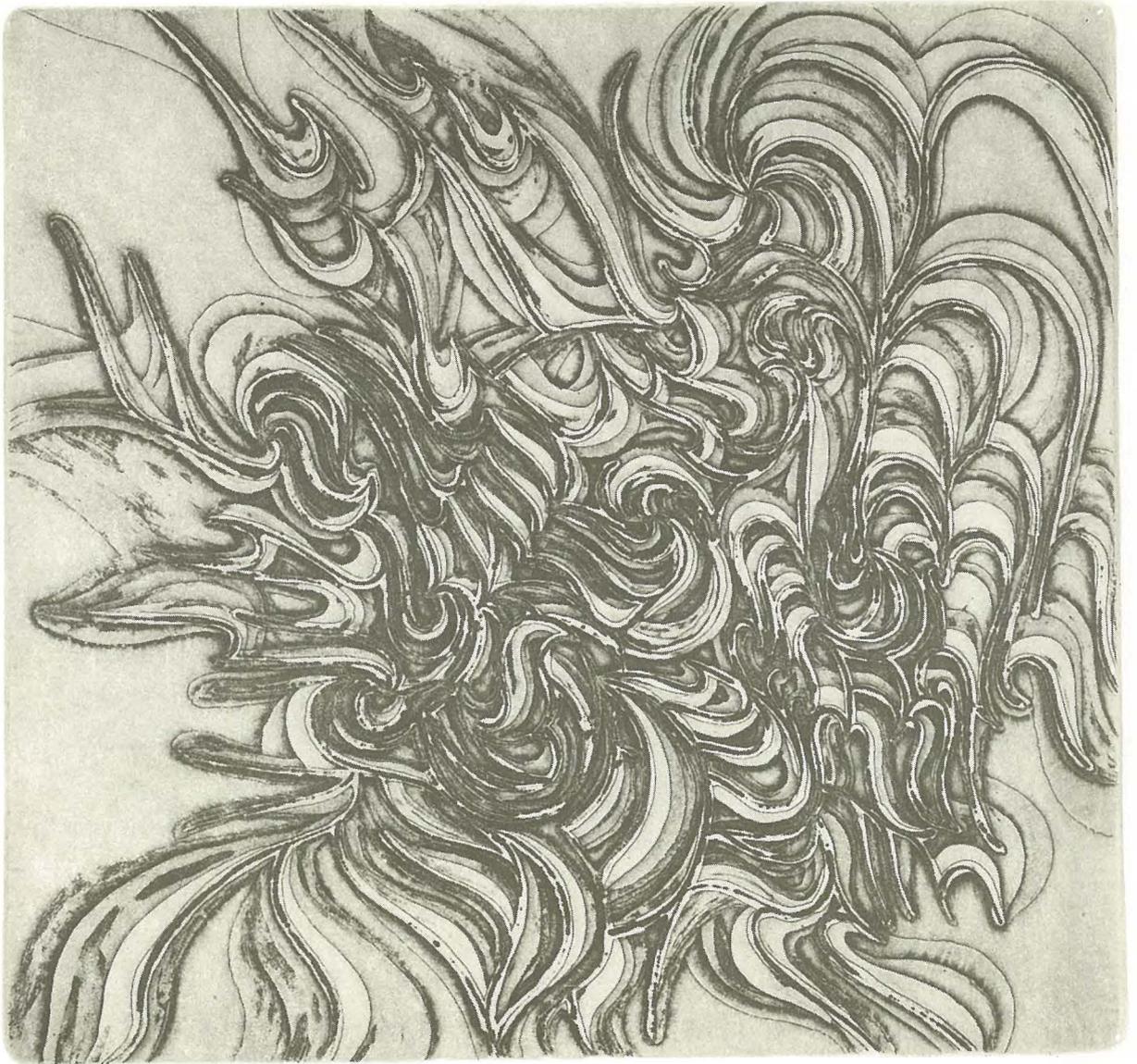
W. A. SUTTON. STUDY. Pencil, 1966. $8\frac{7}{8}$ x $5\frac{1}{8}$ ins.



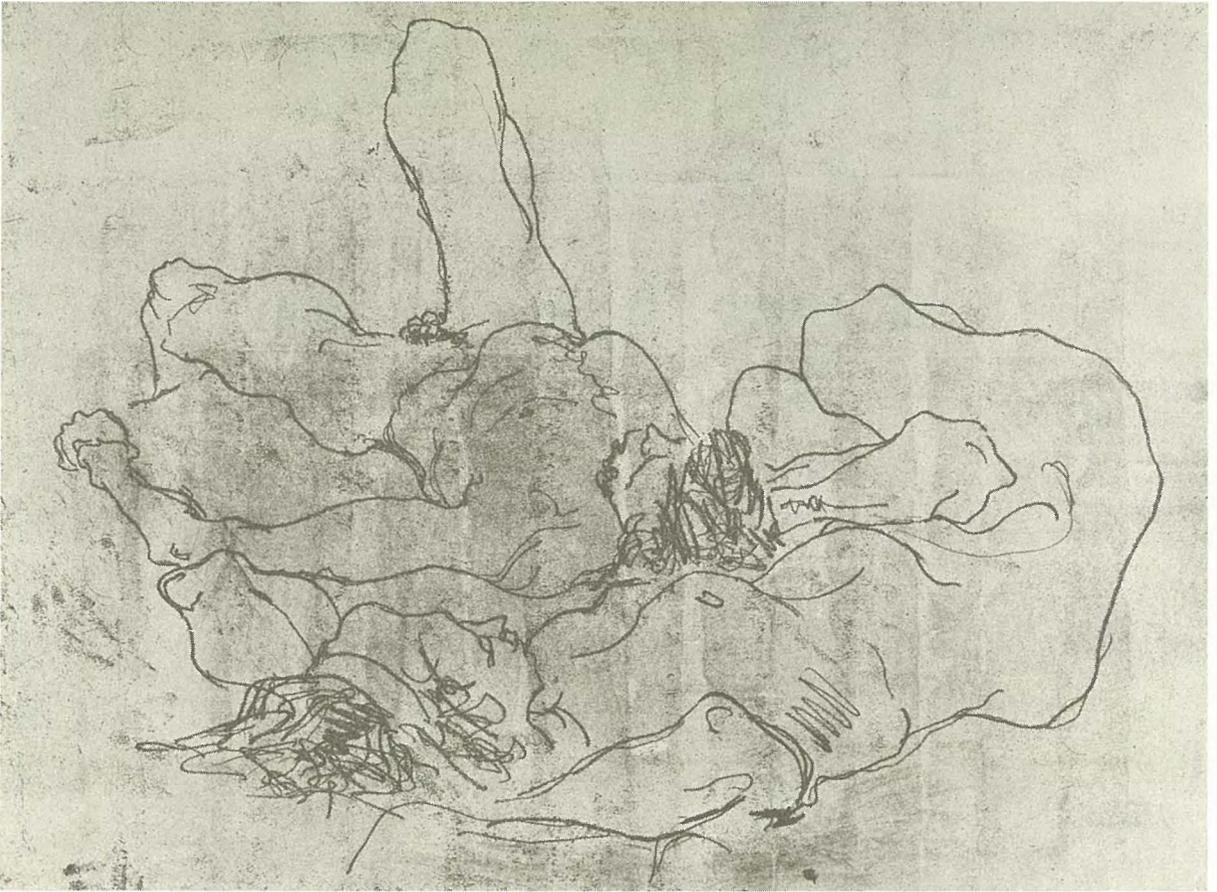
BARRY CLEAVIN. FRAGMENT III. Multi-technique, zinc plate. 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins.



BARRY CLEAVIN. SUSPENSION. Etching on steel plate. 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ ins.



BARRY CLEAVIN. WIND. Relief etching, zinc plate. 9½ x 10ins.



BARRY CLEAVIN. SOMNOLENCE. Soft ground etching. 10½ x 14ins.

The Trapdoor Spider and the Great Leap Outwards

*Abridged and revised version of an address given to the
English Association, Massey University of Manawatu,
Palmerston North, New Zealand, April 1966*



BRUCE MASON

May I recall my only independent scientific experiment. I once discovered a trapdoor spider, in the bush. I watched, fascinated. The trapdoor was almost invisible: I saw it only because I had put my lunch paper over it and it began to wriggle. From time to time, the spider would go out on safari, then return, skiddle down the trapdoor and lock himself in. A moth once alighted on the trapdoor which duly caved in, and I caught a glimpse of my friend, waiting. But the moth got away. In fact, food-wise, I think it must have been a lean morning. Shortly after this, the spider went out on safari again, and at this point, my experiment began. What would happen, I asked myself, born after all in the century of Pavlov and the conditioned reflex, were I to remove the trapdoor? I scooped it up and threw it behind a bush. It was exquisitely made, with a larder well-stocked with half-decayed corpses, all wrapped in silk, like a miniature abattoir. The spider returned to his home and stopped dead. Then followed an exhibition of what in human circles would now be called paranoid hysteria; he lay on his back and all eight legs waved and writhed. Then

a stillness, that looked like death.

I tell this story at some length because it not only crudely represents the spirit that has underlain all scientific investigation since the Renaissance—what-will-happen-if—but I can also see in the deprived spider a symbol for the position of the artist in the modern world. He cannot live without the trapdoor, the womb of creation, into which he pulls the living corpses of his contemporaries and coevals, there to consume and regurgitate them, but the scientific spirit has removed the trapdoor and so he lies on his back in a frenzy, legs waving. Can the world support the artists? Will it? If it won't, why?

First, some historical speculation. Our Christian culture, whose remnants and *disjecta membra* still litter our lives, whether we be communicants or not, has been a blend—no, not a blend, an unhappy amalgam—of Jewish and Greek elements principally, with a shoal of sectarian outcroppings on the periphery, from the Essenes to the Zoroastrians, with even the odd pinch of quietist Indian curry. The fact of the Incarnation was dropped into a seething

cauldron of philosophy and speculation. Of these diverse elements the most important—and, I believe, in the sense I am outlining—the most dangerous, came from the Hellenic world, the most advanced and sophisticated that the world has so far known. We took from the Greeks and set squarely in our imaginations the ideas of logic and causality which Aristotle had systematized from the laws of Greek syntax. What this logic takes for granted, what we all for most of our waking lives still take for granted, is the divorce between subject and object, observed and observer: that every effect can be accounted for by a rational cause, and that the whole vast mechanism could be accounted for by a First Cause, a Primordial Fact, a God who turned on the switch and set the conveyor belt running. The Primordial Fact was not the identity which underlay all the little facts: It (or He) was outside Creation; once He had thrown the switch, He could just sit there, aloof, sufficient, paring his finger-nails.

The world, creation, had therefore two categories: objects, to which distinguishing names were given and collectively referred to as Matter or Nature, and the inner world of thought and idea, collectively referred to as Spirit. Spirit is to Matter as abstract is to concrete. In this view of the world, ideas, thoughts, words, do not represent Nature; rather Nature represents ideas under the gross texture of substance. And in this view, you can already see the dim outline of transubstantiation: the body of the god under the appearance of bread and wine. We still talk loosely of Appearance and Reality as if they were separate categories: this is what I mean.

Thus in Greek, there were words for abstractions like Being and Nothing, as if they were separate and irreconcilable. What the structure of their language prevented their seeing was that Being and Nothing are not irreconcilables put polarities: that you can't have one without the other. No up without down, no north without south, no rough without smooth, no figure without ground. And the feeling of Nature as separate from Man, as 'out there' in a sometimes alarmingly hostile dimension, would be fully realized two thousand years later, when the circumstances were propitious, in the physical sciences up to, but not including, nuclear physics.

We have all had these arbitrary Greek classifications built in; we have been conditioned to this world-view by our language, the only mode most of us have for reading what we see. Just how arbitrary this world-view is I realized recently, reading of a remote tribe in South America still living in a con-

dition of primitive isolation: their language consists only of verbs: no nouns at all. What kind of world do they live in then? One of processes, events, but no things. Things, separate, finite things, ourselves included, are the creation of language, of the graph we place upon the world to read and measure it. The word 'matter' and the word 'measure' come from the same Sanskrit root; so also from the same root come 'matrix' and 'mother'. So that the Virgin Mother of Christian cosmogony can also be thought of as Virgin Matter, awaiting impregnation by the Holy Spirit so that division, measurement, multiplicity, will be possible.

The early Christians built all this into the faith and added to it some patriarchal Jewish notions of the Father, the Creator of all things. He was Absolute: all powerful, all good, all wise, and knew everything that had happened, everything that would happen until the end of time. He was the first term in a series infinitely receding back to him. He was also, if I may suggest, a monster of the imagination, beside whose awful light, awful omniscience, a dreadful King of Quiz, man was less than a fly, less than dust. In self-defence almost, I believe, Christianity slowly worked on the idea of his Opposite, his Other, fount and source of evil, Satan, father of lies, the Devil, grotesque parody of the All-Father, who may not know all the answers, but at least had the best tunes. And there is justice in the conception. If being and nothing were separate, right and wrong absolutely distinct, then again the source of all good must have a rival, the source of all evil. What the early theologians could not be expected to know was, that behind the fabric of Creation, God and Satan were the greatest chums: light and dark are simply aspects of each other. But to ask the mediaeval mind to concede that good and evil were related, that God and Devil were pals, was more than minds encased in the strait-jacket of scholastic philosophy could possibly entertain. What it has meant in history is this: that rather than admit the underlying identity, you could, without torturing classical logic, simply change the labels. Any man who questions that my God is not absolutely good must, *ex hypothesi*, be Satan's knowing and deliberate emissary. Hence the religious wars. Crusading dog would fight Moslem pig to the point of exhaustion; after three hundred years, Christianity and Islam agreed to live together. The Whore of Babylon, to give a Protestant tag to the Roman Catholic Church, would fight the irretrievably damned Protestants until, after three hundred years,

the Peace of Westphalia allotted zones and the agreement to live together. Capitalist-imperialist hyena still fights Communist arch-enemy of-all-that-is-sacred-in-civilized-life, in terms of the same old methodology, the same old label-switching game. Whether they will agree to live together before we are all engulfed, we shall soon know. At least, the issue will not take three hundred years to sort out, one way or other. Isn't there, in all this, some clue to the origin and fuel of ideological wars, the quarrelling about names and terms, that has so disfigured European history?

Any absolute, regarded as binding on all its subjects, any supreme command claiming its authority from God, is bound to create its opposite: unless their underlying identity is seen, they will be at war. To adapt the terminology of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* the game of the Middle Ages was Beat the Pope. Pope falls, Prince rules. The game of the Renaissance was Beat the Prince. Prince falls (on the guillotine, in 1793). The world was now safe for business, for industry, the amassing of wealth and the building of empires. The game now? To Beat the Boss. Hence trade unionism, collective bargaining, the rights of the proletariat. Boss falls: machine rules. And now? To Beat the Machine. Which is where I came in.

And the artist, in all this? In mediaeval Europe, he was simply an artisan: the words were identical. Anonymous, having no special status, he built cathedrals and made images. His job: to embellish the faith and proclaim the greater glory of God.

But with the Renaissance, he acquires a special character: a name and a historical personality. Prince rules and commands his talent, but the partial breakdown of orthodox religion had ushered in a whole new conception of man. If the true home of the mediaeval Christian was the City of God, Renaissance man was learning to live comfortably in more earthly habitations. Instead of being central to the universe and under the special favour and protection of God, he now stood against his environment, in terms of space and time. The expression of his spatial relationship was called in art, perspective; his new role in time was called history, the process of man in time. Thus the sudden passion for the classical period, seen as a Golden Age leading to the present. And these new concepts of man in action, man in history, would come not by divine revelation or priestly illumination: they would come from foraging, tinkering man himself, picking his universe apart and learning how it ticks. My trap-

door image again: the whole of society waited on the words from the trapdoor, the adumbration in music, sculpture, painting, science, of man liberated from the oppressive weight of a transcendent God. Nominally, the artist flattered the prince and thus earned his bread. But in fact, he was undisputed ruler of the European imagination. Michelangelo could keep Julius II waiting; Leonardo lived like a prince at the court of François Premier in Paris.

But the prince still claimed to rule by divine right: the new vision of the artist exposed it as caprice. If Lorenzo de Medici wished to rid himself of a trouble-maker, he had only to open one of the doors in his study and send the unfortunate man to the Arno by the quickest route: I have seen this noisome hole. By the end of the eighteenth century, artists and prince were at loggerheads. Mozart was kicked bodily from the palace of Archbishop Colloredo in Salzburg and never worked for a patron again; Dr Johnson brought the whole age of patronage to an end by his majestic trumpet-blast to Lord Chesterfield: 'Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man swimming for his life in the water and when he has reached dry land, encumbers him with help?' From this time on, there would be no more trust in princes: he would throw himself on the General Will.

The French Revolution, fuelled by the Enlightenment, liberated a new man in European society, the intellectual, and the word dates from this time. In fact, the word 'intellect', as applied to the reasoning faculty, is recent enough, first used in English about 1500. Its use marks the divorce of mind from body, reason from emotion: yet another of those disastrous dualisms which have splintered European life and thought. Reason, brought into the church by the majestic synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, was freed by the Renaissance to its own devices. It turned its attention from theological speculation onto matter, still regarded as the lower category and thus inaugurated the physical sciences. In 1789, Reason was enthroned in the Place de la Concorde in Paris as a pagan goddess, looking remarkably like Britannia on British coins. She was not a kind goddess: within two years she was eating, rather slicing, her devotees by the thousand.

With the Prince dead, the bourgeois took over the seats of power and disfigured the whole of Europe with boiler and factory chimney, polluting the air with black smoke from Birmingham to Istanbul, from Kiev to Barcelona. Everything became chimneys: top hats, trousers, suits. James

Laver has noted that the fashion of an age is derived from its dominant architectural feature: thus classical Greeks dressed as pillars, mediaeval French ladies as turrets, Henry VIII as a Tudor arch, repeated from his hat to shoulders and shoes.

The artist's trapdoor had been wide open for three hundred years: now suddenly, industry closed it. All his craft-making, shaping capacities were superseded or soon would be. The painter of likeness to the visible world was quickly rendered obsolete by photography. The artists had no place in the vast complex of greed. Nature had become loot. The implications of Christianity and Greek syntax were at last being accomplished: matter was coarse, gross stuff and deserved no better than to be conquered, bent, pressed, forced: victory over Nature has always been the central theme of orthodox Christianity. Thus the Church of the time could applaud what was happening: this wholesale spoliation and exploitation was a harrowing of souls right in its line. If artist and artisan were once identical in the mediaeval world, then in the Renaissance they were at least colleagues: now they were permanently split. The artists's world had left matter to become all spirit: the creative intellect, the imagination. And his product, his art, would now slowly turn to artifice, decoration. There was no faith to embellish; the factories could be relied on for that, sending their products to every corner of the world; there was no longer any prince to flatter, because from now on, what princes there were would reign but not rule; he could only offer the map of himself, tell the world what it was like to be the only free man in society. Thus romanticism and the half-in-love-with-easeful-death syndrome; thus the huge neurotic talents of Byron, Berlioz, Liszt, Baudelaire, Rimbaud. The life of Berlioz resounds with shrieks of anguish, torrents of tears and huge joys: it is all reflected faithfully in his music, at once dotty and glorious. If he was liberated to huge energies, then his talent tended always towards the demonic. The trapdoor was closed; he had now to draw the stuff of his work from his own body.

'Then pious Eneas wrote over every square inch of the only foolscap available, his own body, till by its corrosive sublimation. . .' James Joyce, from *Finnegans Wake*. The operative word for Eneas was 'corrosive'. The nineteenth century artist incised his age in corrosive sublimate. If the mediaeval artist embellished the Word, and the Renaissance artist proclaimed a new word, then the romantic artist shouted his despair into the wind. Words, capital or

lower case, were alike useless. He was on his back, all legs flailing. His situation is beautifully symbolised in the last song of the Schubert song-cycle, *Die Winterreise*, in which an organ-grinder stands in the snow, grinding out pathetic tunes to which no-one will listen.

And the image of the artist as irrational, capricious, a self-willed, self-aggrandizing, self-propelled bag of contradiction and anarchy, is still his popular cliché. Ask any average citizen in the entire English-speaking world what response the word 'artist' arouses in him and I suspect that you will hear these: 'undisciplined, too big for his boots, affected, lazy, probably pansy, useless, spoilt, parasitic.' 'But what did he *do*?' demanded a close relative, after the death of Bernard Shaw. In the twentieth century, an artist is at best an entertainer or decorator, offering 'the finer side of life' as Prime Ministers and Presidents are wont to say: at worst, useless and his labour no labour at all.

The drama of the mid-twentieth century is neither theatre, film, nor even TV: it is gossip, news. What else involves millions of people, simultaneously, all over the world? The news is a vast, world-wide conveyor belt, in its several media: newspapers, radio, television, films. It is the world truly fragmented as the Greek philosophers implied by their researches so long ago: a permanent Heraclitean flux, a vast chaos of unrelated data. We get, sure enough, the Facts That Speak for Themselves, but never any synthesis to hold them together, at least in the West; in the East, the facts are selected with more care, and the synthesis is what the ruling clique needs to stay in office. All else is regarded as diversion, froth. No one really wants enlightenment. Gone are the days when the artist's vision could be relied on to change the map of one's mind and destiny. Our present situation could be best symbolized by a seat in front of a moving belt: on the belt, the figures who have briefly taken world attention. The news is grave, but we did not make it so; if crisis is averted, we will not have helped. There will be other figures, another crisis tomorrow.

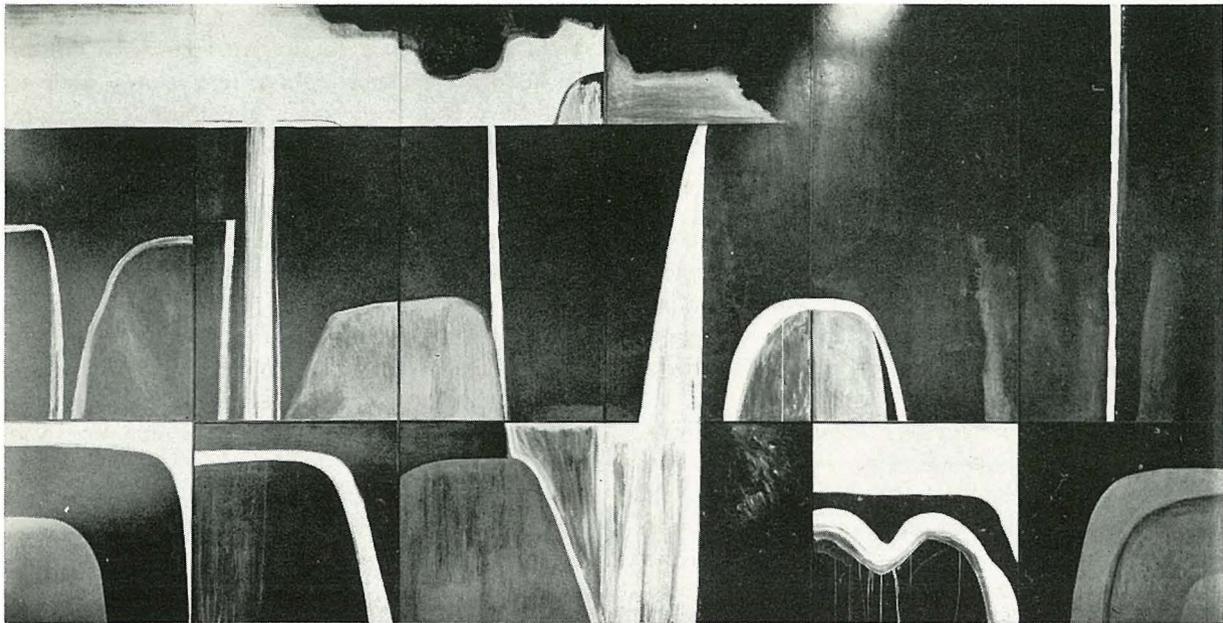
Yet with all this food for low spirits and depressing thoughts, I still believe that the world is on the brink of a revolution in consciousness profounder even than the Renaissance, a re-smelting of its nature: better, the discovery of its true nature. All our actions depend, finally, on what we hold to be real. The guardians of this reality, its dispensers, bearers and authorities, have always been priests and theologians, those whose special func-

tion it is to define the nature of man and set the pattern for society. It has always been so: we are in a period of transition: it will soon be so again. Man is slowly being re-defined by science and if it seems odd to talk of a nuclear physicist as a theologian, remember that, for the first time in our culture since the fifth century B.C., science and philosophy are making the same noises in what seems a remarkably Buddhist turn of phrase. Reality, they tell us, on every grade, on every level, is not concerned with the clash of opposites: it is the field in which you can find both. The world of the Greek philosophers needed a warring dichotomy to run itself out, as it were, and so the history of Europe is littered with irreconcilable opposites in every single branch of human activity, from Faith and Works, to Reason and Emotion, to Catholic and Protestant. They are simply the terms of their field, plus and minus signs, but holding each other up and together. Even some psychiatrists have accepted the view that a disturbed patient cannot be treated without reference to his whole environment: that a neurosis is not just a wilful personal quirk but a public matter to which hundreds may have contributed. And if, in modern terms, there is no longer any such things as a fact, only events and processes, then neither can there be anything private in a thought which, expressing itself in words and images, thereby enters the public domain. The principle of causality, of this hence that, of a machine slowly running down, of a universal deep-freeze, of *nox perpetua est una dormienda* which so appalled the nineteenth century, have been superseded by a radiant image of the universe as in constant self-renewal, instant by instant. And if God need be defined at all, he is no longer sitting aloofly in some celestial corridor behind his creation, paring his fingernails or scratching his great white beard: he is right inside his creation, so inward that he can never be found. The physicists have brought back from their researches intimations of a quite staggering beauty, of a supreme order, of which we are part. And if the environment has this supreme beauty and harmony, then so have we, since we are part of its field, and only language enables us to say where we end and the environment begins. And as this vision spreads, as it surely must, the personality, that dried husk of wants, propulsions and repulsions, of credentials and potentials, that we call ourselves will begin to wither away, because we will see through it, not as meaningless, but simply as a useful convention.

There must be a world revolution to accommodate

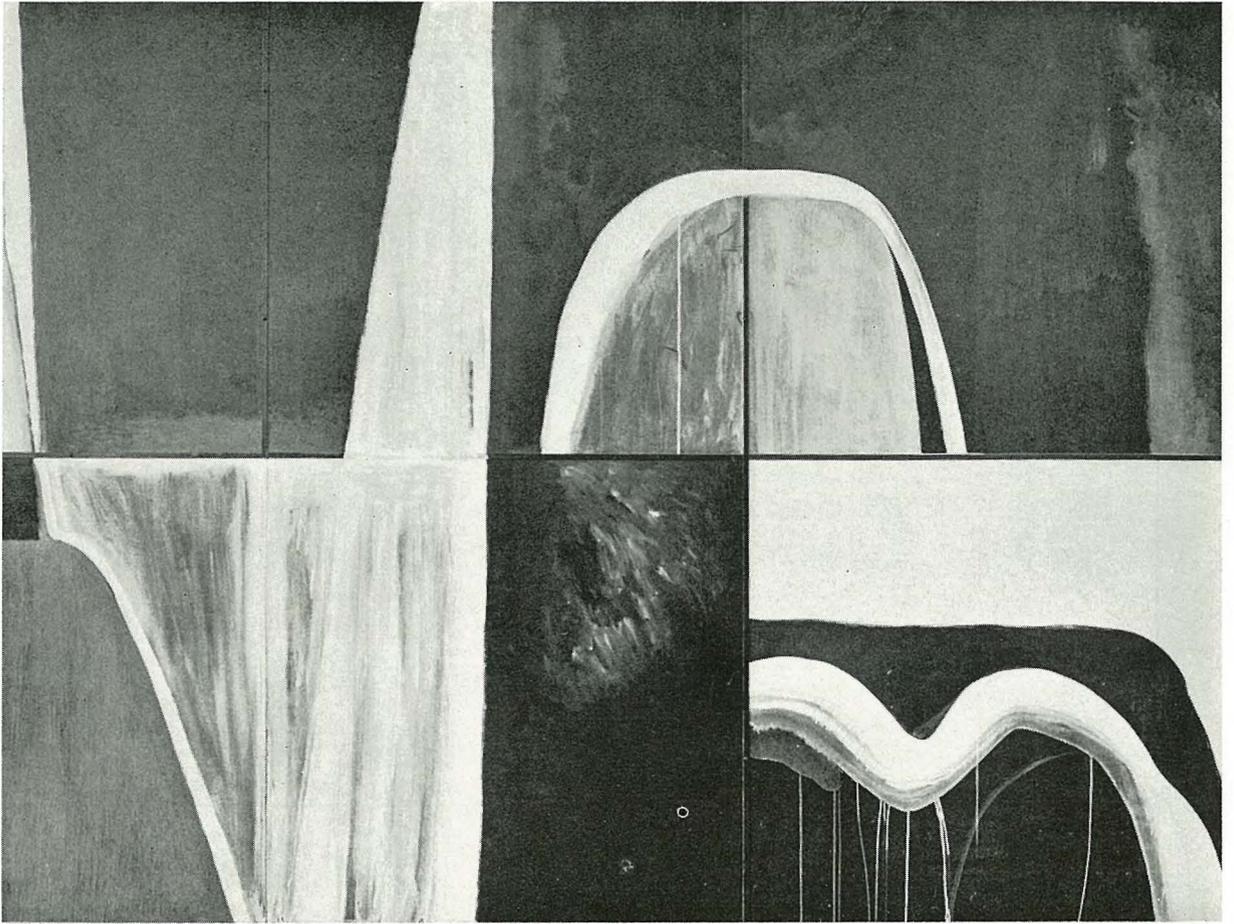
the change in our being and this revolution will be in the heart. Its agent, its particular agitator, must be the artist and poet, whose role is once again as important as ever it was in the High Renaissance. Bring back the trapdoor and let him live there; follow him in his Great Leap Outward. Let him take the helm—department of mixed metaphors—in the great voyage of discovery into the uncharted realm of ourselves. For the rest of us, it is not simply a matter of kicking over the traces—the poet can show us that there are no traces to be kicked: having made them ourselves, we can unmake them. He must inaugurate a new sense of the Erotic, not the hideously debased furtive sniggering we go in for now, fit only for squalid paragraphs in tabloid newspapers, but a true invocation of Eros so that sex is not simply a matter of genital contact but is accommodated to the whole man and the whole woman.

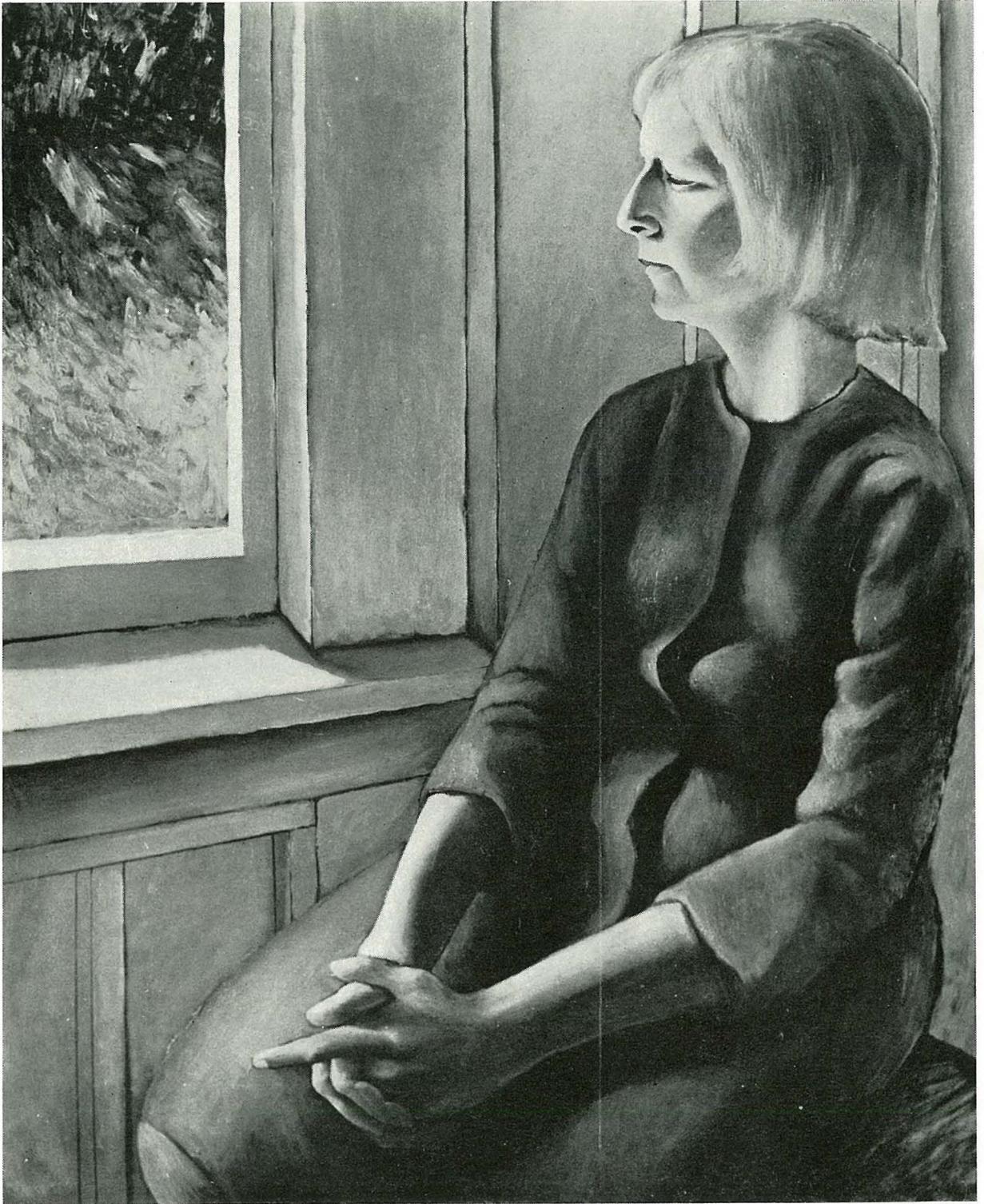
If, in the Middle Ages, man was real only in relation to an anthropomorphic God, if in the Renaissance he was real only beside his fellow man, his Other, sundered and estranged from his environment, forced to own and possess because he had no other reality, then now we can surely see the outline of a new man who will own nothing but himself and take his place in the universe as a whole. The world is waiting for us not to conquer it, not to exploit it, but to claim it.



COLIN McCAHON. MURAL (The Library, University of Otago, Dunedin). P.V.A. on hardboard, 1967. 10ft 10ins x 24ft. Single panels: upper 7ft 2ins x 4ft; lower 3ft 8ins x 4ft.

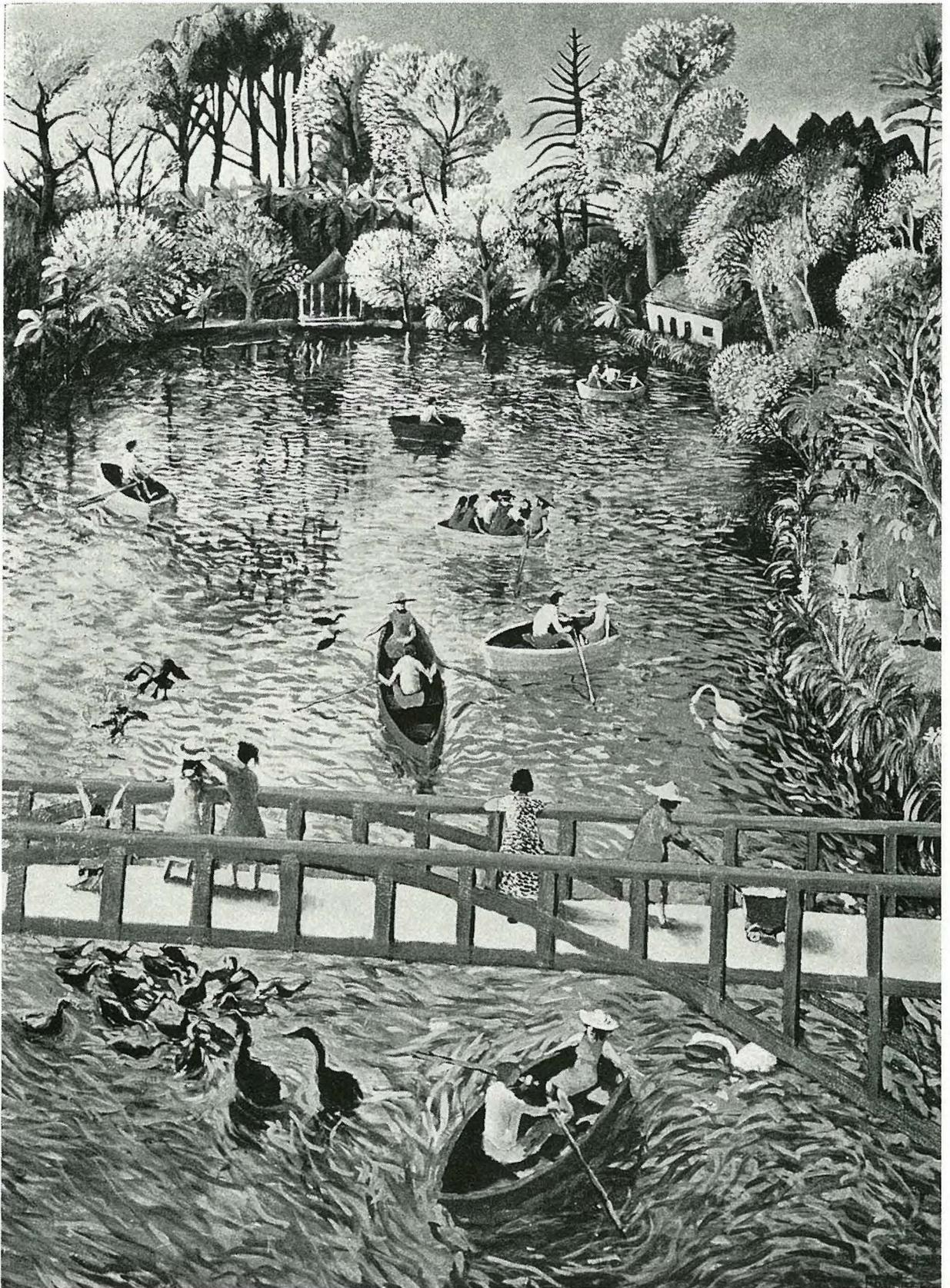
Opposite: detail





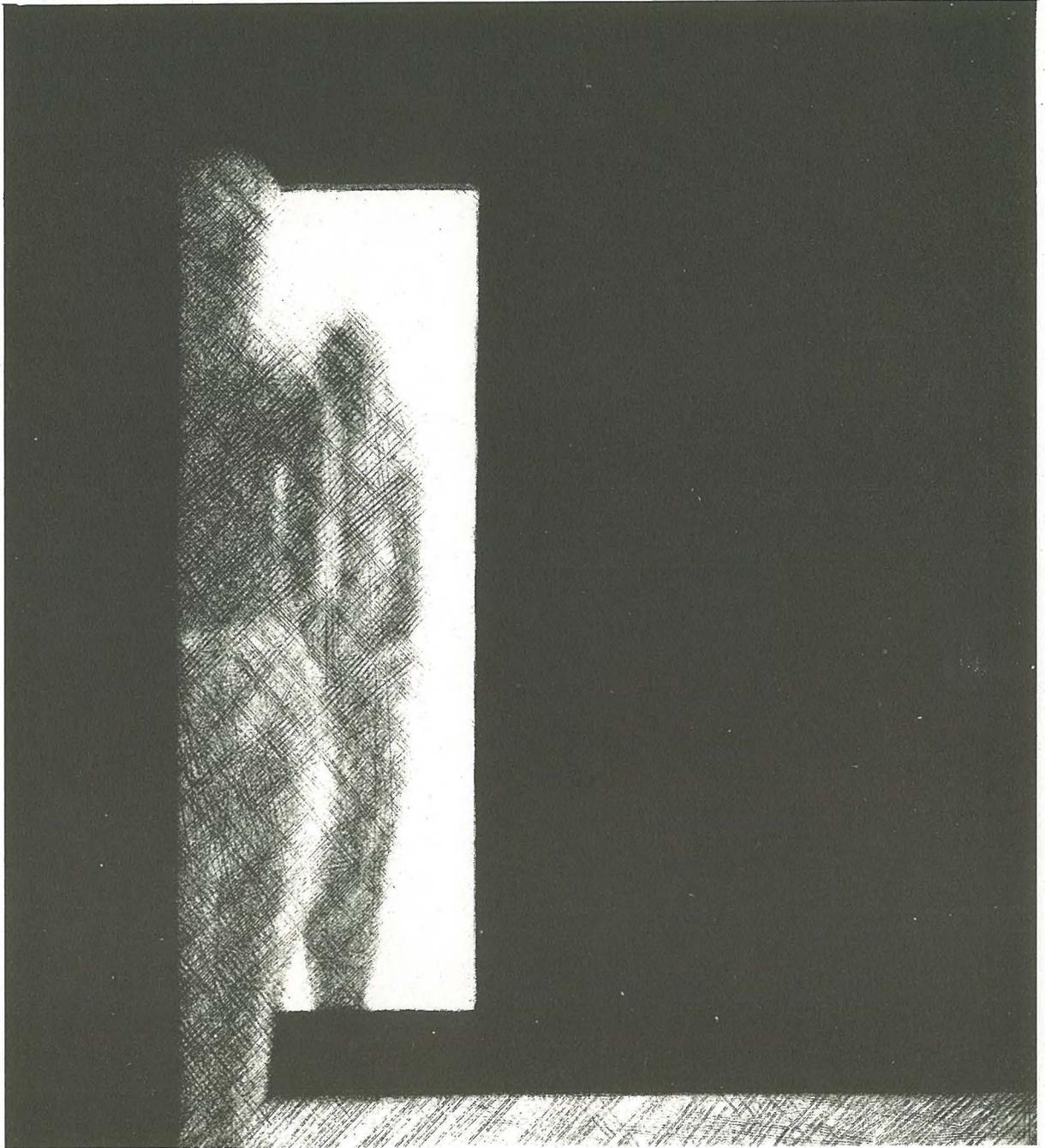
MICHAEL SMITHER. PORTRAIT OF MY WIFE. Oil on board. 37 x 30ins.

Opposite: **PUKEKURA PARK.** Oil on board, 1967, 48 x 35ins.

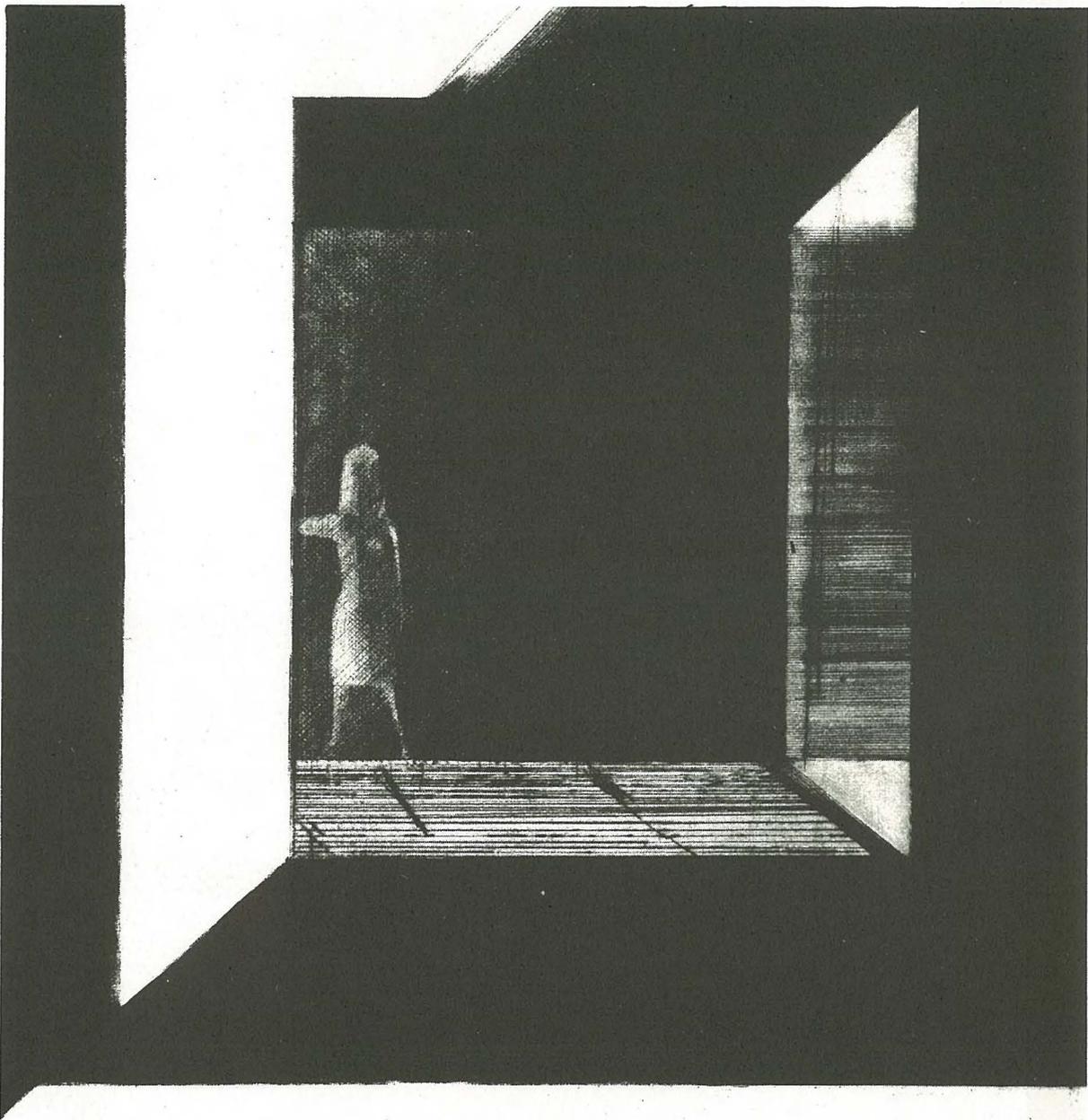




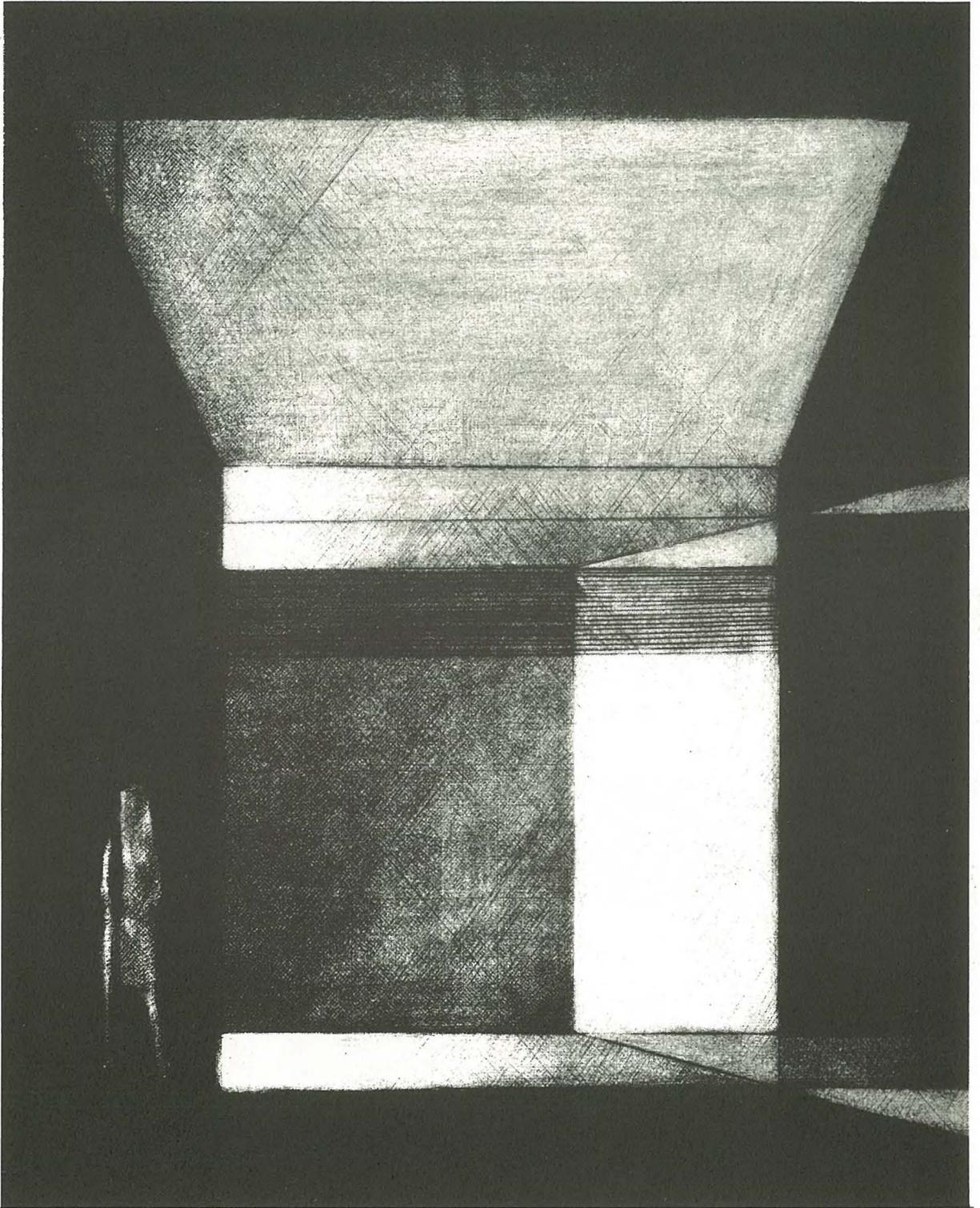
MILAN MRKUSICH. PAINTING 61-24. Oil, 1961. (Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand). 34 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 33ins.
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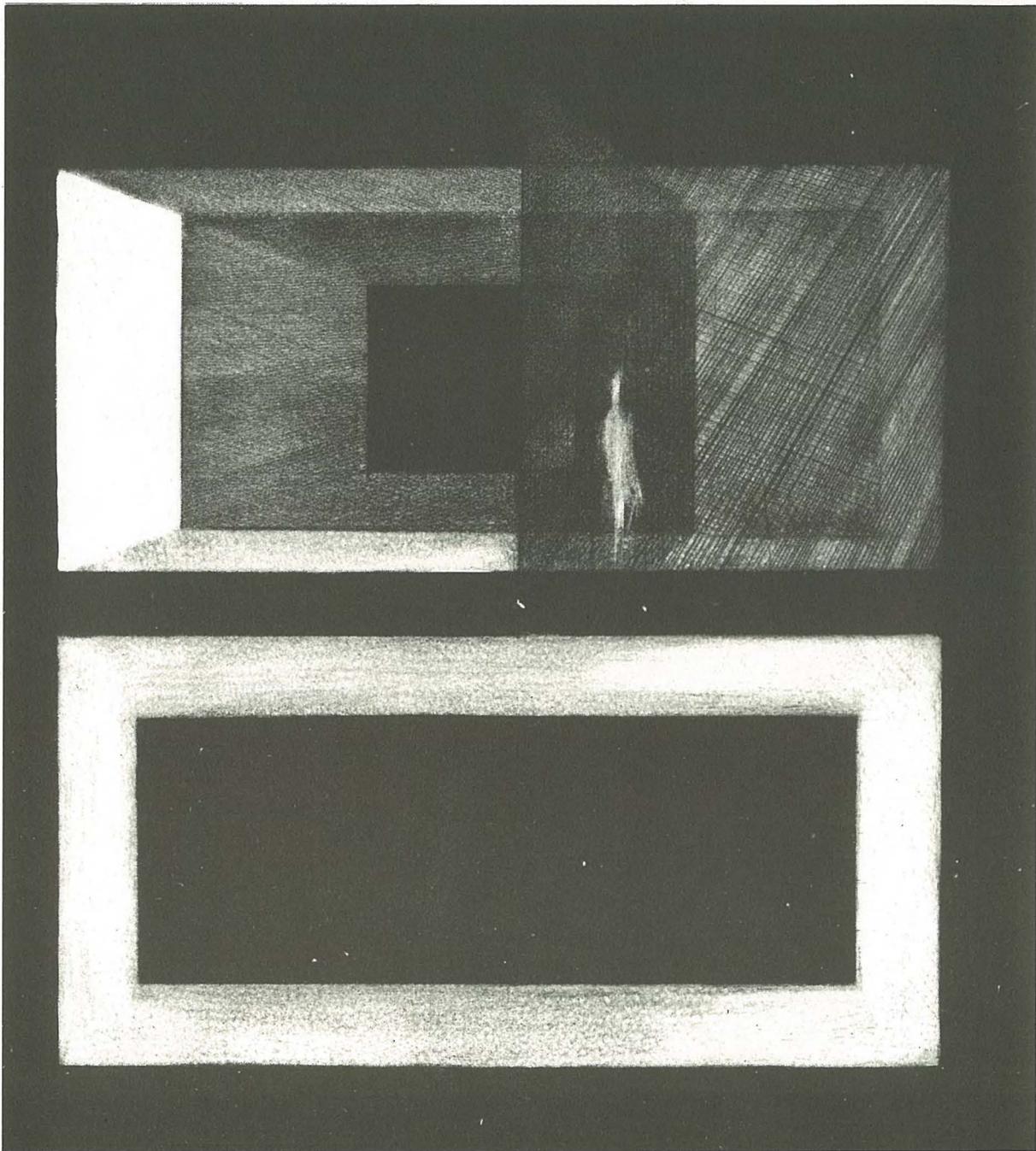
JOHN DRAWBRIDGE. GIRL BEFORE A MIRROR. Mezzotint, 1967. $13\frac{1}{2}$ x $11\frac{3}{4}$ ins.



JOHN DRAWBRIDGE. TANYA, GOING AND COMING, No. 1. Mezzotint and Drypoint, 1967, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins.



JOHN DRAWBRIDGE. TANYA, GOING AND COMING, No. 2. Mezzotint and Drypoint, 1967, $13\frac{3}{8}$ x $10\frac{7}{8}$ ins.



JOHN DRAWBRIDGE, TANYA, GOING AND COMING, No. 3. Mezzotint and Drypoint, 1967 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{7}{8}$ ins.

The New Zealand Print Council

IAN ROBERTS

The Print Council of New Zealand was established in September of this year with the opening, at the Auckland Art Gallery, of its first annual exhibition. Sixteen printmakers participate in the show which is now in the course of a national tour.

At this early stage in the Council's life it may be useful to note briefly how it operates and what its formation represents. In general terms its establishment gives official recognition to the fact that a substantial body of serious printmakers now exists in New Zealand whose work deserves organized support and encouragement, a development which has been recognized outside the country in our participation in two Tokyo Print Biennales and, more recently, in this year's International Print Exhibition at Ljubljana, Yugoslavia.

Prints are, in a sense, the most popular branch of the visual arts if only because of their price (the average being around \$20 in the Council's first exhibition). They are by definition multiple originals and the printmaker thinks in terms of editions which implies a number of buyers for any one print.

Consequently the Council is attempting to bring the printmaker and the collector into closer and more stable association.¹ Thus through the workings of its annual exhibition four different printmakers each year will now have a guaranteed buyer for a large edition of one of their prints, namely the Council itself. Through the \$10 annual fees of its members the Council is able to commission such editions from its printmaker-members (in the case of the first exhibition the edition size for the four Print Council edition prints was 50), and from the annual show members are entitled to select and acquire one print from these four without additional charge. This is clearly the Council's most important single

¹It may be noted that though its title might suggest it, the Council is not intended to be a professional society of printmakers, though it will perform this role. Its members are predominantly collectors.



MERVYN WILLIAMS. MIDAS GETS AHEAD.
Serigraph, 1967. 17½ x 14½ ins.

achievement in the business of encouraging the sale of artists' prints and both collectors and printmakers should now be benefitting from it.

There has, however, been some criticism of the first series of commissioned prints in that none represents the artist working at his best. The choice of which print to produce for the Council remained with the selected printmakers which suggests once again that an artist is not necessarily the best judge of his own work. Since the fact of being able to obtain one good original print at about half its normal price is one of the main reasons for the public's joining the Council, one hopes that both the artist and print are selected for later Print Council editions.

This aside, Council members are also entitled to a 20% discount on all prints shown at the annual exhibition and may claim a 40% reduction on the current commissioned prints once their distribution to members has been fulfilled. It is not intended however that the Council's activities will revolve solely around its exhibitions. Of its other announced aims the most exciting and, at this stage, most distant plan is the formation of print workshops, financed and conducted on a co-operative basis. That the membership of the Council stood at 150 at the end of Auckland showing of the first exhibitions suggests however there could later be both enough interest and money for the Council to realize this ambition.



GREER TWISS with WALKERS. Polychromatic Bronze, 1967.

A Conversation with Greer Twiss: Sculptor



GIL DOCKING

A right-of-way runs off Mt. Wellington Highway towards a yellow-ochre cottage set among trees where in a sheltered courtyard behind a high red fence I talked with Greer Twiss. At 30 years, Auckland-born Greer Twiss has established himself as a thoroughly professional sculptor who is wholly concerned with the production of sculpture in bronze.

After graduating with honours in sculpture from the University of Auckland School of Fine Arts, he slowly and with single-minded tenacity pursued a course of work and further study, which in 1965 brought him a travel grant from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

With this grant Greer and his wife Dee travelled to Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom where Greer studied bronze casting and foundry techniques. On his return in 1966 he was appointed lecturer-in-sculpture at the School of Fine Arts. Recently he has been working on a major fountain commission for the Auckland City Council.

It was in this secluded courtyard that the conversation began to the sound of birds and the occasional

sighs of Greer's brown dog. But a distant throbbing note would gradually become an avalanche of sound as a freight train thundered past the front door of the Twiss cottage . . .

As the heavy rumble died away conversation would resume and proceed — with occasional pauses depending on the length of the next freight train:

GD: By natural inclination or by personal preference sculptors seem to belong to one of two groups — they are either modellers or carvers.

TWISS: I did some wood carving for a while but I prefer a process which is more versatile. I like to be able to change my mind as I go along but find this difficult with wood carving. With a carving you must know pretty well what you are going to do before your start.

GD: So as a rule you don't clearly visualize a work before you start? You prefer to develop the sculpture by the modelling process as you proceed?

TWISS: With me, a standing figure can end up as a reclining figure. As far as I'm concerned, a piece is never completely conceived until it is finished!

I'm finding more and more that it is the versatility of painting I rather like. To be able to wipe out an area and re-build on top of it.

GD: Is your method the same as the Renaissance 'lost wax' technique of hollow casting where the clay model is evenly coated with wax, covered with clay and ashes and backed with more clay. Then when dry the whole casting with its contents is placed in an oven which hardens the clay but melts the wax which escapes through vent pipes. Then later, bronze is poured into the hollow space left by the wax and so a thin metal shell is formed?

TWISS: I use much the same process, only I don't make the figure in clay — I build it up with solid wax. If it is a small figure it can be cast solid. If it is a big figure, I have to make a plaster mould from the wax and cast into the mould a thin skin wax, then fill up with a refractory core. It's a process that's been used for thousands of years.

GD: And is this wax modelled in its natural colour or do you stain it?

TWISS: It is better if you colour it because you can see the form more clearly in dark wax. On the other hand, the translucent quality of wax is rather beautiful.

GD: A few moments ago you said that you like the 'versatility of painting'. How is this translated from the two-dimensional world of painting to the three-dimensional world of sculpture?

TWISS: I am approaching this by isolating forms so that they do not exist outside their own environment. A painter puts a frame around a picture to define the limits of the painted image — or most painters do! This means that the spectator's viewpoint is confined to this area. Even if he imagines that the painting does go on beyond the canvas, the image is still isolated within the borders of the canvas.

This is what I am starting to do in my own work. I am taking a form and chopping it off in quite an arbitrary place—a leg carries half-way along and is then chopped off, as if some environmental wall was set up at that point — as if an invisible frame cuts across the leg.

GD: As one often sees in magazine photographs where figures and limbs are suddenly trimmed off by the limits of the page! Or in a Japanese print where only the legs may show — the rest of the body is cut off from sight by a bamboo blind!

TWISS: This idea started with the notion of the captive audience. The musician has an audience which stays seated, listening for a specific period of time. A painter isolates his picture on a wall — there is

nothing going on behind it. The observer can narrow his field of vision down to the area of wall and look at this painting.

But a piece of sculpture is normally placed in space amidst all the interruptions going on around it. In a gallery there are paintings and people encroaching on sculpture all the time. In the open air there are all sorts of things eating into your concentration on the sculpture. So I started off by placing figures against walls or within a specific environment so that the spectator felt he was compelled to look at it — say from one viewpoint.

GD: Do you mean in the way sculpture was made and positioned in the Gothic era — closely related to a wall or confined to a niche?

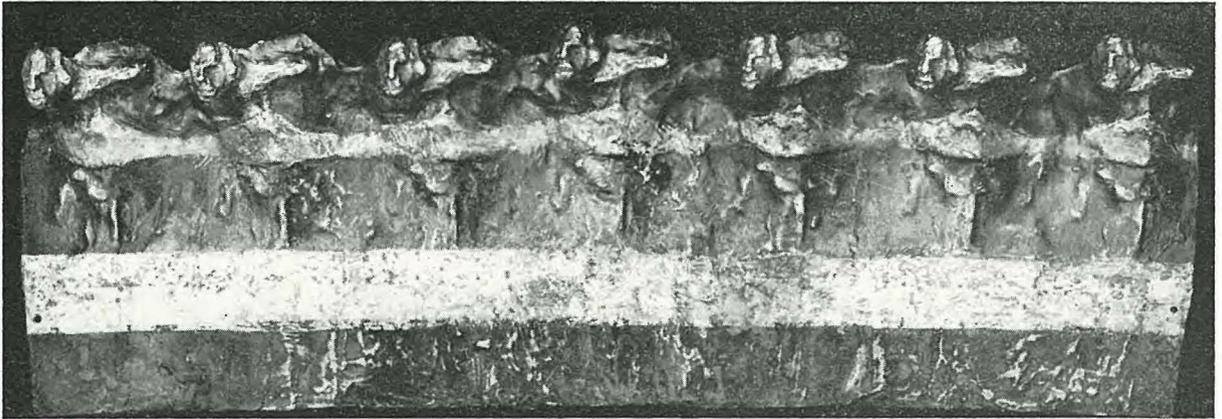
TWISS: No! Not really. I want to suggest sculpture as being itself a slice out of environment. In the Gothic period sculpture was fixed to a wall or placed in a boxed-in environment and the figures never broke through.

The figures I'm trying to produce have their own environment which in turn is cut off sharply from the surrounding space. But because it is such an arbitrary cutting off, the spectator feels that the sculptured environment he is looking at must go on beyond this arbitrary line. So you are aware of a concentrated slice of life but you are also aware that it is only a *slice* and not the full cake.

GD: In effect then, you have a sculptured form occupying its own sculptured space. Because both are suddenly sheared off from the surrounding environment, one is forced to become aware that a new kind of environment has intruded on your immediate surroundings?

TWISS: My long tomb figures in the Patriot Series were the first examples of this idea where I was repeating seven identical figures all joined together in a row. But suggesting that they were only seven of the thousands of patriots killed in the war by slicing these figures off at each end of the row. As if to say, here is only a segment of the great mass of dead!

Now I'm doing this with just the one figure in an environment. Rather in the way Giacometti did, except that Giacometti's figures were always within a confined area. His walking figures never left the square nor did they suggest that they could leave the square. But what I'm trying to do is to suggest that the sculpture is part of a larger environment. Say a figure walking out of the square and his arm extends over the border of the square — then the arm is chopped off.



PATRIOTIC EFFIGY. Bronze (painted), 1967. 24" long.

At the moment I am working on people on beaches — bathers, bikini girls. Because of the contrast of a bathing figure on the flat surface you get the contrast of round forms against flatness. The contrast between people lying on beaches and people standing on beaches. I am also starting to introduce a forced perspective, by showing the large legs of a bather at one end of an environmental plane and a small standing figure at the other end of the plane — so that when viewed from the leg-end of the plane the sculptured limbs seem like your own limbs and away in the distance is the small perspective figure at the other end of the beach.

GD: Perhaps it could be a 'view-finder' way of looking at life—so this is one of your methods of realizing the versatility of painting in your sculpture.

Of course the dimensions of colour are vital to painting. Many people are not aware that up to the 17th century sculpture was usually coloured, polychromed or stained—whether it was in marble, wood or stone.

TWISS: I was very excited by the 12th century wood carvings in Italy. These are beautifully coloured with gesso and gliding. Ghiberti's bronze doors on the Baptistry in Florence are gilded. I could see that by painting bronze one could introduce some very beautiful qualities.

So I started to introduce a certain amount of painting to my sculpture. Not in the hard-edge manner in which many of the British sculptors are using colour but by putting layer upon layer of colour and cutting back through it, giving a rich surface to the bronze. By allowing bronze to show through there is a contrast between shiny metal and dull black paint or baked glassy enamel.

I have also started to introduce a shadow—a

painted shadow not a cast shadow. Again this shadow helps to remove the work from its actual environment. The painted shadow relates to its own environment and in this way it also seems to relate the spectator to it. You feel you should be on the light side looking towards the dark. The shadow seems to direct your viewpoint.

GD: With one of these pieces outdoors it would then have its natural shadow as well as its painted shadow! People are naturally curious about some of the sources from which an artist commences collecting ideas. Everything has its starting point. Until one gets to know something of the creative processes, it seems surprising how mundane can be the starting point for what in the end becomes a fine work of art. How have some of your ideas originated?

TWISS: Joggers on the side of the road started me off on my series of bronzes on athletes. Then I started collecting photographs and many of my works came pretty well straight from photographs. Photography is a valuable way of recording images for a painter or sculptor. You can record a whole series of images much quicker by photography than by doing drawings—if that is all you are after. Obviously, once you've got the photograph you have to *explore the idea* in the photograph, perhaps by doing drawings or maquettes.

GD: Nearly everybody today is pounded hourly with photographic images by means of the press, magazines and television. The photographic way of looking at things is rather in-built now. So when you use this way of looking—perhaps you are more likely to make images which are quickly understood at a popular level?

TWISS: This is an interesting thing! I sometimes think when looking at a television programme that in actual fact the image on the television screen is a poor image. It is often moving too quickly to get a clear image and yet you are able to read it. If you had been able to put this before a Renaissance painter, would he have been able to read what was happening on that screen?

GD: I have heard that certain people in tribal states could not read photographs until they were taught how to read them. At first the tribesmen could not interpret the tones of a photograph.

TWISS: Probably the approach I am starting to use now will only be readable by people because of their familiarity with these broken images.

GD: Right from the beginning of your professional work you have always used the human figure almost exclusively as the central content of your sculpture. I am wondering if you have any deep feelings about the human figure—is it a figure of man in a special sense?

TWISS: I think I use it purely because it is a familiar symbol. Because it is human, people relate to it more readily than they would if it were a completely abstracted form.

GD: With your athletes there is a tremendous sense of pent-up energy—bulging muscles, stretching fingers and flaying arms. There is a sense of tension within your figures but I was wondering if this goes further regarding any philosophical notions concerning mankind?

TWISS: No! I think it's purely a sculptural thing. Actually, this idea of man in relationship to himself and things around him has probably always interested me. When I was a student at art school, I made a group of three miners going down a shaft in a cage. I was interested in the confining of the miners within the cage and then the confining forms they made between themselves.

In the 'Athletes' it was more a relationship between one athlete and another. In cases where there are three, four, or up to eight or nine athletes in some works, all straining in the same direction, all relating to one another—I in fact joined them together so they became walls of runners.

GD: The joining together into walls of runners came out of your own observation as being a good answer to a sculptural problem?

TWISS: There are plenty of precedents of course. From the Greeks who overlapped figures in friezes up to the work of the English sculptor Kenneth Armitage. In my case the solution probably came

from the photographic image. When you take a photograph of a group of runners racing for a tape—they do overlap, join up and blur together. You are not aware of them as separate runners if it's a close race—just a mass of people racing towards a silly little arbitrary line. The tensions which occur are between them—not between the runners and the line. It's the group dynamic theme which interested me. The same occurred in the next series of works—the 'Protest Marchers'.

GD: Last year the Auckland City Council commissioned you to design and construct a \$16,000 fountain to be erected in a small park on the corner of Karangahape Road and Symonds Street. I am interested to know something of the site problems, how you as a sculptor resolved these problems, and the general concept of this fountain you are now working on.

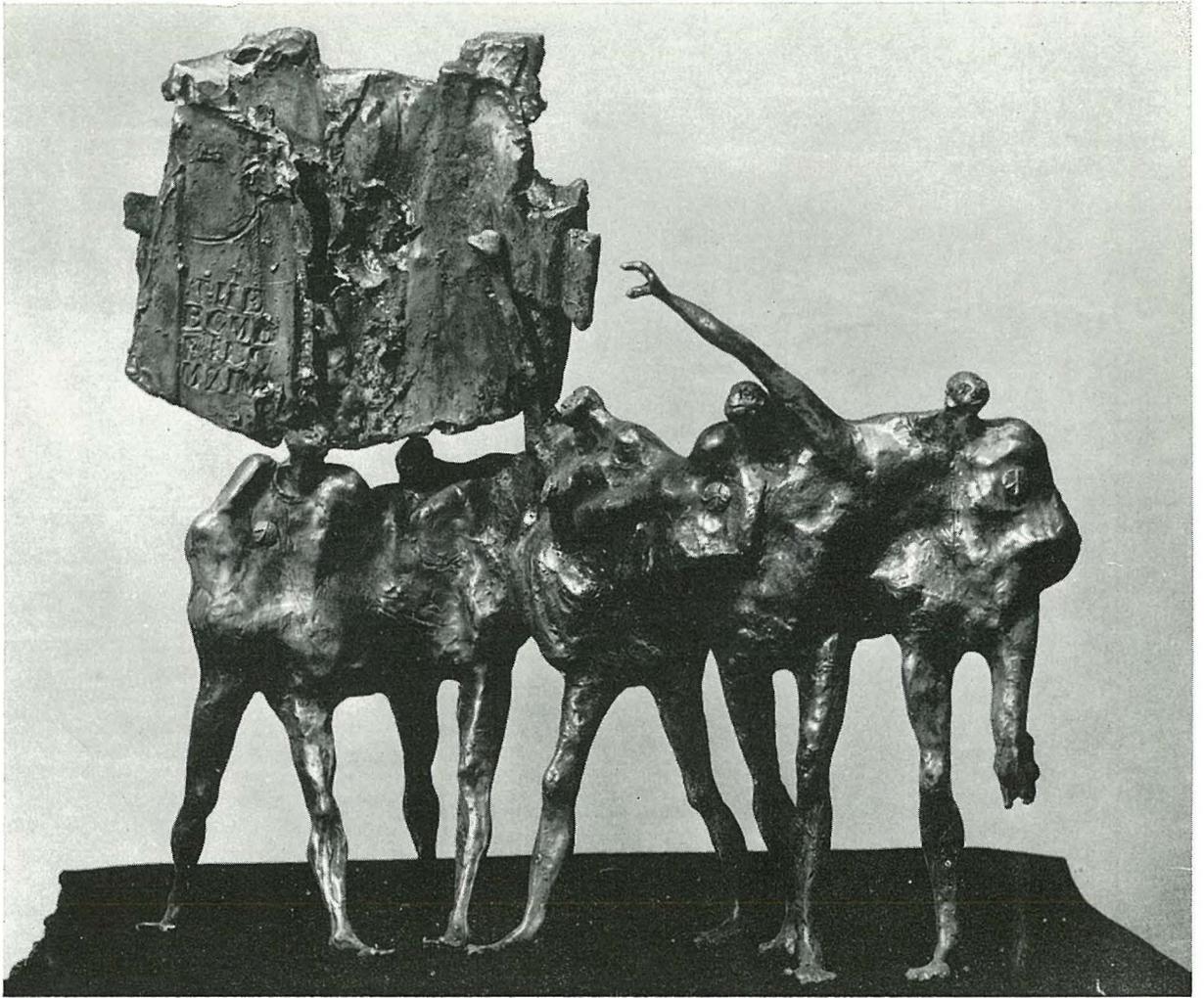
TWISS: The problem with a fountain on a site where there are lots of people walking or resting is one of water-spray being spread over a wide area. This park is on an exposed ridge which increases the likelihood of water being blown and drenching spectators.

So I had to consider designing a form which would contain the water yet baffle it from the wind but still leave it visible. I had to decide whether to make it a piece of sculpture with water working in it, or basically a water fountain which would spend half its life turned off!

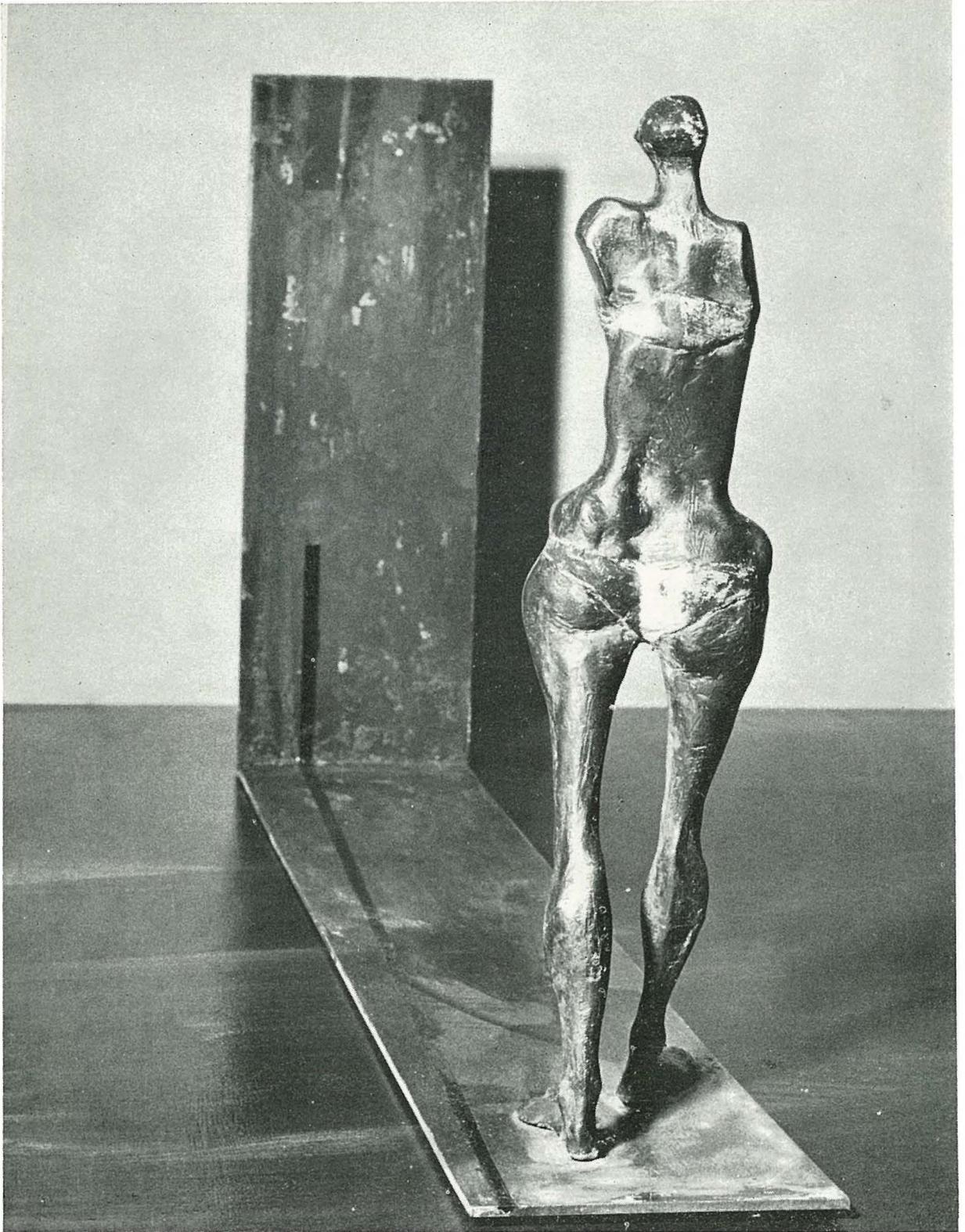
My solution is to produce what is mainly a piece of sculpture comprising a series of 3 big forms up to 9 feet high. These are rather like hollow rocks with fissures, within which water flows.

As you move towards them you become aware of the trickling and gurgling sounds of water within the 'rocks'. Some of the fissures or cracks penetrate the rock forms so you get glimpses through of trees, buses and people on the other side. This is another environmental idea. It involves the forms with its environment because you can even see the surrounding environment through the forms. The sculpture also includes bronze figures seated against one of the large 'rock' forms. In this way it is similar to work I am now doing in my studio—small figures related to an environmental wall.

GD: I believe you are doing virtually all the work on the Karangahape fountain yourself—making all the moulds, about 100 of them, and joining and finishing the metal castings. The time factor must be considerable. Is the situation such that there is no foundry here you can hand the work over to?



THE BOMBS WILL MAIM. Bronze, 1965. (Auckland City Art Gallery). 20" high.



WALKING BATHER. Polychromatic Bronze, 1967. 12 x 24ins.

TWISS: There is one foundry that would do it all. But the problem is one of time and expense in getting a big job cast. In Italy, casting is very cheap and people go from all over the world to have sculpture cast there. In New Zealand labour and time costs are the most expensive factors. I find too that casting a big job is such a drain on time that it tends to slow-up developing my own work and ideas. This fountain has taken two years now from the time of starting to think about it and it will take another year before it is completed. Three years involved on one work is pretty devastating.

GD: You were awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant and travelled in 1965-66. I believe you worked in foundries in Rome, Florence, Pistoia and Milan.

TWISS: Pistoia is a little town outside Florence with what is reputed to be the best foundry in Italy. It casts work by Emilio Greco, Fazzini and other well-known Italian sculptors.

GD: What is the procedure in Italy when the sculptor has finished the final model?

TWISS: Usually the Italian foundries are not very happy with wax models. If the wax is damaged in the casting, the piece of sculpture is lost. The model usually comes in clay or plaster. The foundry takes moulds from the model and from the moulds they take a wax pattern from which they make their bronze mould. Then the pattern will be worked on by the sculptor.

In the Milan foundry there are studios for sculptors. So a sculptor can build (say this fountain) in the studio and it wouldn't have to be transported for casting. Here I have to move the pieces around. I've modelled it in my own studio but as my studio is too warm for the wax patterns these have been moved to a cool basement at the School of Art.

When all the patterns are made I then transport them to the foundry to be cast in about 100 pieces. Then I must transport all these pieces again for finishing and joining before going to the final site.

In Italy, these processes would all be done in the one foundry and the finished job taken straight to the site. The costs would be less and the amount of time I would have to spend on it would be cut by probably two-thirds. So the commission would be more of an economic proposition.

GD: The sculptor can get on with the production of sculpture and not be caught up with the production of castings?

TWISS: People get the idea that I'm interested in techniques. In fact I hate the business of actually

doing the casting. I would rather hand this over to somebody else. It takes much of the pleasure out of a piece of work if you spend days of your time chipping away with a cold chisel trying to get it back to its original form—barking your knuckles on the metal and getting bronze powder in your hair, eyes and nose.

GD: I understand that in England you saw the Giacometti Retrospective Exhibition in the Tate Gallery?

TWISS: This was the most exciting show I have ever seen. I had previously seen only isolated pieces of Giacometti's work. The effect of viewing a whole gallery filled with Giacometti figures made his idea very clear. The way in which space was eroding into these figures and the way the figures pushed out vertically into space. To walk into a room and see about 200 figures standing on various levels was quite fantastic.

GD: The experience would be like walking into a city you had never visited before and seeing it completely peopled by a new race. In this sense Giacometti had created his own environment.

What were your responses to the work produced by the new generation of British sculptors?

TWISS: I knew nothing about the new generation of English sculptors when I arrived in London. When I saw their work I became extremely enthusiastic—not because I felt any affinity with these sculptors. It was all non-figurative work, all concerned with the making of single objective images—not relating them in any way with people or with their environment. They were very internal things.

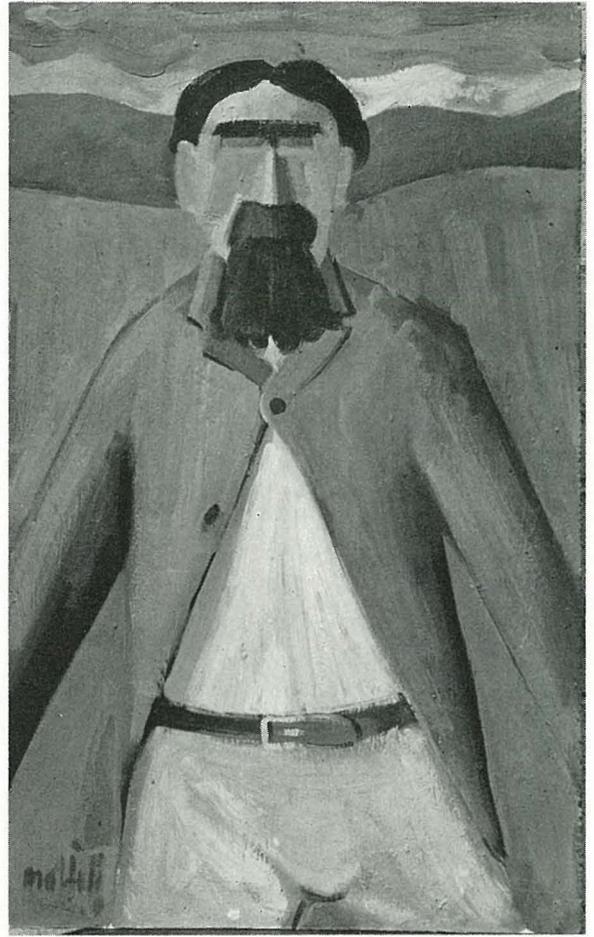
On the other hand I was very excited by the colour quality and the audacity of a lot of the work—by what they put up and called a piece of sculpture.

GD: Much of it I suppose was welded and painted sculpture and in new materials too?

TWISS: Yes! The Royal College, London, where I worked for 3 months was doing a lot of sculpture in fibre-glass. Colour is saturated into the fibre-glass and the material is so light that vast shapes can be cantilevered out into space. You would think this big form could never stand up—but there it is balanced in space!



G. T. MOFFITT. MINER SMOKING A PIPE. Oil, 1967. 15 x 15ins.



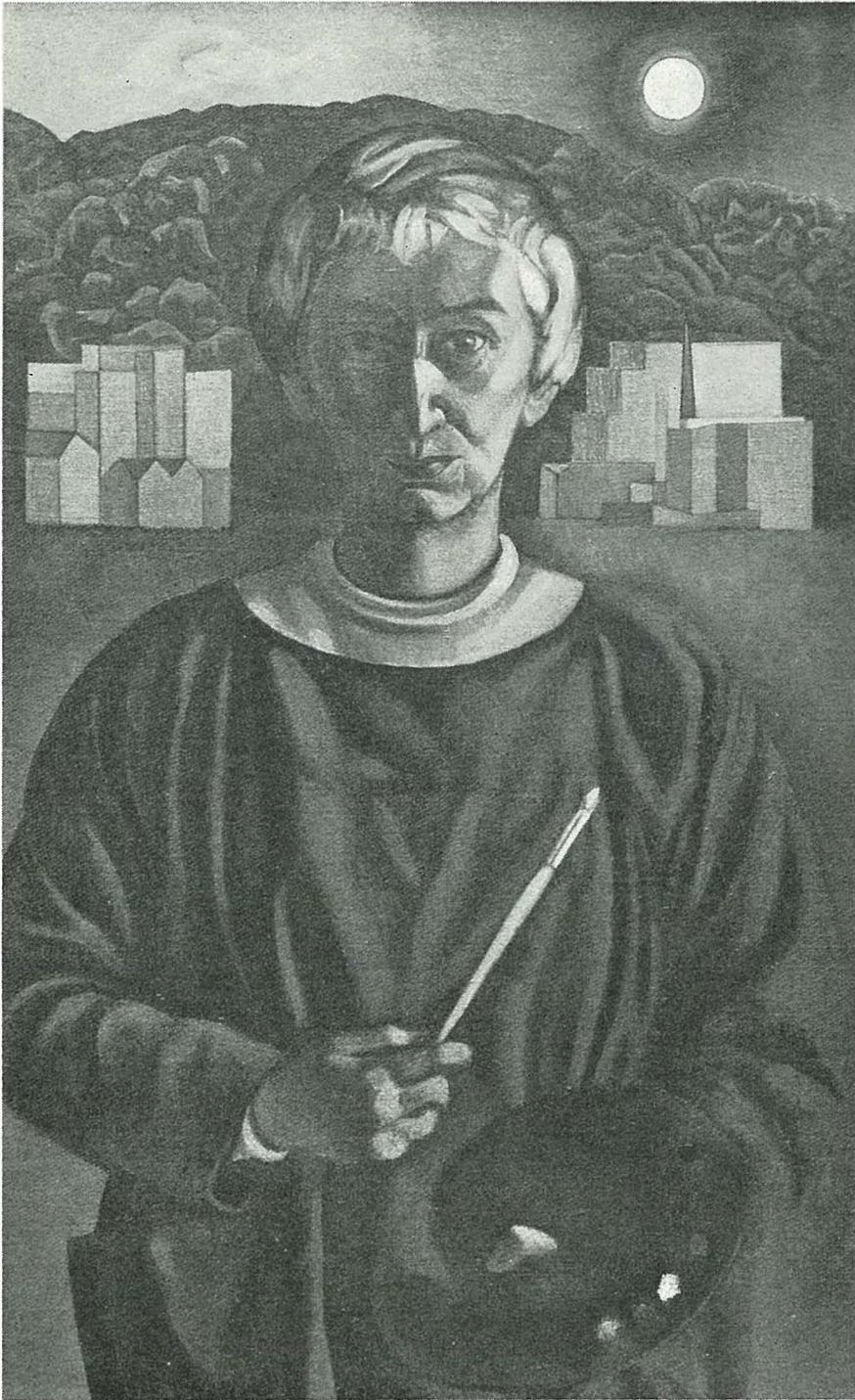
G. T. MOFFITT.

Above: CAPTAIN MOONLIGHT ON HORSEBACK. Oil, 1967. 29 x 22½ ins.

Above right: CAPTAIN GEORGE FAIRWEATHER MOONLIGHT. Oil, 1967. 30 x 18 ins.

At right: THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MOONLIGHT. Oil, 1967. 23½ x 29½ ins.





RITA ANGUS. SELF PORTRAIT (National Art Gallery, Wellington).
Oil on canvas, 1966. 29½ x 17½ ins.

Patricia Perrin



BEVERLEY SIMMONS

Sculpture or pot? That is the equivocation that is very much a feature of Patricia Perrin's work at the moment.

This adventurous potter, centred on Auckland but with a reputation that reaches right through New Zealand, has never allowed herself the indulgence of the repetitive process but has always sought out the challenging ways of working and firing clay.

Regarded by fellow-potters and collectors as a trail-blazer, an exhibition of her work—usually biennial and usually held in Auckland's New Vision Gallery—is an event that rates a 'must see' on the exhibition calendar.

This year was no exception. Here was Pat Perrin taking another leap forward, this time into the realm of purely organic shapes and surfaces. Critical response to the exhibition was wary and it raised once more the old query—what is more important, form or function?

Pat Perrin has an emphatic, one-word answer to that. It is 'Both! I don't like the monotony of just functional pots,' she says, 'yet I cannot bear pots that are just ornaments, with nothing to commend

them other than a balanced, pleasing form. I hate to think of pots going on a shelf doing nothing. Why, even a stone should have a purpose, if only as a doorstep.'

This insistence on use is the disciplining factor in Pat Perrin's work. But it also leads to some puzzling ambiguities, manifest, for instance, in the squat, concave and rough-surfaced boulder that turns out to be a vessel for wine, or in the small asymmetrical stone that in reality is a garlic storer.

The ambiguity is perhaps in Pat Perrin herself. Deep down she has an affinity with sculpture, with purely plastic form, that was shaped in her childhood. As a child she had access to her dentist father's workshop and here she discovered modelling clay, an ideal material to flex the creative mind and fingers of the latent artist. Pottery came later when at a pre-war Winter Show in Auckland she saw veteran potter Briar Gardiner working at the wheel.

It was not until after the war when she had finished a stint with the Wrens that she took up potting formally. At Avondale College she attended the evening classes of Robert Field and three years



A group of Patricia Perrin's pots which displays the range and versatility of her work.



PATRICIA PERRIN

later was herself teaching at the school.

Teaching still absorbs a lot of her time. She has evening classes at Avondale, Pakuranga and Otahuhu Colleges and is very much in demand as a tutor at summer and weekend schools throughout New Zealand.

With 17 years' experience as a teacher behind her Pat Perrin can point to some significant changes in the practice and appreciation of potting.

'Throughout, there's been a gradual shift of emphasis from earthenware to stoneware and now most schools have the equipment to fire this. Where they don't I bring some of the pupils' best work home and fire it in my own. But the real change has been in the widening of people's awareness.

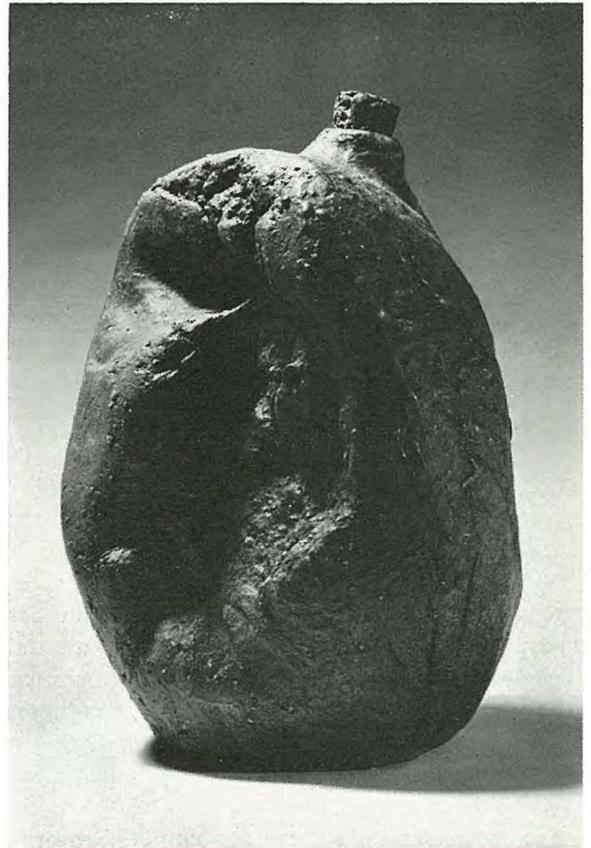
Right now I'm reaping the harvest of a more liberal and less doctrinaire system of art teaching. I find my pupils are far more creative now than they were say 10 years ago and they certainly have a far more ready appreciation of organic shapes.'

Time and again Pat Perrin's conversation comes round to this description of what she wants to achieve in her pots.

'I admire broken form,' she says. 'I would like to go completely sculptural, but'—she adds with a rueful sigh—'it's the shops that drag me back. If I'm going to sell I know I can't go too "way out!" Yet Clay is such a wonderfully plastic material. Potters should be bold and handle it in a more casual way.'

If form is a 'casual' element in a Perrin pot, construction, glaze and finish are certainly not. She is one potter who will not accept the fortuitous effect. If it does happen she wants to know why, not so much for future exploitation, but for the sheer joy of arriving at a scientific reason.

Another characteristic of her work is the interplay between clay and glaze. As her fellow-potter Yvonne Rust says, 'Pat develops her pots with the love and



SCULPTURED WINE POT. Stoneware, 8ins.



ONION POT. Dolomite glaze, stoneware, 7ins.

care of someone in complete harmony with her media. She extends clay to its limits, making it stand on its own without the use of glaze. If she does use a glaze she does so with restraint, usually pouring it so that it follows the form of the pot, producing a unity of glaze and clay that can only be described as an abstract quality.'

She applies the same discipline, but not necessarily the same restraint, in her kiln building. In this

department she is a dedicated enthusiast. Three years ago with the help of Yvonne Rust she built her own oil-fired kiln, a behemoth that superseded an electric kiln which she now uses solely for biscuit firing.

The setting of her workshop is as organic as the pots that come out of it. Though she lives in the suburban centre of Ellerslie, native trees crowd round the studio door and the adjoining kiln is lapped by exotic ferns, luxuriating in the warmth.

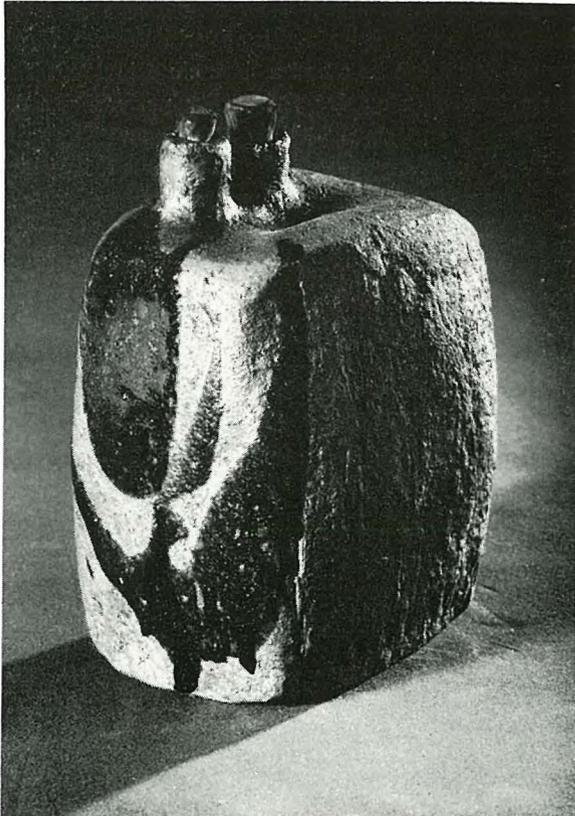
Here and there, casually discarded but adding their own natural charm and colour are lichen-covered crocks and urns.

In Pat Perrin's estimation it takes seven years to make a potter and once out of apprenticeship she maintains a studio potter should ceaselessly explore new ways of working clay. While she admires the impetus individual potters such as Leach and Hamada have given to potting in New Zealand she would rather see New Zealand develop its own school than follow the mores set down by other traditions.

'One can learn from them,' she says, 'but it's a mistake to follow them implicitly. Far better to regard them as a point of departure.'

Pat Perrin's point of departure occurred when she forsook the wheel for slab and beaten shapes and fused sculptural form with practical function. Her point of arrival is not measured in time but in the fact that as an experimenter, innovator and pace-setter she is a cornerstone of an emerging New Zealand tradition.

SQUARED WINE BOTTLE. Ash glaze. Wheel thrown and beaten. 6ins.



SCULPTURED WINE BOTTLE. Turquoise glaze, stoneware. 9ins.



Reviews

Art and the Encyclopaedia (1)

The encyclopaedia edited by A. H. McLintock and published in 1966 by the Government Printer is New Zealand's official encyclopaedia.¹ Art is treated in the articles ART, ART AWARDS, ART GALLERIES, ART SCHOOLS, ART SOCIETIES, MAORI ART and also in a number of biographical articles.

It was Dr McLintock who in 1940 organised the National Centennial Exhibition and wrote the *Introduction* to its catalogue.² He thereby rendered a signal service to art in New Zealand; for the *Introduction* and *Letters and Art in New Zealand* by E. H. McCormick became for long the standard general treatments of our art history.³ In 1965 they were superseded by the ART article in the *Oxford New Zealand Encyclopaedia*.⁴ The Oxford volume has not however been superseded in its turn by the corresponding article in the official encyclopaedia, and the reason, I suspect, lies somewhere in the world of official Wellington art, a much narrower and darker world than in the days of Sir Joseph Heenan. The modest *Oxford* article, which is supplemented by a short SCULPTURE one, is about one third the length of the official article and more succinct, clear, factual, judicious and up-to-date. Lively paintings have been found to illustrate a variety of subjects besides art itself, making it a more stimulating volume to browse through and presenting New Zealand art attractively and unapologetically to the world. This cannot be said of the official encyclopaedia, where 35 paintings are reproduced in seven plates and the general attitude to art may be gauged in the following gem:

'... energetic pioneering had provided a more leisurely way of life in which the arts might merit indulgence.'

The decision to divide the official encyclopaedia ART article into two parts ('1642-1939' and '1938 to Present' but the overlap is greater than the dates suggest) is understandable but unfortunate. If Dr McLintock, as may be supposed, was overburdened with editorial duties and unable to write the whole article, he was unwise to have undertaken the first period; it may be the one he covered so well in 1940 but a great deal of research has been done in it since and by neglecting it he has undermined the reputation he established then. Likewise the choice of the Director of the National Art Gallery to cover the recent period is understandable but it cannot be said that Mr S. B. MacLennan's contribution is other than disappointing. Dr McLintock's work, despite its shortcomings, is that of a scholarly and sensitive mind, Mr MacLennan's that of the art society critic: arch, condescending and, as the gem already quoted testifies, obsequious before the Philistines.

Dr McLintock has reworked his material for the centennial catalogue chiefly by dividing it into sections and filling out some of these a little, particularly 'Settler-Artists' and 'New Influences', the latter being the period from the 1st World War to which no doubt he felt he stood a little close in 1940. The main source today for the earlier periods are the catalogues prepared by the Auckland City Art Gallery in the past decade for its various exhibitions of the works of individual and grouped artists, e.g. Kinder, Hoyte, Gully, Nairn and Fristom, Van der Velden, culminating in the *Early Watercolours of New Zealand* show in 1963.⁵ Dr McLintock's neglect of this source may be illustrated by his inclusion of Fox, along with several minor artists likewise omitted from the centennial article, with J. C. Richmond among 'Settler-Artists'. But Fox's main work, in the Alexander Turnbull Library, belongs with 'Explorer-Artists of the 1840's', where it holds its own. Kinder, unmentioned by McLintock, would have been a better example of a 'settler-artist', whilst Hoyte (also unmentioned) would have been a useful foil in treating 'The Gully Influence'. Much of the time Dr McLintock follows his earlier work word for word so that slight modifications of judgement stand out, e.g. Nairn, instead of being a 'competent draughtsman and a sound colourist', becomes a 'sound draughtsman and an unenterprising colourist'; the only man amongst them who could form

through colour, A. H. O'Keeffe, remains unmentioned. As to 'New Influences' in the years between the wars, Dr McLintock mentions only Donn, Johnstone, Shurrock, Hipkins, W. H. Wright, W. H. Allen, Field, Jenkin and F. V. Ellis; he could at least have acknowledged that the generation of artists rising in the thirties were influenced, more than by most of these, by John Weeks, Christopher Perkins, Rita Angus, Eve Page, T. A. McCormack and M. T. Woollaston, whatever he thinks of them. As it is he leaves them to the unequal arms of Mr Maclennan, who drops Perkins completely and lumps Woollaston with a parade of mostly minor artists, with whom he has little in common. Dr McLintock drops the note of optimism, and the reference to Cézanne, on which he ended in 1940, and instead refers darkly to the Kelliher prize, the colour camera and the topographers.

Mr Maclennan spends two and a half precious columns before getting us to the point at which Dr McLintock left us, and spends it on matters in which he shows he knows little, such as European trends, and on matters in which he appears as all too much involved, such as the reaction of art societies to the work of 'Angry Young Men' (also 'pseudo-revolutionaries') who are influenced by the Europeans. The only thing dear to his heart is the memory of an exhibition in 1938 of the Canadian 'Group of Seven'; it represents to him everything that New Zealand art might have been; since even he is aware that it hardly influenced us, it is a mystery why he devotes half a column to it. Australian art, which he says we know less than Canadian, is also commented on to its disadvantage in the same context.

When under 'Recent Trends' Mr Maclennan begins to mention artists, he interlards the exercise with similar irrelevant matter; one third of a column goes on 'social reasons' for our lack of genre painting. His instances, e.g. 'Kitchens are efficient rather than picturesque . . .', reveal that Mr Maclennan shares the widespread fallacy that the artist's concern is to render what is picture-like or paintable in itself; a little reflection will show that such things are picturesque because they have been successfully realized in art already.

Artists mentioned in the *Oxford* article but not by Mr Maclennan are Louise Henderson, Mrkusich and Patterson; by Mr Maclennan but not the *Oxford*, Hipkins, Olds, P. McIntyre, L. Mitchell, Juliet Peter, R. Cowan, Helen Stewart, Mason, Day, Holmwood, McDiarmid, Coombes, Leary, Young, Turner, Joan

Fanning, Minhinnick, 'laughing' Neville Lodge and Syd Scales. It should be added that the following are mentioned by neither: Olivia Spencer Bower, Bensemann, Gopas, R. Ellis, Doris Lusk, Hanly and Macfarlane. In the *Oxford*, McCahon is 'a highly inventive painter whose strong individuality is seen particularly in his interpretation of landscape'; in Maclennan he 'has reduced subject matter to Rothko terms of geometric simplicity'—a bit of repeated gossip that suggests the writer did not see the Woollaston-McCahon Retrospective Exhibition of 1963, since it applies to only a fraction of McCahon's work. The *Oxford* article pays tribute to the Christchurch Group and mentions the present 'centre of activity' in Auckland; Mr Maclennan hardly sees beyond Wellington.

The ART article is properly distinguished by Dr McLintock as being on 'European art in New Zealand' but Mr Maclennan has something to say on Maori art too. The implications of his remarks in relation to certain implications of the MAORI ART article by Mr J. M. McEwen, Secretary of Maori Affairs, will be treated in Part II of my article.

Mr Maclennan is also responsible for the ART AWARDS, ART GALLERIES, ART SCHOOLS and ART SOCIETIES articles in the official encyclopaedia, as well as for the plates. He is most at home with the societies, telling us for example the amount of Wellington sales and that this is the highest of all the societies. He is less revealing about galleries and so we still lack figures on purchase funds and establishments, let alone an appraisal of collections and of exhibition and research programmes. No reference is made to collections outside the galleries nor to the work done in the Art Galleries and Museums' Association of New Zealand to assist libraries and the smaller galleries with their collections.

Some two dozen artists have individual biographies, including Barraud, Buchanan, Russell Clark, Goldie, Gully, Heaphy, Frances Hodgkins, C. and E. Kelly, Lindauer, Low, McCormack, Maclennan, Nairn, Nicholl, Shurrock, Sydney Thompson, Van der Velden, Alfred Walsh and John Weeks; the fact that Fox and J. C. Richmond painted is mentioned in passing in their biographies. The longer biographies of those known primarily as artists are by Thomas Esplin, and his are informative and documented.

Established artists without biographies are Kinder, Hoyte, the Wrights, O'Keeffe, M. O. Stoddart, Rita Angus (still referred to by Mr Maclennan as Cook),

M. T. Woollaston, W. A. Sutton and McCahon; these as we have seen get scant or no mention though both Woollaston and McCahon have reproductions.

Apart from Esplin's biographies, none of the articles surveyed here have bibliographies. Mr MacLennan mentions, along with H. V. Miller's reviews in the *Evening Star*, Eric Ramsden's in the *Evening Post*, which long set the tone for the public with which he is most in contact, but not the reviewers of *The Press*, who have treated serious art seriously. He also mentions the *New Zealand Arts Year Book* but not H. H. Tombs's earlier publication, the periodical *Art in New Zealand*.^{6 7} The publications of the Auckland City Art Gallery, which range more widely than indicated by my earlier allusion, and *Landfall*, which has consistently covered New Zealand artists in its plates and also supplied a number of articles on them, are sources which Mr MacLennan has omitted unwisely.^{5 8}

R. N. O'REILLY

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¹*An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*; ed. A. H. McLintock. Government Printer, Wellington, 1966. 3 v. \$15.00.

²THE NEW ZEALAND DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS. *National Exhibition of New Zealand Art: Catalogue*. The Department, Wellington, 1940.

³E. H. McCORMICK. *Letters and Art in New Zealand*. Dept. of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1940. (Dr McCormick's works generally are a source for New Zealand art history; they are however neglected in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, except by T. Esplin.)

⁴*Oxford New Zealand Encyclopaedia*; general editor Laura E. Salt, New Zealand editor John Pascoe; companion volume to the *Oxford Junior Encyclopaedia*. Oxford University Press, London, 1965.

⁵AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY. *Early Watercolours of New Zealand*. The Gallery, Auckland, 1963. (To list the publications of the Gallery or those of the Auckland Gallery Associates, would be a bibliographic exercise outside present scope but mention may be made to its *Quarterly*, published since 1956.)

⁶*Arts Year Book*. H. H. Tombs, Wellington, 1945-1951. (Title varies).

⁷*Art in New Zealand*. H. H. Tombs, Wellington, 1928-1946. (1945-46 issues as *Arts in New Zealand*.)

⁸*Landfall; a New Zealand Quarterly*. The Caxton Press, Christchurch, 1947—.

General. *The Turnbull Library Record*. Friends of the Turnbull Library, Wellington, (New Series) 1967—, should be mentioned as a source for New Zealand art history.

Present Company

Present Company, Charles Brasch, published for The Auckland Gallery Associates, Blackwood and Janet Paul, 75c.

In their present form these reflections on the arts have developed far from 'the scattered notions that have been rattling round' in the head of Charles Brasch for thirty or forty years. His random thoughts have found their shape and rhythm in the text of a lecture given to the Auckland Gallery Associates; and 'the present company of artistic creations' that despite time and mortality continues to enrich life and ignore death provided him with a substantial roll-call, a standard of reference and a point of departure for a meditation on the significance of the creative impulse. It may be that in 'this land of uneducated hearts' few will find time or reason to pursue a line of thought which concerns itself with making and discovery, with memory and tradition, with the art of naming and the rhythm of the universal dance, even when it encompasses an area of educational problems by no means irrelevant to the here and now. Yet those who can discern more than flippancy in E. M. Forster's remark 'How can I know what I think till I see what I say' with which his exploration begins are likely to find *Present Company* a rewarding experience if not a definitive statement.

No attempt has been made to produce a laborious treatise on the value and function of the arts, nor to deliver anything that amounts to a manifesto. Brasch is reflecting, and to the reflective mind concerned with the significance of the creative process and the responses of the educated heart to the 'continual renewing of real relationship, relationship in and with reality' some important aspects of the arts claim more than momentary attention. Inevitably he is drawn towards a concept of value, towards the essential problem, so difficult for the phlegmatic utilitarian even to understand, of the sense in which artistic creation is true creation, why it becomes discovery and how, among so many things that are old and time-worn, it remains new and, at one and the same time, is both an extension of knowledge about the inner and outer reality of life and an end in itself.

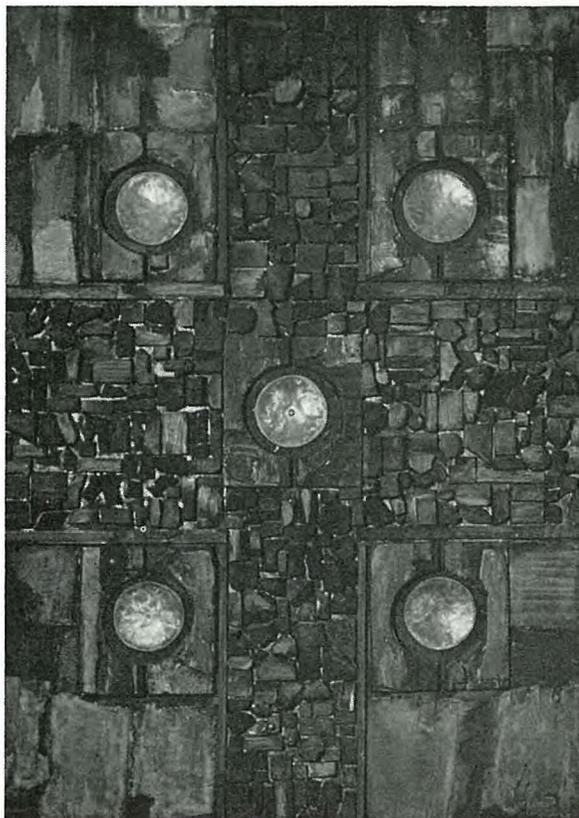
Although in the development and illustration of his complex theme Brasch refers to numbers of painters, sculptors and musicians until the weight of accumu-

lated appreciation becomes a little oppressive, it is evident that for the purpose of this essay he is primarily interested in the medium of words, and in this medium as it manifests itself in certain kinds of poetry. His apparent dismissal of the novel and large areas of prose makes his argument less than comprehensive; and the reader may readily detect, as he may indeed with all critical expositions, a concealed assumption about the nature of art or about certain aspects of art. At times there is an understandable tendency to over-simplify, to assume the existence of a hierarchy of the arts, to neglect the contributions made by the different kinds of art; and he tends to pass from the broader statement ('in a work of art each finds his uniqueness affirmed') to the personal preference expressed in T. S. Eliot's 'There is only the dance'. The middle section of this meditation is largely preoccupied with tradition, memory and the importance of the mastery of language by means of the right kind of education; and this is perhaps insufficiently related to the first section on creation and discovery and the last which weaves its way into the universal dance of which art is the participator and reflector. Nevertheless, only the reader determined to discover inadequacies in the treatment of a subject that is without limits should feel moved to complain about a series of stimulating reflections that bears testimony to the author's deep concern not only with artistic value but with its especial importance in 'this land of uneducated hearts'.

H. WINSTON RHODES

The 1966 NZ Contemporary Painting Exhibition

The 1966 N.Z. Contemporary Painting Exhibition toured the country during this year and was shown in Christchurch in the Durham Street Art Gallery in early May. The exhibition, as usual received reasonable public support (and some criticism) but it fell below the level of many of the earlier contemporary shows. Perhaps hung in a more attractive gallery the exhibition might have thrown off some



DON DRIVER. IKON. Construction. 51 x 36ins.

of its dead wood appearance but it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that only about a third of the paintings deserved serious consideration in terms of the claims made for them. For which third, however, one should be grateful; and whether or not this exhibition failed to provide the slightly heady brew of former shows it would be disastrous if for reasons of financial loss or lack of public interest these travelling exhibitions had to be discontinued.

The Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery in his foreword to the catalogue warned of the rising costs of touring these exhibitions: '—it is surely the duty of a public art gallery to foster these vital and thinking artists within our national life. To encourage their development and growth for the national good — if for no other reason. These exhibitions are then offered as travelling units. Galleries accepting the exhibition share the cost of touring. As these costs are steadily rising and no grant-in-aid is involved, organizations presenting this exhibition will need to exert even greater efforts to ensure the continuance of the exhibition on a travelling basis'.

The unevenness of the 1966 show may have been due either to the manner in which it was selected or plain bad luck that some works were not available. (Work from three established Christchurch painters was not available for the exhibition but this fact enabled the work of four younger artists to be included).

The selection of work for this exhibition was handed over to the four main centres, each being equally represented by eight painters. The Wellington paintings were selected by Mr Peter McCleavey, Christchurch by Mr John Coley and Dunedin by Mr Charlton Edgar. The resulting 'anthology' (as it was guardedly described) suffered from this divided command. A minor criticism of the Christchurch presentation could be levelled at the hanging. The exhibition was presumably meant to be shown in regional groups but here the paintings were shuffled and hung out of order with the result that constant reference to the catalogue became a nuisance and made nonsense of the organizers' work.

It would be invidious to select one centre as showing better work than the others since the odd fine painting stood out in each group — but the more established work of some of the Auckland and Christchurch painters supplied a solid core for the exhibition. Colin McCahon's sombre and beautiful *14 Stations of the Cross*, evoking symbols of human suffering from the landscape around him, dominated the exhibition to an extent that they almost detached



PHILIP TRUTTUM. CAN I? Oil on board. 73 x 48ins.



QUENTIN MACFARLANE. BAY SERIES. Acrylic on canvas. 36 x 48ins.

themselves from it. Although painted in a technique familiar enough now from McCahon these paintings, through the sheer force of their desolation and integrity, never fell into the category of formula works.

Patrick Hanlly's two *Pacific Icons* with their oblique references to Polynesian imagery at once baffled and fascinated. Whether or not they require a private work of elucidation from the intimate circle to make them effective as works of art they nag at the edge of imagination—not easily grasped, not easily forgotten. In a somewhat difference manner Ralph Hoere's *Big Red X* also attracted. This coldly negative painting in no



ROSS RITCHIE. COMPOSITION. Acrylic on canvas. 42 x 39ins.

way offered a suggestion of attitudes yet to be fathomed—as Hanly did—but rather provided an aloof starting point for the observer to supply an attitude. One takes it or leaves it and must be content to do either—the painting, icily capable, remains indifferent.

In an exhibition selected with remarkably little concern for what was once called ‘the human form’ Michael Smithers *Portrait of my Wife* (entitled in the catalogue *Window*) stood out as one of the best works shown. The disturbing blue-green tonality and strain of light through the window rebounding against the taut repose of face and figure, left the feeling that one was confronted with a portrait of insight and sensitivity.

John Drawbridge’s lovely and meticulously painted *Space Move* needed better surroundings to allow a full appreciation — surroundings, however, which did not prevent Don Driver’s *Ikon* from succeeding in conveying a certain compelling mystery. But apart from these works the Wellington paintings — if one excepts the ‘straight’ charm (almost defiantly so in the circumstances) of Joan Fanning’s *Blinman, South Australia* — drifted away into much ado about nothing.

With the exception of a few unimpressive efforts The Christchurch paintings were confident and exhilarating. If the best of them relied on a surface appeal what they had to say was communicated with an easy freshness and assurance. Without making any

profound demands David Graham’s *Set 41* and *Set 42*, W. A. Sutton’s *Horizontal Composition No. 1* and Philip Trusttum’s *Can I?* were stimulating and lively works. The honours went to Quentin Macfarlane’s two marine paintings, particularly the larger with its powerful rolling sweep and sense of distant loneliness — works which stepped boldly forward to claim attention for the seas and coasts around us.

The Dunedin group of work was altogether more subdued and in fairly strident company had difficulty in securing much attention. But Elizabeth Steven’s modest and charming *Rockscape*, informed by pleasant colour, came as a relief after much of the regulation pinks and green of pop and Michael Illingworth’s two rather doleful fantasies were distinguished by a careful and expert use of paint. This attention to the use of materials was happily apparent in several other paintings in the exhibition and its exercise might have saved a few more from oblivion. The most powerful and interesting work from Dunedin was Hubert Struyk’s *Landscape* unfortunately overpowered by being hung next to Michael Smither’s strong blues and green. This conflict of colour interest left one with the unhappy thought that it was more commanding in the catalogue reproduction than in its original state.

L.B.

The Auckland Scene

Although the 1967 Auckland Festival of Arts has now receded well into the past, it marks a convenient point from which a survey of painting, as seen in Auckland, can begin. The two painters who dominated the earlier part of the Festival exhibitions (excepting, of course, Duchamp) were both lecturers from the Ilam School of Art, Canterbury University: one being Donald Peebles, the other Rudolf Gopas.

In many ways Rudi Gopas’s *Galactic Landscapes*, despite the elaborate lighting arrangements which were made to play across the works emphasising their monochromatic colours and textured surfaces, were essentially failures because the artist’s wish to stimulate images in the spectators’ minds with



RUDI GOPAS. GALACTIC LANDSCAPE SERIES.

cosmic implications did not materialize. The paintings simply remained highly worked, carefully painted surfaces which communicated very little other than this.

Don Peebles' exhibition was more successful. His work combines three approaches which, because they spring from a consistent artistic viewpoint, interlock with each other to present a single outlook. There are paintings, relief constructions and free-standing constructions. His relief constructions often use materials left in their natural state or painted in simple and frequently bright colours. Compared with his earlier constructions the works included in the May exhibition showed a greater attention to finish, but while these works are always interesting, there are some that require more natural visual tension if they are to retain the viewer's consideration for any prolonged period. It was amongst the paintings, however, that some of the best work was found. Peebles' paintings reveal an ever increasing control over the relationship between line, colour and shape, and if his use of these elements looks simple, it is a deceptive simplicity. Such a work is *Painting 1967: Linear series no. 19* with its slightly off-vertical stripes and its subtle change in colour intensity between each half. Although Peebles' work possesses an apparent rigidity, this is countered by an almost lyrical tendency that is more easily seen in his choice of materials, his colour, and his avoidance of anything suggesting a cold mathematical perfectionism.

While there is a strong, and obvious geometrical basis inherent in his work, the impression is that this springs more from intuitive rather than inductive reasoning.

Another Christchurch painter who exhibited in Auckland during August was David Graham, winner of the 1966 Hays Prize. Compared with the few works already seen in Auckland the paintings in this exhibition fell far short of expectations. Many of the paintings had a look about them which seemed to indicate that the painter was unsure as to what he was about, for while isolated areas in paintings like *Set 72*, *Set 75* and *Set 76* contained interesting material, the shapes and colours were not always well related to each other, nor did the painter's statement, printed in the catalogue, add up to much when related to the paintings themselves. Part of this statement read: 'These paintings are conceptual paintings. They aim to create meanings for visual experiences through a set of disciplines—hence the title "set". To obtain the flexibility to work creatively requires that I do not restrict myself to a characteristically identifying style—rather I prefer to meet each situation as it arises so that each painting becomes a specific solution to a general problem of meaning.' It may sound good to say that each painting demands its own stylistic solution, but Graham displays none of the technical assurance seen in the work of either Gopas or Peebles and which is required to undertake this sort of adventure. Indeed, the rather mean look about much of the paintwork seems to destroy a great deal that is admirable in his work. In contrast, the most impressive painting in the exhibition, *Set 86*, is technically well presented in a style that is apt for the austere treatment given to the subject. This work, unlike the majority of paintings shown with their florid zig-zagging lines, comes closer to the earlier, better organized works (such as *Set 53*, also included in the exhibition). *Set 86* helped to restore David Graham's reputation as a painter worthy of serious consideration.

Michael Illingworth's exhibition, on during the Auckland Festival, caused a minor sensation by being an almost complete sell-out, mainly to one buyer. In his paintings Illingworth continues to develop along his established line, but while he still maintains a pointing finger at suburbia and its narrow conventions, his style has, over the past few years, brightened and become looser, with landscape slowly attaining a more certain role in the organization of his pictures. The highly formal human-figure

symbols are also simpler in construction and are frequently more dominating in the position they occupy on the canvas. One aspect that continues to grow more aggressive is Illingworth's desire to shock people, especially at a sexual level. If some may doubt the complete artistic integrity of indulging in such play, it can also be said that this aspect, despite any dubiousness it may possess, does fit into Illingworth's central and basic theme.

One of the most stimulating, and to some the most perplexing exhibition, was the one where Ralph Hotere's paintings, a series titled *Zero*, were shown. One says stimulating because these paintings force the viewer to reconsider many of the basic suppositions as to what a work of art really is. As paintings these works consist of unframed square and oblong canvases, each painted in a single colour used in, or similar to a monochromatic manner so that the full vibrant effect derived from the colour is utilized. Some paintings consist of two adjoining squares of differing sizes, or the combination of a square with an oblong, usually painted in different colours which may or may not be held in separation from each other. In one work, *Zero is White*, this division takes the form of a thin dazzling strip of red plastic. Buried within each painting and yet modulating across its surface is a conventional geometric pattern that must be sought after if it is to be properly seen, for each one is stated by means of an almost imperceptible change of colour or by a slight variation in texture. Another characteristic is the unusual restraint and impersonal finish of the painted surfaces. Only occasionally does any sort of personal gesture make itself evident, as in the wiggly conclusion to the plastic strip in *Zero Silent* or in the numbers hidden beneath the dark plastic strip in *3 2 1 Zero*. The fact that the key visual elements are presented with such a degree of refinement that they are almost hidden and must be sought after by the viewer seems to contain the clue to the general title *Zero*. As the painter has written: 'The series ZERO may be called an object of visual meditation, the essence of meditation being a personal discovery in a seeming void. I have provided for the spectator a starting point, which, upon contemplation may become a nucleus revealing scores of new possibilities. No object and certainly no painting is seen in the same way by everybody, yet most people want an unmistakable meaning which is accessible to all in a work of art. It is the spectator who provokes the change and the meaning in these works.' It is therefore essential that some sort of nuance be estab-

lished between the spectator and the work, for the spectator is required to give of himself something more than is normally required when looking at a work of art. There is, however, something disturbing in this sort of development, as well as something exhilarating to those who can glimpse a way through this sort of aggressive negativism. The one thing that is certain about such painting is that it can gather only a few genuine disciples. The way is narrow and there is no looking back.

Amongst the painters who can be considered to have established some sort of reputation as a painter is Shay Docking, although as yet she is little known in New Zealand. By training and outlook she is still very much an Australian painter but her exhibition in late September reveals the fact that she has made some attempt to come to terms with the local setting. In her 'working notes' Mrs Docking writes of her astonishment at the rich profusion of organic form found in New Zealand landscape when compared with 'Australia's vast space and its "featureless" landscape'. In effect, however, her style remains much the same, and if anything, her attempts at nationalization are rather less successful than her 'Australian' works. The most apparent aspect about Mrs Docking's work is its strong lyrical and decorative

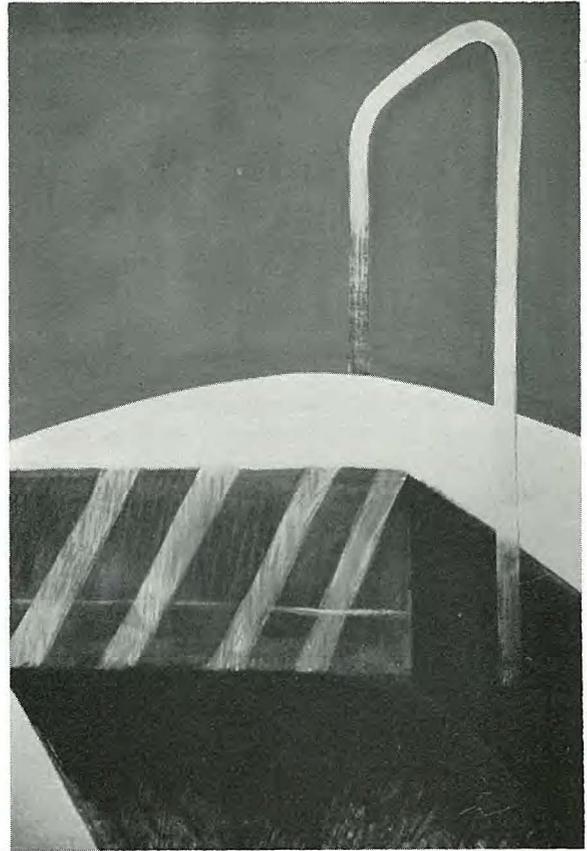


SHAY DOCKING. LANDSCAPE WITH NIKAU PALMS. Oil, Tempera and PVA on hardboard, 1967. 65 x 54ins. board, 1967. 65 x 54ins.

qualities rather than any forceful matter she may wish to communicate. On the whole her pastels succeed better than her too-deliberately painted oils. At times these paintings reveal lapses in the tonal structure, giving to some of the images an ambiguity that can hardly be intended. Frequently the highly formal organization of her pictures is static and some of her techniques of applying the medium rather mannered. In her best work she attains greater control and freedom over her composition with the result that it has a well thought out abstract quality that is suggestive of a more positive meaning.

Other painters who have established a reputation, and who have exhibited over the last six months, are Frances Rutherford and Gretchen Albrecht. As with her earlier work Miss Albrecht still retains her interest in the human being as central to her theme, but there has been a considerable change in her manner of painting. Whereas her earlier work centred around personal fantasies which Miss Albrecht now feels were 'too emotional, and governed by Art School sentiments', her more recent paintings aim at placing the ordinary person in a situation where the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary. Considered generally, however, her images are not strong or clear enough to fulfil this aim. Part of Miss Albrecht's method includes the use of visual devices practised by de Chirico and Rene Margritte, although there is also a strong 'Pop Art' influence at work. These influences are not always well integrated, and her control over tonal values is at times faulty nor are her figures always as well realized as they could be. It is this discrepancy between what she is capable of doing and what she accepts as a finished work that is disturbing. As in the past, some of her best work is to be seen amongst her drawings.

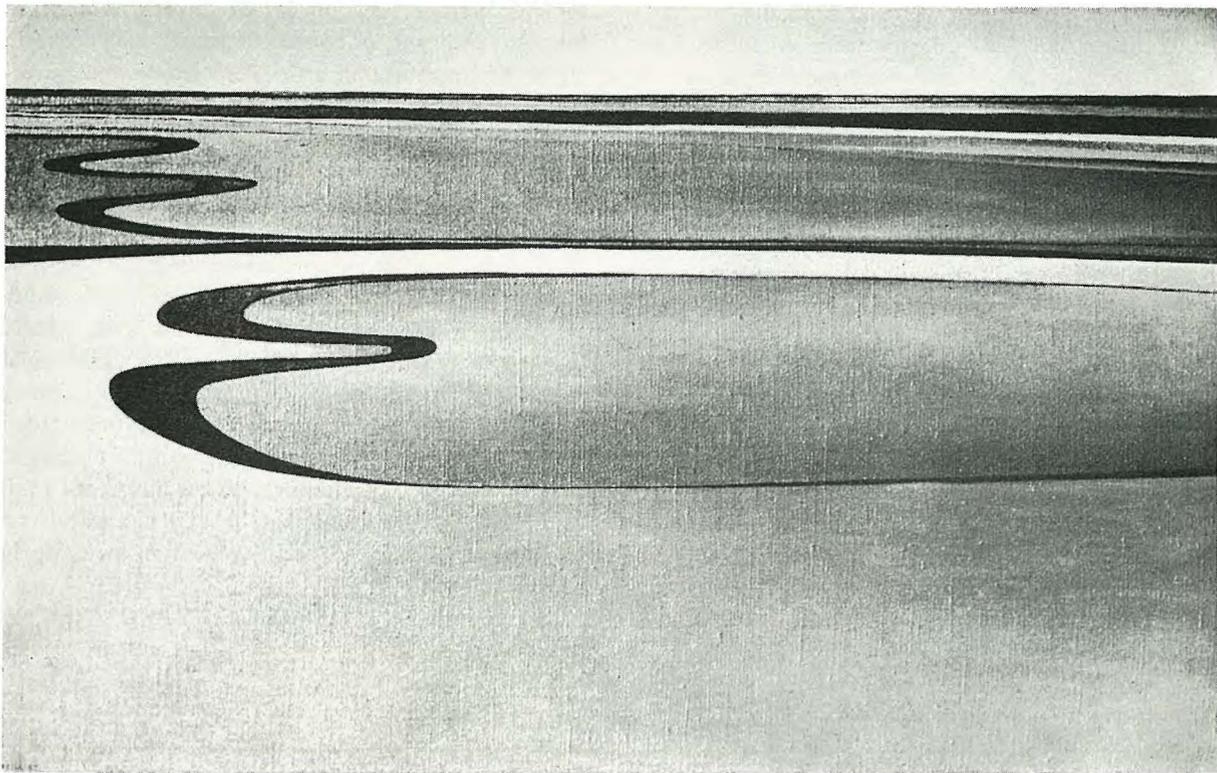
Frances M. Rutherford has been painting for some time, and if her work appears to have strong ties with traditional landscape painting, it has also, at its best, some very rewarding qualities that cannot be dismissed out of hand as old-fashioned art society stuff. Where Miss Rutherford fails is in her hit-and-miss approach which results in work of a very uneven quality. Often a well conceived painting is spoilt by a small area of ill considered brush work or a form that is only partly realized in pictorial terms. Unfortunately, this failure to see the whole work as a complete working unity is a recurring disability found in a considerable proportion of her work. But in other ways Miss Rutherford makes up for this lack of control through the fact



MAX McLELLAN. CANBERRA SERIES.

that she has something very definite to communicate about the quality of light and atmospheric space that comes from her careful study of the land forms about her. In her best work there is also a strong yet simple rhythmic force that gives to them an artistic forcefulness that is compelling, especially when it is taken into consideration that these works are frequently small in size.

Two painters who returned to New Zealand about a year ago are Max McLellan and Ray Thorburn. Both painters have ability but as yet neither have solved the formal problems inherent in their paintings, and until they do their work will remain limited. Max McLellan, who has spent some time in England, showed a series of paintings conceived from drawings made aboard the *Canberra* on his return voyage to New Zealand. To some extent these paintings reflect an appreciation, if not a complete understanding of Richard Smith's work. While there is a certain compositional boldness in McLellan's work, it is obvious that he is not a natural colourist for his use of colour does not always contribute as much as it could towards the total effectiveness of



IRENE O'NEILL. WAITAO ESTUARY. Tauranga Harbour Series. Oil.

a painting. His main problem centres more on his manner of painting and on the sort of definition he gives to his forms for there is in his approach an indecisiveness which gives to his pictures the impression that they are very large preliminary studies rather than the finished work.

In some ways Garth Tapper's exhibition displayed similar shortcomings, even though his style and subject matter is entirely different from McLellan's. The caricaturing element in Tapper's work adds a definite illustrative aspect, as though Tapper were taking notes on New Zealand life, particularly drinking habits, rather than being engaged in serious painting. There is also a feeling of non-involvement about these works that suggest a commentator looking on from the outside but not really being involved. Tapper's best work is more modest in intention, but more serious as painting. The inclusion of two small still-lives in his recent exhibition show Tapper to be an artist with considerable talent who rarely does it justice.

With her first major Auckland exhibition, Irene O'Neill hung a series of paintings and drawings

which, as the painter states 'set out to find the essence of the Tauranga Harbour'. Miss O'Neill's work, however, is interesting and disappointing at one and the same time, for while it maintains a consistent level of attainment, and while she possesses an obvious talent, the final result suggests paintings that remain within a neutral territory, being neither entirely successful as interpretations of her chosen subject, nor visually demanding as paintings. Part of this dilemma rests on the lack of compositional tension in her work, for the lines, forms and colours are too easily arrived at as though the painter had not been wholly involved in her subject, but interested more in making all the natural forms she has based her paintings on as smooth flowing as possible. Such a treatment removes any natural tension that could have been utilized with the result that the most positive aspects to be found in her work are some mildly decorative qualities.

If Geoff Thornley's work still lacks complete confidence, he is, from the younger emerging painters to exhibit so far this year, the most worth watching to see how he develops in the next few years. All

the works shown in his September exhibition had the common title *Ocean-Within*. His paintings, but more especially his drawings, show him to have fallen under the spell of the surrealists and in particular Max Ernst, but there are other influences at work for such painters as Francis Bacon and certain figurative 'Pop' artists are also acknowledged. His treatment of the figure makes use of hard shadows, often unsupported by strong lightning effects, plus an unnatural camera-like distortion of the limbs, but he also has an unfortunate habit of turning forms into patterns which nullifies the strength of the image rather than clarifying it. If, at his best, Thornley's imagery is compelling, it does occasionally go beyond credible limits as the rather senseless horror reported in *Ocean-Within: Apple* demonstrates.

During July and August a retrospective exhibition of paintings and monoprints by John Weeks was on show. While the exhibition included work from different periods of his working life, it lacked the authority usually associated with retrospective exhi-

bitions because none of his best work, already in private and public collections, was included: in essence it remained an art dealer's exhibition. Nevertheless the works shown did give a reasonable insight into his oeuvre. In his day Weeks was considered a leader of modernism in art for he seemed, to New Zealand eyes, to personify the modern movement in art, but today much of his output appears very tame, and not particularly 'modern' for the time when it was done. Rather than the more obviously 'advanced' work, his modernism was better put to use on a much more moderate level, and his mild and rather English use of cubism is more convincing than most of the experimental work. If today John Weeks does not seem to be the giant of New Zealand painting he was once thought to be, the recent exhibition did demonstrate that he still commands an important place in the development of painting in this country.

GORDON H. BROWN,
October, 1967.

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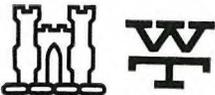
“Quam quisque norit artem, in hac se exerceat”

(Let each man exercise the art he knows)

Artisan, artist, artiste . . . it all comes down to the same thing: man enriching his fellow-man by practising the art he knows best.

Drama, painting, music, sculpture and dance are the arts that enrich the senses, stir the emotions, elevate the mind. But there are other arts. And mankind passes from the old to the new over the human bridge formed by those who labour in the arts of agriculture, manufacture and transportation.

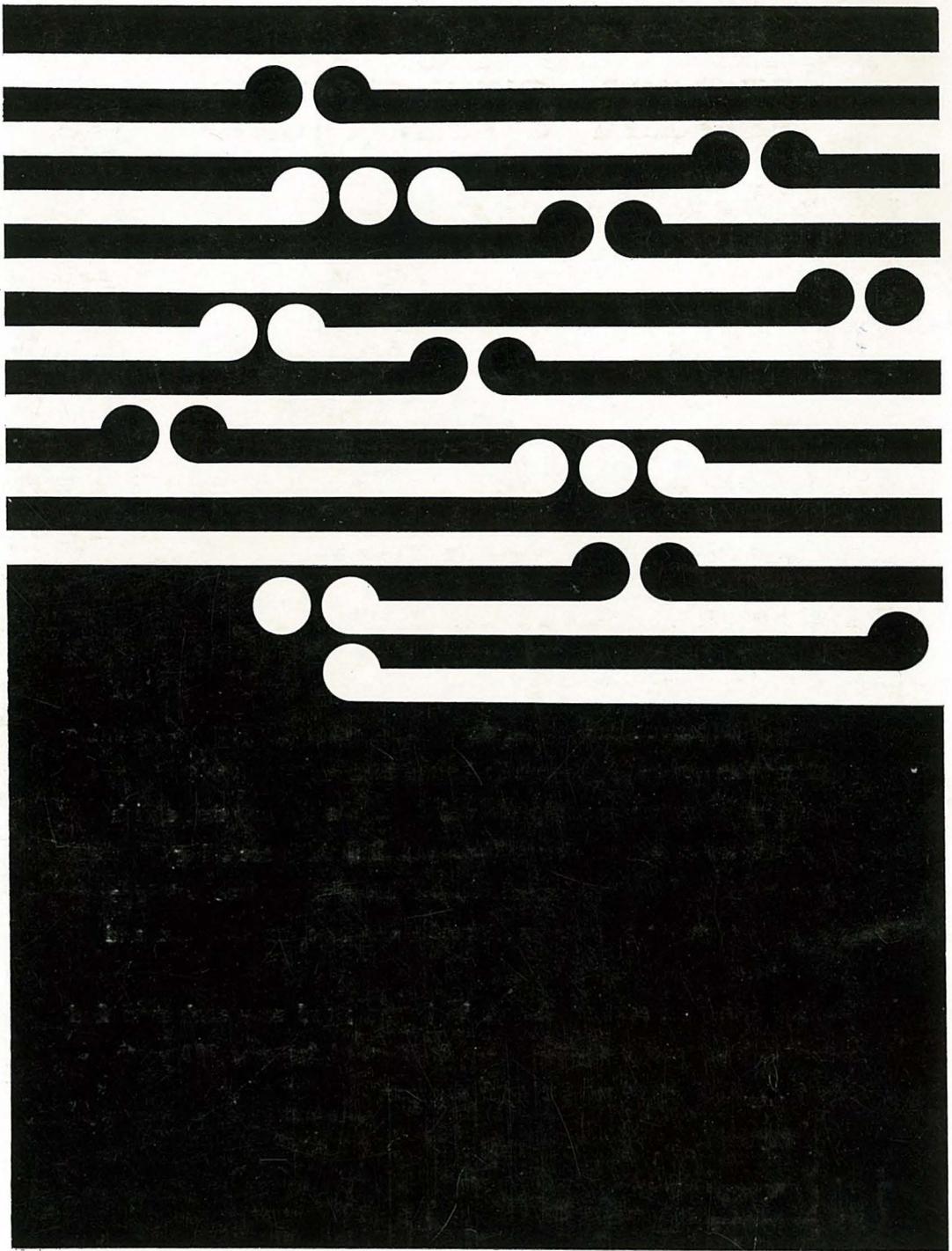
So “let each man exercise the art he knows”; and may each man find in his art the pride and the pleasure we have found for over 200 years in our art . . . the art of producing fine paper.



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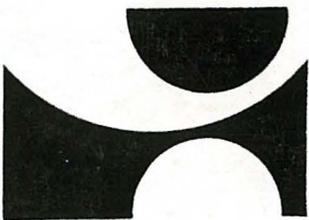
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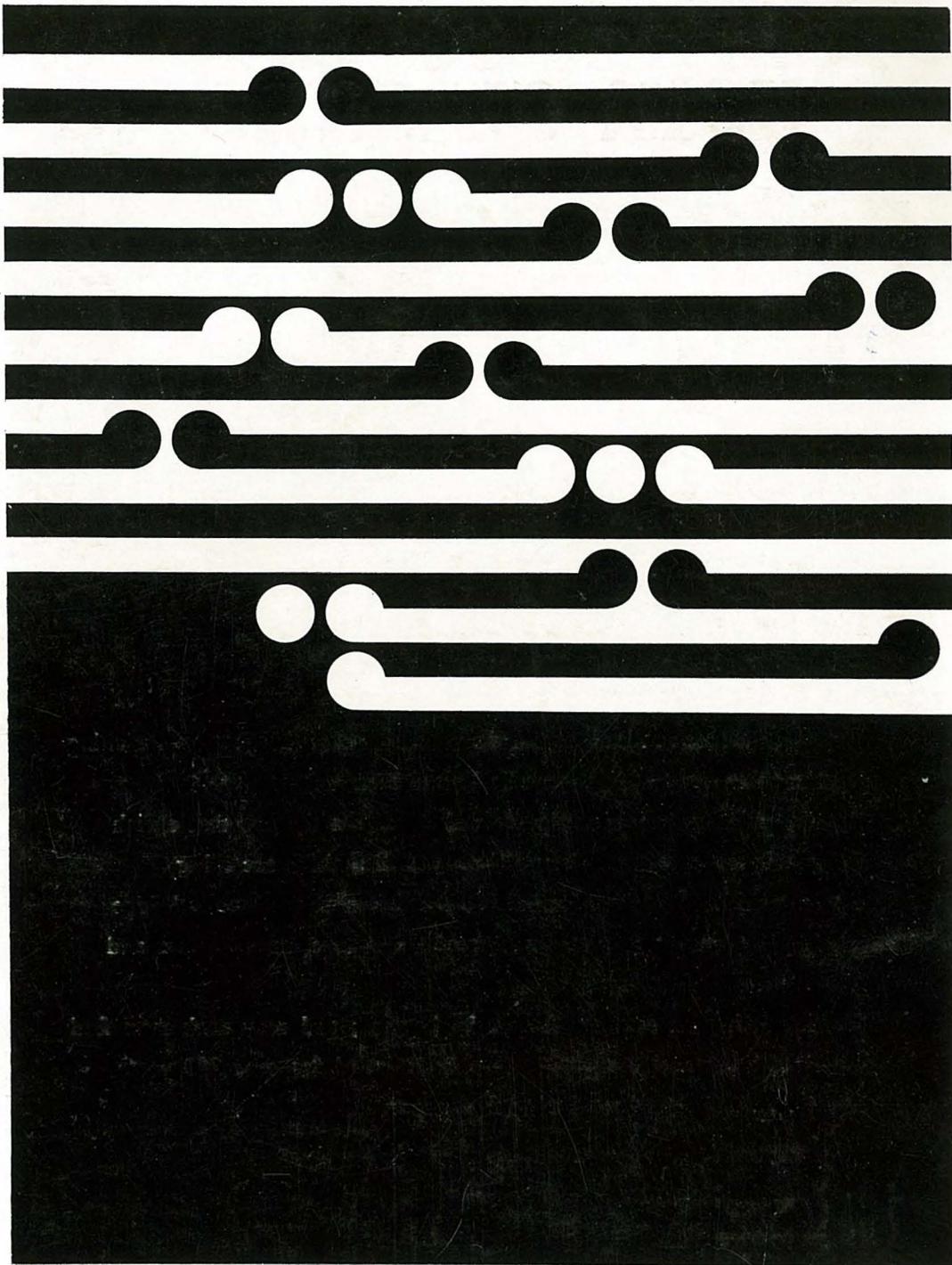


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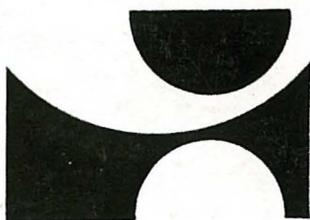
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