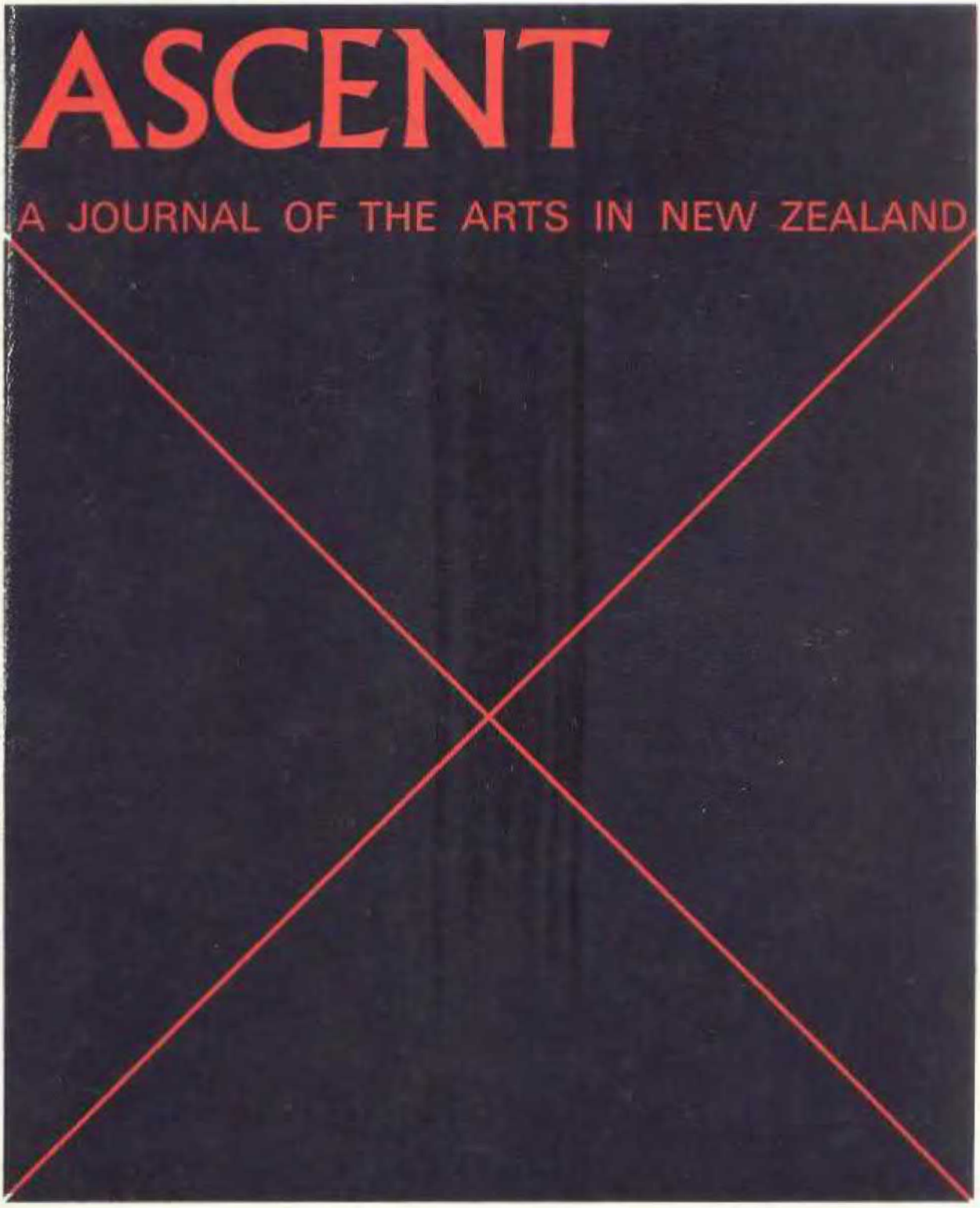
ASCENT

A JOURNAL OF THE ARTS IN NEW ZEALAND



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Ascent

A JOURNAL OF THE ARTS IN NEW ZEALAND

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Ascent

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Paul Beadle: Sculptor

*

GIL DOCKING

AT the age of 51, when most artists have held either a long series of one-man exhibitions or have given the game away or perhaps settled for some compromise, Paul Beadle has just held his first major one-man exhibition. This was presented in Sydney's Bonython Gallery during November, 1968.

The exhibition consisted of 30 pieces, all made by the lost-wax process. At the moment Paul Beadle feels he hasn't patience for stone or wood carving. He prefers the flexibility of wax in a fluid or semi-solid state. He cuts sheets and rods of wax and rolls some of this material into elementary forms. With these he manipulates the material into figures, joining parts together with hot tools and painting wax on with brushes.

This is a forming and manipulating process. Rather than commence with a wholly fixed and formal idea and then try to translate this idea into wax, he keeps his mind open to unexpected and accidental relationships which come unbidden into his mind as the wax takes form.

He likes to start several works at once and will have them developing concurrently: 'One of these may come to a halt and be left smouldering for some time—the other may spark into life and cannot be left until it has been fanned into a blaze.' He finds this method suits his creative processes and he likens its instantaneous approach to sketching and drawing.

Paul Beadle has found that this way of working inevitably produces a number of misfits—like people who apparently don't fit into their job or environment. At first, these unfortunates were thrown back into the melting pot. But he hit on the idea that these misfits were often only like people out of kilter with their environment. In another setting they might work supremely well. So he began to reprieve them and allowed them to lie on the bench. But they got crippled and squashed so he started tipping them lightly on to sheets of wax standing safely away from the working area—after the style of an artist's notebook. Now some of these 'notebooks' have been cast in bronze and were included as *Trials and Errors* in the exhibition. Perhaps a good philosophy of life has been demonstrated by turning apparently

1 SUBSCRIPTION BALL AT BALLARAT (after Gill). Bronze, 1968. 6¼ x 8in. diam. Owned by Mr Fred Storch.

unsuitable material to constructive ends.

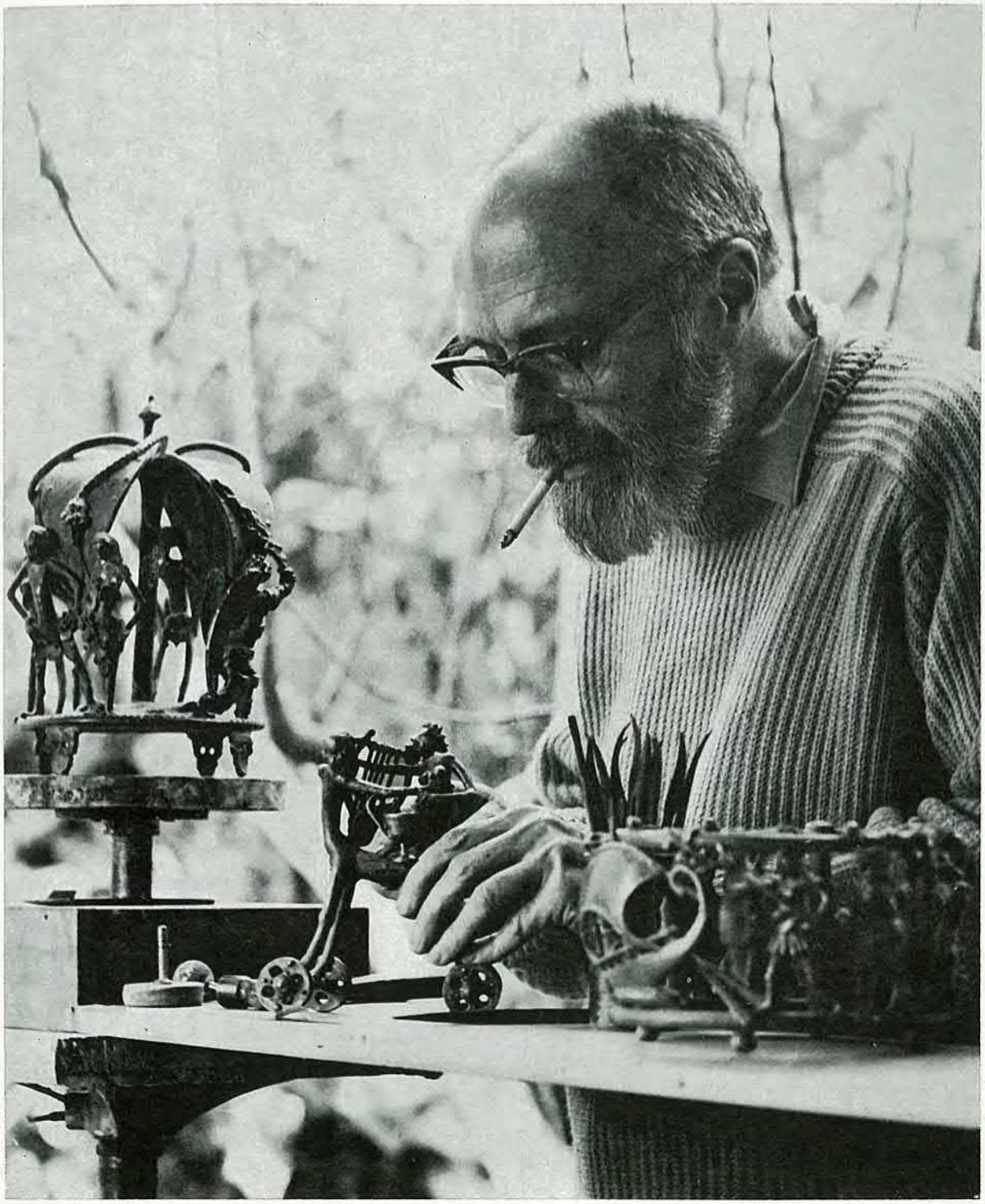
The only extent to which Paul Beadle goes with a premeditated basic plan is to construct an environment for his 'people'—something for the wax figures to exist on or in. It might be a wall as in *H.M.P.* (pl 6), or a tree as in *Not in my father's garden you don't* (pl 2), a courtyard as in *Un Seul But—La Victoire!* (pl 3), or a globe as in *The Seven Ages of Man* (pl 8) and *Capital Sins and Cardinal Virtues* (pl 4), but at least a setting. The only part of his planning which seems clear-cut is the environment. That is the initial idea but its full realisation is evolved. His ideas concerning what goes on in that environment change freely as the work proceeds.

Paul Beadle doesn't think of his sculptures as expressing any particular philosophy in a premeditative way, but it is inevitable that the creative artist—by translating responses to life into tangible forms—is in fact demonstrating and making real, personal attitudes to life.

However he feels that the artist is often utterly surprised by the philosophic notions which critics sometimes try to pin on the works he has created. If he has an attitude to life, it is that he sees 'Man as a rather funny little fellow—and this is me too' he adds. He accepts man for what he is. He accepts even if he does not understand all his faults—or most of them. He feels that he has more faith in Man himself, than in the things Man often 'concocts to have faith in'.

Paul Beadle thinks that no particular sculptural tradition has been a main influence in his work. As a young student he was enormously impressed with Egyptian scultpture and still is. But this has been modified now and put into perspective by other great traditions such as Greek and Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic. He believes that it is difficult to pin down any one particular influence from past traditions. Rather, it has been living people more than abstract notions of past traditions, which have been causative influences.

He remembers the collective influence of three



2 PAUL BEADLE with, from left to right: NOT IN MY FATHER'S GARDEN YOU DON'T. Bronze, 1968. 10¼ x 7in. diam. Owned by Professor Denis Winston. A TOY FOR YOUNG EROS. Bronze, 1968. 7¼ x 5¾ x 3¼in. THE GREEKS. Bronze, 1968. 4¾ x 9in. diam. Bonython Gallery, Sydney.

3 UN SEUL BUT—LA VICTOIRE! Bronze, 1968. 7 x 7¾in. diam. Von Bertouch Gallery, Newcastle, New South Wales.

drawing teachers in particular—Jimmy Grant (Duncan Grant's brother); William Roberts 'who never spoke in class but just picked up a pencil and did a drawing without taking the pencil off the paper', and Bernard Meninsky. There was also Eric Schilsky, John Skeaping and Harald Isenstein, the German who worked in Denmark—under all of whom he studied sculpture. It was the collective influence of these personalities which gave him a professional attitude to his work and a method of attack.

By going further back into his boyhood he pays tribute to two aunts whose influence can now be seen in his work. One of them, Aunt Bella, 'was large and pink, flowery and florid'. She introduced the young Paul to music hall comedy, Gilbert and Sullivan operas, circuses and Madame Tussaud's Waxworks. The other was Annie—'tall, gaunt and Edwardian'—one time fashion-artist at Marshall and Snellgrove's. She introduced him to the old Vic Theatre, Sadlers Wells, the National Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Now, these two personalities exist in both balance and conflict in a good deal of Beadle's work.

One must also take into account the influence of Tom Paget, the English medallist at the London Central School of Art and Crafts, who first introduced Paul Beadle to his life-long love—Greek and Roman coins and designing and producing medallions. Today, Beadle is New Zealand's only member of the International Federation of Medal Designers.

4 CAPITAL SINS AND CARDINAL VIRTUES. Bronze, 1968. 11½ x 4½in. diam. New Vision Gallery, Auckland. (In the above photograph 'Sins' are on the right, 'Virtues' left.)

5 GLENROWAN (after Nolan). Bronze, 1968. 4 x 7½in. diam. Owned by Mr Arnold Newhouse.

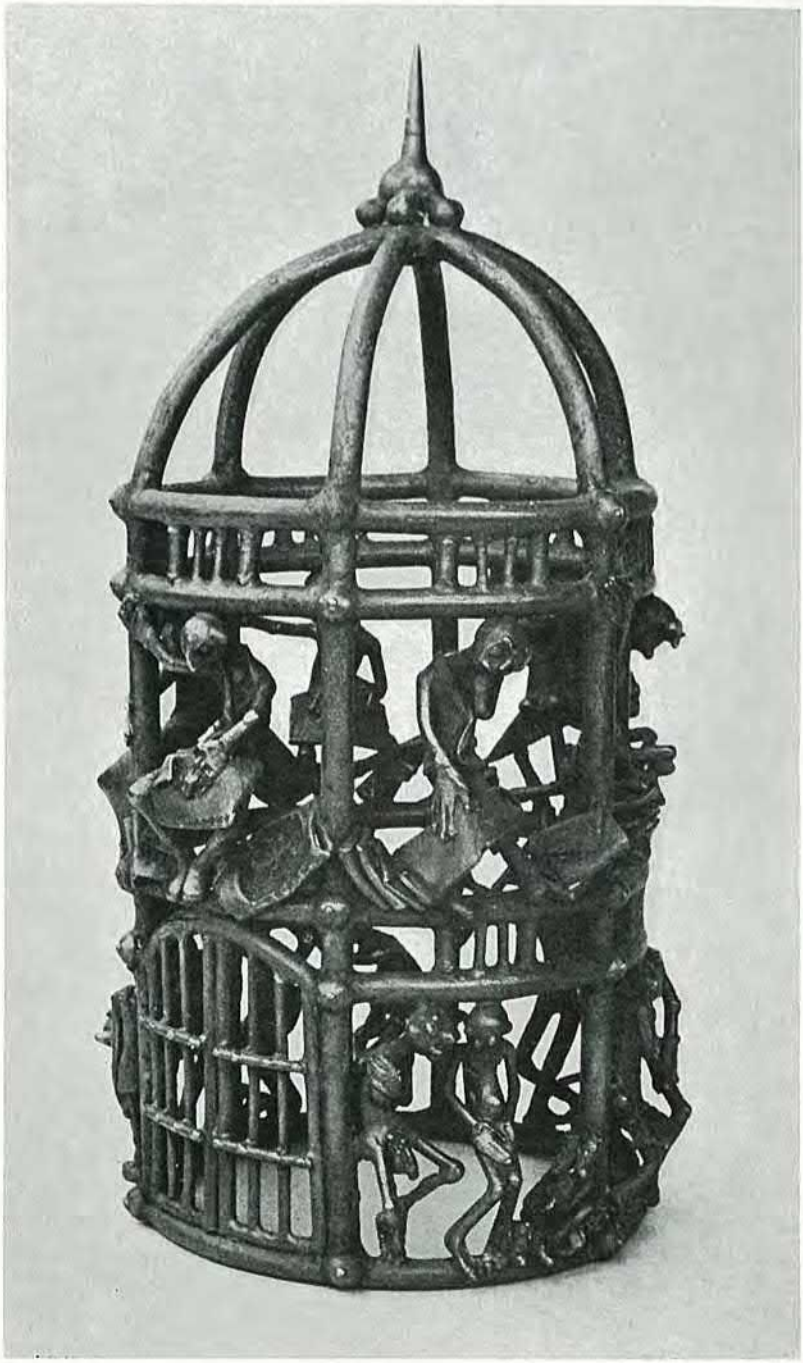
The motifs and scale of coins provides a link with the work in his Sydney exhibition.

Beadle finds it hard to trace a steady evolutionary trend since he began working as a sculptor in the 1930s. All of his pre-war material exists only in his mind, as an air raid completely destroyed his London studio and its contents. A small chest of tools and a small portfolio of early drawings escaped, they were in his cottage at Spellbrook.

For the duration of the war he served as an able-seaman with the Royal Navy in the Home and Mediterranean Fleets and as a torpedo-man in submarines in the Pacific. After the war he took his discharge in Australia and began his career again as a sculptor and teacher. From teaching and administration in art schools in Sydney, Newcastle and Adelaide, he is now Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Auckland University. This peripatetic life rather mitigated against a steady development in his sculptural work, and the change of locations meant re-establishing studios with frustrating delays in settling to work again.

Whilst in Australia, he was commissioned to make the 36 ft. American eagle surmounting the American War Memorial obelisk at Canberra. He also made four 12 ft. figures positioned at Taverners Hill in Sydney. The enormous scale of these public works demanded a vast change in technique, medium and style. This prevented—or delayed—the earlier finding of his personal themes and intimate scale, which he is now happy with. But he senses that, although sometimes cataclysmic events have delayed the development of a personal style and outlook, they are now providing grist for his particular mill. One small bronze is on the theme of sailors struggling from the sea after their ship was torpedoed. In short, he feels that he has a wholly different attitude to life. Perhaps a rededication has taken place, 'and I feel I'm reaping the benefits now fully, for the first time in my life, of my training and experiences.'

Paul Beadle considers that the event which caused the crystallization of his varied past into a meaningful present, was an extraordinary request in 1964 by a prospective client in Australia, to design a chess-set in chrysophrase and pure gold. 'The commission came to nothing as such, but it started me working on a lot of small figures—and the fitting of one's ideas into the conception of a chess-set was a tremendous discipline.' It seemed to badger him into doing an immense amount of work with small figures. This really was the beginning of the work he is doing today. Then, the whole programme seemed to snowball. The possession of two fine Ashanti gold weight pieces was another crystallizing agency. Two chess-sets in bronze, one titled *Big Game* the other *Battle of the Beasts*, were shown in Sydney.



6 H.M.P. Bronze, 1968. 9½ x 4½in. diam. New Vision Gallery, Auckland.

Another fruitful factor leading to his present direction was a marvellous commission to make an angel: 'I had never come across such a commission as this,' he said. 'An angel! and no questions asked, and no other restrictions except that it had to be made for a reasonably modest sum.'

So Paul Beadle is now exclusively working on small lost-wax bronzes. The tallest would be about 14 in. and the smallest 2 in. high. The basic environment or form, as described earlier, is quite simple, being a scaffolding-like construction or some room-like setting—but what happens within the setting is often complex in detail. People inhabit these structures and the narratives are almost wholly from popular life.

The narratives deal with Man—his humanity and

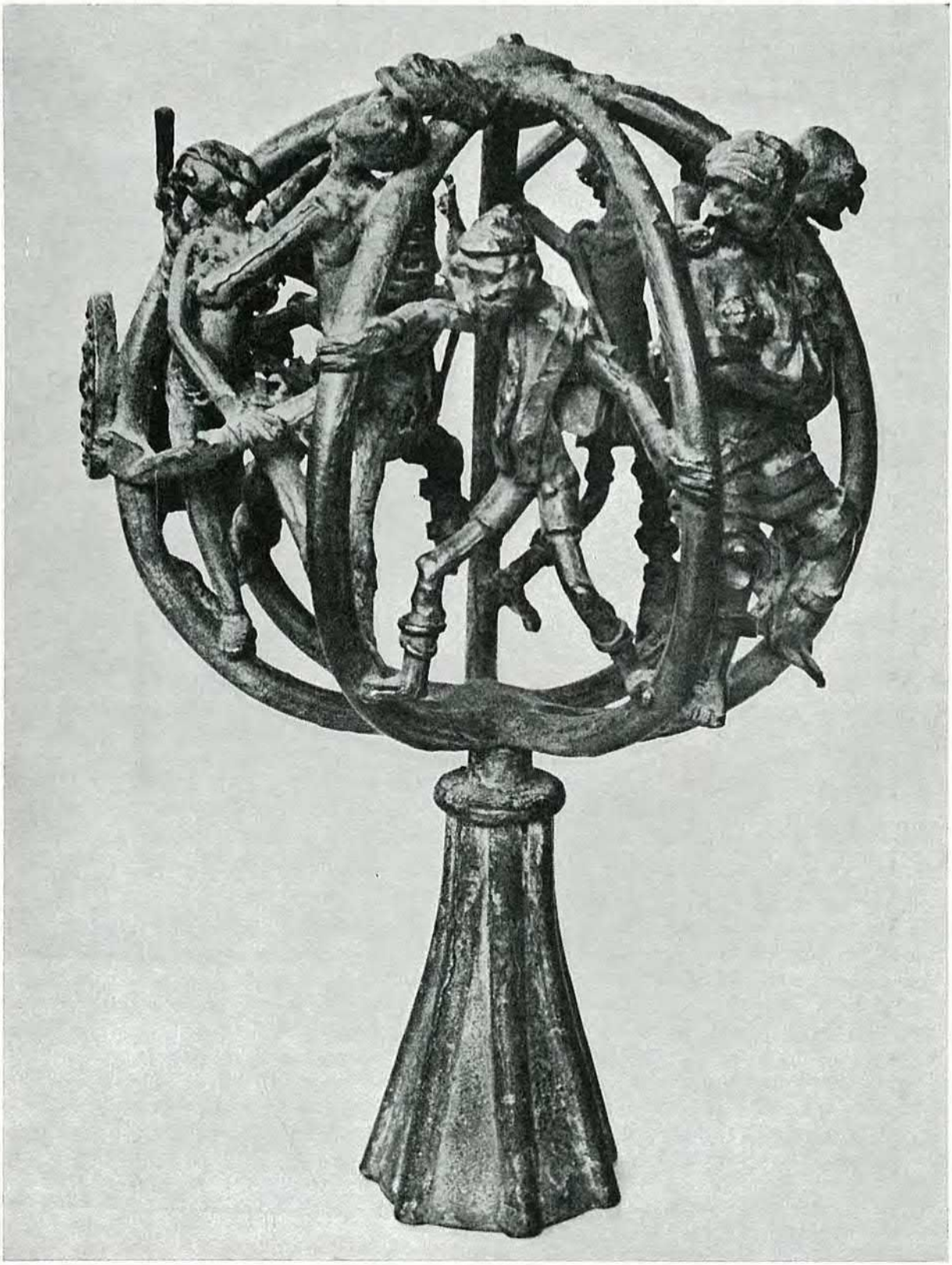
7 RIDE-A-COCK-HORSE. Bronze, 1968. 7 x 5 x 2¾in. Possession of the artist.

inhumanity; his comedy and tragedy—most of them are gently satirical and sometimes bawdy in a way Shakespeare would delight in. There are people climbing and running, fighting and loving, in and over and through these arcades and towers, arches and walls—calling to mind some madly gesticulating garland of humanity.

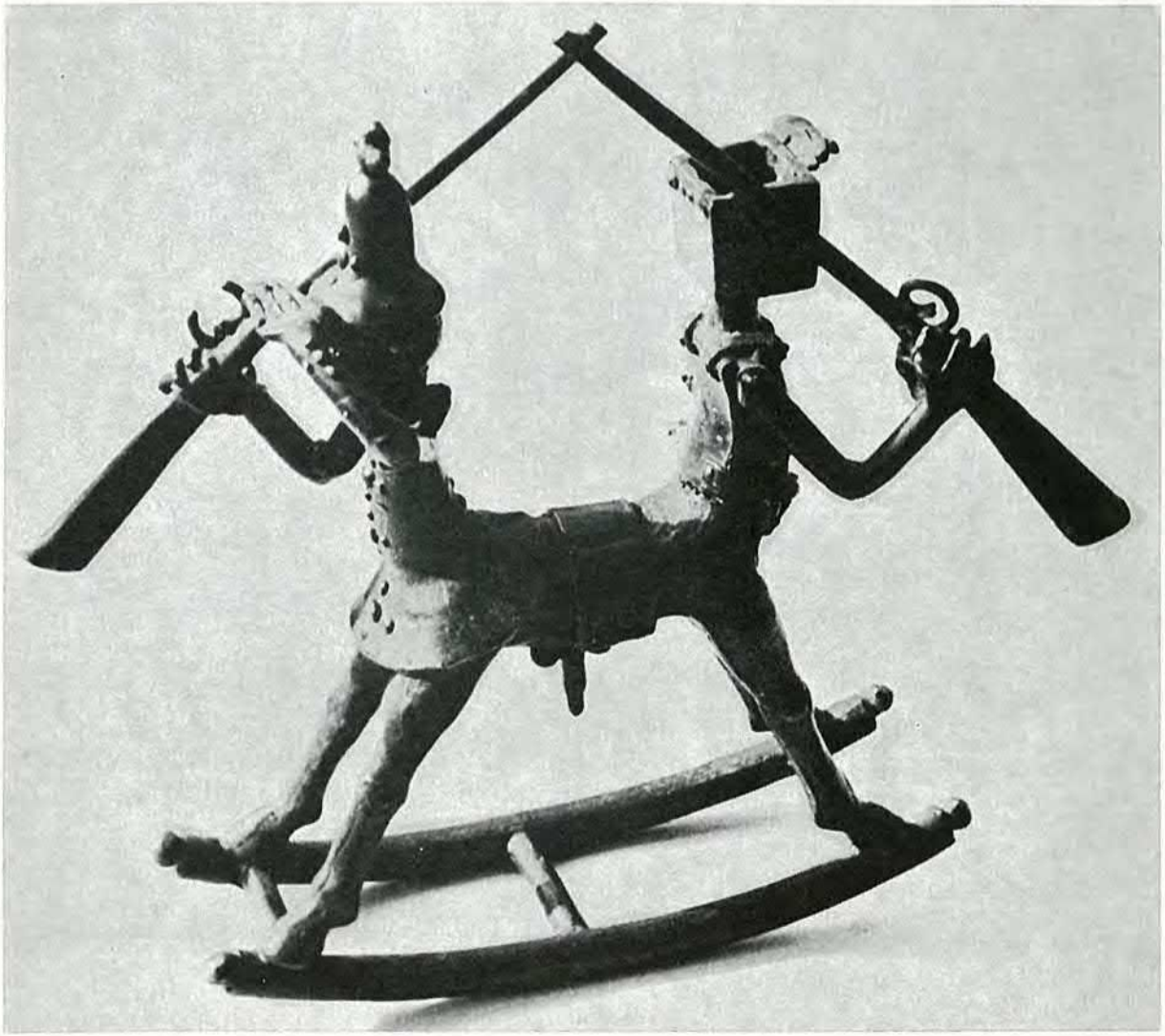
None of this is in the popular main-stream of avant-garde art. With Beadle it is now a matter of doing what he believes in and making what he wants to make. As far as he is concerned, any attempt on his part to produce 'main-stream' sculpture would be disastrous. He has had his excursions into abstract sculpture and is content now to leave these investigations into abstraction, as being part of his development.

So strong is Beadle's bent towards narrative and descriptive imagery, that amongst the bronzes are a few works based on the Australian Ned Kelly saga. For a long time he has been interested in the Kelly story, and the mythicizing work of Sidney Nolan in this area of Australian history and legend.

One of his creations is *Cooee* (pl 9), a very witty construction which forms a bronze rocking-horse. It is a kind of double centaur, with Kelly in his metal helmet at one end, hand shielding the sun from his eyes and vainly searching for the constable who, meanwhile, vainly searches at the other end. Back to back, with rifles across their shoulders, they rock away in a comical canter. It's the kind of buffoonery which has always been dear to the Australian sense of humour—especially when it comes



8 THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN. Bronze, 1968. 12 x 8in. diam. Art Gallery of New South Wales.



9 COOEE. Bronze, 1968. 8 x 8 x 2¼in. Owned by Mr Sidney Nolan.

to a spoof on law and authority. So by making the sculpture in this form, Beadle, who says he is a 'Pommie-Aussie-Kiwi with accent on the second syllable', has quite profoundly touched on a basic reason why the Kelly story has become entrenched in Australia's national folklore.

Finally, Paul Beadle's partiality to a circular composition in a number of his major bronzes is not merely a carry-through from coins and medals and the revolving stage of the theatre. (A sculptor can cast almost any shape in bronze). But rather, the circular arrangement is closely allied to his working methods. From a funnel-like sprue, the molten bronze falls down a column through the centre of the inverted work, and then feeds up through the wax leads to all wax parts of the sculpture. This in itself tends to encourage the adoption of a circular structure. But the artist is taking it a step further. He is interested in eventually pouring a complicated bronze then taking it out of its mould—completed.

In the *Seven Ages of Man* (pl 8), and the *Capital Sins and Cardinal Virtues* (pl 4), the sprue remains and becomes the supporting base for the sculpture. It is his aim to design a sculpture in such a way, that sprue, column and leads are all treated sculpturally and remain essential parts of the whole concept.

Photographs by Marti Friedlander.

Love plus Zero / no Limit

*

MARK YOUNG

I like to find
what's not found
at once, but lies

within something of another nature,
in repose, distinct.

DENISE LEVERTOV: *Pleasures*

IN one of Ralph Hotere's paintings we are shown a square which is not/a square. Is a diamond. In which there is a square. The painting is orange, but some parts are more orange than others. A green plastic strip is attached, in which there are numbers. 3 2 1—the countdown. The painting is ZERO. Or is it the square? Either way, it is where we take off from.

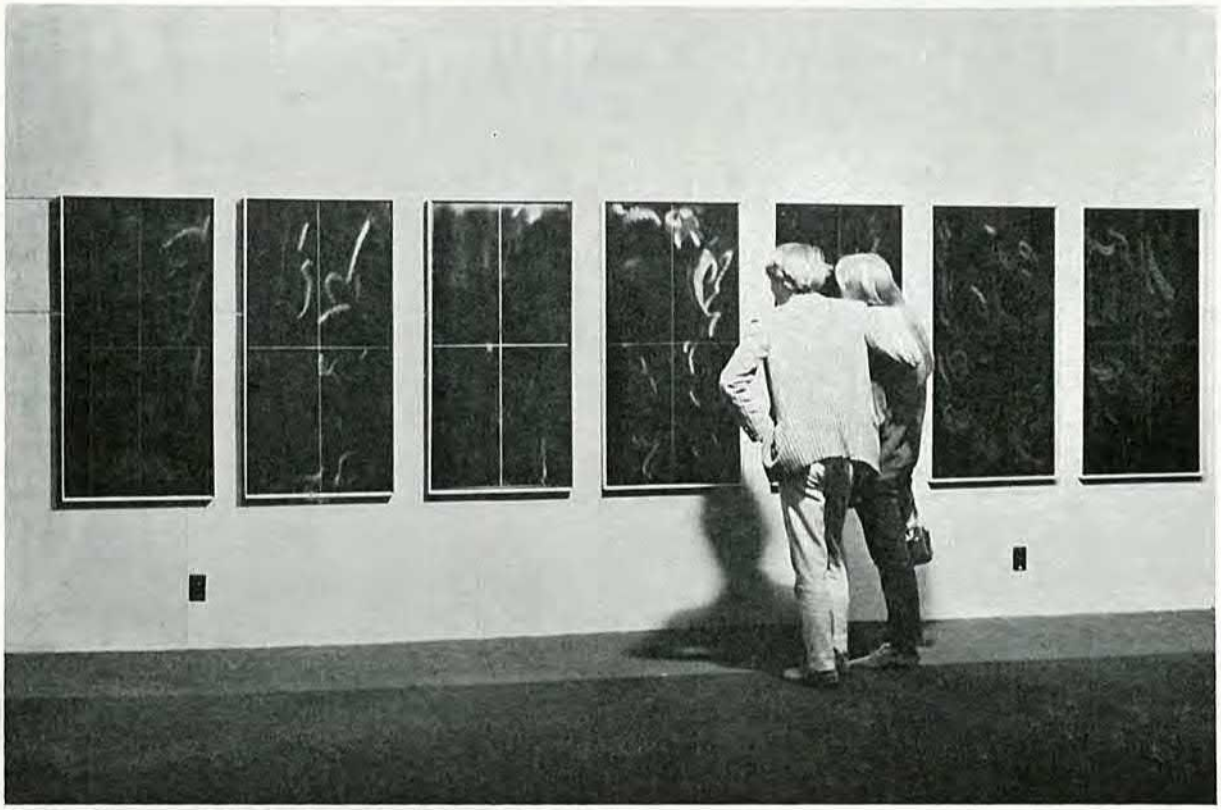
What is there is below the surface. & so we pass through, like Alice, like a Cocteau mirror, to a land in which everything is not as it seems. 'Buried within each painting and yet modulating across its surface is a conventional geometric pattern that must be sought after if it is to be properly seen, for each one is stated by means of an almost imperceptible change of colour or by a slight variation in texture.'*

But Hotere's is no Alice in Wonderland land for the White Rabbit & the Red Queen could never exist here. Hotere is too human, too compassionate, too caring for his fellow men; is concerned with the things we prefer to ignore—such as the international crises—because we are too concerned with ourselves. He is trying to teach us love, offering us a chance to progress by giving us what may be the first opportunity for our own betterment & self-discovery. 'The series ZERO' he writes, 'may be called an object of visual meditation, the essence of meditation being a personal discovery in a seeming void.'

The most obvious examples of his concern are to be found amongst the paintings done in Europe. From the catalogue to his exhibition at the Middlesborough Municipal Art Gallery in England:

'The Sangro River War Cemetery is on the Adriatic Coast of Italy, south of the still battle-scarred township of Ortona and the bustling city of Pescara. Here the New Zealand Division, including

*The Auckland Scene. Gordon H. Brown. *Ascent 1.*



Black Paintings, 1968. Each panel 48 x 24in.

the Maori Battalion, fought in one of the most bitter encounters of the Italian campaign in the winter of 1943. Among the hundreds of New Zealand servicemen's graves is that of the painter's brother. The *Sangro* series is not a sentimental or resentful statement—it is merely an expression of the utter futility at the wasteful destruction of the lives of young men.

'The *Polaris* series was painted at the height of the Cuba crisis in 1962. They speak for themselves.

'The *Algérie* series was painted during the O.A.S. crisis.'

Impersonal? Negative? Surely not. Yet these are the favourite catchwords that most local critics hang their reviews on. To make a painting one colour only is perhaps the most positive act a painter can do. To temper it with love is another firm gesture, for love is perhaps the most personal of all emotions.

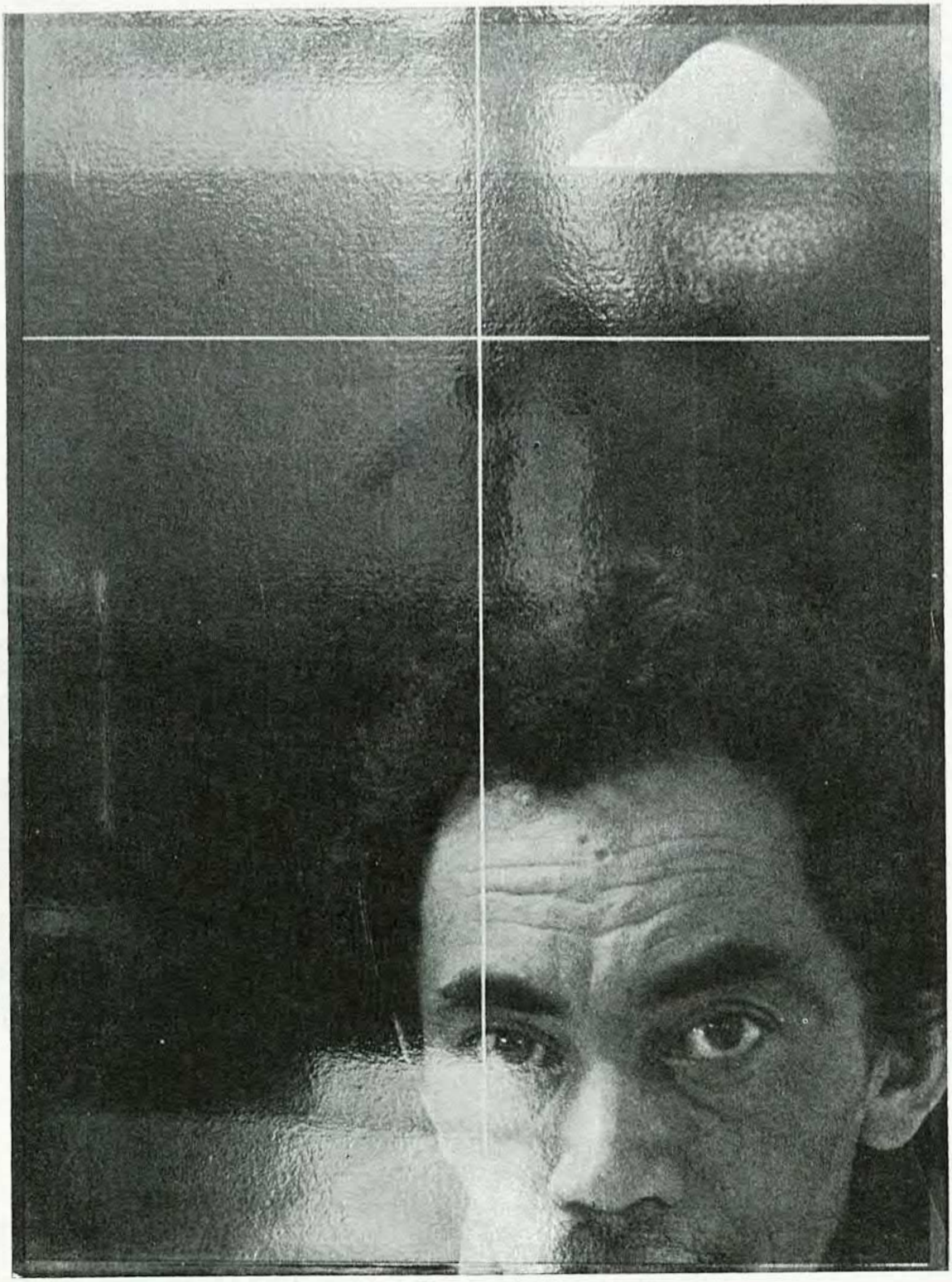
To go even further: in Hotere's BLACK PAINTINGS/68 exhibition, the submerged geometric patterns of the year before have given way to nebulous shapes that, as the viewer moves around the gallery, swirl & sway & assume new outlines beneath black surfaces that have incredible depth & on which have been painted a thin cruciform design that seems to float on top & whose colour varies from painting to painting.

What has already been quoted from the painter's introduction to ZERO can apply here too. But how can we catch hold of something that is forever moving? The zen master has set the koan. The answer lies in our hearts—that we let that something catch hold of us.

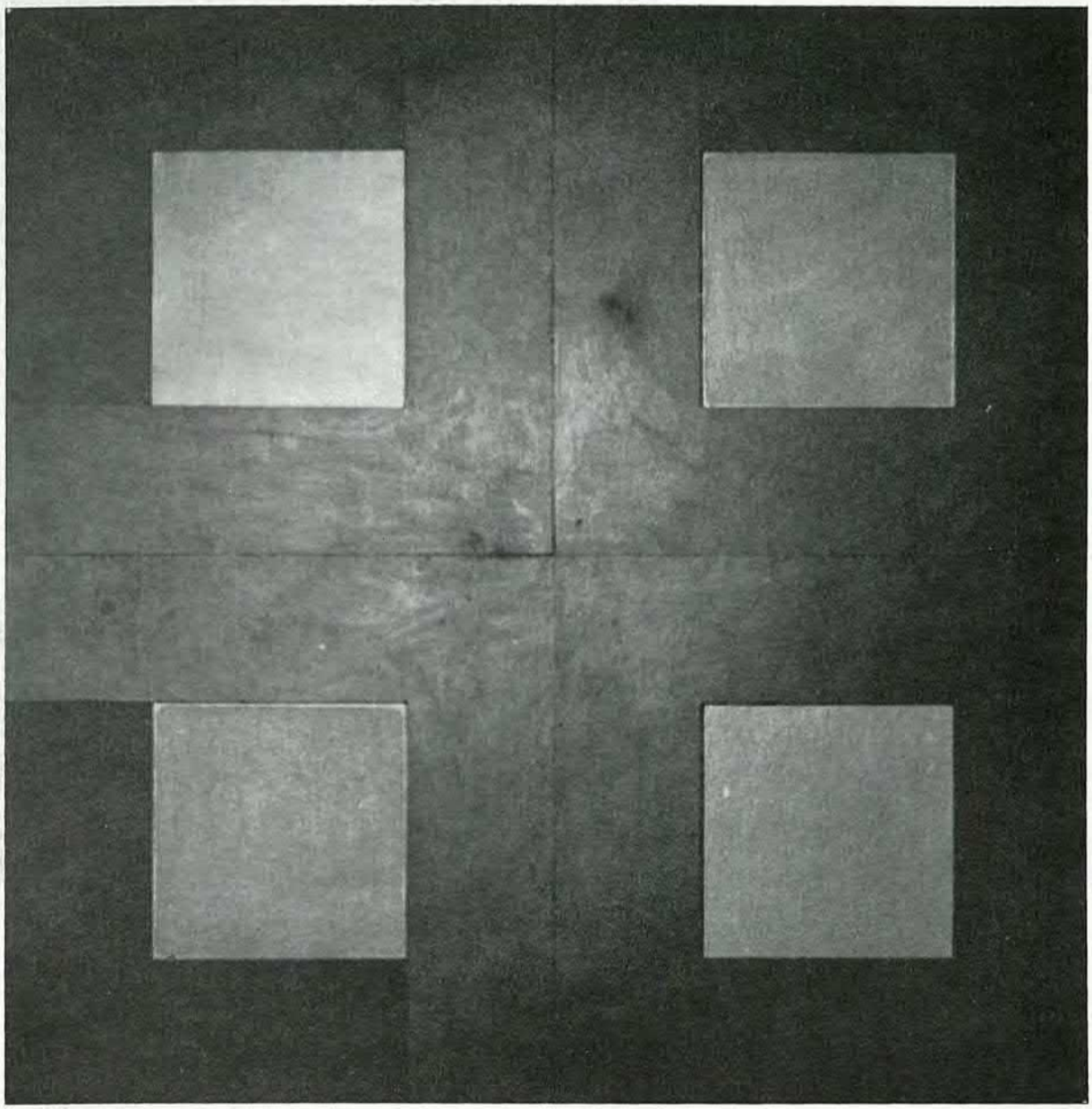
* * *

What should we say about the man? The facts, first, perhaps.

His life—that he was born somewhere in Northland in 1931 & now reminds me strongly of a pixie—something that brings immense joy to my Tolkien-loving heart. Awarded a New Zealand Federation of Art Societies Fellowship in 1961, taking him to England & Europe; sponsored by a



RALPH HOTERE

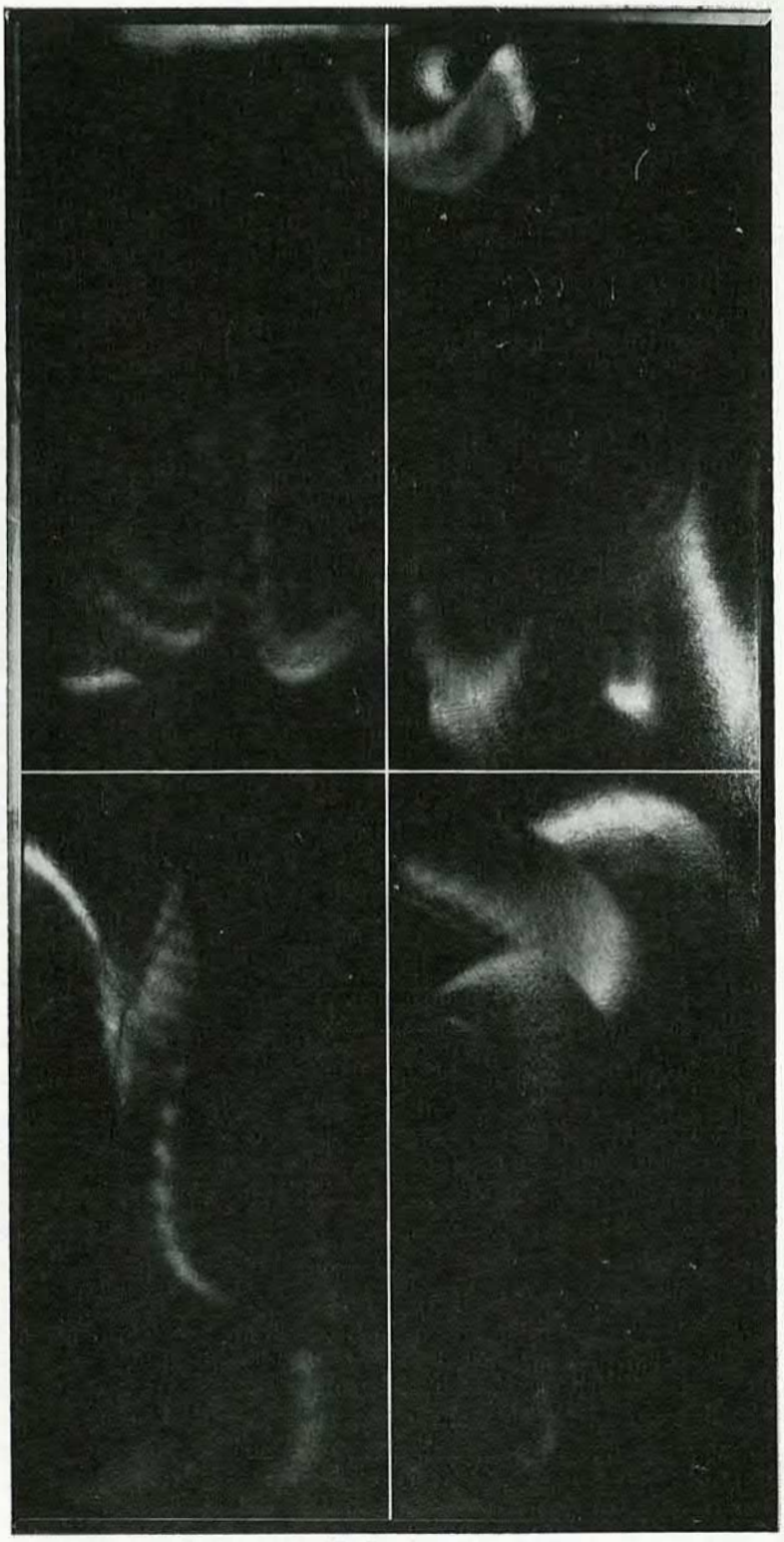


Black Painting (Human Rights Series). 48 x 48in.

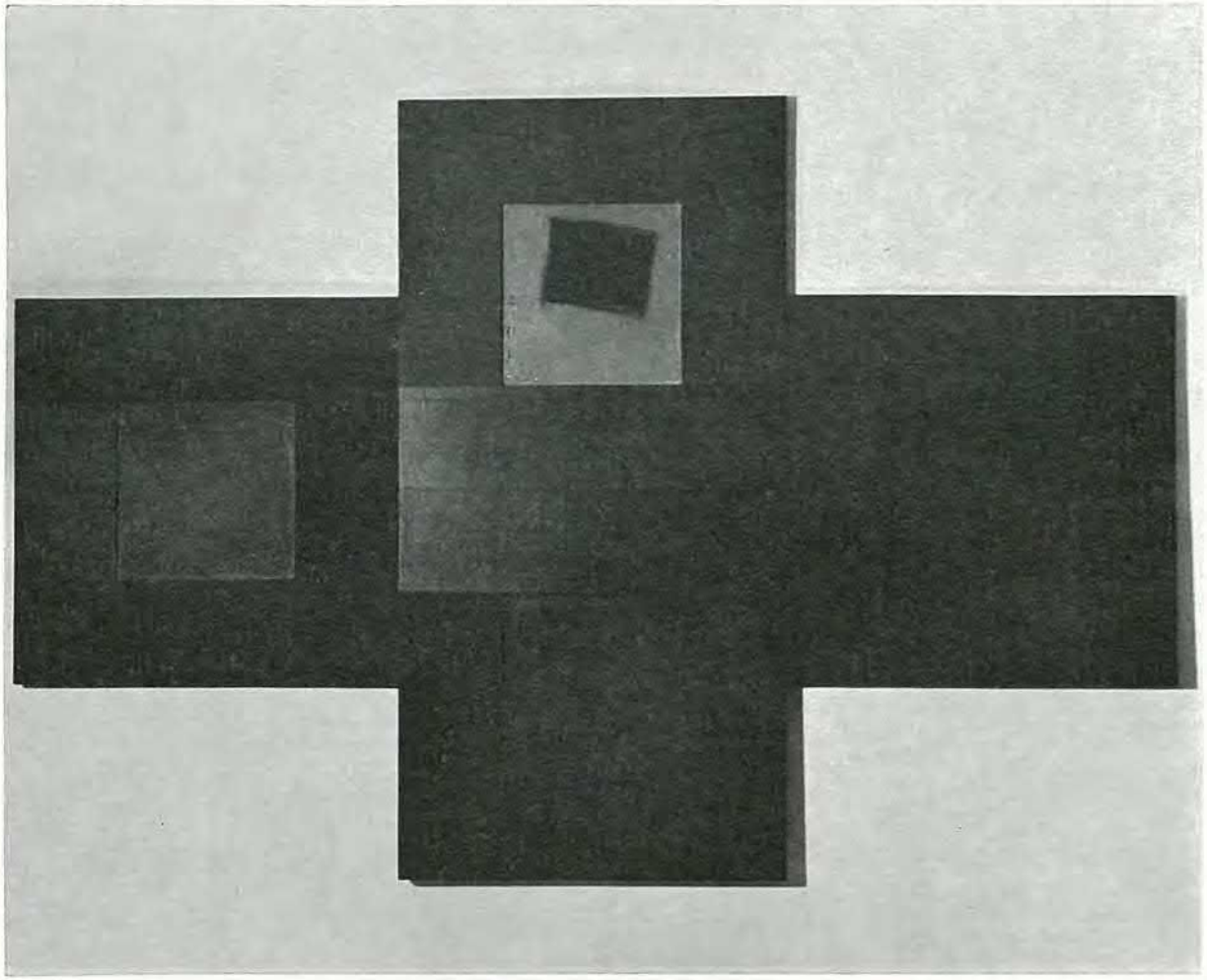
Karolyi International Fellowship in France & Italy 1962-63; returned to N.Z. in 1965 to resume his post as an arts & crafts advisor to the Education Dept, a position he will be leaving to take up his latest award —1969 Frances Hodgkins Fellow at Otago University.

Exhibitions: first one-man show at Dunedin Art Gallery in 1952; other one-man shows at Galérie Chandor, Tourottes sur Loup, France 1962; Middlesborough Municipal Art Gallery, England 1963; Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland, 1965; Dunedin Art Gallery, 1966; Barry Lett Galleries, 1967, 1968: participation in various group shows in England, France & N.Z. dates from 1958.

But the computer gives forth/no blood with its data. What shapes the vision is hand & eye, life &



Yellow on Black.



Cruciform II (Human Rights Series). 48 x 72in.

living, fragrance of flesh & essence of mind; & the cold catalogue gives few hints of the tastes contained in the flowers of a man's mind. It is better that one enters into the human situation.

So this afternoon we sit with the races on the bar radio behind us, only a few people here & even less paying attention to the excited droning that whips its way amongst the tables, winding around us, & around the affair in its first fumblings at the table next to ours. This couple, sitting apart from each other, who will entangle themselves briefly & incompletely, like glass-tube skeletons, for their dry words contain no possibility of future oneness & mutual joy. O to go up to them/& take their hands/& say: why waste yr time? Or show them instead this colour transparency of the spectrum ZERO, seven separate monochrome paintings, in front of which stand two youngchicks holding hands. Who, having been aware of themselves as one being for an eternity, have come to these paintings & in them & in themselves have truly found each other; & now their joy emanates & inscribes itself on this photographic recording of that precise moment. It is a joy that, like the paintings, is infinite; an eternal reverberation of warmth & light.

Things, not words. Photographs & paintings, not explanations. It is hard to write about a person you love & whose work moves you incredibly, to be analytical, to be historical & specific, to deal in tangibles, presenting your evidence like a defence counsel. The heart is not a courtroom, nor is that mute—apart from the instantaneous neon word YES —part of your mind that registers immediate awareness & recognition of your counterparts. Certainly I have taken notes, acting for part of the time like

some tired B-grade movie detective, but I have since discarded them & given up the rôle. I remember the four different settings we have so far been in this day, admit that only now can we talk freely to each other, here, in this bar, for it is the first time we have been on neutral ground, away from the stickiness of arenas of art, places of employment & the social life of another bar where the only known form of painter is one who deals with houses. There has been a hang-up for one or other of us in each of them, & the phony interviewer/subject rôles that I have inflicted have weighed guiltily on me. 'Now, Mr Hotere, what made you . . .' Tear yourself away, transport yourself back to his office, remembering it as one vast haphazard & incredible work, an environment. I would like once again to be overwhelmed by it, absorb it orally, intravenously, through the skin, through all apertures of sensation. The paintings there—started/stopped/brushed over/finished; being used as easels or bookshelves (& elsewhere as packing cases & paperweights); a black-painted desk whose texture achieves the same effect as the 'Human Rights' series of a few years ago. & even the blotter pad—also painted black but with blue corners. A ready-made Hotere. The room—it should be that instead of writings.

Plus the paintings.

The paintings that move with you.

The paintings on glass in which you are reflected.

The paintings that provoke anguish—*Sangro, Polaris, Algérie*—

& the paintings that provoke joy.

The room that is alive because it has been/

truly lived in. Experience.

Participation. Hotere's personal & singular view of the universalities that surround us, that constitute our being. That we all participate in. His vision & the offering of it. 'I have provided for the spectator a starting point . . .'

What is it Jean Genet says? 'Acts must be carried through to their completion. Whatever their point of departure, the end will be beautiful.'

OM MANI PADME HUM

The jewel
lies
in the lotus.

MARK YOUNG

After the Gallery

1

There isn't much I can remember of the paintings
except the painters. & the jazz
the same.

Only people. Not only the creators
but also those that swirl around beneath the paint,
behind the music. I watch them, night after night,
swirling, dreaming painters, the faces of them,
the musicians.

I carry them against my skin
as once I carried stolen apples or hid
a book that knew too much about my private world.
When I move, they swirl within my shirt
& I become the gallery, the Sunday
nights of jazz, the weekday exhibitions
displaying death & sorrow.

2

In all this,
how am I to act? Do I enter as a beggar
knowing only the hunger of the paintings, the
sadness of the music, the apposition of the artists
with myself?

Or am I meant to burst in
all bubbly, like, of course, champagne —
the air bubbles exploding, each one a
separate thought, another action, but all
contained complete within the bottle?

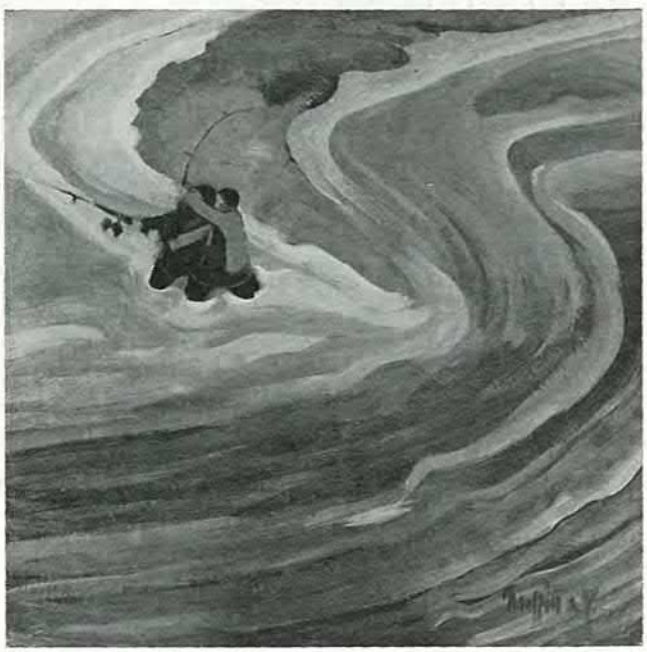
& who then
to teach me of the rhythms of the paintings?

IAN HUTSON. Lazarus. PVA, 1968. 41 x 47¾in.

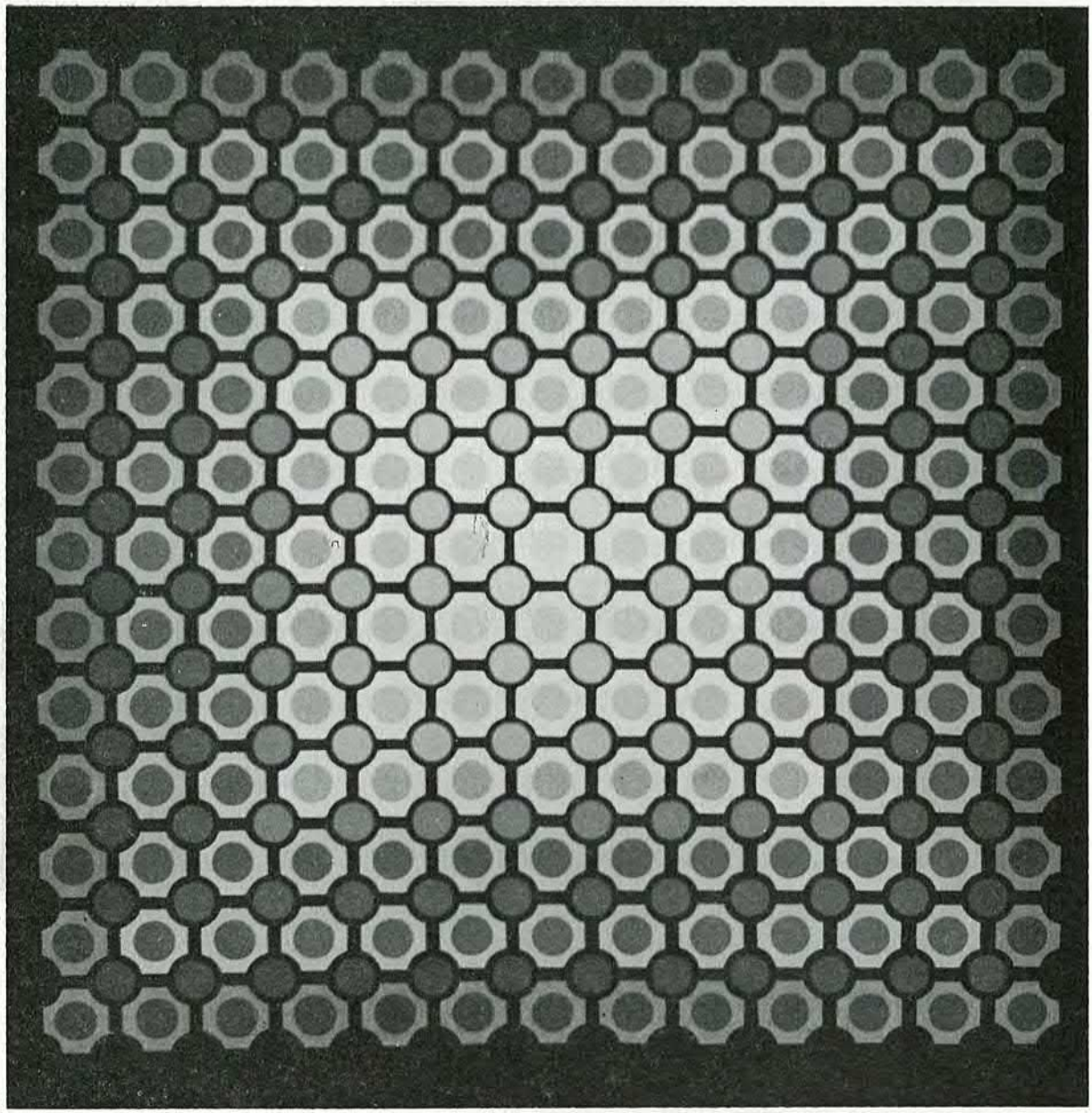
The Group Show, 1968

The paintings and sculpture reproduced in the following eight pages were exhibited in the 1968 Group exhibition.

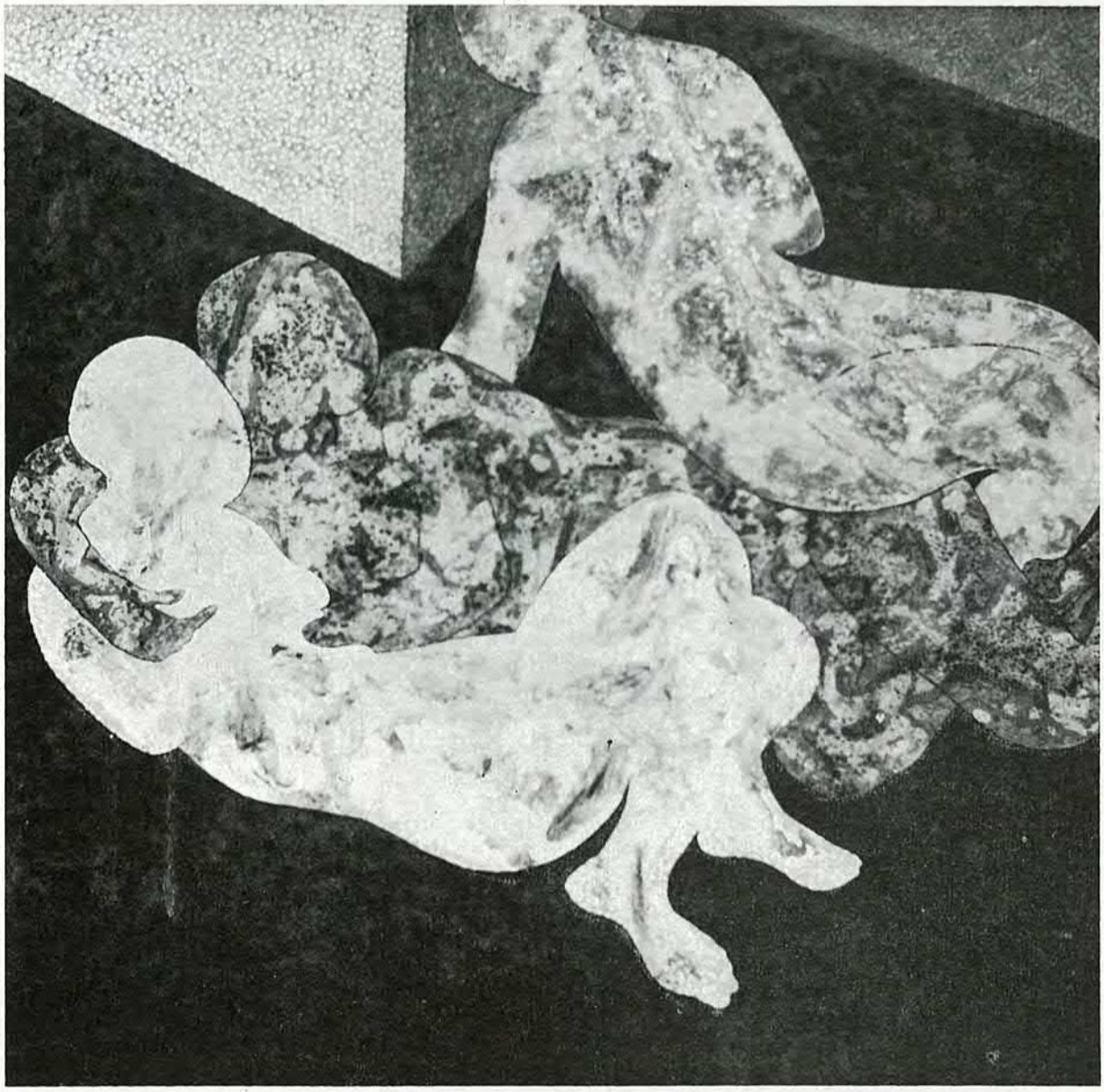
W. A. SUTTON. The Four Seasons.
Above: Autumn. Oil, 1968. 35⅝ x 96in.
Below: Winter. Oil, 1968. 35⅝ x 96in.



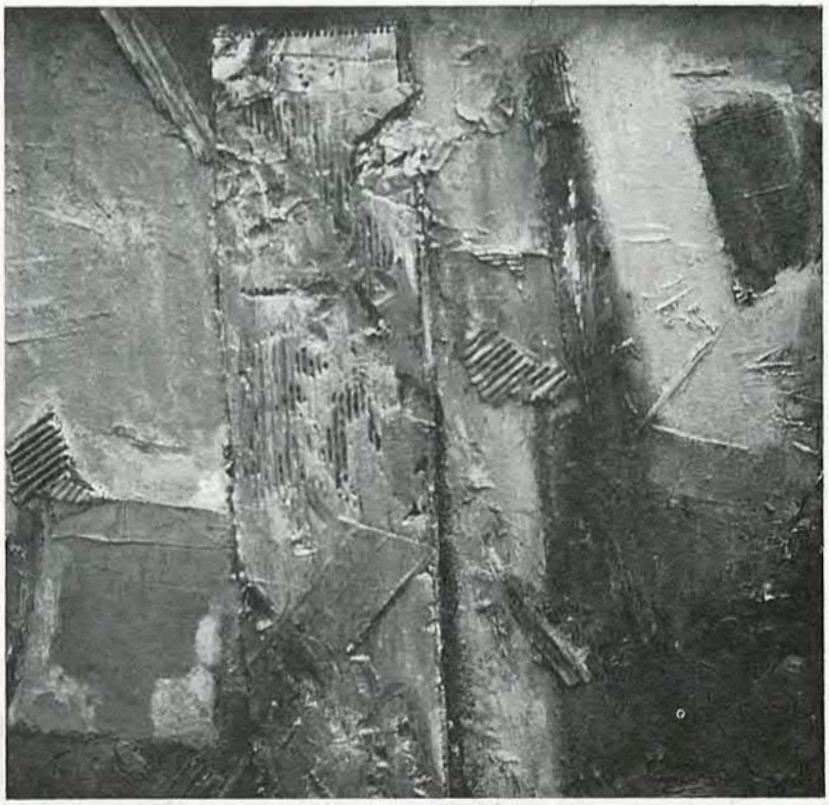
G. T. MOFFITT. The Big Fisherman, Series 1.
Oil, 1968. 35½ x 35½in.



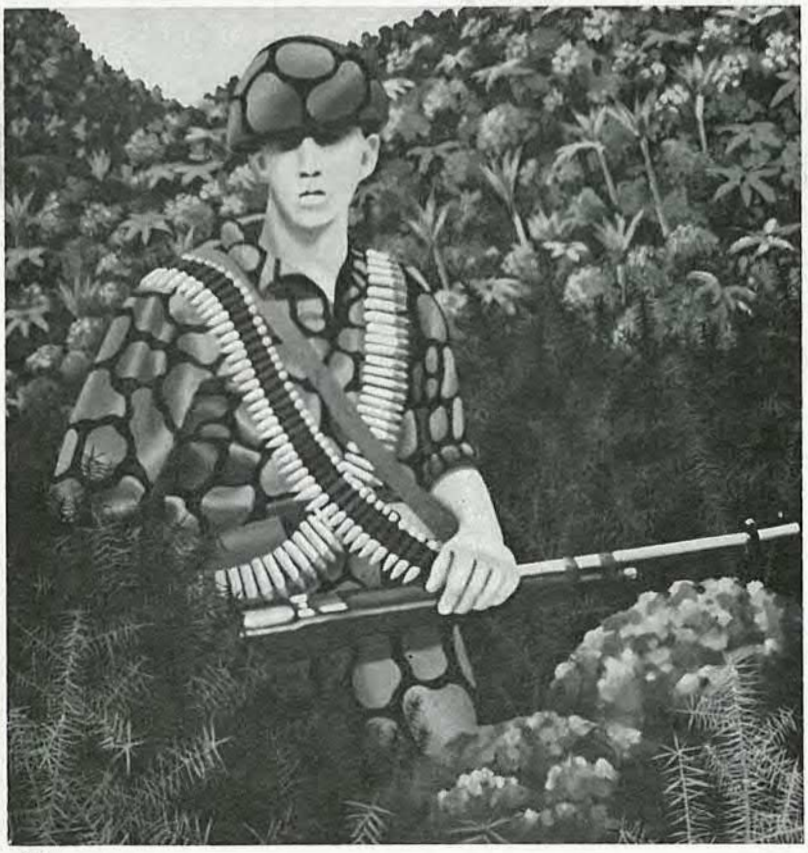
JOHN COLEY. Abacus X. Oil, 1968. 65 x 62in.



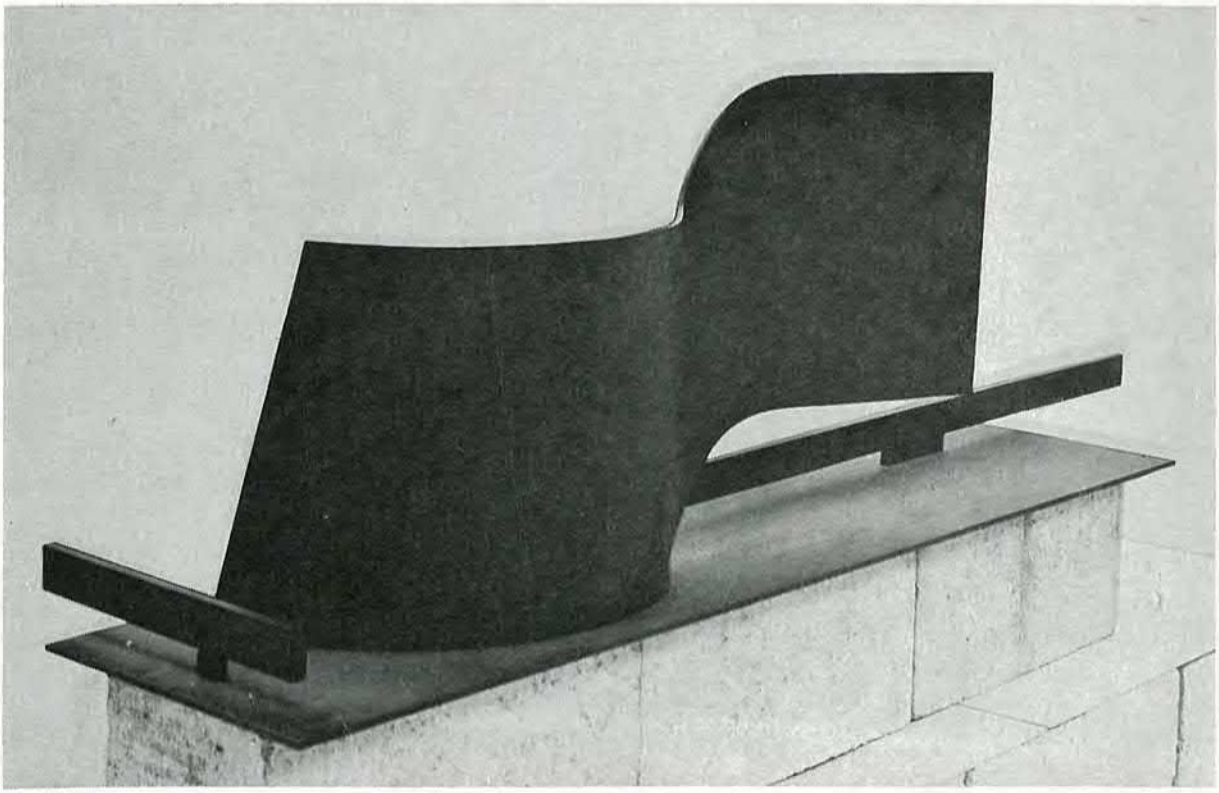
PATRICK HANLY. Love Scene, Molecular Aspect. Oil, 1968. $47\frac{1}{2}$ x $47\frac{3}{4}$in.



R. GOPAS. Red and Blue.
PVA, 1968. 36 x 38in.

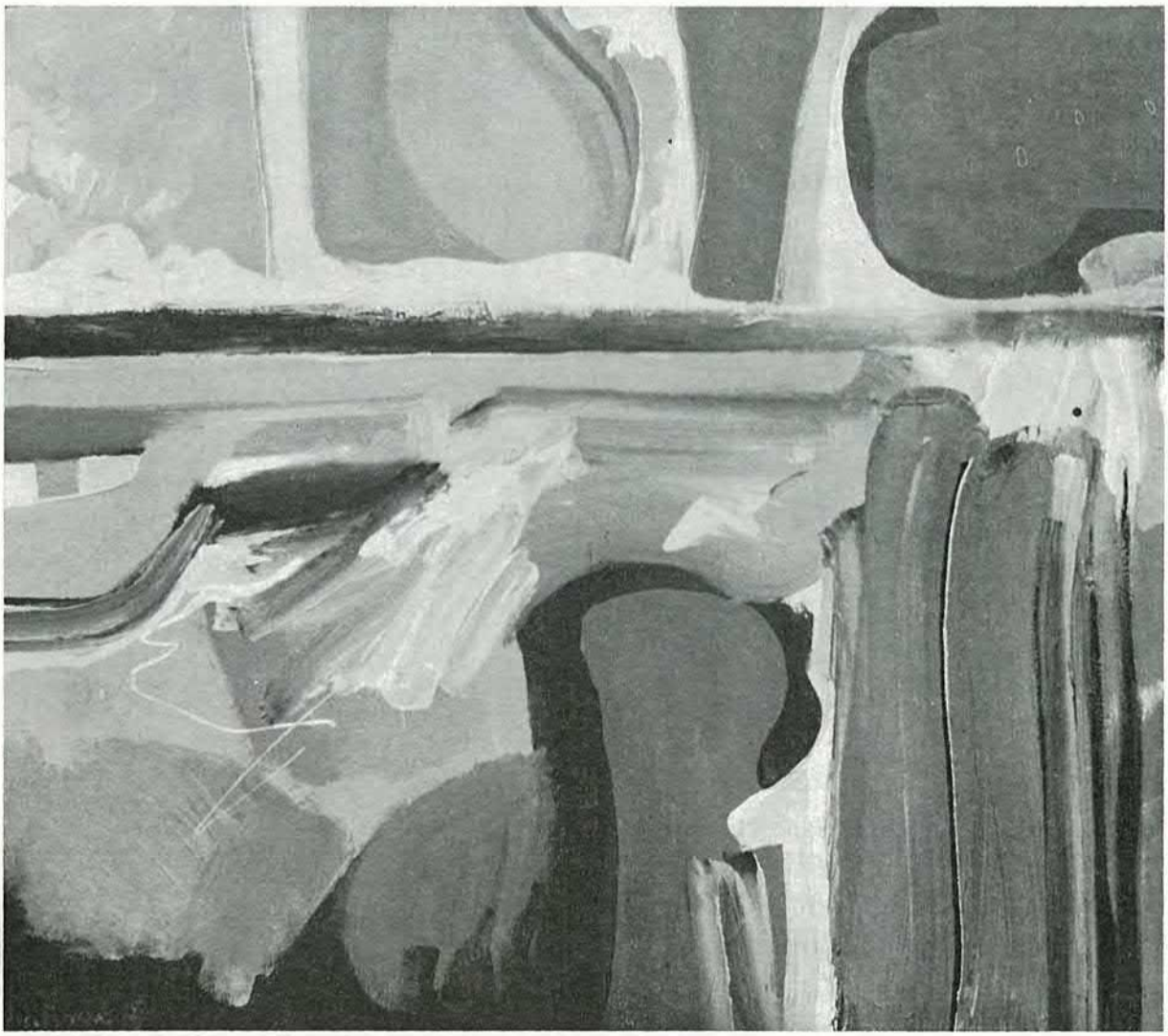


RICHARD KILLEEN. Soldier.
Oil, 1968. 40½ x 40½in.



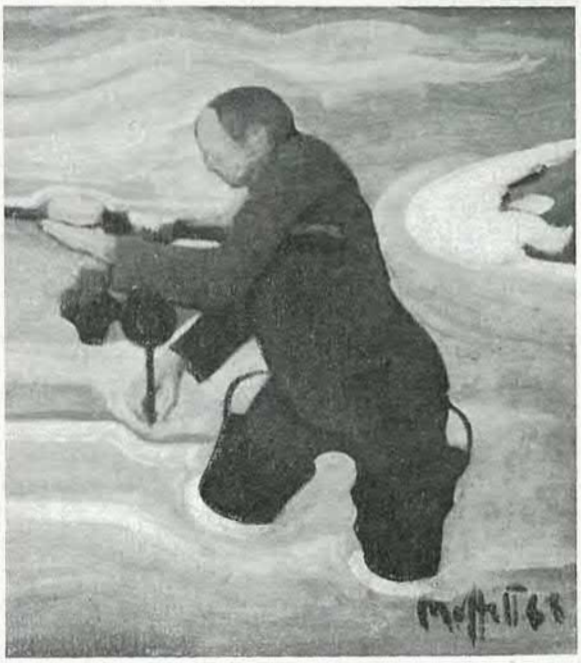
TOM TAYLOR. St. Ivo. Steel, 1968. Length, 4ft. 7in.; width, 12in.; height, 17in.

RIA BANCROFT. Dormition of the Virgin Mary. Coldcast Bronze, 1968. 24 x 16in.

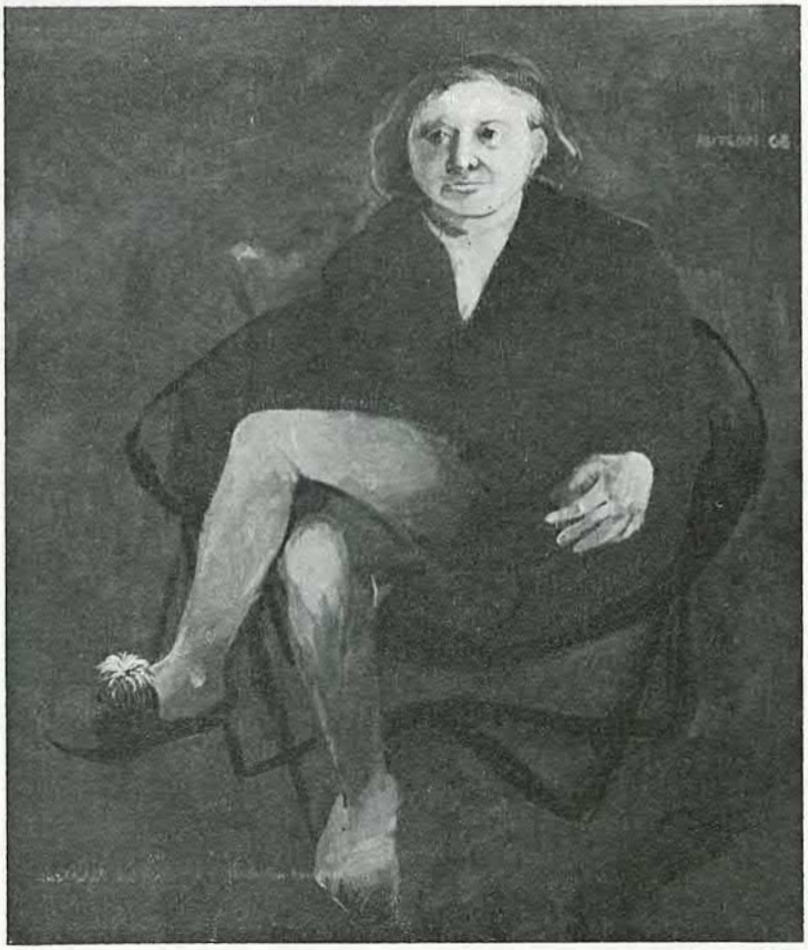


QUENTIN MACFARLANE. Marine—Three Stages. Acrylic, 1968. 35½ x 42in.

OLIVIA SPENCER BOWER.
Dark Girl. Watercolour, 1968.



G. T. MOFFITT. The Big Fisherman, Series 2. Oil, 1968. 23 x 22in.



IAN HUTSON. Red Chair, 1. PVA, 1968. 47¼ x 39in.

The Performing Arts in New Zealand

ASCENT, a Journal of the Arts in New Zealand, has been enthusiastically received not only in New Zealand but also overseas.

Originally this journal was intended to encompass all of the arts. Costs of production imposed restrictions and the first two issues, which appeared in 1968, were confined to the visual arts. Both issues were most readable and well endowed with illustrations.

It is most encouraging, therefore, to know that issue Number 3 of *Ascent* can include this supplement devoted to the performing arts. This development receives the wholehearted support of the Arts Council for it has long been felt that the arts in New Zealand would benefit from a permanent publication that would record what was happening and would present the case for a greater acceptance of the needs of the arts throughout the country.

The influence of this publication is not restricted to New Zealand. *Ascent* is now being read overseas and the Arts Council believes that by incorporating a supplement on the performing arts a better understanding of what this country is setting out to do can be had by those overseas countries that have economic and commercial links with New Zealand but which have not yet realized that links can also be established in the cultural area. This supplement is a beginning. More must appear for there are developments in theatre, ballet, opera, orchestral music and the visual arts which will be of particular interest to many people overseas. It is with this in view that the Arts Council is happy to be associated with the third issue of *Ascent* because the future of the arts in New Zealand will depend not only on the vigour of the response within this country but also on sympathetic understanding from overseas.

DAVID PETERS

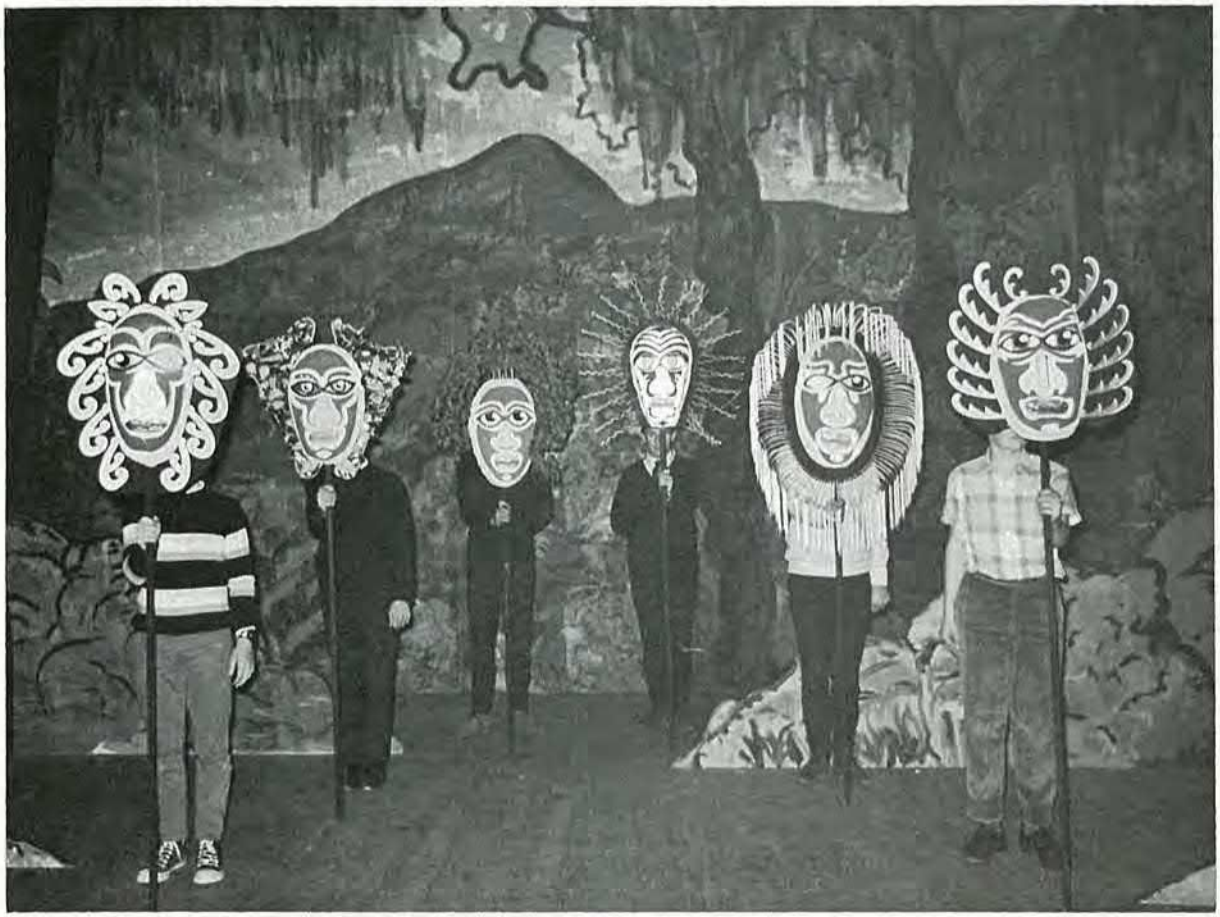
A scene from Jenny McLeod's 'Earth and Sky'. Ko nga Atua kei waenganui e Rangi me Papatuanuku. The Gods trapped between Heaven and Earth.

An Explosive Kind of Fashion

MERVYN CULL

AS a journalist who cut his critical teeth on amateur theatre in the provinces, I have a horror of anything amateur. It was engendered partly by those maids, butlers, prompts and women who made the tea at rehearsals who complained that their names had been omitted from the press notices; and partly by the dramatic desecrations of which I was an uncomfortable and unwilling witness.

So when it was suggested that I should go to Masterton to see *Earth and Sky* I found plenty of



From 'Earth and Sky'. Ko te haka a nga Atua. The dance of the Gods.

reasons for going elsewhere. I knew that the work had been written by a professional. But so had all those plays which had fallen without whimper before provincial amateur onslaught. In any case, one fact alone—that *Earth and Sky* was to be performed by school children—was enough to send me bolting for cover. From the première I was inconspicuously absent.

But then reports of the first performance came through. The audience, which included the Prime Minister, had given it a standing ovation; the newspaper critics were in ecstasies; and men at the centre of New Zealand arts, and whose opinions I respected, said it was the most thrilling thing they had seen for years. I went to the third performance.

As far as I know, no one has yet discovered, or invented, an apt definition for *Earth and Sky*. It is not drama, ballet or opera, but a little of all three. Singing, dancing, mime, narration and the music of an orchestra of mostly wind and percussion instruments combine to tell the story of the Creation according to Maori mythology. As performed by 250 school children in Masterton in September, 1968, it demonstrated to me the heights to which amateurs can rise when they have dedicated guidance and inspiring material to work with.

Earth and Sky is the work of Jenny McLeod, the 27-year-old Wellington composer who is a lecturer in the music department at Victoria University. From 1964 to 1966, as a bursar of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, she studied at the Paris Conservatoire in the classes of Olivier Messiaen, and in Cologne, taking the New Music course of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Henri Pousseur, Luciano Berio, Earle Brown and Michael Gielen.

It was from Cologne in January, 1966, that the Arts Council first heard of her interest in music for Maori mythology. 'I have in mind,' she wrote in an end-of-term report, 'a project which interests me very much—a work based on some of the Maori

The composer, Jenny McLeod, and Dobbs Franks, conductor.

poetry for the Creation, set in some kind of "explosive" fashion for choir and orchestra of strings, flutes, clarinets, trombones and percussion.'

Meanwhile, in New Zealand, the Wairarapa branch of the Educational Institute was searching for a work suitable for presentation by school children at the Wairarapa primary schools' annual festival of music. The idea of commissioning a composition had first been mooted at a branch meeting in 1965 after a successful presentation the previous year of Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde*.

It was the director of the Arts Council, David Peters, who drew the two threads together. In 1967, the council commissioned Jenny McLeod to compose the work now known as *Earth and Sky*. The terms of the commission required her to write a work the performance of which would involve, and lie within the competence of, 250 school children helped by adult amateurs. The key figures of the production were to be the best-qualified professionals available within the operating budget.

In the event, Dobbs Franks, the American who came to New Zealand in 1965 to conduct *Porgy and Bess* for the New Zealand Opera Company, was chosen as the conductor; Peter Tulloch, a school teacher who had had three years' experience with the Children's Art Theatre, the New Zealand Theatre Centre and the Southern Players, became the producer; and Jacqueline Burt, another Arts Council bursar, was appointed choreographer.

For the Masterton presentation, pupils from 10 Wairarapa schools took part. There were three main choirs of 50 voices each; an orchestral choir of about 20 voices; an orchestra of about 30 players, many of them children; and about 30 dancers.

The success was staggering and, as news of it spread, so did the demand for the presentation of *Earth and Sky* in centres far removed from Masterton. Early ripples of reaction reached Australia, where a company is now publishing the work. Up and down New Zealand individuals and organizations have been asking about performing rights. *Earth and Sky* would probably have been chosen as a New Zealand cultural contribution to Expo 70 in Osaka if the difficulty and expense of transferring it to Japan were more manageable.

Why was *Earth and Sky* so successful?

Certainly it is not the music alone. With a Stravinskyish flavour, and played predominantly on percussion instruments, it is not the type of music one whistles easily. Perhaps the major reason for the success is that the music, action and narration come in one impact—thrilling in combination but less than thrilling individually.

In addition, the work appeals to children, on whom depended the success of at least the Masterton performances. Those who took part willingly gave up their school holidays to rehearsals and, according to Peter Tulloch, worked harder at the rehearsals than they would have had to work at school.

So *Earth and Sky* owes much of its triumph to the fact that, in writing a work for performance by children, Jenny McLeod created something which genuinely appealed to them, no less than to the adults in the audience. Dobbs Franks compares it with *Alice in Wonderland*, in that it appeals to adults and children, but in different ways.

'The work,' he says, 'takes a beautiful legend, treats it seriously and allows two levels of appreciation to exist—in the minds of the child performers and in the minds of the adult listeners—and it calls on the imagination at both levels.'

Peter Tulloch attributes much of the success of the Masterton performances to the fact that the work is geared to children. Written for children and performed by them, with the help of adults sympathetic to them, *Earth and Sky* enabled an unusual degree of finesse to be attained in its presentation.

But while two of the professionals involved modestly lay most of the credit at the feet of a third, there can be no doubt that they, and Jacqueline Burt, are entitled to a good deal of it themselves. To extract the best from primary school children demands patience, tolerance and understanding in as generous

From 'Earth and Sky'. Hei whaka moe miti ki a Papatua nuku. In praise of Earth.

a measure as it demands competence in music, stage production and dancing.

In seeking to explain the triumph of *Earth and Sky* at Masterton, one must take into account the fact that all the professionals involved lived within two hours' drive of the town. Thus, they could spend longer periods at rehearsals, and attend more of them, than might have been possible if longer travelling distances had been involved. It is a point which others interested in staging *Earth and Sky*—particularly those working on restricted budgets—would do well to remember.

Moreover, the Masterton production enjoyed the benefits of a community spirit more easily found in a small centre than in a large. The people of Masterton and surrounding areas conceived the idea, backed it financially and fulfilled it artistically, and hardly anyone there today does not share the sense of pride in the community achievement.

A third point which others contemplating the production of *Earth and Sky* should take into account is that the work lends itself to infinite variation in the scale of its presentation. Masterton used 250 children; the thought of its being produced with a cast of, say, 2000 in an open-air setting sets my spine atingle; but it could prove equally as moving with a cast of a mere couple of dozen, provided that each of those players was sufficiently capable to survive the more concentrated scrutiny he would undergo from the audience.

Jenny McLeod's reaction to the success of *Earth and Sky* was primarily one of surprise. But it was also one of gratification that a personal experiment in the combination of several art forms had so appealed to the public that the concept would be worth exploring further.

Not that she has any intention at the moment of pursuing the idea. She is conscious of the danger that very early in her career she could to disadvantage easily become 'type cast'. For the same reason

she is not contemplating the adaptation to music and the stage of other Maori legends—although she concedes that her attitude is also influenced by the fact that there is no other Maori myth as splendid as that which she used for *Earth and Sky*.

At present, Jenny McLeod is content to allow her imagination free rein. She is toying with a whole range of theatrical ideas which she cheerfully admits 'would cost a fortune to put on'. She says: 'I particularly like the idea of several arts being combined in one work. The trouble is that, if one is to pursue this line, one must be thoroughly familiar with several art forms so that one can create for each of them, and combine them, with confidence.

'It would be wonderful if there were a place where one could gain an all-round training in all the arts, but there is none. Without such an education one may become sufficiently competent in one's own particular field to steer clear of clichés but hesitate to venture into other arts where one's knowledge is inadequate to avoid them.'

In the New Zealand arts, *Earth and Sky* is something of a phenomenon. By its exploitation of available talent in a blending of the amateur and the professional, it is uniquely suited to our circumstances. As a work of artistic expression, it is about as indigenous as any could be, for it was written by a New Zealander, using a Maori theme, to fulfil a completely indigenous purpose. Yet here, too, appropriately, is the European cultural heritage—that wealth from which Jenny McLeod has drawn during her studies in New Zealand and overseas.

Could any work epitomize more effectively and more happily New Zealand culture at its present stage of development?

From 'Earth and Sky'. Kua kitea te Wahine e Tane. Tane discovers Woman.

Government and the Arts: the next Ten Years and Beyond

(This article is based on a paper presented to Victoria University, Wellington in April 1966)

FRED TURNOVSKY

A YEAR or so ago an article by Marghanita Laski appeared in the English *Listener*, in which this well-known English writer and critic questioned whether public money should be spent on art. In this article, Miss Laski argues, surprisingly, that it should not.

'Until a few months ago,' she writes, 'I should not have thought it possible that I could question the rightness of spending public money on the arts.' The question, incidentally, was prompted by a comment by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham in the course of a television interview which apparently irritated Miss Laski greatly, but is rather irrelevant to this discussion. Marghanita Laski goes on to ask: 'Why do you think it is such an undoubted good for people to like art that you are prepared to treat the providing of it as being as unassailably right as the providing of religion?

'If we can say,' she goes on, 'that the response to art is one of the order of religious responses, that the experience of art, like religious experience, makes people feel better in fundamentally important ways—not just happy, or excited, or relaxed as they may be by the Beatles or dance halls, but consoled, renewed, strengthened, purified, more creative, even more noble—then we can justify art . . . But we have not yet reached sufficient justification for spending public money on art, because we still have to ask ourselves whether art can fulfil this function for most people. At the moment demonstrably it does not. If it did, one might add, then the galleries would be more crowded than our churches, and of this there is evidence only to the contrary.'

So there we are. The proposition that the use of public money for the promotion of art is justified, if

that art approaches 'the order of religious responses', but not, if it merely contains qualities of 'happiness, excitement or relaxation', is a curious one, and calls for examination. And since Miss Laski is a person of eminence in the literary world, one cannot easily dismiss her outburst as an aberration committed under provocation. Her arguments have the familiar ring of the philistine attitude towards the arts, one to which we have been, and are still, highly susceptible in New Zealand.

It is less than fifteen years since the National Orchestra was on the brink of dissolution precisely because of the clamour, by the Press and in Parliament, demanding that those who like their music should pay for it, and not expect the taxpayer to find the money in order to gratify their whims. It is the inviolability of ratepayers' money for purposes other than to care for our bodily needs, such as sewerage at their grossest, and parks and playing fields at their best, that has made our local bodies almost impervious to the needs of the arts as a community activity, and has left the housing of the arts —let alone their re-housing which has been tackled with such gusto in Britain recently—in a state of almost complete suspense.

Before I can therefore attempt to forecast the relationship between government and art ten years hence and beyond, it is necessary first to examine the nature of this relationship, and to determine whether government has any business to concern itself with art at all.

It is easy to dispose of Marghanita Laski's arbitrary values according to which she places happiness, excitement and relaxation into a lower category of human responses by the simple device of associating them with the Beatles, as distinct from those of a higher order, such as consolation, renewal, purification which she associates with desirable religious responses and thus unassailably right. One has to be a dyed-in-the-wool puritan to regard the pursuit of happiness, excitement and relaxation as inconsistent with the highest human motivations.

Yet it is not too far-fetched to link art with religion; some people not in the least religious in the conventional sense respond to art in a manner akin to religious feeling, without even knowing. But where does this lead us? I suggest the evaluation of art in terms of religious responses is the least valid argument why the state should, or should not, subsidize art.

More important is to consider the changing pattern of the patronage of the arts. Much has been said and written about the emergence of a mass culture in a modern democratic society, about the people's right to culture. If we mean thereby that we are promoting the arts so that their enjoyment becomes available to the majority of our population, provided it desires to avail itself of the opportunity, we may well be on the road to success. If, on the other hand, we aim to secure the participation of the masses in the pursuit of the arts, we in New Zealand are still a long way from attaining this objective. But not only in New Zealand; statistics from European countries which traditionally take their arts much more seriously than we do, show that the involvement in the arts is restricted to a small percentage of the population indeed. The most that we can claim is that we, along with the whole civilized world, promote a mass-supported culture, mass-supported that is, because it is, by some form of public consent, paid for by user and non-user alike, but nevertheless is, and is likely to remain, a minority interest.

The point is—does this really matter? And a further point is that all I have said so far is true of art, but has no relevance to entertainment. Nothing is as elusive as a definition of art, and I am not going to attempt it. There is a distinction between art and entertainment in the rather loose sense in which we use these terms nowadays. What exactly do we mean when we juxtapose the two? Good art can be good entertainment, and equally, good entertainment can be good art. But the word entertainment has assumed a cheap meaning of something appealing to our low senses, as though being entertained were something we should apologize for. On the other hand, art is invested with the rather forbidding connotation of an activity that is good for our soul, rather than for our senses, one that promotes purification rather than happiness, one that consoles rather than relaxes. This awestruck puritanical attitude to the arts would have met with ridicule in the lustier days of Virgil and Ovid, of Chaucer, Boccaccio and Rabelais. Indeed, art through the ages has always made its appeal through the senses to man's inner being.

The artificial distinction between art and entertainment goes back less than a century, and expresses a social and economic phenomenon inherent in our bourgeois society. When we speak of entertainment and entertainers we think of people making lots of money by amusing us, and whilst we admire and respect their acumen in exploiting commercially our need for amusement, and indeed tend to lionize them because of their success, we express our resentment

of this commercial exploitation, to which we subject ourselves voluntarily, by placing their offering low in our estimation.

Equally, we associate art and artists with life in the garret, with impecunity and commercial failure, and because of this signal lack of profitability, and the corresponding absence of commercial motivation, we treat the pursuit of art, like poverty, as a blessed state of virtue with an admixture of ill-disguised contempt. Our responses to art, as indeed to most of our activities are conditioned by the commercialized world in which we live.

In actual fact, this artificial distinction between entertainment and art is not altogether warranted, because there are some great artists—writers, painters and musicians—who have been successful in amassing considerable fortunes during their lifetime. They are the exception and have beaten the barrier that separates art from profit. It is typical of our attitudes that we avoid thinking of the pecuniary success of these artistic giants for fear of committing an act of irreverence.

It is worth contemplating that entertainment for profit is a relatively recent phenomenon, and probably doesn't go back much further than the turn of this century. Up to the time of the industrial revolution and the advent of capitalism, self-supporting art was almost unknown. Somebody always paid the piper, and usually it was someone in authority. From the time of the great Egyptian artifacts, through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, right up to the industrial revolution, art was commissioned by the church, by kings, by princes and princelings, by an emergent merchant class. Art was always the concern of a minority.

The history of the professional artist goes as far back as the history of civilization. He was always a dependent person, dependent on patronage, and his livelihood was only as secure as his position in the entourage of his patrons. We can imagine the restraints this position of dependence imposed upon the artist's freedom of artistic creation; how mightily the pressures to conform bore upon him. Although the innovations of some artists of genius eluded the vigilance of their employers, major changes of style and conception coincided with periods of major political and social change—the Renaissance, Reformation, wars.

Art ran its course until the breaking up of feudalism, the emergence of a bourgeois society, and with it the disappearance of a clearly identifiable source of patronage. The new capitalist had brought to his position of pre-eminence no love of art, no tradition of sponsorship. He had not yet discovered the status symbols inherent in the patronage of art. If profit was the measuring rod of the successful business man, why not also that of a successful artist—an attitude that persists to the present day.

For the first time in history the artist found himself left out in the cold, without visible means of patronage and support. To trace the profound influence this loss of economic security, and its corollary, the freedom from subservience to conventional taste, had on artistic creation during the 19th and the beginning of the present century, would make a fascinating subject of a separate study. Let me here merely exemplify the quickening pace of artistic innovation by drawing attention to the quick succession of impressionism, expressionism, cubism in painting, and atonalism and the twelve tone system in music. These are creations of artists answerable to no-one but themselves, free to do as they pleased, because there was no-one with whom to bargain this freedom in return for economic security. And, I venture to say, these were expressions of a revolt against a society which, if it did not support and recognize the genius of art, should at least be shocked by it.

I have tried so far to establish three points: First, that art has always, with the exception of a brief period of the recent past, been patronized, promoted and subsidized by authority by the use, in the main, of public funds. Secondly, in referring to art, as distinct from entertainment, and without passing judgment on the merits of either, we confine ourselves to a field of expression which cannot possibly be financially self-supporting and needs patronage in order to be socially meaningful. Thirdly, I have tried to trace the fundamental changes in attitudes inherent in the progression from a readily identifiable, personal or group patronage up to the time of the industrial revolution, through a period of unsympathetic non-patronage of the last century, to the present collective, amorphous sponsorship of the arts in a democratic society, culminating in New Zealand in the establishment by the state of a statutory authority, the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

State support for the arts in New Zealand is not new. Where it conveniently fitted into the pattern of education, it became part of the educational system. The Workers' Educational Association leading to the establishment of the Community Arts Services is an example. Where it became part of the function of broadcasting, the greatest mass medium of entertainment in our time, art patronage goes back to the

New Zealand Opera Company. 'L'Elisir d'Amore', 1967.

New Zealand Opera Company. Kiang Hwa as Madame Butterfly, 1968.

establishment of the first radio station. The foundation of the National Symphony Orchestra in 1946 was, and remains to this day, the largest single commitment to the promotion of art entered into by any agency of the state at any time. Today, the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation is by far the largest and most affluent patron of art in New Zealand and will remain so for the time being. Its expenditure on art by maintaining a symphony orchestra, and by the payment for radio and television programmes of artistic quality by far exceeds the funds available to the Arts Council for distribution.

The Broadcasting Corporation's activities are, in the main, related to its functions as an agency to provide programme material for radio and television, and to include public performances of orchestral concerts and music. There was a time when the function of the then National Broadcasting Service was conceived to embrace the creation of a conservatorium of music, an idea long since buried; we are still left lamenting the absence of any major development in the professional training for a musical career. The attitude of the Broadcasting Corporation has tended to harden against any further expansion of its activities outside strictly broadcasting responsibilities, understandably in view of the setting up of an Arts Council whose statutory obligation is the fostering of the arts in the broadest sense.

A few words about the background of the Arts Council's formation.

Outside the educational and broadcasting field there was no systematic subsidization of the arts prior to 1960. True, study bursaries and subsidies for some artistic enterprises were granted by the Minister of Internal Affairs out of Art Union Funds for many years, but there was no attempt made to relate grants to a stated policy. Two events prompted government in 1960 to regularize the making of grants; the New Zealand Players folded up and despite substantial ministerial grants-in-aid, could not be saved, and the New Zealand Opera Company entered the scene as a vigorous artistic force needing regular financial assistance. In his budget speech, the then Minister of Finance, Mr Nordmeyer, announced the setting up of an Arts Advisory Council to advise the Minister of Internal Affairs on the disbursement of a fund consisting of $60,000 provided out of consolidated revenue, and $60,000 from Art Union profits.

An important principle had thus become established: by setting aside even a modest sum of tax from revenue, the state acknowledged, for the first time in New Zealand, a direct responsibility for the welfare, promotion and subsidizing of the arts, outside education and broadcasting.

The Arts Advisory Council was replaced by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, established by Act of Parliament in 1964. The Arts Council's responsibilities are very wide indeed. Every facet of the arts comes under its purview, except literature which remains under the care of a separate advisory committee. Theatre, opera, ballet, music, the visual arts, museums and art galleries, training and travel awards, all these come within its scope. Its mandate could hardly be wider.

One can agree or disagree with present Arts Council policy, but the future will tell whether it is doing a good job. The progress of the arts in New Zealand during the next ten years and beyond will be determined by the pace the Arts Council sets now and associated with this, by the determination of its priorities. A long-term plan should be based on a close study of sociological and economic trends, and on an assessment of the artistic potential within the community, both to give creatively and to respond. There is a need to grapple with glaring shortcomings, and to plan how to overcome them.

An Arts Council is often criticized for what it does, rarely for what it omits to do. Yet I believe, it is its omissions, as much as its actions, that spell success or failure. An Arts Council should recognize the capabilities and ambitions of the men and women active in the arts and should lead, rather than be pushed. In order to succeed the Arts Council needs the goodwill and co-operation of the multitude of professional and volunteer workers in the field, as much as the latter need help from the Arts Council.

I said earlier that the Arts Council is the spokesman of the collective, amorphous patronage of our society. This places it in a position of special responsibility towards artistic creation. Whereas the typically autocratic patron of the past exercised the right to choose what art he liked, and to reject what he didn't like, the Arts Council, acting, as it does, on behalf of a conglomerate of people, is faced with great difficulties. Who is it to take notice of? The majority or the minority? Writers of letters to the papers or art critics? It will do better by taking risks rather than by playing safe, by being venturesome rather than conservative, by looking into the future rather than into the past.

The arts need leadership to set both the pace and the direction, not as part of a Machiavellian plot

to ram culture down the throat of an unwilling public, but in order to make the arts accessible to the widest possible public.

Nobody can say that the funds available to the three agencies—education, broadcasting and Arts Council—are inconsiderable, yet they are not generous enough. We should be on the threshold of big things, but are too slow getting there. Too many art galleries house indifferent collections. Where are the benefactors who gave Melbourne its choice collection of great paintings? Our galleries are crying out for acquisitions that will make a dramatic impact on our communities, lift them out of their apathy and give them a feeling of pride in their art collections, if for no other reason than to show them off to tourists whom we hope to attract in ever-growing numbers. The Metropolitan Museum in New York registered an increase in attendances by forty per cent following the acquisition of a Rembrandt for $2,300,000. Call it sensationalism, commercialism, snobbery if you like, but the result is a growing awareness of art. Something much more modest than this Rembrandt would serve our needs.

We derive satisfaction from developing professional opera, ballet, drama, but whenever figures are published giving details of the modest subsidies to our professional companies, there are always those who rush into the papers suspecting gross profligacy in what is in fact a shoestring operation. Let's face it, we are worried by this kind of public criticism, and with good reason. If you took a public opinion poll whether too much money is being spent on the arts, my guess is that the answer would be in the affirmative. If my guess is right, it cannot be a question of the Arts Council keeping in step with public opinion; it is bound to assume the burden of leadership, if it intends to live up to its responsibilities.

I could cite many more examples to show that we tend to adopt an essentially parsimonious and makeshift attitude towards the arts. Take the quite inadequate training facilities for artists, particularly for musicians and those training for the theatre. Take our outdated theatres and concert halls. I mentioned earlier that Britain is embarking on an ambitious programme of re-housing the arts; we have to think of housing them first. Our amateur societies have fared poorly in obtaining largesse from the Golden Kiwi for the building of little theatres, compared with sports clubs, scout groups, and the like. Wellington has been waiting for a civic theatre for years, so has Christchurch for its Town Hall. We put on our most ambitious spectacles in opera houses that were good for vaudeville 60 or 80 years ago. Need I go on? This is the price we pay for patronage in a democratic society. It all points to the fact that New Zealanders still regard the arts as a fringe activity. We don't treat the arts very seriously, and certainly not as worth making sacrifices for. Our cultural veneer is still very thin.

It is more important to understand this than to apologize for it. New Zealand is a very young country, and that excuses almost all shortcomings. And it is true that the pre-occupation with the quest for food and shelter in a pioneering society remains pre-eminent long after these basic needs have been secured. But I wonder whether this is the complete answer. We have managed to build a welfare state with no expenses spared. Why aren't we equally generous to the arts which should form a vital corollary of the welfare state, if we are at all concerned with the best possible employment of our leisure time?

The truth is that there is no evidence to show that the welfare state promotes a greater appreciation of spiritual, aesthetic or religious values. On the contrary, our ever-growing pre-occupation with material possessions, our ever-increasing ability to gratify these desires, tends to distort our sense of values towards a superficial state of well-being in our cluttered-up four walls or in a fast motor car. True, some of us get tired of acquiring even more gadgetry, and spend some of our money on collections of classical gramophone records, on books we might even find time to read, and on *objets d'art.* But there are no signs of an explosive growth among the ranks of art lovers. Art is still a minority interest, no longer of an aristocratic élite, but of an amorphous group of better educated citizens. But whereas patronage was dispensed in the past by the unassailable decision of an élite, it now has to take its turn in the general dispensation in which the whole community, whether the least bit interested in the arts or not, shares and shares alike.

Yet I believe there are technological, physiological and economic forces at work which will exercise a profound influence on the arts in years to come.

The invention of the daguerrotype, the forerunner of photography, by its ability to obtain a representational likeness of people through technical means, made the craft of portrait painting largely redundant in the last century. This affected the function and the social position of the painter, as well as his style. None of the painter's art can match the representational exactitude of a good photograph, and the

same is true of landscape painting. So the painter set to work to discover qualities in his subjects which the camera is incapable of revealing. He distorted, he abstracted, he broke down colours to the elements of the spectrum, did anything but paint the image as it presents itself to our vision. This is true, of course, of all painting to a degree, but never to the extent to which it applies to painting of the last 100 years, beginning with the impressionist period up to the present day. Today, representational painting is dead, and nothing our more conservative art collectors can do will bring it to life.

We observe a similar development in television which has displaced the cinema as the pre-eminent mass medium of entertainment. The search for its rightful function in this new situation has led film making, on the one hand, in the direction of the epic, made at vast expense, and on the other, of the modestly priced esoteric art film. Another example of how technology influences art. The outcome, I think, is fewer but better films.

Listening to music will never be the same as it was before the invention of the gramophone. Twenty or thirty years ago listening to the great symphonic and chamber works was a unique event, to live in one's memory until the next memorable opportunity, maybe six months, maybe a year, maybe several years later. Today, if we take a liking to Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony, we buy a record; we will probably play it so loud that it will threaten to lift the roof, and if we happen to be gramophone addicts or discomanes, or whatever you call them, we will count the decibels and the frequencies, talk about bass response, tweeters, hum, whoof, and all the other abracadabra which Michael Flanders has parodied more skilfully than I can. When we hear the *Eroica* again in the concert hall, we will probably know all the notes, but, the chances are, we won't enjoy the music; it will sound flat, we will miss the euphoria of exaggerated sound, and quite likely won't care for the interpretation, because it is different from what is on the record.

Even if we don't collect records, the radio broadcasts more music in a week than we can hear in a concert hall in a year, but again, the sound will be nothing like that of an orchestra, and the conditions under which we listen may vary from anything between deep concentration with the score in hand, to the rustle of a newspaper whilst eating fish and chips.

Far be it from me to decry mechanical music altogether. Nothing serves the understanding of music better than familiarity. More people know more about music than ever before. But I do believe that our sensibilities have been deeply affected, and that physiologically our responses to musical sounds have altered.

Today, auditoria are built, not to compete with the beautifully mellow sounds of Carnegie Hall, or of the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, but to accord with the laws of acoustics, with reverberation chambers, amplifiers and all the clap-trap of modern technology. Architects and technicians are trying to emulate the tone quality of an expensive hi-fi set, and will quote every authority in the book to prove that it should sound thus, and not the way you and I like it. But as the old halls become obsolete, we will come to like the new ones, because we won't know any different.

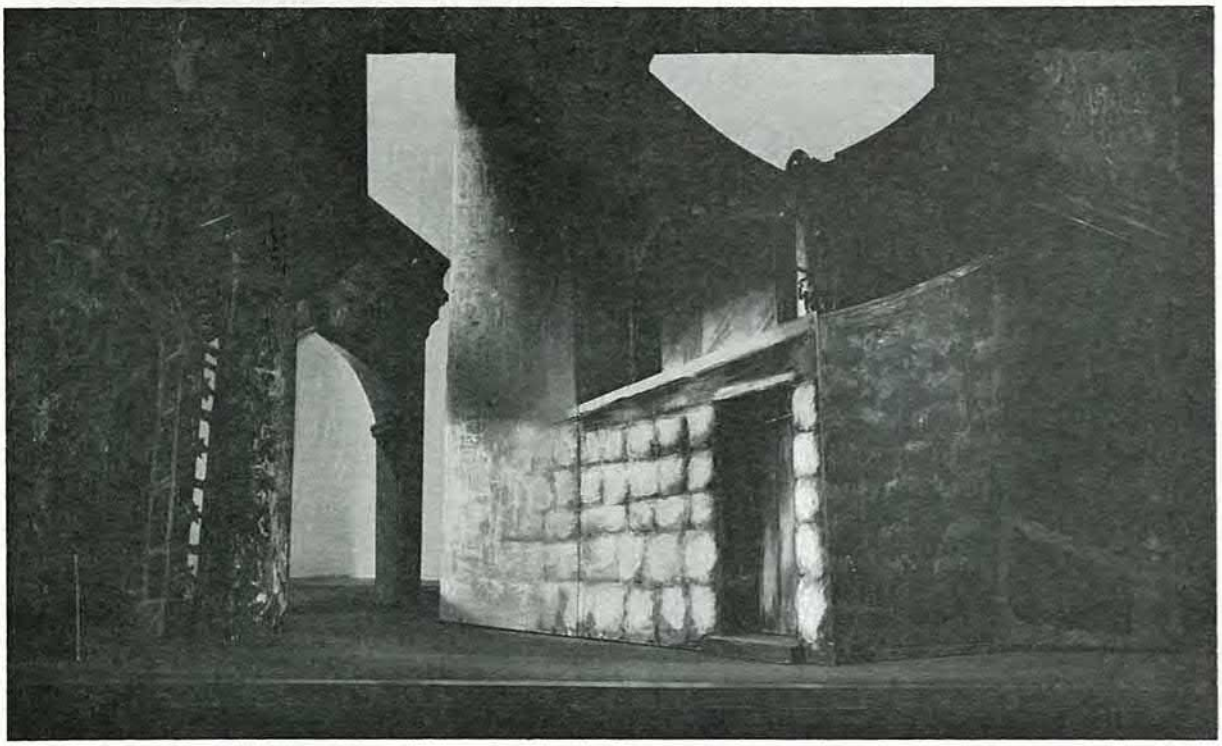
I mentioned how photography affects our response to painting. Films changed our response to drama, television to films. We are being exposed to visual and aural impressions at a steadily increasing rate. Recent statistics show that 70% of all television sets are turned on at any one time. Transistor radios have invaded beaches and parks. It is significant that daytime radio advertising has gained a new lease of life since the advent of transistors. We are rapidly losing the facility for quietude and contemplation, the sense of uniqueness in art, art to be indulged in to excess only at our peril. Add to this the barrage of traffic noises, the garishness of advertising hoardings and picture magazines, and you may well ask how our senses can stand this onslaught and not become stunted.

Man of the 'seventies and 'eighties will have less responsive eyes and ears, will be more restless, less easily moved by aesthetic experiences. Will we still be able to attune our ears to a string quartet, and our eyes to a painting by Renoir? Will we have the patience to read a book? Mechanical invention gives rise to new art forms; can the old ones survive? There can be no certainty.

But it is certain that we will be further along the road towards developing a mass culture. Art forms will change, people will change, and the rationale for a mass culture is already changing. Nothing was more indicative of the changing attitude towards the arts than the resolution passed with acclaim at the May session of the National Development Conference emphasizing the need for creating a cultural environment consistent with the economic objectives for the next decade. This thinking underlines the need to develop the essential human qualities capable of dealing with the challenges of the

'The Bartered Bride', 1964. Set designed Ostoja-Kotkowski.

Set design for 'Rigoletto', 1964, by Raymond Boyce.



years to come, with the stresses inherent in a programme of industrialization, and with the institutional requirements of a country bent on building a tourist industry.

The rôle of the arts as a corollary of economic progress in real terms has become recognized at last and there can be no doubt that government, through its agencies, has an increasingly pre-eminent part to play in the shaping of New Zealand's artistic future. By 1981 New Zealand will have a population of more than 3,500,000. Auckland will be a city approaching 900,000, Wellington and Christchurch will not be far off 400,000. More people will live in apartments in densely populated areas, and fewer will spend their leisure time tending their gardens. There will be more public eating places and more beer gardens and bars. In the cities, people will become more gregarious and will tend to seek their pleasures in the company of their kind. Young married couples will tend to have children at a later stage than now, and may have fewer of them, thanks to the pill. They will surround themselves first with the paraphernalia of affluence before thinking about procreation.

A recent Australian survey made this forecast, and it is supported by a leading advertising agency which comments on the trend towards living in flats: 'It is generally agreed that the high standard of development and use of functional—and aesthetically satisfying — furniture, ceramics, glassware, stainless steel, furnishings for which the Scandinavian countries have become famous stems from their tradition of renting flats rather than owning homes. This results in a much higher proportion of total personal income being available for spending on all sorts of consumer goods, with a much lower proportion tied up as capital investment in land and home. Not only do consumer goods benefit, but so do the arts, leisure activities, travel, to name a few. Just think what you could do with your time and money with no mortgage to pay, no maintenance to meet, no lawns to mow nor garden to dig.'

In the 1970s we will intensify our endeavours to compete in the market places of the world both with the raw materials produced from our indigenous resources, and with consumer goods fashioned by the skill of our work force. We will follow the example of Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland, countries with populations not so much larger than ours, that have built a world-wide reputation for excellence of taste and design. Good design and good art, I believe, are first cousins. No, closer than that: they are Siamese twins. European manufacturers have the advantage of drawing on age-old aesthetic traditions founded in folk art. Many of these are adapted to modern concepts with an intense feeling for good design. We lack this feeling, because we lack tradition, but I believe, the inexorable demands of economic survival will force us to find short cuts.

We must make a start now, and concentrate on the study and development of design and nothing can speed this process more than the experience of art. This is perhaps the most compelling argument why government should place the whole weight of its authority behind the development of the arts. Art in this concept becomes, finally, not the gratification of anybody's whim, but a question of economic necessity.

All this will cost money, a lot more money than we are spending now. But building the arts is not only a matter of money: it requires the will, the determination and a sense of urgency to do it. And as far as money is concerned, the question we must ask ourselves is: are we the poorer for spending it, or for not spending it?

Music and the Future

P. PLATT

The Arts Council has clear responsibilities towards young people, the country's emerging artists and audiences, and these responsibilities are not entirely met by providing them with more or better opportunities for training and professional life. Just as important is a first-rate artistic environment, abreast of modern developments and flexible enough to remain so. The subject of music has grown rapidly in recent years and young people are beginning to accept this wider subject as a matter of course: the Council must recognize the importance of the changing conditions too, otherwise it may find itself an anachronism providing mainly for survivors from a past age.

What are the changes to which I am referring? To begin with, most music students have broken through a barrier which has confused the subject of 20th century music for years: dissonance. They are at home in the world of Schoenberg and Dallapiccola, Webern and Stockhausen and late Stravinsky and are not in any way put out merely because it is relatively more dissonant than earlier music. This means they are in a position to approach and size up the music without preconceived antipathies. If music students can do this now it won't be long before 6th and 5th formers can do the same thing. Indeed, in my experience some of them can do so already; and in the junior school, children who haven't yet acquired their parents' bias in favour of 18th and 19th century musical procedures can revel in Jenny McLeod's *Earth and Sky*.

But it is not only modern music that is establishing itself. Music of the middle ages and Renaissance, music of India and Bali and Aboriginal Australia, all of which even 15 years ago were regarded as specialized fields, are now readily available in one form or another to any music lover, and are accepted as the groundwork of University study. Schools must soon take advantage of the situation too, and one notes already that *Earth and Sky* is in an idiom which fuses Maori chant and mediaeval organum and recent techniques in the most natural way in the world.

Nor is the growth in understanding simply a matter of enlarged horizons. For the first time in history it becomes possible to perceive an overall view of music as a subject, as a human activity of major significance, in both past and present, and in all cultures.

The emerging view is already bringing changes in our attitudes to music, and it is likely that these changing attitudes will have far-reaching effects. In general terms, there is a new confidence in the importance of music in man's life; music can no longer be thought of as merely a leisure pursuit, a fringe interest for initiates, one of the 'finer things of life'; in some form or another it is and always has been a necessary part of human life itself. In more particular terms, the musical riches now uncovered must be explored. School music will as a matter of course explore music of every kind—modern, mediaeval, classical, primitive, exotic—for there is simple and, perhaps more important, improvisable music in all these. New generations of teachers brought up to recognize that good music is not confined to the (admittedly excellent) Western product between Bach and Debussy, will no longer feel that they stand or fall by their ability to impress the love of this music above all others on their pupils. This should help reduce the present often uncomfortable gap between teacher and reluctant pupil, and commercial interests which have literally made capital out of this gap by trading on the apparent rebelliousness of pop music will have to recede as the relationship of pop music to the whole range of possible music becomes obvious. (The Monkees sang a song from the *Cancionero de Upsa'a* of 1556 on the television the other night.) Most far-reaching of all, the present gap between the composer and his audience will eventually go, as he finds a new public brought up to understand the artistic possibilities of sound patterns of many different types; if the audience has been brought up to explore the old, the exotic and the recent, I don't see how it can fail to involve itself with the new. Even now the composer is a more obviously needed person than he was a few years ago—for school music, youth orchestras, summer music schools especially; it may be that we are on the way to a situation in which musical experience afforded by new works is the standard by which other music is gauged, in which the general public recognizes the composer as musical leader, and creativeness as a true sign of musical vitality.

Would this change in attitude to new music eventually require old music to be thrown out? I think not: one of the most important revelations of the modern development of the subject is that the great work of art no matter what its provenance proclaims its stature in clear terms (a situation the other arts have been used to for years). Guillaume de Machaut's Mass of about 1350 offers a powerful musical experience in its own right. It is no more merely a museum piece than the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is merely a museum piece; its construction is comparable in workmanship to a work of Webern's, its strange magnificent music a testament of man's capacity for speculation, for exploration in sound. And familiar works such as the Beethoven Sonatas gain a new dimension and a new intensity when they are heard in the newly opened perspectives. To those attuned to the sound-constructions of Machaut, of Webern, Schoenberg and Stravinsky, the Beethoven Piano Sonata series given by Istvan Nadas in Otago this year was an affirmation of the profound significance of the sound-constructions of Beethoven. (The widening concepts

in fact confirm the vitality of the 18th and 19th centuries. Indeed, one might still substantiate a claim that the 19th century was the greatest in Western music—if anyone is still interested in establishing this sort of priority.)

I suspect also that the continuing vitality of older music will assure, at least for some time, the future of the performing artist. Many observers have pointed out, no doubt correctly, that the private music-lover—especially the Hi-fi fan—is tomorrow's ideal listener to electronic music, which is essentially a dialogue between composer and listener; sometimes such observers go on to imagine a situation in which music is preponderantly a private experience, a matter of LP's and tapes, with the live performer—if he's needed at all—relegated to the recording studio. I don't see much evidence yet that this situation is on the way. Indeed, even as the LP and tape show themselves increasingly useful as teaching aids, as media through which one may learn, they become more obviously deficient as vehicles for any musical experience other than electronic music; one seems to meet fewer rather than more record fans amongst one's musical friends than one did a few years ago, and certainly University music students turn increasingly to live performance, more especially if they are performing themselves. At the moment then one is probably justified in regarding electronic music as a special case in spite of its great potentiality, and I don't think other music will be *supplanted* by electronic music without yet another major change in our attitude to the past and to the value of past musical literature.

Since most of the changes and developments I have been describing or forecasting depend in the first instance on education, the responsibilities of the universities are clear—though not entirely plain sailing, as our curricula were founded at a time when little good music was available besides the Classics and Romantics. As for the Arts Council, I feel its obligations lie not so much in the adoption of sweeping new policies as in encouraging conditions in which the emerging concepts can flourish. The continual broadening of the country's musical outlook may be accepted as a principle. This means among other things encouraging enterprise in performing new or unusual music from whatever source, and seeing that our scholars and bursars overseas are working in forward-looking centres. Composition and composers must be recognized as of first importance. Here, of course, work has already begun, and one must acknowledge too the contribution of the NZBC, APRA, of certain recording companies and of the two universities which engage in publishing New Zealand music. But there is plenty more to be done, in commissioning, in the support of publication, perhaps in helping persuade the Education Department to experiment with a Composer-in-Schools scheme.

In the performing art of music the Council must continue to fight both for the funds and for the sense of public involvement necessary to encourage the highest attainable standard. Every major beneficiary —opera, ballet, regional orchestras—should be proficient enough to perform the older repertoire with distinction and flexible enough to adapt itself to new ways and means, providing a wealth of professional opportunity and also a great range of music to experience; there are those who maintain that opera is not for New Zealand because of its general expensiveness, because it uses up too much of the Council's money or because it is somehow foreign to the New Zealand temperament. I believe we *do* need it, not just because every other country with a high standard of living has it, or even because it belongs to a tradition which we should not allow to lapse, but because the greatest operas—and this includes many of the standard works—have lasting musical value, and our audiences and especially the rising generations must have the opportunity to experience these in productions of high standard. And opera should exist on as full a professional basis as possible, not only to provide careers for our own performers but because only thus can we hope to perform adequately works of the 20th century or indeed, any other sophisticated repertoire. The New Zealand requirements for opera are in my view a stable organization assured of a regular minimum income, one which regards self-education as one of its most important duties, with a production staff always on the lookout for new ways of presenting the standard repertoire, for new works to perform, for new types of dramatic music, and with a public which nags and batters it into high standards of responsiveness and presentation. Similar arguments apply to civic orchestras and choral societies: their necessity is undoubted, and in their development a progression to the greatest possible proficiency with the greatest possible flexibility is essential. (There may of course be other ways than the present ones of constructing the basic organization of all these musical bodies, but this is a different question, and

one that will, one hopes, be thrashed out during the next few years).

All this is easy to write about. Time will be needed before it can be fully effective. Time—and money, more especially a consistent system of funding without which the Council will never be able to construct sensible policies or avoid crippling setbacks such as we have seen in regional orchestra development in the last two years.

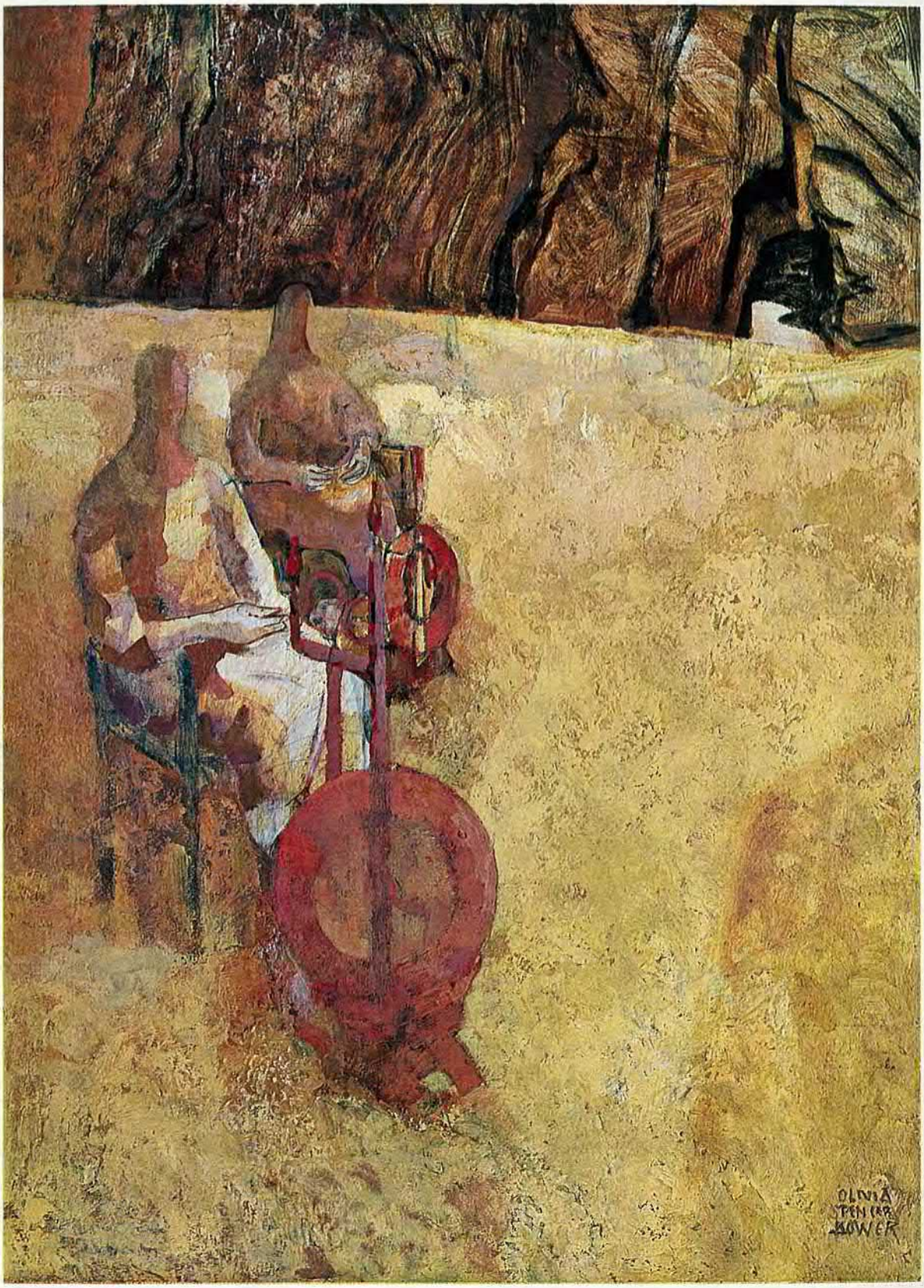
But it is ideas rather than money that concern me in this article, and in the realm of ideas, the Council's forthcoming survey of Music Education may prove to be of far-reaching importance. I do not share the view expressed by some of my friends that the survey will merely show what we know already with a few figures in support, for the manner in which it was commissioned oblige the surveyor to propose remedies for a situation which everyone knows is by no means ideal. We may decide not to implement these particular remedies but at least the proposals will be there to accept, to modify or reject. The survey in fact promises not only a welcome communication between all those musicians concerned in teaching and being taught, but also the possibility of bringing consistency to our whole musical structure. Within such a structure for example, the new, more direct, relationship between composer and public to which I referred earlier should be able to flourish naturally—in schools, in universities, eventually in the whole country's musical life.

New Zealand seems to me to be well placed to take advantage of the present situation in music. At the moment we stand outside the busiest areas of musical development, but thanks to the speed and efficiency of modern communications, we are able to draw on good ideas wherever they may come from. We are not a poor country, there is considerable musical activity here, and we are not compelled by tradition, population pressures or any other circumstance to develop rigid or quirky institutions. The custom we have already established of encouraging our composers is beginning to blossom into recordings and scores at a time when creativeness seems ready to take a more central part in our musical life.

Let there be any amount of controversy about how we encourage and broaden the conditions I have been writing about. We can at least be confident in the importance and scope of the art we are developing; we can see with increasing clarity that its many branches are interdependent and that therefore a consistent structure is possible. This structure can be flexible, and can take every advantage of modern developments. We can establish at one and the same time a profusion of opportunities for audiences to increase the range and depth of their musical experience, and for musicians to lead a satisfying professional life. Perhaps most important of all, we can develop the concept that creativeness and not mere preservation of tradition lies at the heart of artistic life.

Mary O'Brien, Leonard Delaney in 'Don Giovanni', 1965.

Photographs: 'Earth and Sky' by Alan Cooke, Masterton. Opera by N.Z. Opera Company.


OLIVIA
STEINER
BOWER

Olivia Spencer Bower

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RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION 1968

OLIVIA SPENCER BOWER'S retrospective exhibition was held in the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery from 7 - 21 November 1968. It was her first major one-man show since her return from the Pacific Islands in 1960. Works from the various years of development—or pilgrimage—were included and although one remembers many fine works which were not included the general sense of being in the presence of a rounded achievement added much to the immense success of the exhibition. Her painting is a personal rejoicing—a quality which unites the earliest and latest works—and coupled with this is her ability to handle portraits and figures with that assurance and stamp of personality which dignifies all good figure-painting.

Apart from the obvious technical development (and in spite of her varied art school training which fortunately left her work with only faint traces of 'influence') the exhibition underlined another aspect of her work and that was 'place'.

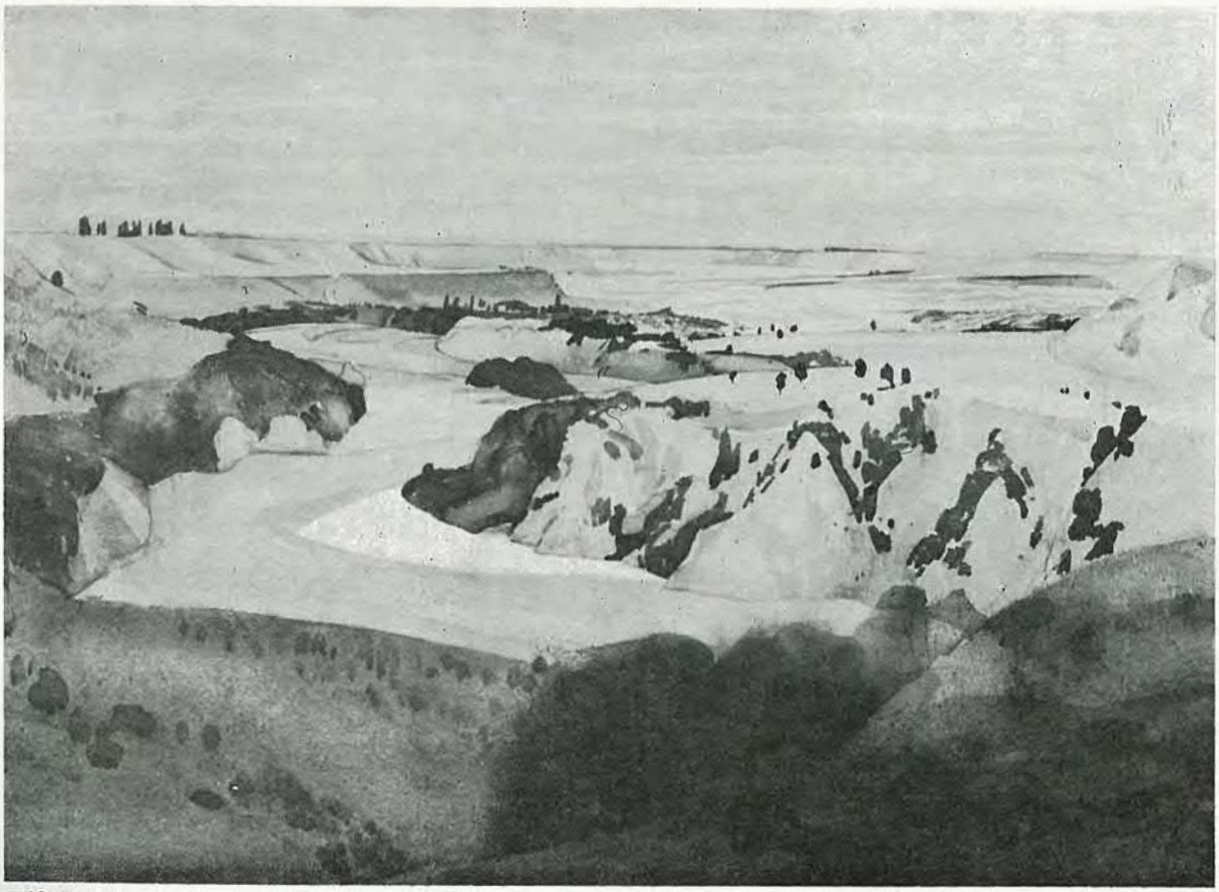
Over the years one has tended to consider her primarily as a New Zealand painter involved with this particular part of the country. But what of Italy, the Islands (Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji, Tahaa, Bora Bora) and England? Each of these places has provided exactly the same stimulus as New Zealand, expressed in works of equal penetration and beauty. But her painting is not that of a gifted dilettante recording a Grand Tour. She stands revealed as a painter of great individuality, passionately concerned with those places in the world which have given her the inspiration to develop her painting and so express a joy in the life and situations around her. It is difficult to suppose that had she worked mainly, say, in England or Italy, her painting would have been substantially different from what it is now.

The earlier works included some eminently successful painting and none more so than *The Terraces.* This painting—with its immense sweep of dry river-bed and opalescent threads of water, the infinite distance and the subordination of dominant trees in the foreground—places her securely at the head of the field in topographical painting and makes similar works by others of the same period—and

Opposite: Spinning. Oil, 1968. 36 x 26in.

Washing day, Assisi. Watercolour. 15 x 21½in.

The Terraces. Watercolour. 22 x 29in.



since—seem pedestrian by comparison. It is linked firmly with some of her later watercolours of Canterbury landscapes except that in the later paintings the colour has become more golden and the brushwork looser and softer—almost reminiscent of some of the Sung album paintings.

From the portrait of Alison Pickmere—a simple head poised with Florentine precision and scrupulously modelled in luminous colour—it seemed an easy step to the magnificent watercolour of Amalfi. And from Amalfi back again to the Fijians chatting away in the South Seas; and then to *Willie Lotts* with its fellow-feeling with Frances Hodgkins—the portrayal of water sinking away beneath its own surface, the pending dissolution of material content —and once more back to the mysterious spinners.

The *Picture for Marjorie* will be remembered among the portraits. The quite small painting contained a whole remote world of silent reminiscence, locked up in subdued purple and gold, blue and grey. And this, together with some splendid drawings added another strength to an exhibition which, all in all, was a superb display in insight and development.

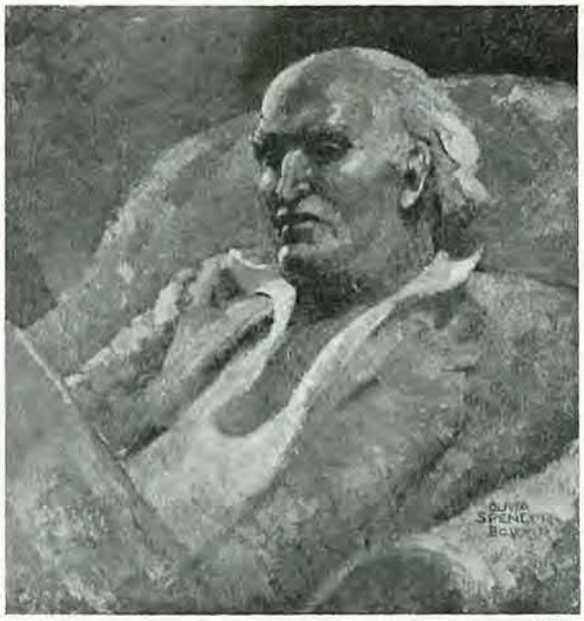
Alison Pickmere. Oil on cardboard, 1945. 18 x 12¾in.

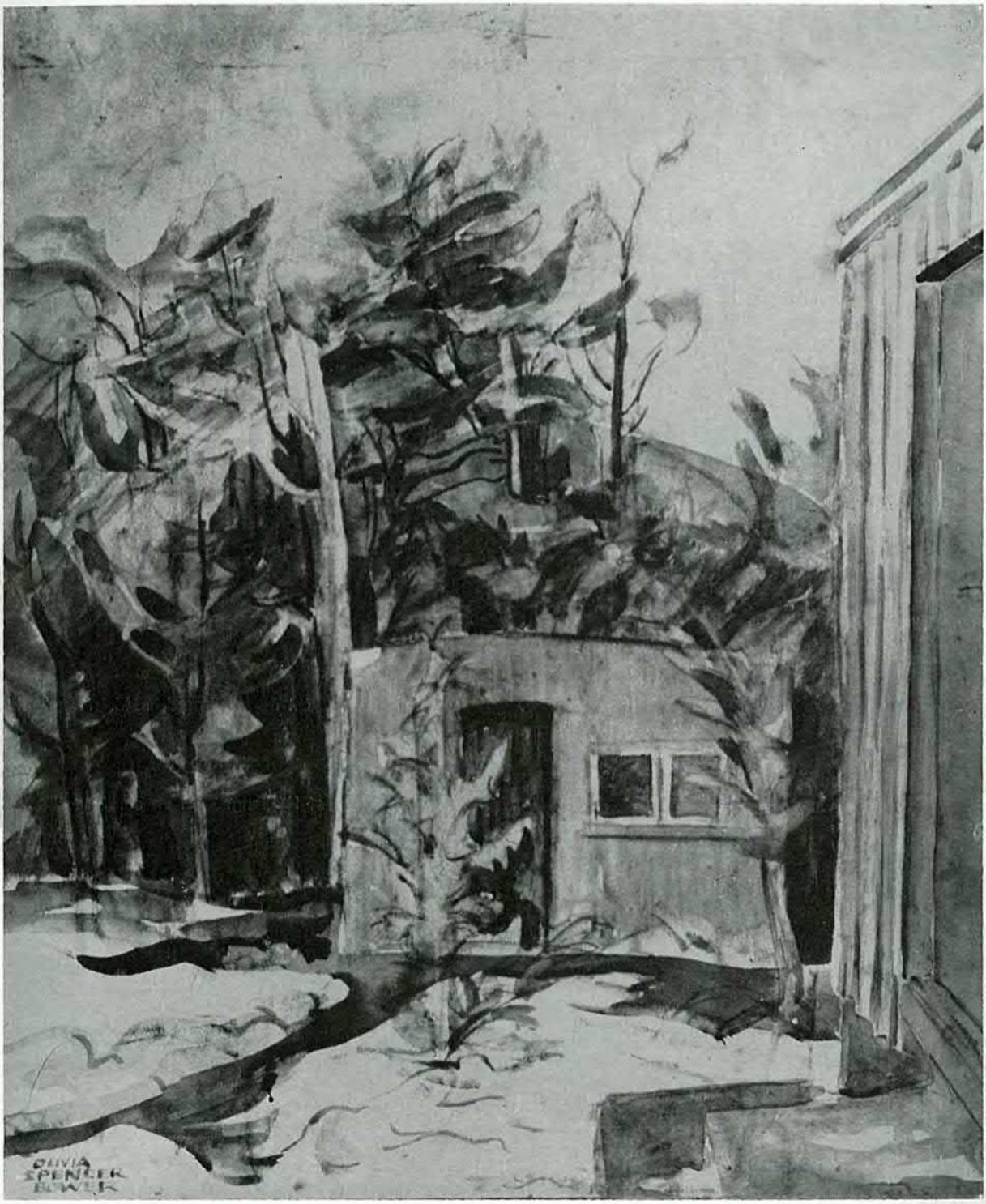
Olivia Spencer Bower was born in Huntingdon, England, and received her first art training from her mother, Rosa Spencer Bower, a water-colourist of note who had been persuaded by her friend Frances Hodgkins to leave New Zealand for Europe and England, where she married Olivia's father, Antony Spencer Bower, a mathematician. Mrs Spencer Bower studied first at the Slade under Henry Tonks and later in Rome with Signor Nardi.

Olivia Spencer Bower went to school in Boscombe, Hampshire, where the art mistress Miss Coles taught watercolour, and insisted on three flat washes only, all subject matter being resolved in terms of these clearly defined tones — a splendid technical and mental discipline.

She came to her mother's homeland, New Zealand, after the First World War and attended Rangiruru School in Christchurch. She went on to Canterbury College School of Art where she was taught by Archibald Nicoll, Richard Wallwork, Cecil Kelly and L. H. Booth. Among her fellow students were Eve Page, Rhona Hazard, Russell Clark, Ivy Fife, Ronald MacKenzie, Alfred and James Cook, Ruth Turner and Kathleen Brown. While she was there the Group was formed at the instigation of Rhona

Dr G. M. Smith of Hokianga. Oil on cardboard, 1945. 15¾ x 15½in.





The Shed at Enys. Watercolour, 1952. 24 x 22in.

The Two Thumb Range. Watercolour, 1962. 24 x 36in.

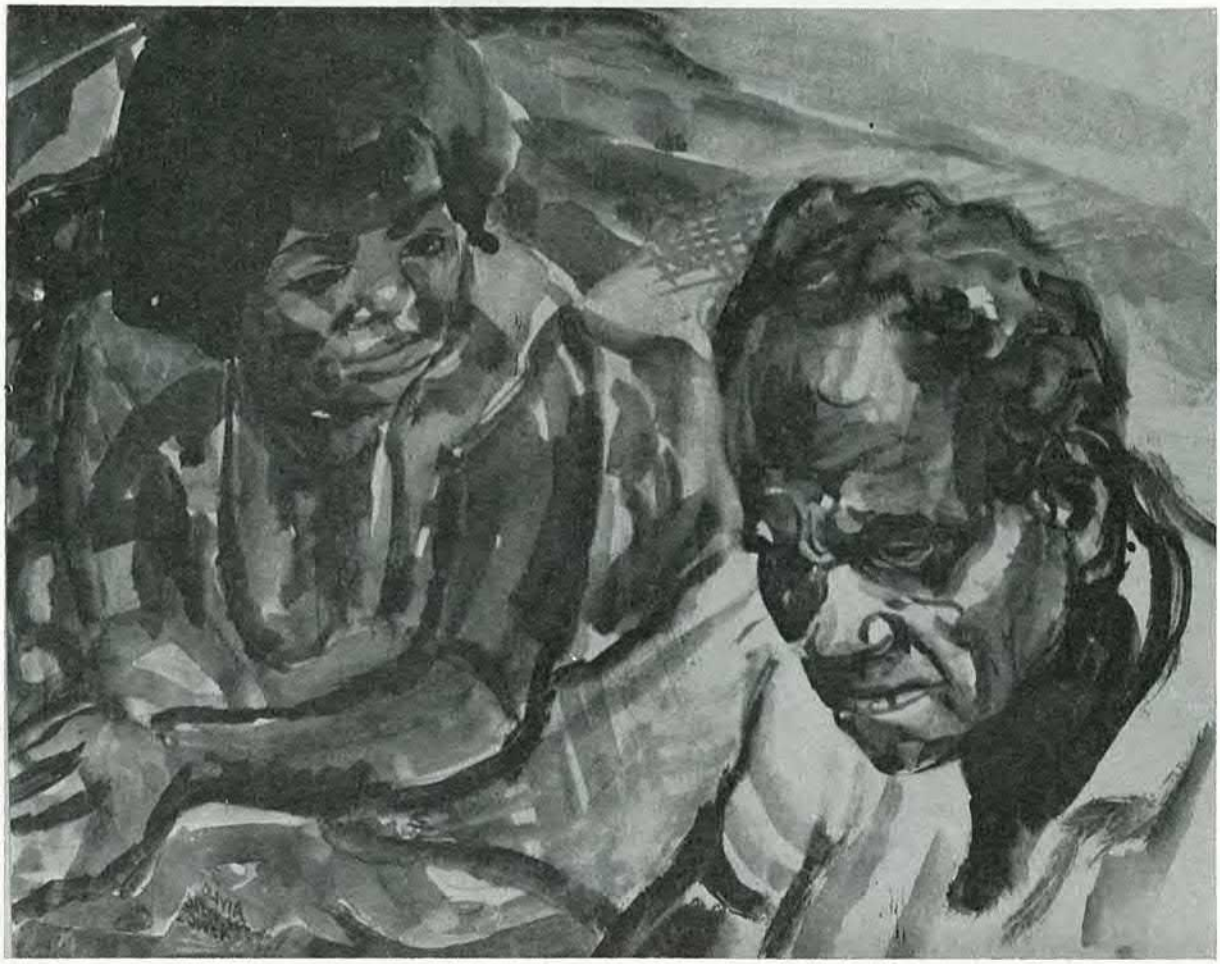
Hazard—an attic, a model to work from and immense enthusiasm later brought into being a memorable series of exhibitions which proved a gathering point and inspiration for many of the best artists in New Zealand.

Returning to England in 1929 Olivia Spencer Bower studied at the Slade under Professor Henry Tonks (in his last year) whom she found tremendously inspiring. This was followed by trips to the Continent, to Concarneau where Mr and Mrs Sydney Thompson and their family were living and to Italy and Capri. She returned to New Zealand during the difficult years of the early nineteen-thirties and lived mainly in the country at Swannanoa in North Canterbury seeing little of the town and exhibiting very few works. She was painting almost entirely in watercolours at this time with a penchant for riverbeds—the Waimakariri, Kowai, Otira, Arthur's Pass —and many paintings of this period have remained in her possession. During the 'thirties she left the farm and settled in Christchurch with her mother; she began to exhibit more and was in stimulating contact with other members of the Group.

During the Second World War she studied at the Elam School of Art with Mr A. J. C. Fisher because she found the opportunity there to resolve some aspects of Slade understanding under this former Slade pupil.

Northland became her base for a time—Rawene and Hokianga—where she met Dr G. M. Smith. She painted his portrait and learnt much from his robust 'kitchen philosophy'. During this period she accompanied Dr Graham Kemble-Welsh, who was at that time associated with Dr Smith in his work, on medical trips to Maori settlements in Northland learning much of the Maori life and ways, sketching and taking notes for later paintings.

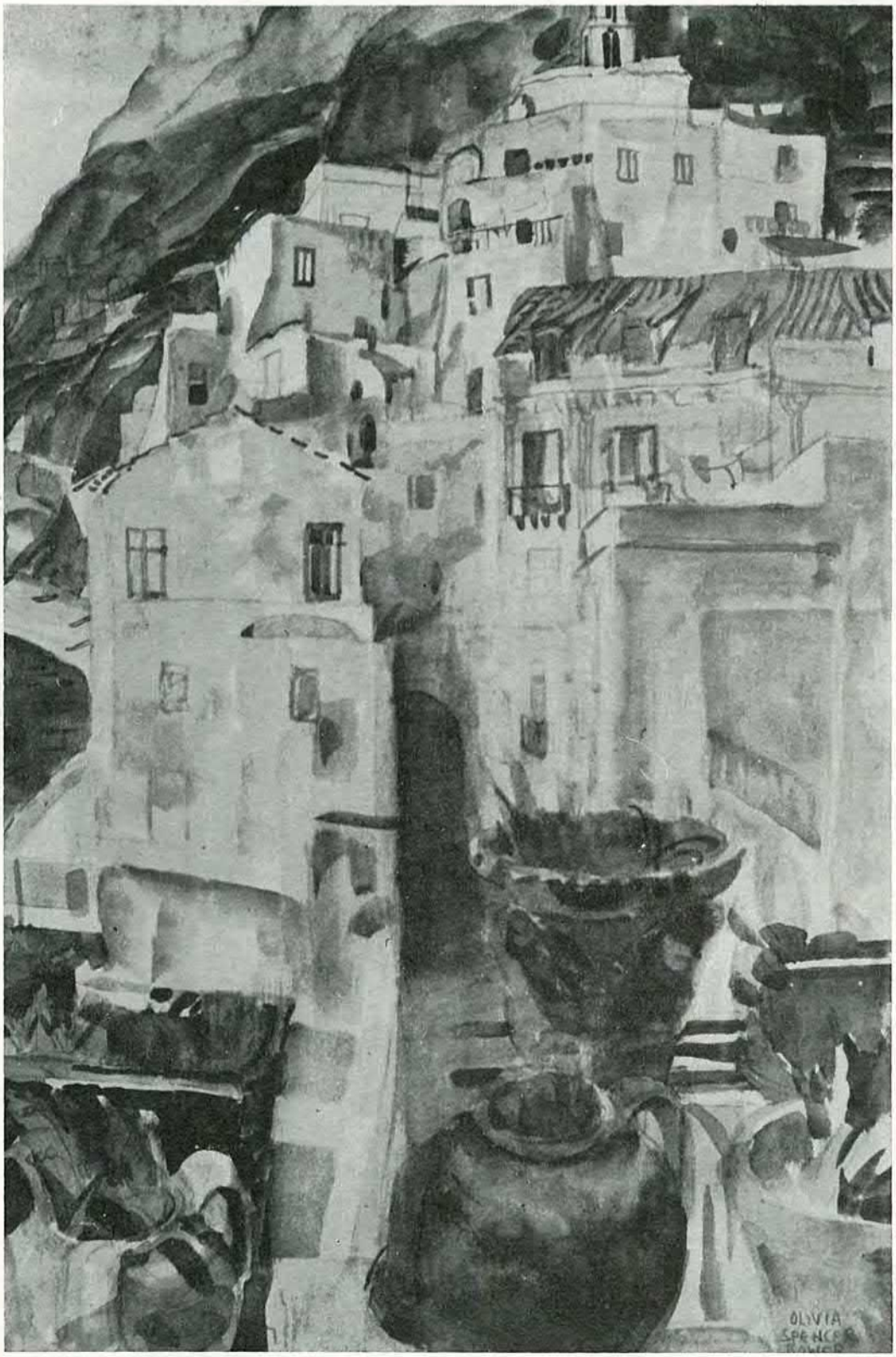
Some time later she returned to Christchurch where she remained to look after her mother. For the next few years she continued to paint—landscapes in watercolour and portraits and groups in oil. During this period Mr Peter Tomory, then Director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, started to make collections of paintings which were toured around



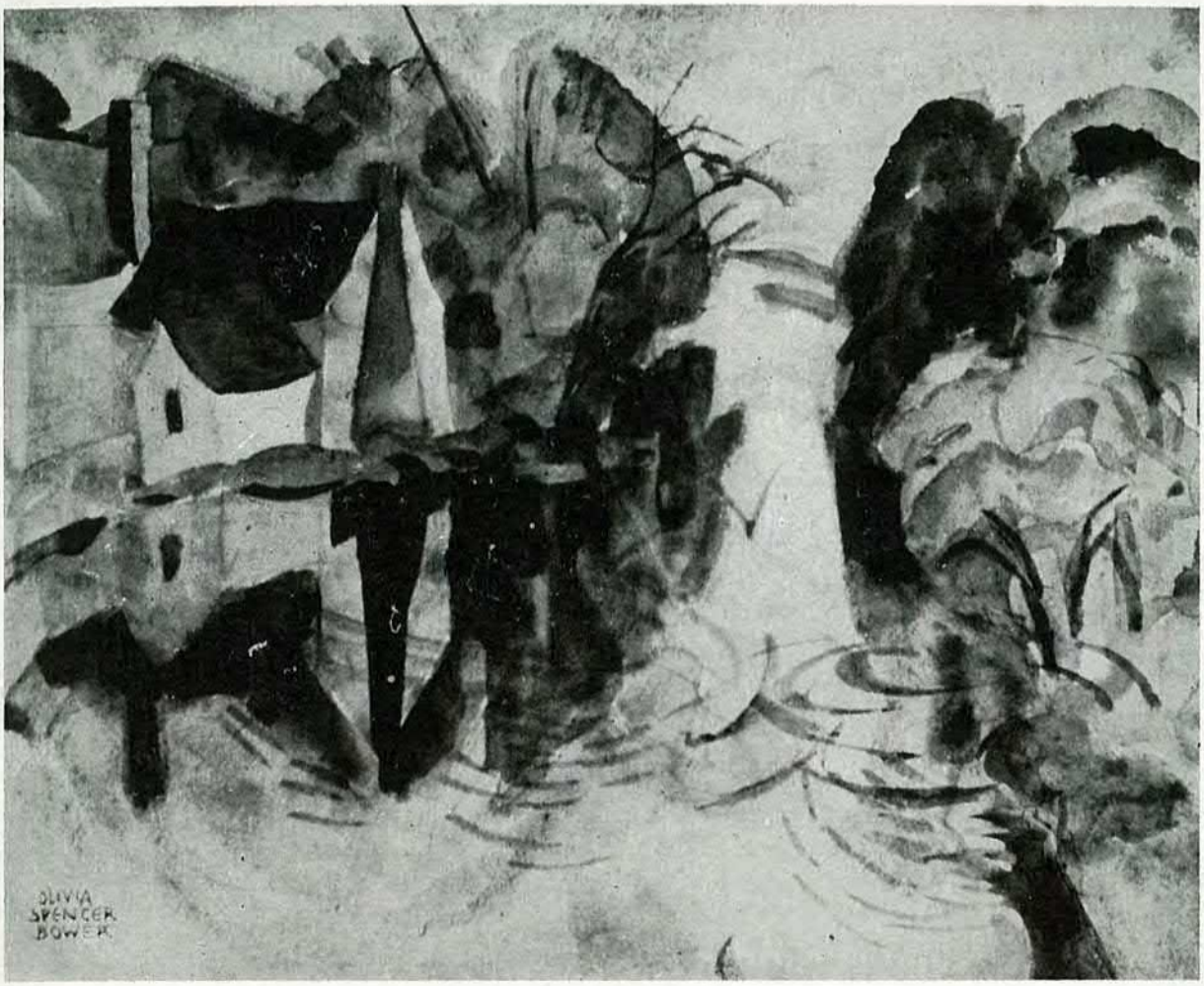
Two Fijians. Watercolour, 1960. 17¾ x 23in.

New Zealand. Her work was exhibited in two of these exhibitions, 'Five Watercolourists' and then 'Eight N.Z. Painters'. These collections by Mr Tomory were a great encouragement for many painters.

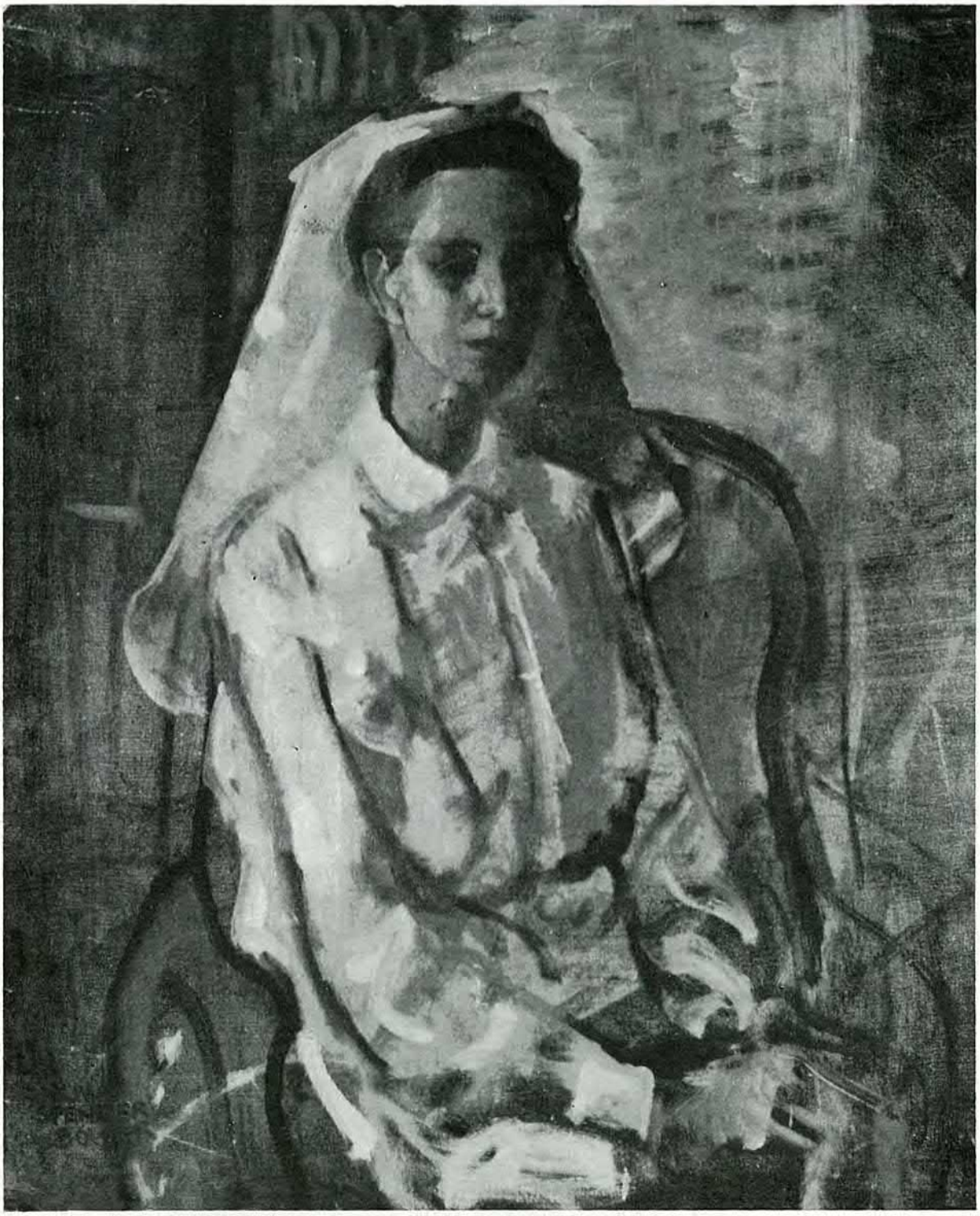
On the death of her mother she left for the Pacific and painted extensively in Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji and the islands of Tahaa and Bora Bora. Her subsequent spectacular one-man show in Christchurch in 1960 revealed a tremendous sense of liberation and vigour never subsequently lost. She continued to paint for a year or so in Canterbury and Otago before leaving for Europe again in 1963. Landing in Naples she toured slowly through Italy revisiting Amalfi and Perugia where she was fortunate enough to meet Professor Antonelli who took his students on extensive tours to cities and remote villages and showed them little-known art works which illustrated his lectures. During the next two years she toured Europe and England, settled for a time in London where she had a flat in Eric Newton's home, visited Russia and later stayed in Suffolk at Flatford Mill where she continued to paint. She returned to New Zealand in 1966.



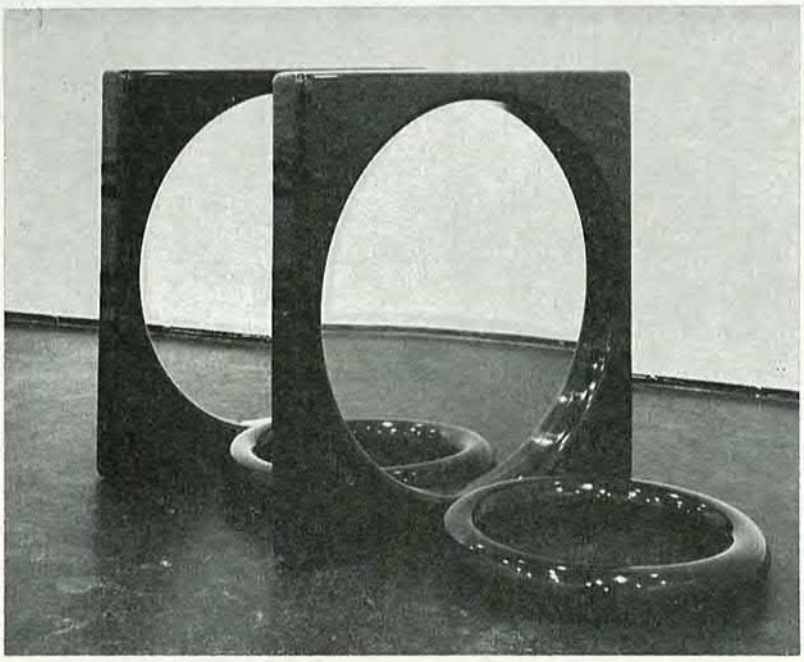
Amalfi. Watercolour, 1963. 25 x 17¾in.

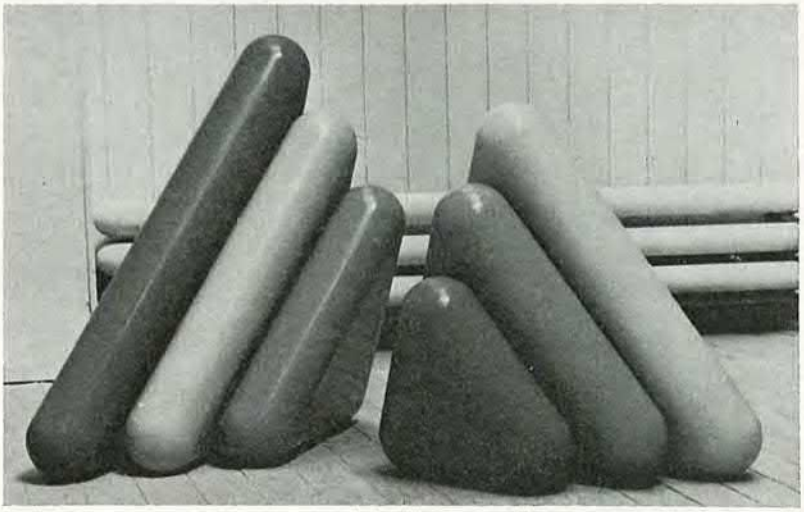


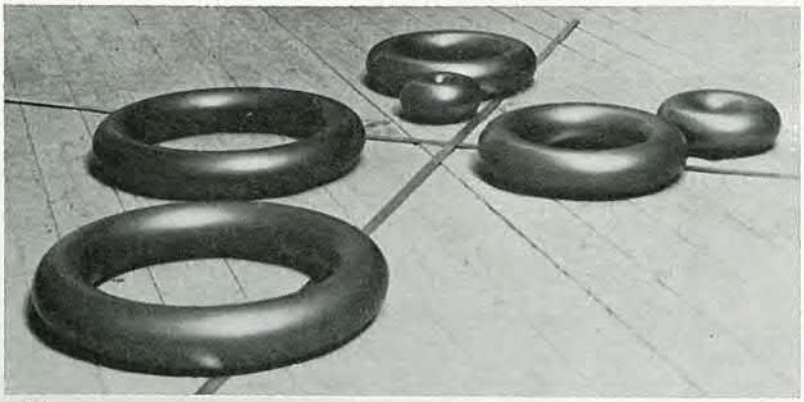
Willie Lotts'. Watercolour, 1964. 15 x 19in.



Picture for Marjorie. Oil on board, 1968. 24 x 19½in.







John Panting

JOHN PANTING was born in New Zealand in 1940. He studied at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts 1959-62 and at the Royal College of Art 1963-7. He teaches at the Royal College of Art and Central School of Art, London.

Exhibitions

1965 Towards Art (Arts Council of Great Britain).
1966 Structure '66, Cardiff.
Hanover Gallery, London.
1967 New Generation R.C.A. Galerie Givaudon Paris Amiens.
One man show. Galerie Swart, Amsterdam.
British Sculpture '60-'67 Arts Council touring exhibition.
1968 Survey '68 Camden Arts Centre, London.
V.A.T. '68 Herbert Museum, Coventry.
Festival of the City of London, London.
Burleighfield House open air exhibition, Buckinghamshire.
One man show, Galerie Swart, Amsterdam.

Collections include Arts Council, Great Britain.

Top left:

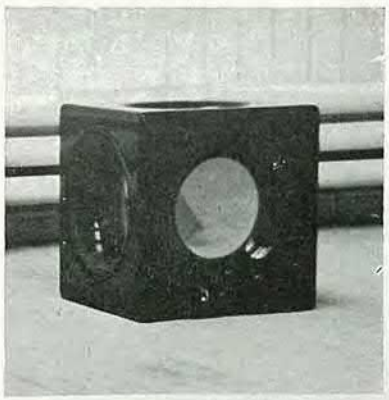
Black Sculpture, 1966-7.

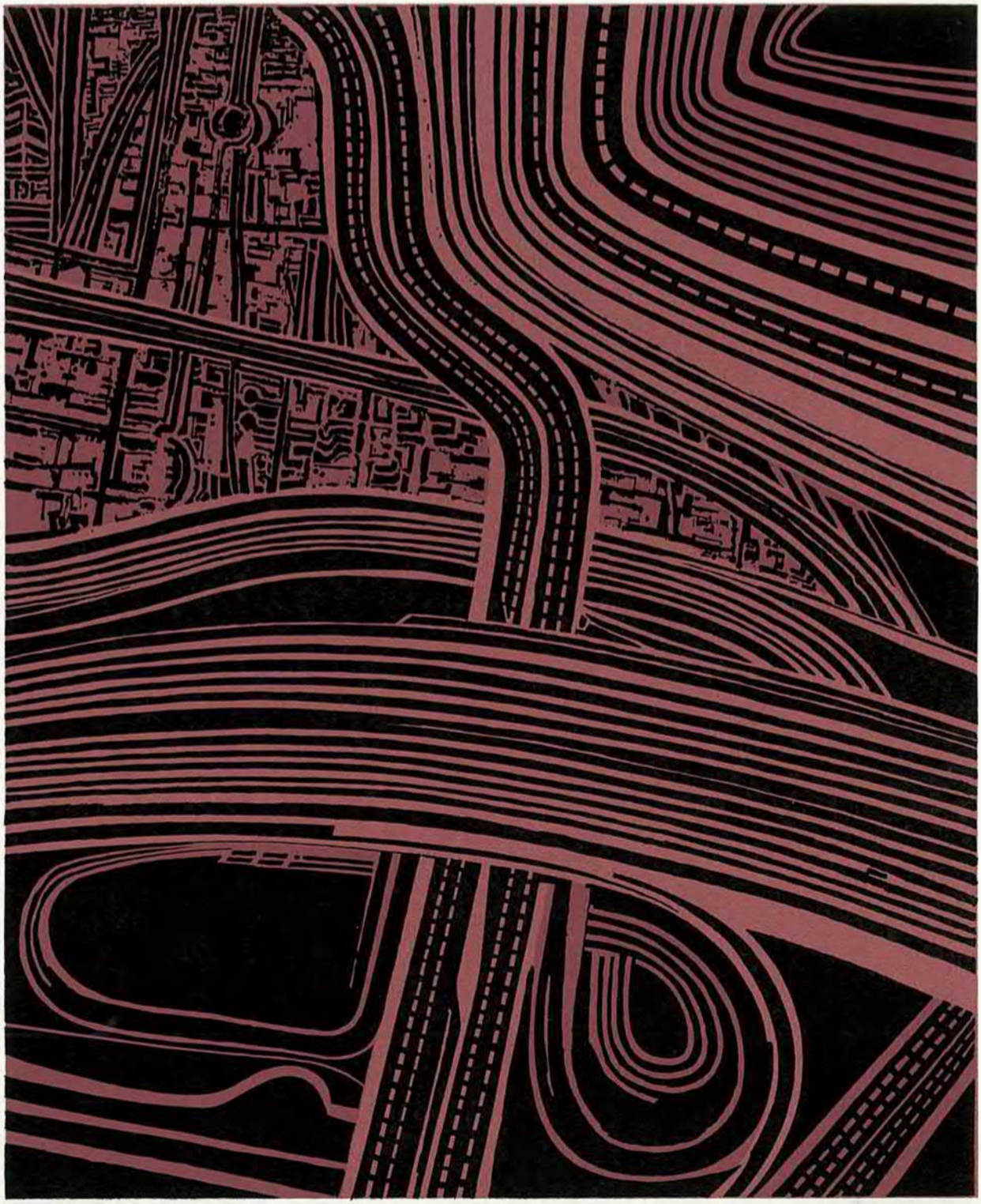
Polyester resin, fibre glass, stainless steel. 30 x 30 x 52in.

Three sculptures, 1966-7.

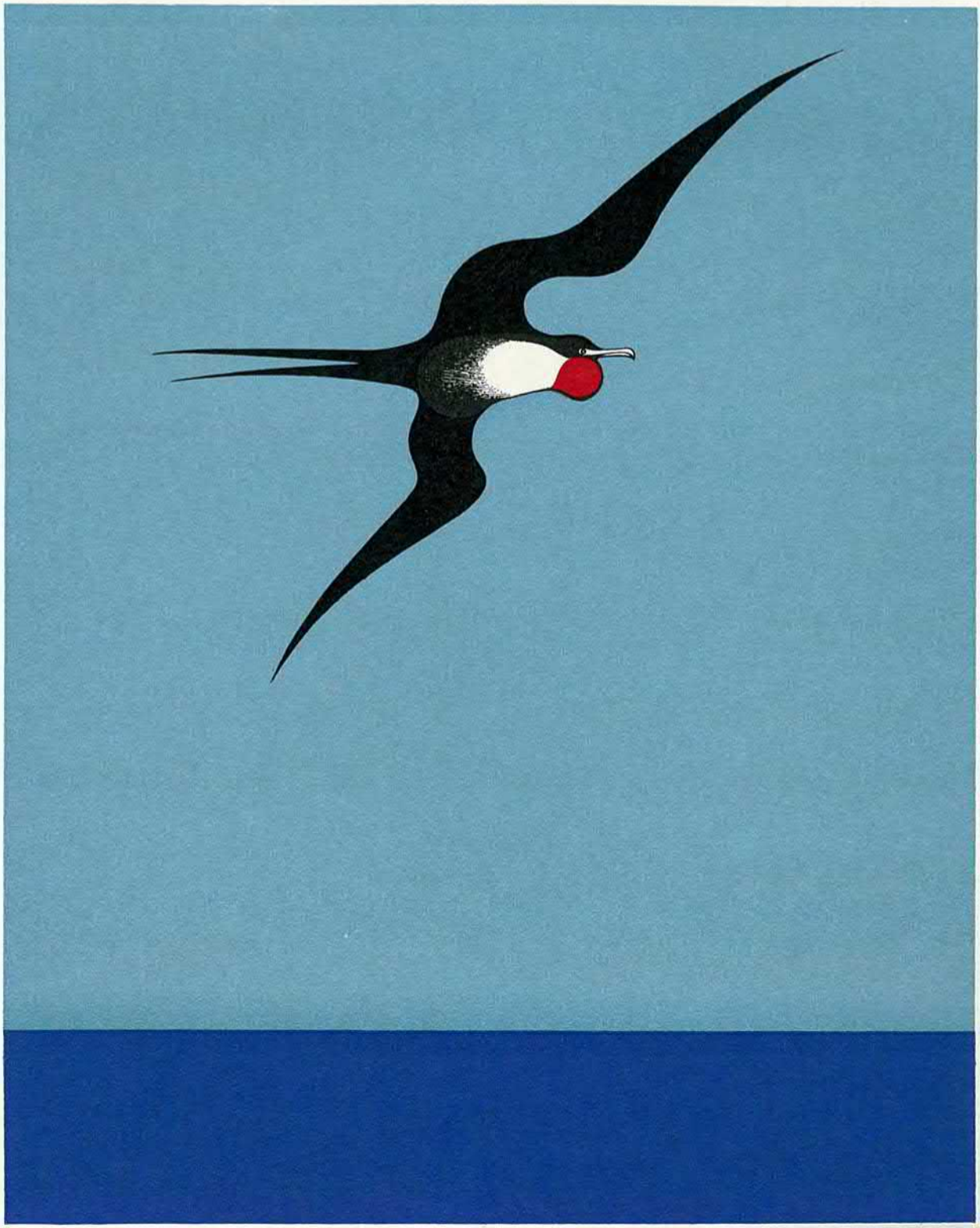
At left: 72 x 48 x 38in.
Bottom left: 10ft. x 10ft. x 4in.
Bottom right: 25 x 25 x 26in.

All polyester resin, fibre glass, steel.

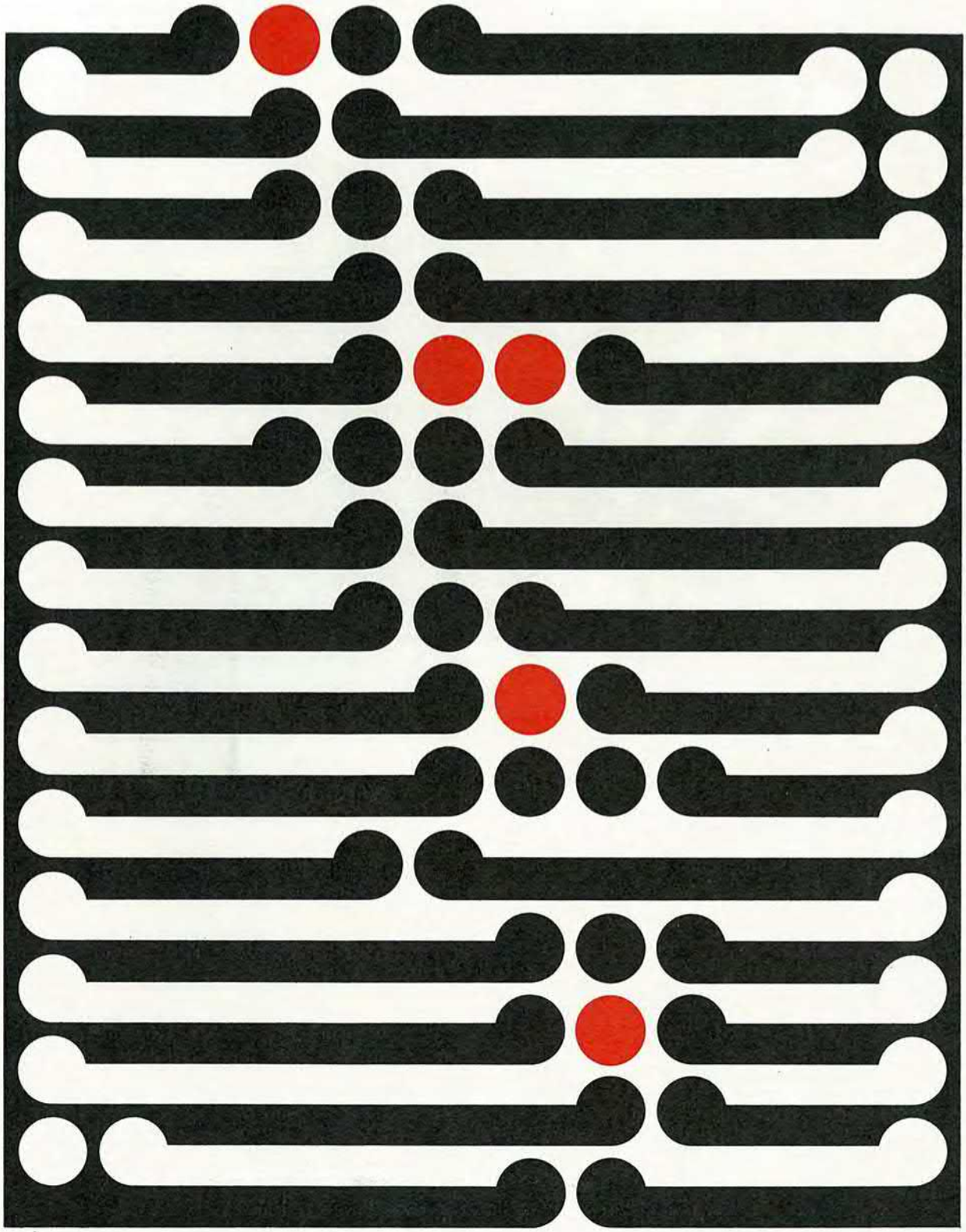




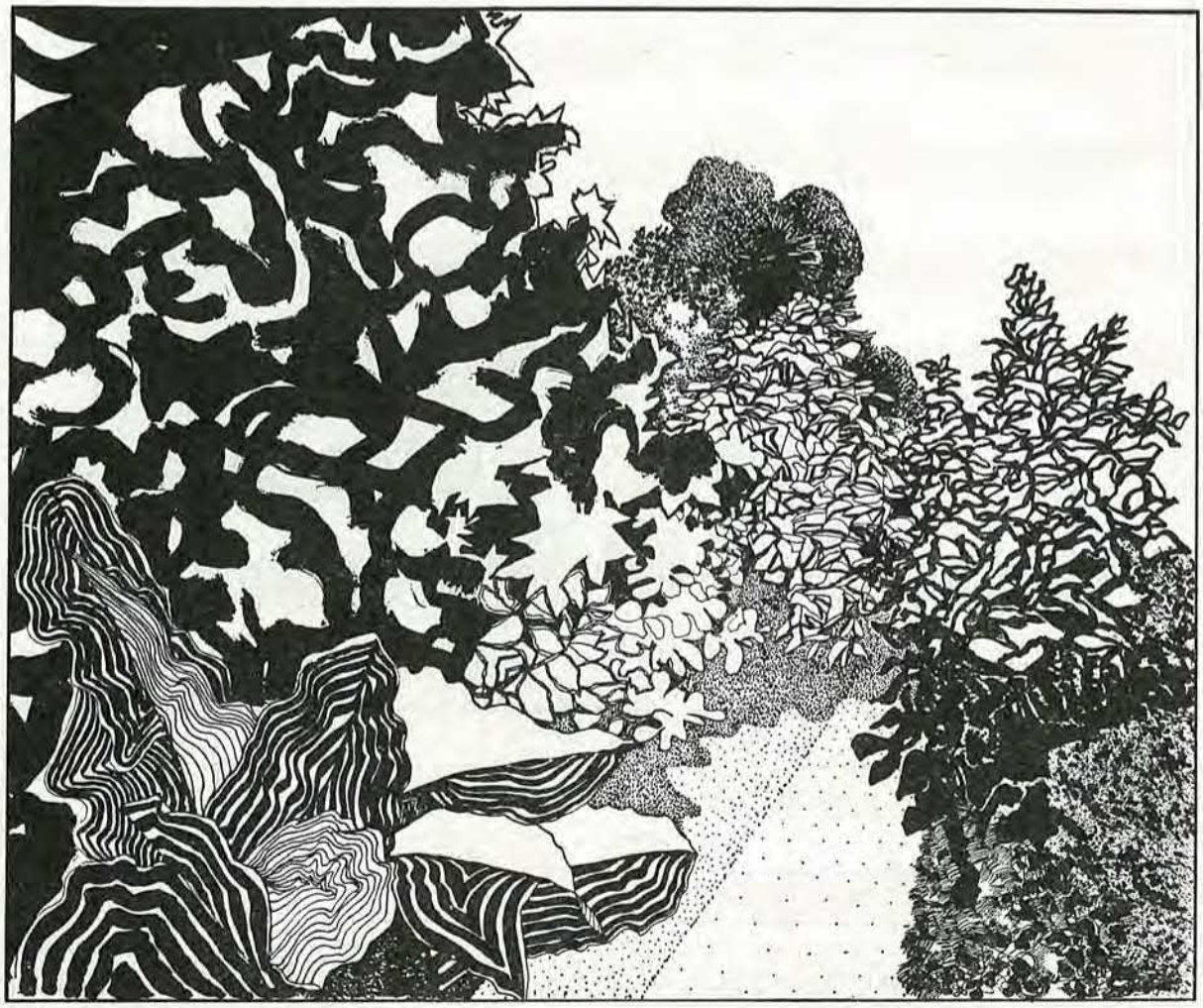
ROBERT ELLIS. Motorways. 22 x 18in.



DON BINNEY. Pacific Frigate Bird. 22 x 18in.



GORDON WALTERS. Tawa. 21 x 16½in.



PATRICK HANLY. Inside the Garden. 16¾ x 20in.

MULTIPLES

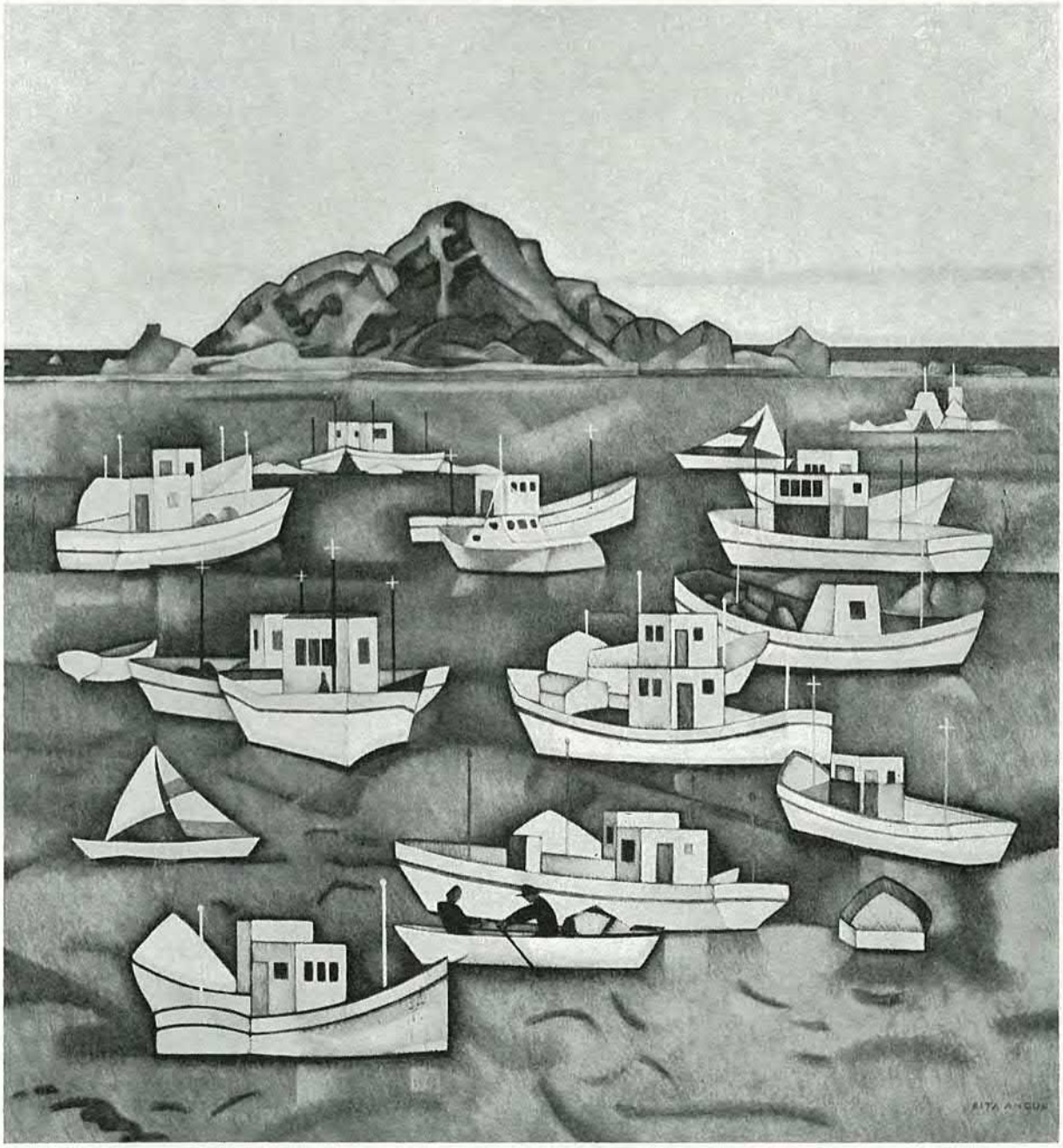
The multiple combines artistic creativity with industrial productive means. Each work expresses the original intention of the artist completely and, potentially, can be produced in unlimited numbers. Each work of an edition is identical. The multiple becomes a normal commercial object with price related to actual production cost and accordingly is quite inexpensive.

The set of multiples being produced by Barry Lett Galleries has work by the following artists: Colin McCahon, Milan Mrkusich, Ralph Hotere, Ross Ritchie, Patrick Hanly, M. T. Woollaston, Michael Smither, Donald Binney, Mervyn Williams, Robert Ellis, Michael Illingworth, Gordon Walters. The works themselves relate to the artist's normal production but have been designed, in most cases, for the silk screen medium. Most of them will be printed under the supervision of Mervyn Williams.

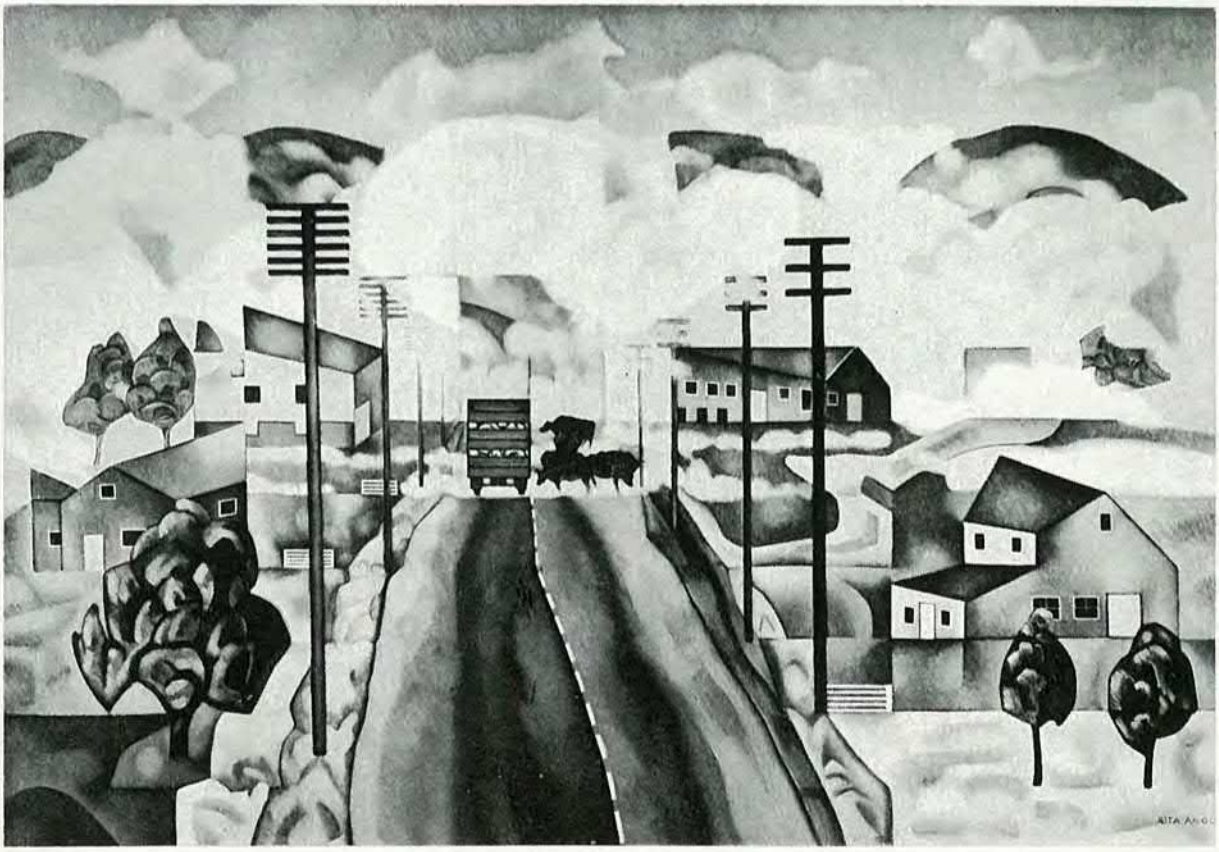
The works will be published in packaged sets with complete notes on the artists and the mediums in which they are produced. They will be printed on a high quality imperial (30 x 22in.) size paper with an image size of approximately 18 x 22in.

The idea of the set is to make available at a very low cost representative works by a number of the leading artists in New Zealand. A prospectus will be issued in the new year and the sets will be issued a little later and should retail for about $40.00.

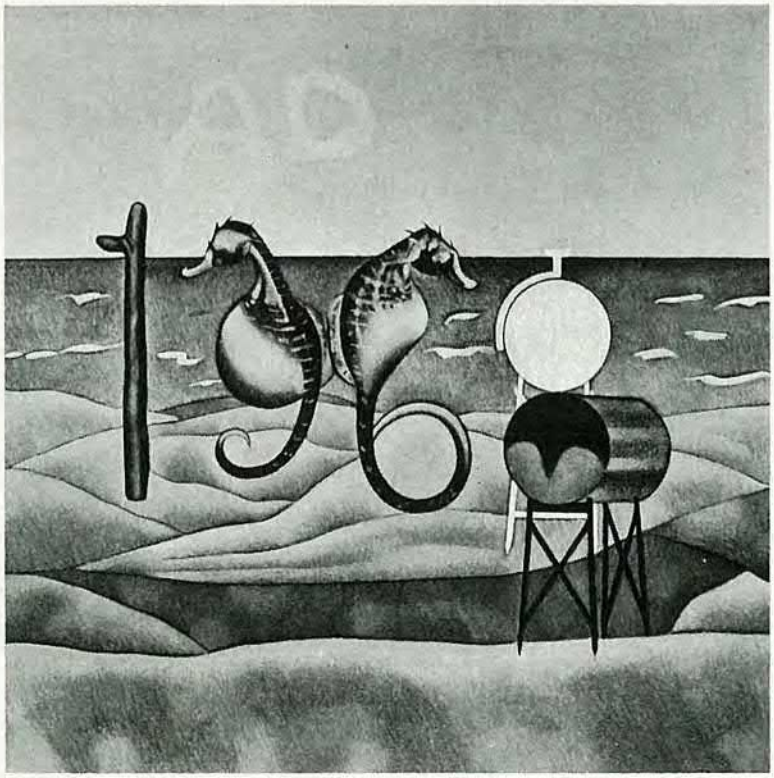
It is hoped that further sets by other artists will be produced in the future.



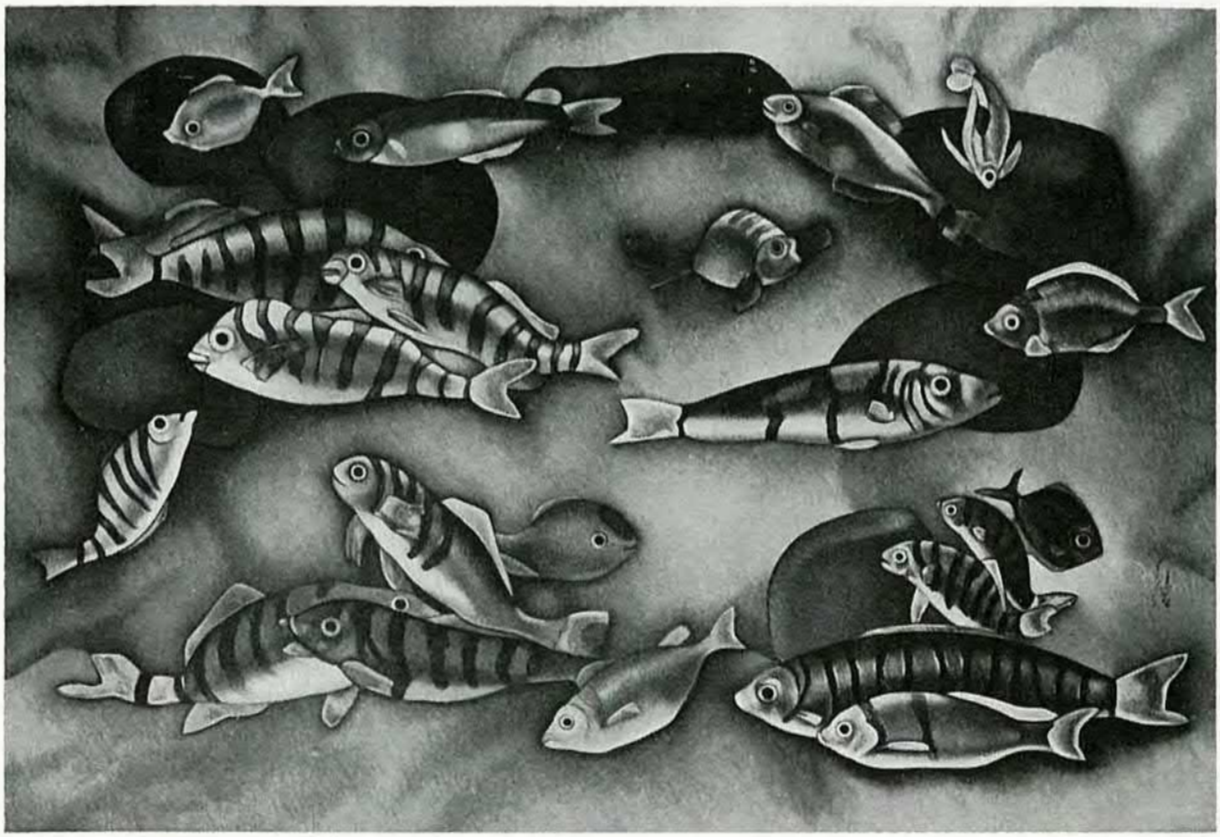
RITA ANGUS. Boats, Island Bay. Oil, 1968. 24 x 24in. (Seven Arts Society).



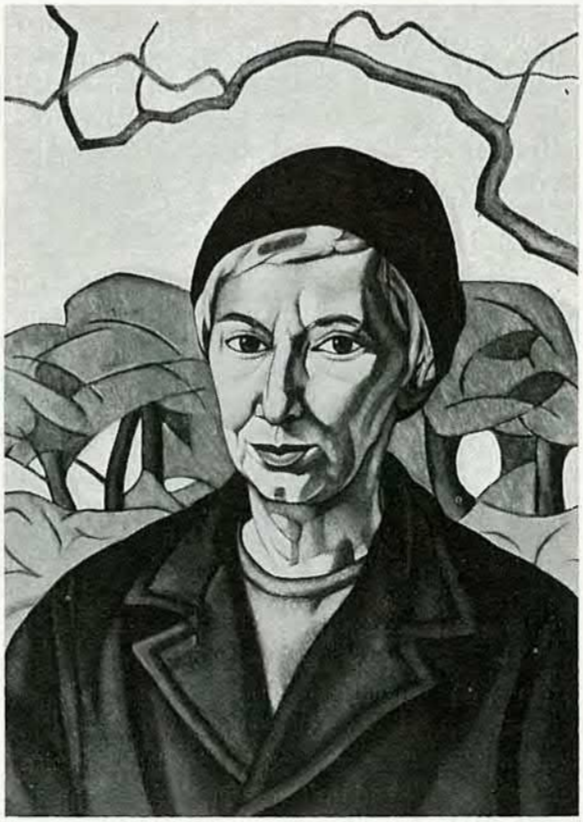
RITA ANGUS.
Fog, Hawke's Bay. Oil, 1968.
23½ x 35in.
(Auckland City Art Gallery).



1968. Oil, 1968. 23½ x 23½in.
(Mr and Mrs R. J. Rands).



RITA ANGUS.
Fish III. Oil, 1968. 23½ x 35½in.
(The artist).



Self-portrait. Oil, 1968. 22¼ x 15½in.
(The artist).

Reviews

The Auckland Scene

In his public address at the Auckland City Art Gallery Clement Greenberg, one of America's most influential critics, stressed the importance of major art centres as a necessary stimulus to the production of great works of art, giving special emphasis to New York's emergence as such a capital and commenting on the structure as well as some of the liabilities of the New York art scene; a topic he felt was relevant to Auckland as the only New Zealand city having an established art scene. If the visit of Greenberg had an effect somewhat like a cloudburst over Auckland, the brief appearance of the English critic Robert Melville was more like that of a shower. Melville, regrettably, was not at all well and this probably accounted for his reluctance to address a public gathering such as the one undertaken by Greenberg. Instead he confined his activities to meeting a number of local painters and viewing their work. The aspect that seems to have impressed him about New Zealand painting was its sense of independence.

Another visitor, but no stranger to these shores, Len Lye was in this country with his wife on a personal pilgrimage. Born in Christchurch in 1901 he now lives in New York. On the evening of December 28, at an informal gathering in the Barry Lett Galleries, Mr Lye screened some of his films and described various aspects of his work. Amongst the films shown were *Colour Box, Trade Tattoo, Rhythm, Free Radicals* and *Particles in Space.* As an innovator Lye was the first to use the non-camera technique of painting directly onto film as seen in *Colour Box* (1935), a technique adopted and developed in another direction by Norman McLaren. Lye also pioneered such photomontage effects as the use of conventional black and white film combined with stencilled colour patterns, as for instance, in *Trade Tattoo* (1937). In later films like *Free Radicals* (1958) the images are scratched, or etched into the celluloid. One strong characteristic of all these films was the persistent rhythm, visual and musical, perfectly matched and often accompanied by an element of wit. More recently his activities as a kinetic sculptor have brought his name to the fore. Although acquainted with still photographs of his 'tangible motion sculptures' the film shown about him and his work emphasized the complete inadequacy of photographs to give any idea of how these sculptures look and function. One thing that became apparent during the evening was the coherent outlook behind both his films and his sculpture. Vitally important to this outlook is the need to find physical rapport with the work being created rather than mere theoretical involvement. This physical involvement was further deepened through Lye's passion for primitive art and music: a love that began during his New Zealand years when he came across primitive masks and artifacts from the South Pacific and New Guinea areas. It is obvious from his choice of music as soundtrack to several of his films—in his preference for vigorous jazzy rhythms and action, plus the implied reference to primitive art and religion behind many of his statements—that Lye believes in a sort of artistic pantheism, primitive and mystical, yet conditioned by a fervent individualism and the sophisticated techniques of the West.

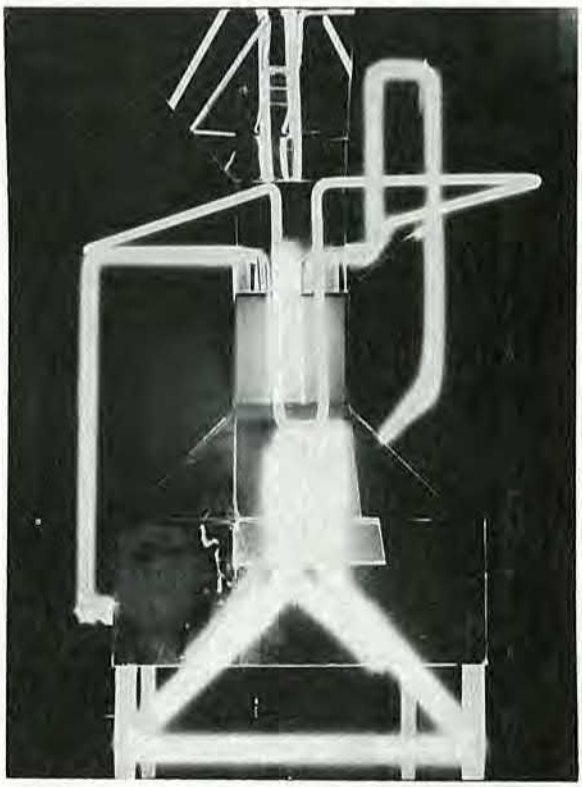
Towards the end of November Moller's New Gallery opened. It is an extension of a well-established firm of artists' suppliers and picture framers. Although not large, this gallery is adequate for most exhibiting purposes and hopes have been expressed that it will cater for the younger and unknown artists; thus filling the gap that has been vacant since the closure of the Uptown Gallery several years ago.

The two overseas exhibitions shown in Auckland, both from Australia, were also seen in other parts of New Zealand. Except for the enthusiasm of a few, Sidney Nolan's *River Bend* panels received a lukewarm reception that contrasted with the general public interest shown in his *Ned Kelly* series. The exhibition of Australian sculpture *Form in Action,* although stimulating a good deal of curiosity, did not fare much better. This was partly due to the inclusion of some pseudo-modern pieces and some ill-conceived works like Klippel's 'junk' sculpture. However, as it stood, the exhibition gave the impression that Australian sculpture is on much the same footing as New Zealand sculpture with the sculptors in both countries still working out their own individual styles.

The young sculptors' work dominated the exhibition of recent sculpture at the Barry Lett Galleries, but in general the quality of the exhibits was erratic.

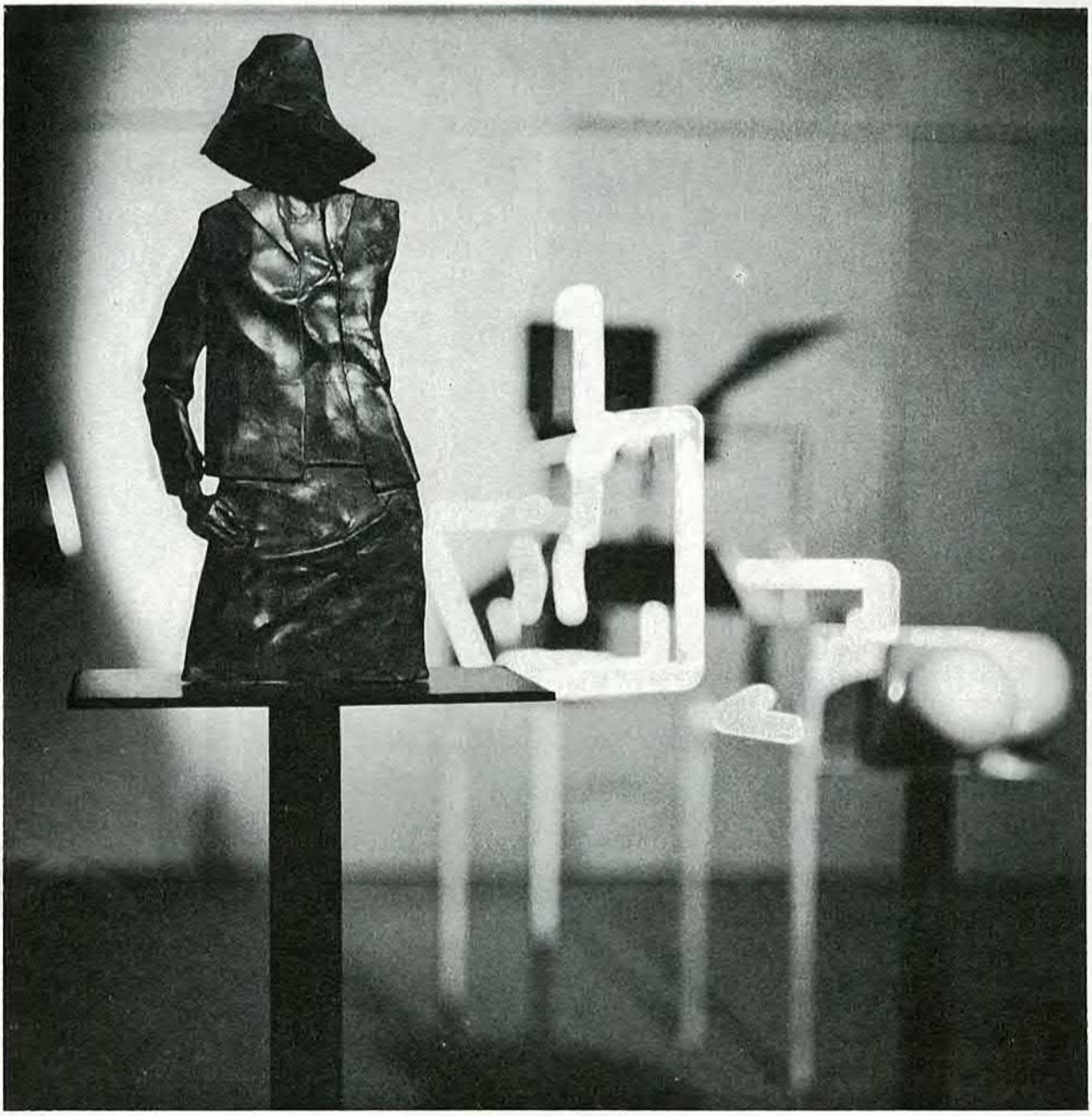
Even though the reasoning behind Molly Macalister's *Fledgling* was discernible its total effectiveness as an image miscarried. Much the same could be said about Warren Viscoe's brightly painted wooden pieces or *Summer Snapshot* by Paul Dibble which was more intriguing for its suggestive possibilities than for its actual performance as sculpture. The success of Don Driver's almost identical works *Black* and *Yellow* was hard to judge as they required a large wall area on which to work rather than the restricted environment offered by the gallery. The moderate scale of the pieces by Marte Szirmay and Graham Brett escaped such problems and the virtues of their work could be more easily appreciated. If Brett's five 'Figurative' pieces were amongst the most admired works in the exhibition, they did suffer slightly from a flattening of the three-dimensional form which imposed on the spectator a frontal viewing position—a limitation that did not seem altogether justifiable. Beyond doubt the works that aroused most interest were those by Leo Narby, particularly his *Temporal No. 1.* The almost novel visual element in these sculptures is the neon tube-lights which flicker on and off to a set programme, but unlike some overseas light sculpture, these works retain a 'solid' sculptural core that utilizes materials capable of reflecting the light or letting the light shine through. Amongst the travellers recently returned who had seen similar work overseas it was felt that Narby's pieces stood up to favourable comparison.

The tenth New Zealand Universities' Fine Arts Exhibition gave the public a chance to see what students are doing in the visual arts. The inclusion of work by Szirmay, Brett, Narby from Auckland and Philip Rooke from Christchurch gave the sculpture section a professional look that was absent from the painting and graphic sections and which the odd painting of merit could not rectify. Holding the exhibition on the Auckland University campus meant that the display was contained within the right context—that of work done by students. Although I would not wish to dampen the ardour of young artists, too frequently they rush into one-man or group exhibitions without first considering the consequences. To show one's work publicly should imply the acceptance of a professional outlook with all its standards, obligations and liabilities, but in the young artists' haste for recognition this is often forgotten. Some aspects of this situation were too clearly apparent in John Nicol's exhibition where



LEO NARBY. Temporal No. 1. Chrome steel, perspex and Neon tubing, 1968. 67in.

the inclusion of two reasonably effective works could not cancel out the inferior quality of the remaining dozen paintings and drawings. The fifteen pairs of highly finished pencil drawings by Bob Stewart fared somewhat better. In these the technical skill with which the pencil was handled carried the day rather than any implications derived from the subject, a sort of staccato theme and variation based on a set of fixed images—telephone pole, road sign, crash barrier, fence and simplified landscape background—as if they were stills from a film. But when isolated each drawing failed to carry much weight and any compositional or tonal fault became increasingly evident. Amongst other young artists recently studying at the Auckland University School of Art (and included in the inaugural exhibition at Moller's New Gallery) were Richard Killeen, Ian Scott, Andrew McAlpine and Robin White. Miss White's *Self Portrait* with its strong lineal quality and faintly Cézanne-like colour was a modest but satisfying effort. The strangely dream-like character of Ian Scott's *Ursula at the Kauri Camp* was badly shaken by the painter's inability to handle the conventions of three-dimensional form so obviously essential to



GRAHAM BRETT. Large Hat. Bronze, 1968. 20in. Works by Marte Szirmay and Leo Narby in background.

his visual language. One revealing aspect common to the paintings of White, McAlpine, Scott, Killeen and to the drawings of Stewart and Vasant Pragji, is the insistence on representational art with an apparent rejection of so-called abstract art.

It is only rarely that tapestries originating in New Zealand are seen, but in Louise Henderson's exhibition the pride of place was the tapestry designed by her and woven by Zena Abbott and Vonda McGregor. Its design, while simple, is bold, with its combination of white, black and greys skilfully balanced. The discipline imposed by this kind of work shows Louise Henderson's ability to advantage, and it is to be hoped that she will exploit this talent to the full.

The retrospective exhibition of work by E. Mervyn Taylor presented an opportunity to reassess his significance in the visual arts of this country. One plain fact emerged. The claim frequently made on his behalf that he was a major New Zealand artist

was not born out by the quality of the work shown. There may be no doubt that he has a place, but his importance must be relegated to a somewhat minor rôle.

The North African and Mediterranean watercolours by John Weeks had an historical importance that escaped many people unfamiliar with his work. These watercolours were painted at a critical period of Weeks' development and some knowledge of them is essential if his later work is to be properly understood. After his return to New Zealand in 1929 the Moroccan and Mediterranean themes were used and re-used in his work of the nineteen-thirties and continued as a source for many of his paintings throughout the rest of his life. However, in the absence of any such historical perspective, many viewers found that the works tended to date and took the flavour of period pieces.

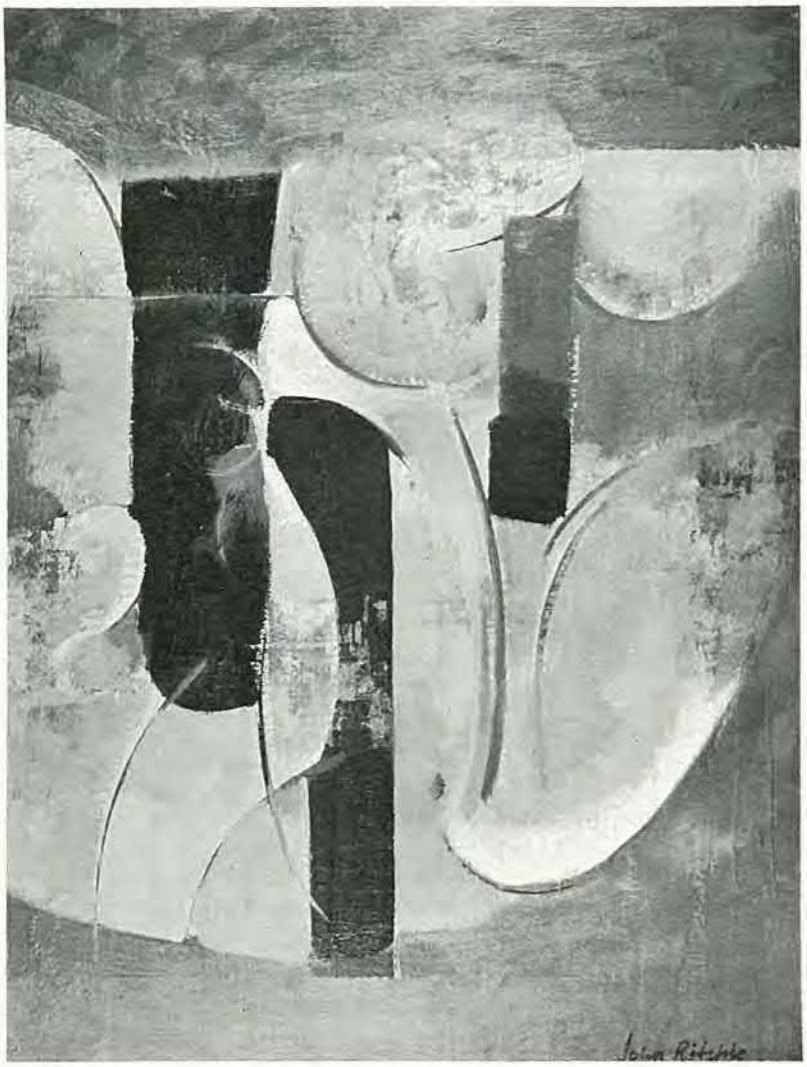
May Smith's drawings and watercolours were of subjects drawn mainly from in and around Auckland and the Coromandel area: close-ups of old houses and landscapes. Nothing in this exhibition equalled her two paintings included in the Auckland Art Society's New Zealand women painters' exhibition. The strongest and most coherent of her recent work was *Under the Motorway* which had a strength absent from most of her other watercolours. This seems typical of May Smith's output which, although uneven, occasionally includes a work of real merit. On the other hand John Ritchie is a painter who can be relied upon consistently to produce work of a reasonable technical and artistic standard but who rarely goes beyond this. While there are admirable qualities about his work too frequently his paintings look as if they are little more than well ordered pictures of subjects about which the painter has little to say. In many ways Ritchie is a painter who has never really discovered his true identity so that outside influences, such as that of Graham Sutherland, are still much in evidence. In *Ebb Tide* and *Rock and Tide,* if not wholly engrossed in the subjects, he has attempted something more vital than is usual in his painting.

An instructor at the Wellington Polytechnic School of Design, Bob Bassant's work was pleasant and, in the main, strongly reminiscent of the abstract and semi-abstract painting that was in vogue in Paris during the nineteen-fifties. His exhibition also included a few works which owed something to the Pop Art idiom and it was from amongst these that the most interesting paintings came. Some of these had areas that were well painted but the overall handling of the forms and underlying ideas was not always convincing. If it had not been for the ambiguous form of the beach ball in the foreground of *Beach Party* then this painting may have succeeded, but as it was, only *Litt'e Red Wagon* achieved anything like artistic coherence.

From the general public's viewpoint the most popular exhibition was probably Alan Thornton's *Portraits of Aucklanders.* These portraits had a strange mixture of vitality, crudeness, occasional insight and unabashed naivety that worked both for and against them as paintings. From the strictest dictates of portraiture the painter's assessment of what a person looks like physically is often unconvincing, as in his portrait of Eric McCormick. His best portraits, such as those of Robin St John, Patrick Hanly, Frank Sargeson, Graham Brett and Maurice Shadbolt suggest a degree of genuine rapport between painter and sitter that helps to bring them alive as true portraits. Surprisingly, however, the most integrated and convincing work in the exhibition was not in a real sense a portrait but *Girl with a Yellow Hat.*

The paintings by Ted Smyth forming the series *Which Other Eden* seemed too involved in a kind of mysticism that I myself found unconvincing. His four 'portrait' paintings had more bite, but a drawing of a woman seated on a chair was the only work to reveal the sort of sensitivity that should have been expected in his paintings. A similar situation prevails with Malcolm Warr. However, Warr is more persuasive and his exhibition of monoprints had a directness that is both their strength and their weakness. They depend too much on a superficial charm that cannot hide the frequent indifference of his drawing or the casual realization of his forms: faults most noticeable in his depiction of ferns and animals. If some of Smyth's best works show a satirical streak, then Warr reveals an almost whimsical touch, but neither gives the impression that they are painters capable of really dealing wth ideas. Often Warr's monoprints suggest that the subject is used as an excuse to make a picture rather than the other way round. At best they produce pleasant visual effects that show him to be, in essence, a decorative artist. Only in a few landscapes, with their stronger shapes and dark colours, is there a hint of more serious things.

Sylvia Robins' first solo exhibition included some very bad work, especially amongst her figurative

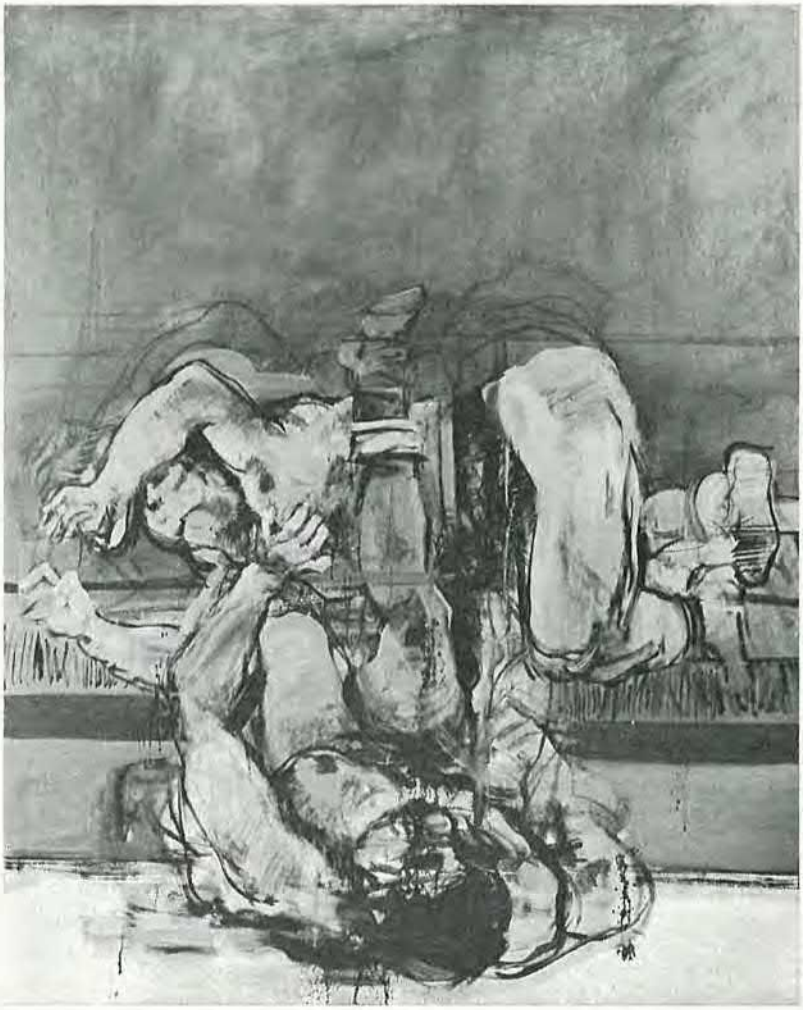


JOHN RITCHIE. Rock and Tide. Oil. 23¾ x 17½in.

'Maori studies' which, although not necessarily badly drawn, depend on pictorial conventions that were fashionable at least sixty years ago. Looking almost as if coming from another hand, the *Water over Rocks* paintings were much more mature in comparison with her other landscapes and figure paintings. Despite some clumsiness and vagueness in her imagery the best *Water over Rocks,* such as numbers III, IX and XIV, do read correctly in terms of tone, colour and unity of idea.

Another, but more talented painter, who suffers from another type of inconsistency is Garth Tapper. All too frequently an overtly illustrative element plagues his work and the bravado technique, especially apparent in his figurative work, rarely lifts them into the realm of serious painting. However, like the still-lifes in his previous exhibition, the paintings of flounders in his latest exhibition clearly show where his real ability lies. Rather than the 'finished pictures', the best of the flounder paintings were the simplest. These show his ability to put down an image in direct terms, often within a limited colour range, that escapes any suggestion of slickness.

Although as yet unsure of himself, the work of David Armitage who is in his mid-twenties, revealed the most increasing potential as a painter of all those who have made a first appearance during the past year. The earlier work, which includes the *Wrestlers,* possesses a technical dexterity that helped to cover up the occasional lapses in other directions. In these works the lineal use of the brush gave to the images the look as if they were drawn rather than painted, a method that suggests a debt to Francis Bacon and Toulouse Lautrec. His studies after Goya,



DAVID ARMITAGE. Wrestlers.
Oil, 1967-8. 83 x 65in.

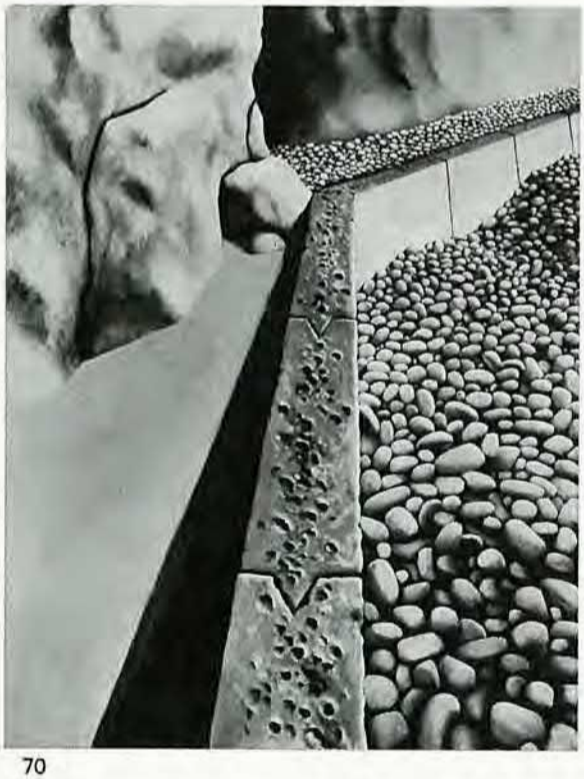
such as the mutilated body of a man impaled on the limb of what remains of a tree (*The Disasters of the War,* no. 37) link the earlier works to the later silk-screen printings. In these paintings the impact relies, not as it should have done on images manipulated towards artistic ends, but on the immediacy of the basically photographic images themselves. The image of the exposed human brain or the girl being strangled are compelling in their gruesome implications but these implications remain outside the confines of the picture. In this sense Armitage has improperly understood the proposition he himself had put forward, for it must be assumed that he was endeavouring to create works of art. While the sets of repeated images were obviously carefully arranged within the picture plane, the images lacked graphic dimension. What they seemed to require was the subtlety of handling that can be seen in the best of Andy Warhol's works along this line where each photographic image is lightly modified from its neighbouring ones. However, if Armitage's aims miscarried one was still aware that he possessed a talent well worth encouraging.

Suzanne Goldberg's exhibition was disappointing. In spite of some new departures in a few paintings like *Silent Water, Waikato Pool* and *Desert Thoroughfare,* the general impression left by her recent work was of a painter who has not progressed in any marked degree over the past couple of years. At best her work remains pleasant, even tantalizing, but only rarely can it withstand prolonged and repeated viewing. In contrast Ted Bracey's landscapes show a marked improvement. No longer does he rely so heavily on secondhand ideas for there are signs that he is moving towards a more personal vision that centres on the fact that he himself has

something he wants to say. If there was a general unity about the landscapes by Bracey, the landscapes in Michael Smither's exhibition were an assortment of styles and regrettably the indifferent quality of more than a few works diminished the impact and reputation of paintings and painter. Four main groups could be sorted out with some in a style amounting to a local brand of abstract expressionism and of which *Lake and Landscape II* was a notable success, to others in his highly finished, highly detailed manner which included some of the best work in the exhibition like *Rock Composition III, Rock with Mountain* and *Alfred Road Bridge.* In this latter work the trout swimming suspended in the stream was a *tour-de-force* in artistic empathy and technique: a triumph not consistently carried through to all other parts of the painting. Amongst a set of watercolours painted in Australia a few like *Desert with Mauve Hill, Bush I* and *Woomera* stood out as reasonably successful evocations of particular places rather than just exercises in colour effects.

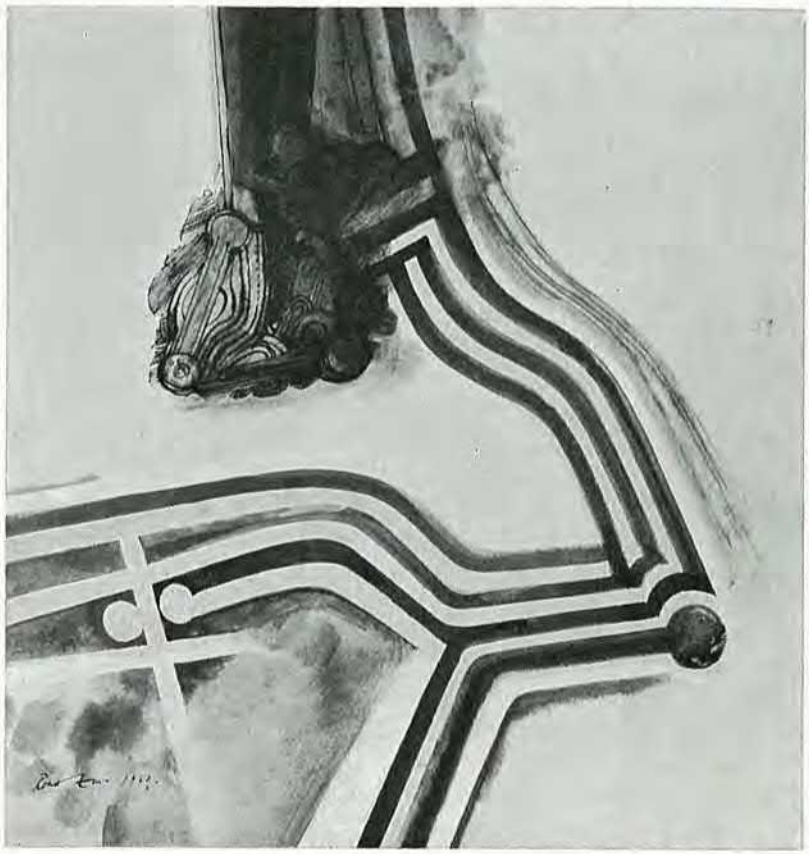
Doris Lusk is a well-established painter yet her exhibition at the New Vision Gallery was her first solo display in Auckland. Landscapes dominated, but also showing were two far from exceptional still-lifes and some portraits. The portraits in water-

MICHAEL SMITHER. Rock Composition, III. Oil, 1968. 48 x 36in.



colour included two impressive works, *Portrait of a Printer* and *Bashir Baraki,* that are freely and loosely painted yet in spite of the daring method in which the pigment is floated onto the paper the forms are clearly indicated. By comparison the portraits in oils seem rather studied with little of the drive that characterized the watercolours. However, in the landscapes her best oil paintings take on something of the quality and freedom that distinguishes the watercolours. This was particularly noticeable in *Alpine Landscape* where the lightness of touch added considerably to the suggestion of clear mountain air and freshly fallen snow. Another excellent landscape in oils was *Takaka Valley, Nelson,* but her most pertinent achievements lay in her watercolour landscapes. Too frequently the skill and mastery essential to good watercolour painting are minimized as if achievements in this medium were of necessity inferior to that of oil painting; a prejudice that is long standing and yet in terms of quality can be quite arbitrary. If there are occasions when Doris Lusk's technique runs away on her and areas in a painting fail to achieve their desired results or give rise to ambiguities, in other watercolours like *Canterbury Landscape,* and *Mountains, Canterbury* her status as a watercolourist is beyond question. As she has said: 'When painting, I find that the images for which one seeks, form almost unconsciously from the liaison between the medium, past experience and immediate creativity.' This seems very true of works like *Canterbury Landscape* where her assured technique, the freedom, the liquidity and appreciation of the medium's capabilities, free from showiness, are qualities often ignored by other more popular watercolourists tackling the New Zealand landscape. It is the unpretentiousness of Doris Lusk's work that often leads people to underestimate her standing amongst New Zealand painters.

Another Christchurch painter, Trevor Moffitt, exhibited his *Gold Miners* and *Mackenzie* paintings: two series that are said to have attracted a commendable reputation in Christchurch. The attempt to turn the famous sheep stealer James Mackenzie into a myth hero (like Nolan's Ned Kelly) seems to me to be a retrograde step back to the nineteen-twenties and early 'thirties when such themes were consciously pursued as New Zealand painters sought identification with their environment. Because they are less ambitious the small paintings in the *Gold Miners* series were the more successful and their evenness of quality and colour scheme added to



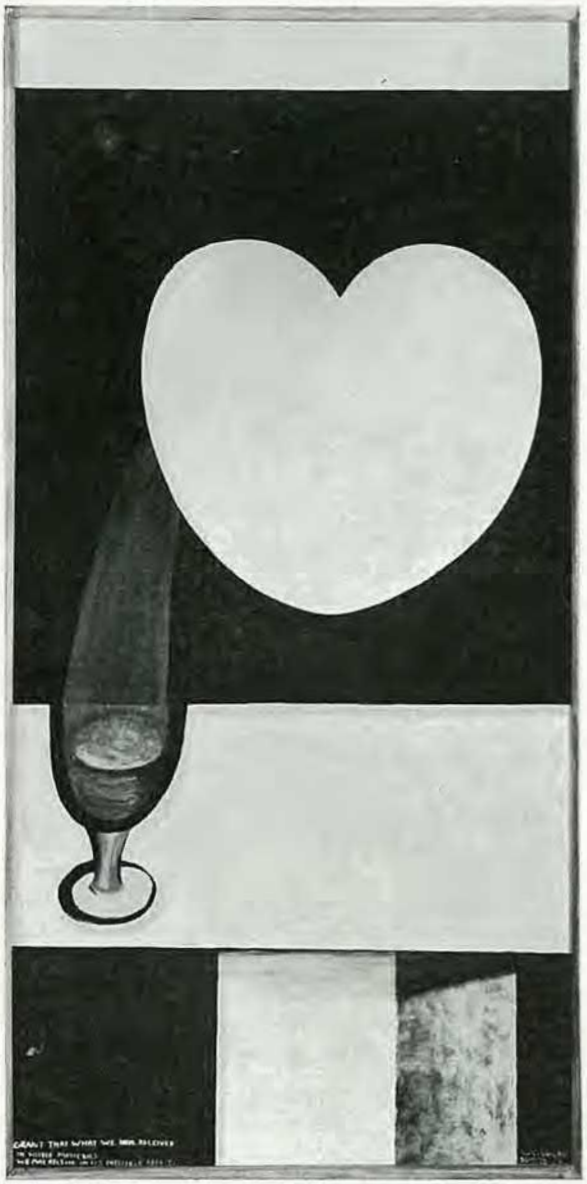
ROBERT ELLIS. Motorway 2. Coloured ink on paper, 1968. 27½ x 27½in.

their sense of unity in a way that was absent from the larger, more emotional *Mackenzie* paintings.

It looks as if Michael Illingworth is beginning to realize that exaggerated depictions of human sex organs and other tactics apparently intended to shock have ceased to have this effect, and if any question can be raised, then it is more likely one touching the artist's taste rather than an affront to public prudity. In his most recent exhibition pictures of this nature were the exception: a reversal from his exhibitions of a year or two back. Other pictorial aspects are now being emphasized and his work is the better because of this. His idea of a background has undergone a slow evolution over the years so that now an interior such as in *Girl in a Blue Hat* has become possible, while his colour combinations have become more subtle. Paintings like *Photographer, Girl in a Blue Hat* and *Portrait of a Man of Consequence* are delightful little works that are also highly successful, but quite a few of the other works fell below the level of these. The element of fantasy that has always played an important role in Illingworth's work is just as active in exploring new possibilities. This was most apparent in the strange geometrical *Flower Paintings* which by a process of metamorphosis grow into faces to become *Flower Portraits*. Another new departure was the primitive-like still-lifes of which the larger one was the better example. In many ways this offering of pictures by Illingworth was his happiest exhibition yet seen.

As the title for all Robert Ellis's drawings and gouaches in his latest exhibition suggests, the *Motorways* series was well within the painter's normally accepted iconography, although, in isolation, a few of these new works suggest some departures from his usual approach. Again, as in some of his *City* paintings, images are included that, like the *koru* pattern, appear as an arbitrary element within the picture. In some of the drawings the rôle played by colour takes on a fresh dimension not usually associated with Ellis's choice of colours. However, like much of Robert Ellis's work, many of these drawings, while extremely accomplished, are somewhat reserved in feeling and only occasionally does one stand out, and speak as it were, with a warmer voice.

Gordon Walters is another painter who tends to be associated with a motif that has become increasingly familiar. But in his exhibition during May-



COLIN McCAHON. Visible Mysteries, 4. P.V.A., 1968. 48 x 25⅞in.

June this motif, not unlike the Maori *koru* pattern, ceased to dominate, for in a number of his paintings it had been replaced with other basic motifs. These new departures were interesting but they lacked the optical ambiguity so vital in the more familiar works. Although based on a repeated pattern the new works create a different effect and the potential interlocking play of positive against negative that is the main feature found in the *koru* patterned ones was absent, and because of this many of the new works lacked any real internal rhythm. From amongst the best of these *Waikanae* was the most interesting but unfortunately it was marred by some careless workmanship that was surprising from one who is normally so fastidious about the finish of his work. Another, much younger non-objective painter who was showing at the same time as Walters was John Perry. He prefaced his exhibition of *Shadowboxes* (not the most apt of titles) with several quotations, one being Léger's famous maxim: 'Nowadays the work of art must compare with the manufactured object.' The implied attitude behind this statement is important to an understanding of what Perry is aiming at. All his works followed the same basic construction. They consist of irregular straight-edge geometrical shapes cut out of cardboard to form a shallow bas-relief and set on a flat background board. Most of these were painted aluminium silver set against colour, either yellow or orange. A few were in metallized blue on a white background. One basic design was repeated in two or three works but the templet used to cut the basic shape can be used to produce an indefinite number if required. Within each of these main units the internal lineal relief is open to a number of variations. In their manufacture as well as in the finished paintwork everything is done to eliminate the human element from these works. It is dehumanized art for a mechanical age. If it were possible to measure degree of non-objectiveness then Ralph Hotere's *Black Paintings* would surely score high marks. They are the nearest we have seen to minimal art. They are stark; they are intensely black with thin lines of colour which divide the surface into four virtually equal parts so that the lines form a simple cross. The highly finished black surfaces are immaculate and have been buffed so that the swirling buff marks catch the light, and as the viewer walks past one of these works the reflected light shimmers across the surface. This shimmering effect, coupled with the impression that the lines seem to float above the painting's black surface, suggests a feeling of immense depth as if more than an illusion of real space were being created. In these paintings Hotere followed two formats, one square, the other an upright oblong, and it was in the large oblong paintings that he achieved his greatest effect.

During October Colin McCahon held an exhibition which clearly divided into two parts. The first called *Colin McCahon's Bargain Basement!* comprised several sets of small landscapes. These were interesting but, on the whole, slight: a fact of which McCahon was aware, as the covering title *Bargain*

Basement suggested. It was the other works, the *Visible Mysteries,* that contributed real significance to this exhibition. Although new works they do have roots in the past as McCahon's subtitle indicated: 'a series of eight paintings arising from the *Bellini Madonna* series and the more recent series *Still Life with an Altar.*' If the *Visible Mysteries* are uneven in quality they mostly avoid the crudities of the *Still Lifes,* with only No. 3 giving rise to similar doubts. As paintings the *Visible Mysteries* are particularly tough, not just in the uncompromising way they are painted, but through the subject's associations, which, with the symbolic heart of Christ hovering above an altar, some viewers found more than they could take. Three of these paintings, Nos. 1, 4 and 5, are amongst the most significant works he has painted for several years. Well organized, yet not too obviously so, the symbols are convincingly integrated with the idea behind the picture which is summed up in the inscription painted on each work: 'Grant that what we have received in visible mysteries we may receive in its invisible effect.' For one who has already achieved some notable successes along similar lines, these latest works add a new dimension to McCahon's stature as a painter of religious themes.

Auckland City Art Gallery
Sidney Nolan 'River Bend' panels: 12 June-3 July. E. Mervyn Taylor retrospective: 19 June-3 July. 'Form in Action', Australian sculpture: 8-21 July.

Barry Lett Galleries
John Perry: 27 May-7 June. 20/20 Multiple prints: 10-21 June. Teuane Tibbo: 10-21 June. D. K. Richmond: 10-21 June. Robert Ellis: 24 June-5 July. David Armitage: 5-16 August. Ralph Hotere: 19-30 August. Ted Bracey: 9-20 September. Suzanne Goldberg: 30 September-11 October. Colin McCahon: 15-25 October. Bob Stewart: 29 October-8 November. Alan Thornton: 12-22 November. Fourth Annual sculpture exhibition: 26 November-6 December. Michael Illingworth: 10-24 December.

New Vision Gallery
Gordon Walters: 27 May-8 June. Malcolm Warr: 17-28 June. Vasant Khushal Pragji: 1-5 July. Ted Smyth: 8-19 July. May Smith: 5-16 August. Ruth Faerber: 19-30 August. Louise Henderson: 21 October-1 November. Trevor Moffitt: 4-15 November. Doris Lusk: 18-30 November. Ceramics and Jewellery: 5-24 December.

John Leech Gallery
John Ritchie: 11-28 June. Bob Bassant: 27 August-13 September. John Weeks: 17 September- 4 October. Michael Smither: 23 October-1 November. Garth Tapper: 20 November-3 December. English Sporting Prints: 5-20 December.

Auckland Society of Arts
Sylvia Robins: 12-23 August.

Mollers Gallery
Clifford Murray: 24 June-5 July. Michael Stockholm: 4-15 November. 'New Gallery' group show: 26 November-6 December.

Giotto Gallery
Audrey Keehan: 10-24 October.

Burnt Olive Gallery
John Nicol: 21 November-5 December.

Wynyard Tavern
Joan Graham: 2-20 December.

GORDON H. BROWN

The Wellington Scene

The past six months in Wellington may well be noted for the establishment of tangible evidence for the existence of the spirit which has seemed to be dormant among local artists for so long that it has led to Wellington's reputation of being, in many ways, insignificant in the New Zealand art scene.

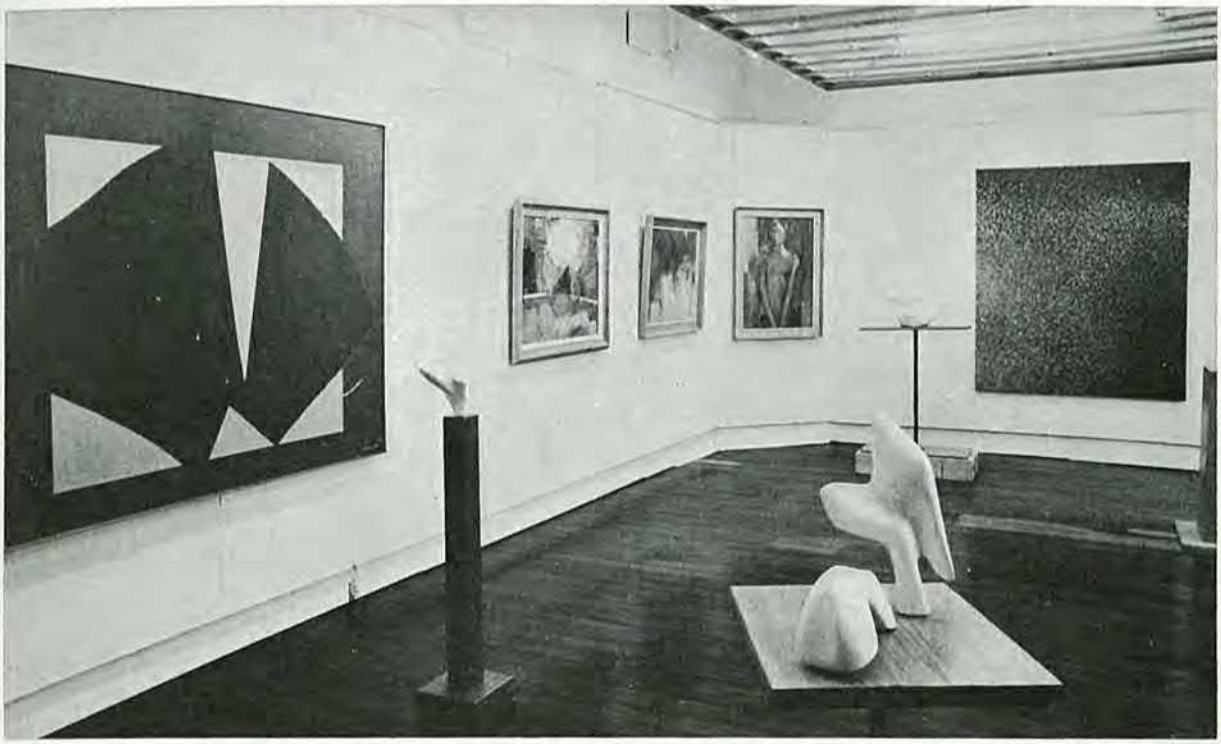
It has marked a new era in which local artists may use the city to exhibit their work and has re-established a centre of communication, with four central galleries, each different in concept, but each aiming to develop and bring to Wellington the best in New Zealand art.

These are the Centre Gallery, of which Mrs Claire Jennings has recently become director following the resignation of Elva Bett, who has gone into a Studio Gallery in Cuba Street with Catherine Duncan; the Peter McLeavey Gallery, also in Cuba Street; and the Dunhill Foundation Room, now in a different section of the New Zealand Display Centre.

During the last six months the Centre Gallery has featured three particularly significant exhibitions, all showing different aspects of New Zealand art. *New Zealand Painting Today,* was brought to Wellington with the aid of a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant and contained the work of four local artists, Rita Angus, Colette Rands, Helen Stewart and Wong Sing Tai. Group A held their annual exhibition, and a show of the 'unknowns' was also presented.

In December an exhibition of post-graduate printing and photography from the Wellington Polytechnic was shown.

Claire Jennings hopes to re-establish some of the 'old' Centre Gallery tradition with lunch-time films, and also to provide further opportunity for some of the younger and less known artists to show their work.



The Bett-Duncan Studio Gallery showing works by Helen Stewart, Tanya Ashken, Paul Olds and John Drawbridge.

The Bett-Duncan Studio Gallery opened in December with a wine and cheese evening, 20/20 Vision Print Show and display of work by Doreen Blumhardt, Flora Christeller, Muriel Moody and Bob Wallace. The gallery is of 632 square feet and although most of one wall is taken up with windows there are facilities for making further hanging space available.

The aim of the directors is to show the best of New Zealand work and by doing so to fulfil a need in Wellington by providing a gallery of the calibre of Auckland's Barry Lett Galleries. The first major show in the gallery opened in early February with works by three Wellington artists and four works by sculptor Tanya Ashken. Helen Stewart showed a mural, four interchangeable panels in oils and Paul Olds exhibited three distinguished paintings including a sensitive portrait and a haunting landscape *Otira*. John Drawbridge's four large canvasses dominated the exhibition. His *All Red* and *Mainly Blue* were a departure for this painter—brilliant mosaics of floating colour.

In the same building Peter McLeavey is running a dealer gallery in which he is to show the 'finest creative painting in New Zealand' by working with a select group of major, established artists, although he hopes also to encourage some of the younger N.Z. painters. Although this is his first gallery McLeavey has been interested in New Zealand art for some time and has been dealing on a small scale for several years. While the gallery is a part-time job it is his major interest.

During 1968 his major exhibitions included Colin McCahon's *Northland Panels* and Toss Woollaston's paintings, drawings and watercolours of the Bayley's Hill area near Stratford where he was born.

The Dunhill Cultural Foundation now has an unobtrusively but expensively decorated room of 2,460 square feet with facilities for exhibiting work of all sizes. The new gallery was opened in mid-November, shortly after which an exhibition of work by Peter Janssen and Duncan Dempsey was shown.

Prior to moving into the new gallery, an exhibition entitled *Two Themes* by John Pine Snadden, the work of Helen Stewart and Gwen Knight and the work of Arthur Dagley from Tauranga was shown in three separate exhibitions.

However, the highlight of shows during the year was the exhibition of Rodin and his contemporaries which created considerable public interest.

The past six months has also been significant for the establishment of the 'New Group' for which

nearly 40 Wellington painters were approached by Elva Bett for their views on the formation of 'an affiliation of individual artists with a common aim'.

The proposal met with an enthusiastic response and for about three months meetings were held fortnightly, giving members an opportunity to meet, discuss their work and see films on the work of others. Despite the drop in numbers attending the meetings which was largely attributable to the lack of a suitable venue, the spirit has survived and it is hoped that the Bett-Duncan Studio-Gallery may become the headquarters of the group.

There has been action too at the National Art Gallery where Melvin Day has begun work as director following the retirement of Stewart Maclennan.

The emphasis of Day's policy is to be on educating the younger group while making the gallery a more vital force nationally as well as locally. The latter, as an attempt to bridge the gap made by the lack of a fine arts institute in Wellington.

Briefly he aims to do this by showing the art historical aspect as well as by showing and acquiring some of the best contemporary work available overseas. As part of the historical aspect he aims to introduce the overseas custom of organizing gallery tours to enable the public to learn of selected aspects of exhibited work.

His education programme began in December with an exhibition of 16th to 19th Century European landscapes, which was geared largely to U.E. level.

By New Zealand standards the gallery is financially well endowed and in buying work Day plans to obtain items that are significant because they pioneer, noticeably record or amplify an aspect of the existing collection rather than repeat. Using this policy he hopes to acquire significant traditional and contemporary painting and sculpture both from New Zealand and overseas.

Day hopes also to develop a good photographic section, both of painting and architecture and to increase the reference section of the gallery.

At the University some of the developments planned by Paul Olds are beginning to take shape. The most significant of these being the appointment of the 1969 visiting lecturer Eveline Hastings N.D.D., D.F.A. London University.

Eveline Hastings gained her National Diploma in pottery while at the Wimbledon School of Art, following which she studied painting at the Slade School where she gained the University of London Diploma in Fine Art in 1956 prior to doing a post-graduate year.

Since 1962 she has been instructing at the Wimbledon School of Art in the ceramic department. In addition to ceramics and pottery she has taught drawing and painting to various groups at adult educational institutes and teachers' colleges and has lectured in the history of furniture, glass, silver and interior decoration.

Although she is based in Wellington her University Extension classes will take her all over the Wellington Province, while at the University she will be taking student pottery classes and supervising printing classes, both of which have been organized by the University Visual Arts Society through the Student Union. This is in addition to variety of drawing classes.

Olds has also organized 20 lecture courses in the History of Architecture, with an emphasis on European architecture, and a History of Western Art. They are to run concurrently with a weekend school for students from both courses and are mainly for teachers interested in U.E. art.

The exhibitions in the University Library of the work of Kees Hos, Don Peebles, Pat Hanly, Greer Twiss, Colin McCahon, Tanya Ashken, Rita Angus and Toss Woollaston have created considerable interest from the students as well as the public. A similar series has been planned for this year.

The first part of the Film School was held in November, the conclusion being a section of the summer school, entitled *The Probing Eye 1969*.

Other sections of the school were: Working with Woollaston; Painting with Edward Francis; Environmental, a study in University Entrance Art by John Coley; and Advanced Pottery with Doreen Blumhardt and Eveline Hastings.

Selected students from the film school are to be invited to join Studio One, the concept of which has been clarified.

The group consists of selected Wellington artists and was formed originally to further art at a higher level. However, this year, 'the members will include artists, architects, urban planners and other professionals including teachers, who have a highly developed creative sense and a knowledge of the technology of new media especially in the fields of television and film.

'Their aim will be to discover from different points of view the visual and aesthetic dynamics of the city environment and their work will be integrated and presented through a variety of media principally visual.'

Aside from the University, the recent Municipal elections resulted in a change of councillors and a loss of some who were supporting the proposal for a piece of contemporary sculpture in Civic Square.

However, the Council's Cultural, Libraries and Public Relations committee have set up an advisory committee, whose members include Melvin Day, Director of the National Gallery, Mr R. J. Waghorn, President of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Mr A. A. Wild, Chairman of the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and Mr R. Bassant, of the Wellington Polytechnic School of Design.

The sculpture is to be in the area defined by the Public Library, Wakefield Street and the Municipal Building and in the position that can be seen and enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Rather than commission an individual to do the sculpture a competition, the rules of which have still to be arranged, will probably be organized. The $6,000 for the sculpture has been put aside in Council funds in the hope that more may be added.

Unlike most of the other developments in Wellington during the past six months which will consolidate during the next few months, the organization behind the sculpture has virtually just begun work. Although there is a public majority favouring work in representational style there is a strong and active minority favouring an individual and distinctive work, which would be a worthy symbol for Wellington and possibly also, indicative of the 'new look' in the art scene.

ROBYN ORMEROD

The Christchurch Scene

The second half of 1968 got under way with a Frank and May Davis show—paintings and printed fabrics—all at Several Arts. Reproductions of Frank Davis' paintings looked pretty good in the newspapers—real kiwi coming of the Taniwha style landscapes—but less so when seen in the raw, being just green and black (or was it blue and brown?) with a lot of filling-in sort of brushwork. The designs were good though, similarly the printed circuit (haven't you seen them in radio shops?) catalogue. Then came The Group.

There were of course other exhibitions at this time and later, but nothing to equal the splendour of the MacFarlanes, or surpass the Hanly, a Gopas and some Moffitts, all seen in The Group Show at their finest. Yet I was also struck, albeit unfavourably, by examples of the 'new realism' contributed by Ian Scott (whose *Nappy Rash* had most viewers on the defensive), Michael Smither, and Richard Killeen.

The trick and the justification for these pictures is their inane timelessness—like a one-frame movie flickering from here to eternity without precedence or outcome. Some aspects of reality are emphasized marvellously by this unreal procedure—the ever-crazed look in a mother's eyes, the never depleted jar of awful sweets, the trees of paint, the bland look of the child with the bayonetted head . . . or is it a headed bayonet? No matter.

Other paintings were less new: Sutton's impressive big landscapes for example—funny how the introduction of air and shadows gets things moving—and some less real. Joan Trollope, inexplicably again, clutched at my sense of properly applied colour.

The pottery by Helen Mason, Cowan, Juliet Peter, Tippett, Castle, Trumic, and Nola Barron was all first rate as was some weaving by Margery Blackman, Ans Loman and Ida Lough. The sculpture I cannot recall vividly but remember liking a jarrah *Cross* by Derek Ball whose paintings (for a Frances Hodgkins Fellow) looked pretty laboured—at best unfamiliar arrangements of familiar objects—but sure to improve.

Hutson fulfilled his promise of last year; *Lazarus* in particular is already past the stage where my comment is pertinent; the picture exists in its own right.

Bracey convinced me completely with his School of McCahon type N.Z. landscape *Kaimai Tunnel.* McCahon himself showed *South Canterbury* a token gesture which must have puzzled even those not unaware of what lay behind it.

Moffitt was in his best vein (where he has been for some time now) and should, for his art's sake, be getting panicky.

Perhaps, though, I had better attempt to justify that 'School of McCahon' reference. By this I mean a style which depends on the paint being an actual physical part of the landscape: where the paint is heavy and dark and hungry to absorb light. Such treatment is typical of the Auckland area; the bush is the prime entity. Bracey's paintings (of which Hotere's are the ultimate distillation?) would persuade me that this is the only approach to our landscape were not many typically New Zealand works

unlike his in every particular. For those who use paint the 'other way' it becomes fluid, radiant, expressive of light and air (rather than earth and gravity)—a Frances Hodgkins School perhaps—just as typically of N.Z. origin but, because of some peculiar fusion of decoration and weightlessness, quite distinct.

Whether true or untrue my theories were mocked by a fine Gopas abstract which succeeded because a chemical reaction (in the concept, not the paint) seemed to be taking place. That acid red among those astral blues somehow infused life into a sterile universe—something which never quite happened in the *Galactic* series.

It is becoming difficult for me not to see my contemporaries as travellers on the same road with MacFarlane at the far end. His work in this exhibition exceeded my wildest expectations. To enjoy these pictures it is not even necessary to know what has gone before, although, for anyone to paint so directly, so biologically and so well, it is necessary for a great deal to have gone before.

PETER YOUNG

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From early December through to January the Christchurch scene was greatly enlivened by a series of exhibitions from young artists in the Canterbury area.

In all of these exhibitions the influences of teachers and some of the current international styles were evident in both painting and sculpture. Somehow this didn't matter, there was enough energy, good use of paint and material and a really professional standard of presentation to demand attention and respect.

The first group to exhibit consisted of Bronwyn Taylor, Rodney Newton-Broad, Phillip Rooke, Warren Clode and Derek Mitchell. The first three are sculptors. Clode is a painter and Mitchell a printmaker. Mitchell has already established himself locally and could well follow the path laid by Barry Cleavin. Both these men must be a source of pride to Jack Knight who encouraged them during their art school years.

The rest have set themselves high standards and all have only to keep working to make their presence felt. Rodney Newton-Broad is this years' recipient

BRONWYN TAYLOR. Nike. Bronze, 1968. 13in.

of the Canterbury Society of Arts-Guthrey Travel Award.

Richard Rudd, Keith Reed and David Hoare mounted the next exhibition. All are painters who finished their art school training a year previously. Colour abounded in this show, though not all of it happily. Keith Reed impressed most with his painting called *Highway I*, a freely painted composite of main road images.

The third exhibition of work by young artists contained photography by Bret de Thier, Peter Ridder and Ken Griffiths, paintings by Colin Loose and Ross Grey and sculpture by Brian Grouden. All have studied at the Canterbury University School of Art and finished their training in 1968. Again many strong influences were apparent in much of the work but this is not intended as a criticism for surely this is the time to study the work and methods of older and more established artists. Of this group Brian Grouden offered most with his large wooden brightly painted sculptures.

Who will finally emerge from this list of younger artists to take a place in New Zealand art is something for each individual to decide for himself. All should be worth watching in the next few years to see how they develop.

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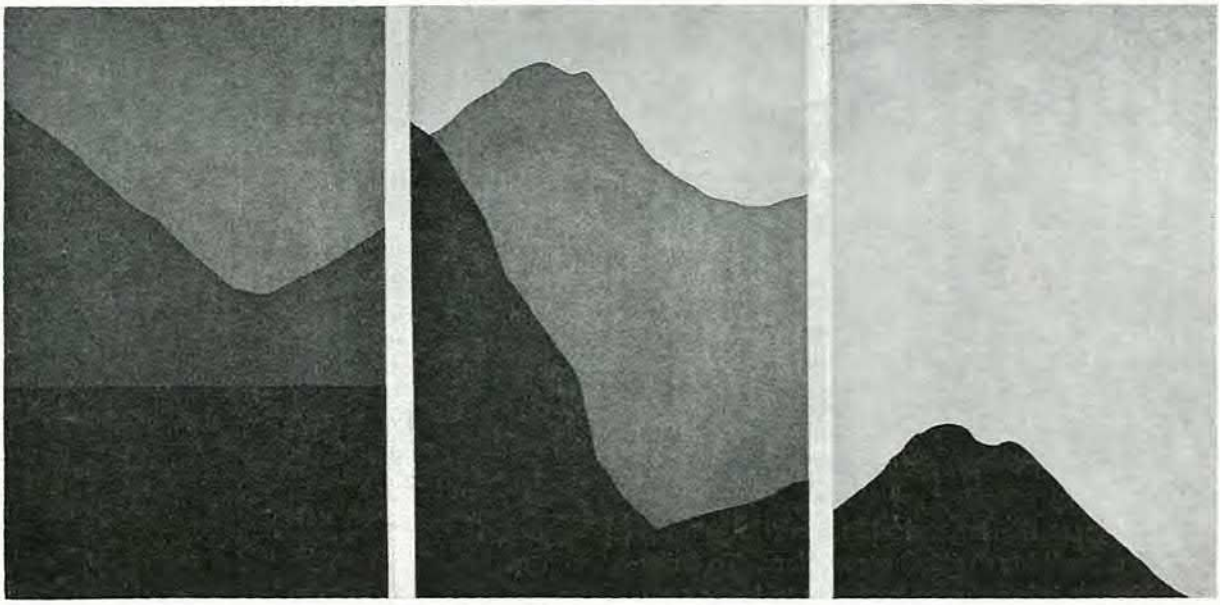
The Manawatu Prize Exhibition opened in Christchurch during February and again failed to be as



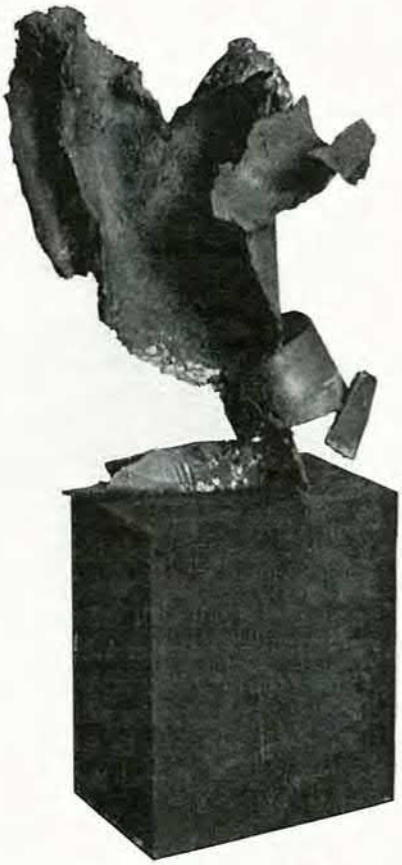
DEREK MITCHELL. Port Hills Variations, No. 1. Etching and Aquatint, 1968. 9¾ x 19⅞in.

stimulating as could have been hoped for. Too many of the country's best painters are not represented which must raise some serious doubts as to the value of this type of exhibition. One possible solution would be to have no prize winner but to divide the money equally among perhaps ten entries and make this the exhibition.

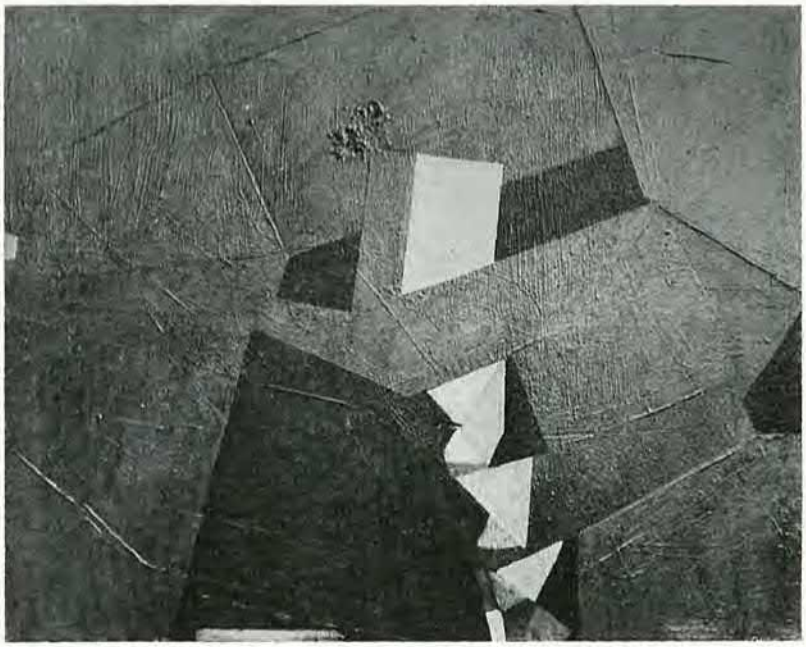
The exhibition was selected by Mr Rodney Kennedy of Dunedin with the result that there is some unity about the work when the show is viewed as a whole. First prize went to Herbert Kindleysides of Auckland. This painting, a row of old houses bathed in late evening light, seemed more an image of the 1950s than the late '60s. Its strength lay in its quiet earthy colours but there are unfortunate weaknesses in the use of perspective. The second prize painting by D. Armitage is presumably intended as a protest. A gaudy mass of billboards, some figures and a glimpse of country beyond, freely used paint and colour are the ingredients.

As guest artist Colin McCahon exhibits five paintings of which *North Otago Landscape No. 5* is quite outstanding. Painting in green, black and grey he has achieved a remarkable feeling of space and volume without the slightest tonal change in his green.

Irene O'Neill, Ted Bracey, Frank Davis, Ralph Hotere and Wong Sing Tai live up to reputations established on previous occasions. Buck Nin's



RODNEY NEWTON-BROAD. Small Judge. Bronze, 1968. 6in.



COLIN LOOSE. Landscape.
Oil, 1968. 28½ x 36¾in.

Maori forms imposed on a landscape seem too self-conscious and might work better with the land forms removed. Jan Nigro's *Man and Rose* is a pointless exercise in anatomical dissection. Many of the remaining entries are at best, merely decorative or too derivative to be taken seriously.

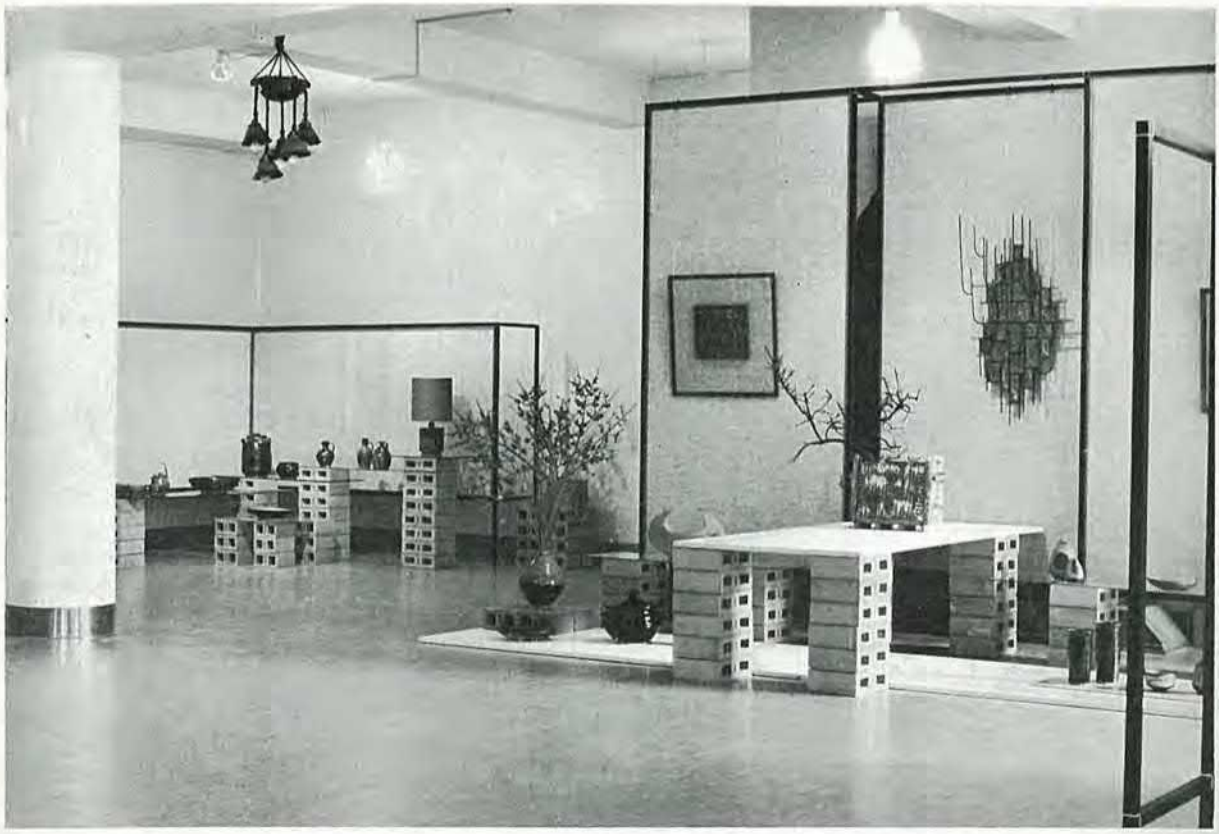
G. T. MOFFITT

The Dunedin Scene

One of the selectors for the 12th Annual Exhibition of the New Zealand Society of Potters, held in Dunedin from 13-27 October, wrote in the foreword of the catalogue: 'There is tending a lack of variety and a loss of the enchantment that the New Zealand exhibition should bring.' There can be little doubt that these remarks were written after the 600 submitted pots, finally whittled down to just over 200, were assembled in Dunedin. Had the selector found his previous mournful thoughts belied by the 200, it is certain he would have said so. Nevertheless, the exhibition attracted a lot of public attention, from buyers as well as viewers. It was opened by the Minister of Industries and Commerce who sees in the pottery movement implications for standards in New Zealand manufacturing. Against the view of the selector was that of the Chairman of the Exhibition Committee who termed the display 'perhaps the best' ever shown by the Society. Things are obviously at sixes and sevens within the pottery movement itself, and it seems likely for this reason if for no other, that Mr Marshall's hopes for a spillover of quality, character and personality from pottery to manufacturing generally will not be quickly realized.

The display was most effectively and imaginatively mounted in the Otago Museum foyer, an excellent centre in all respects (except the important one of lighting) for the many non-museum exhibitions held there. Glass panels supported on bricks were the main props. However, there was some comment that the glass allowed the brick colour to obtrude and interfere with the full appreciation of the pottery colour itself, and that glass and pottery just do not mix. The effectiveness of the display as a whole was enhanced by subtle decorations of dried grasses, flowerheads and weeds. A few pots themselves were similarly decorated, the top pot singled out by the selectors—a slab built branch pot by Juliet Peter—most happily carrying a blackened branch of burnt gorse. The display surfaces rarely came above knee height, often a source of complaint for viewers, but here it attracted little adverse comment.

Sixty-two people produced the 218 pots exhibited. The work of the earthenware potters was not nearly up to the standard of the, on the whole, indifferent stoneware, and was in some cases actually offensive in form and colour. Even in the dominating stone-

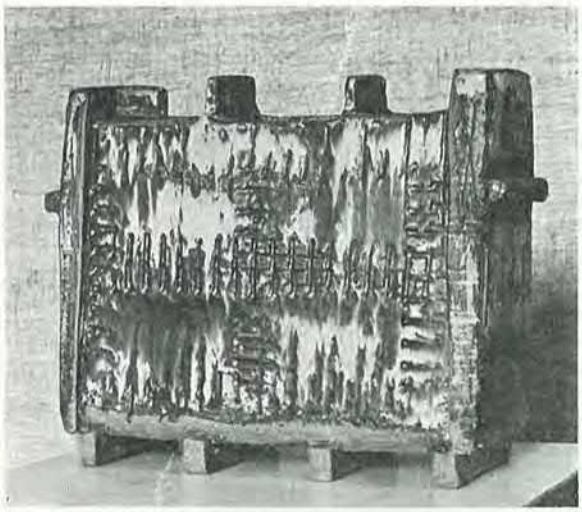


New Zealand Society of Potters 12th Annual Exhibition. Otago Museum foyer, 13-27 October, 1968.

ware, few pots seemed to justify the immense organization put into a national exhibition. In form and glaze, Juliet Peter's little pot pourri pot was more pleasing than her slab branch pot which particularly caught the selectors' eyes. Patricia Perrin showed a lovely rotund little onion pot along with other pieces, all characterized by warm body colours and warm glazes. Bruce Martin's slab built square bottle was clean and delicate in all its aspects, although perhaps rather close to its Japanese origins. Nola Barron's vases and candlesticks, clean in shape, were enhanced by black and white glazes. Mirek Smisek's pots showed a pleasing variety of shapes and glazes, and were most competently made. Helen Mason's domestic ware was as good as ever in shapes, but perhaps not in glazes. Peter Stichbury's quiet work was as acceptable as ever. There were two adventurous potters: David Brokenshire with vigorous experimental shapes of which the smaller pieces only were successful—particularly a weed holder with a texture of weathered limestone—Graeme Storm with unconventional blue, green and purple glazes very sucessfully applied. Most whimsical pots were those of Ann Verdcourt, two of her exhibits being quite assured in conception and execution—the Cretan Woman Pot and a delightful pair of small plump birds. The roll call could go on, but it tends simply to become a catalogue of the longer established potters. Of the younger people, John Fuller, Peter Wilde and James Greig produced pots of interest.

Earlier, from 7-25 September, the Dunedin Art Gallery did have a most competently mounted exhibition of sculpture, mainly in copper, together with some drawings, by John Middleditch. There was nothing monumental in the size of the pieces which were all suitable for domestic display. The largest piece, *Flight of Fishes,* made of cut and welded copper sheet seemed designed for viewing from one side only, and could therefore be displayed in a large private room.

According to his catalogue note, Middleditch has become involved in abstract sculpture developed on a theme of aggression. His underlying concern however, seems to be religious; at one moment joyous with the beauty of movement of birds and fishes



JULIET PETER. Branch Pot.

expressed in flowing winglike shapes, at another, pessimistic and perplexed at the very origin and purpose of life, as in *Biological Aggression,* and at another there is a sense of grandeur and majesty expressed with upright curving forms. His earlier pieces were executed from preliminary drawings, stemming no doubt from his training as an engineering draughtsman, but latterly he has been working directly with his materials, and paying increased attention to the surface treatment of the copper.

Two series of sculpture were exhibited, *Flight* (14 pieces) and *Tube* (7 pieces) together with seven miscellaneous pieces. The sheet metal forms in the *Flight* Series were visually pleasing but were not sculpture in the round. They seemed examples of good design by an observer, rather than a creative artist. In this same series, more sculptural forms such as *Fallen from Flight 1,* were both visually and emotionally satisfying. The newer *Tube* Series, all associated with aspects of the human form, were undoubtedly creative works, but the fact that they do not seem to have occupied the artist's attention for so long as the other series, may account for the not completely convincing quality of many of the pieces. In the miscellaneous group—simply called *Additional Sculpture* in the catalogue—there were two of Middleditch's well-known *Militant Groups;* 1965, much the better, and 1968. Possibly this particular form has now worked itself out as an expression of the artist's intentions.

The Art Gallery showed paintings (predominantly oil) by Pamela Searell, from 5-27 October, but the enormous variety without any apparent unifying thread of development in this widely-travelled painter's work, made it seem hardly a one-man show. Two other one-man shows were also held in the Gallery. A large exhibition of the paintings of Sydney Thompson on 3-21 November was basically the same show as had earlier been staged in Christchurch. The Gallery must be congratulated for seizing the opportunity of putting on, at very short notice, such a comprehensive display by one of New Zealand's distinguished artists. Shay Docking, on 23 November-15 December, exhibited thirty-one works, about equally divided between Australian and New Zealand themes. It was interesting to see this artist's colourful and decorative works following the introduction of her comments in the previous number of *Ascent.*

Derek Ball, 1968 Frances Hodgkins Fellow of the University of Otago, exhibited sixteen paintings and five pieces of sculpture, all done during the year, in the foyer of the Otago Museum on 12-25 November. This Fellowship, with no strings attached, other than that the holder pursue his own artistic interest, has now been awarded three times. The 1968 Fellow

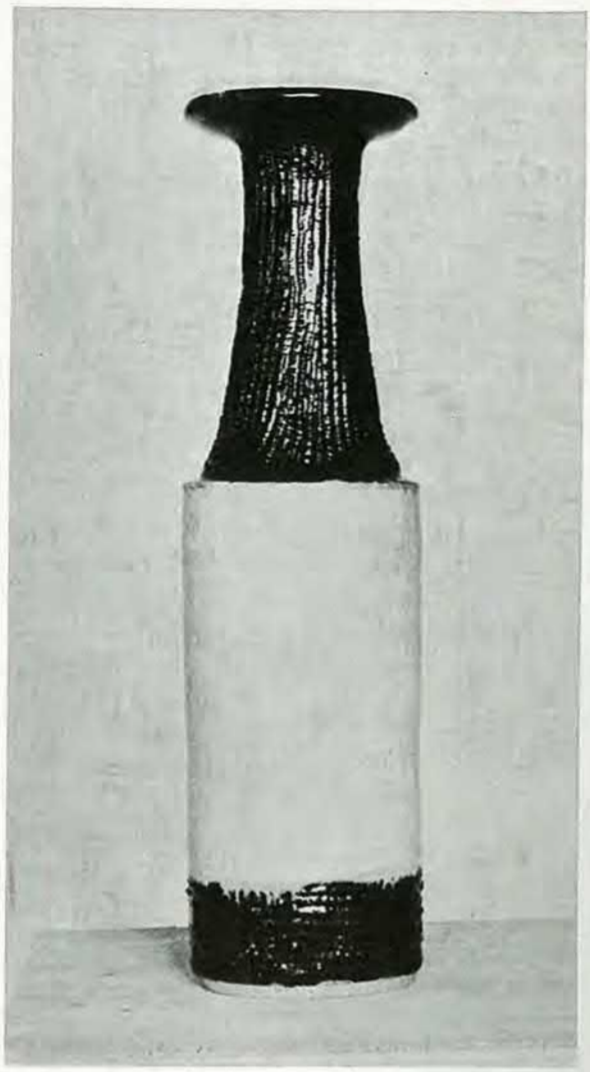
ANN VERDCOURT. Cretan Woman Pot.

seems to be the first to have settled down in it and have had a productive year. Perhaps his age, 23 years, and the fact that he is the first native-born New Zealander to receive it, with all that that is popularly supposed to imply in the way of adaptability and self-reliance, accounts for this, for none of the three Fellows have enjoyed anything like suitable working conditions. Abandoned houses awaiting demolition have been the lot of two of them, and a not too sordid basement with some natural lighting that of the other.

Derek Ball's draughtsmanship is superb. According to his catalogue note he found Dunedin a visually exciting city, and he responded to it with paintings in which small architectural detail dominates—the patterns formed by bricks and tiles, the corner of a doorway. In this he has followed an interest apparent in his earlier work, but now, because more time was available, worked out in greater detail and more meticulous application of paint. Every one of the paintings in this exhibition was marked by some technical problem, usually of design, self-imposed by the artist. Most were successfully resolved. The full length portrait of *Rodney Kennedy* was, most unusually in a formal portrait, painted from a viewpoint above the height of the sitter. The strong diagonal lines of the steps in *Dunedin,* crossing in the centre of the painting did not at all interfere with its unity.

It is strange that with both his urban works and his landscapes, this very young painter evokes a timeless quality in his subjects, rooted in the past but not only of the past. The tiles are old, the steps are old, the tussock land is old. In the paintings they all exist with something of the melancholy and sombreness of ancient things, but there is awakened in the viewer a subtle sense of anticipation of the probability of change in the scene.

JAMES GREIG. Casserole.



MARTIN BECK. Bottle.

The sculptures, two of interlocking wood and three casts of polished polyester resin seemed experimental and had not the assured feel of the paintings.

All except one of the paintings sold, and it is worth saying that numbers of the buyers were quite young people, although interest in the exhibition was not at all restricted to that age group. The exhibition was also notable for the newspaper correspondence it provoked, which too often happens only in response to the superficially shocking in art.

M. G. HITCHINGS

Publications

NEW ZEALAND ART. Edited by P. A. Tomory. *Painting 1827-1890.* Hamish Keith. *Painting 1890-1950.* P. A. Tomory. *Painting 1950-1967.* Mark Young. A. H. & A. W. Reed. $1.00 each.

Each of these booklets of thirty-two pages consists of a short article followed by twenty-five or twenty-six plates (eight of them in colour) with notes beneath. Each contains a reading list and a table of comparative dates. An explanatory note opposite the title-page says that the series was planned as an introduction to the history of painting in New Zealand, and that 'The books [sic] do not attempt to provide a comprehensive account, but rather a commentary on the principal artists and important tendencies of each period'—as if anyone would look for 'a comprehensive account' in picture booklets of this kind.

The first booklet begins with the arrival in New Zealand of Earle and ends with the arrival of Van der Velden and Nairn. The second has thus a clear beginning, but really ends, as Mr Tomory's text makes plain, in 1939. The third has to begin vaguely enough, for 1950 marks nothing in particular, and to emphasize only the last seventeen years of the post-war period is quite misleading—were they any more important than, for example, seventeen years from the mid-eighteen-nineties, when Nerli, Nairn, Van der Velden, Frances Hodgkins, Grace Joel, Walsh, Fristrom, O'Keeffe, McIntyre, Sydney Thompson and others were all working?

Mr Keith, whose sketch of three thousand words is the only one that attempts to be systematic, finds 'three quite distinct categories of colonial painting'. Topographical painting (he writes) dominated the period up to the 1860s; then comes a style of painting 'related to a developing colonial taste'; while itinerant painters, professional and amateur, were at work throughout the period. It is of course easier to see as a whole a period which is farther from us. Mr Keith has the advantage of dealing with the later part of a single period, that of British painting in New Zealand, or of the pre-history of New Zealand painting.

It is harder to deal with New Zealand painting proper, which is the task of Mr Tomory principally. Yet his article is the flimsiest and most disappointing of the three, as well as the shortest (no more than about two thousand words). He touches on Van der Velden, Nairn and Nerli, mentions the artistic generation which includes Frances Hodgkins, and at once passes to The Group and the generation of the nineteen-thirties. But he is not clear enough about the divisions into which New Zealand painting evidently falls: (1) pre-history (Mr Keith's booklet); (2) first New Zealand-born generation, that of O'Keeffe-Frances Hodgkins-Weeks; and, quite distinct, (3) second New Zealand-born generation, that of Evelyn Page-Rita Angus-McCahon; (4) post-war (Mr Young's booklet).

If Mr Tomory had recognized this, it would have allowed him to consider the first generation of New Zealand painters with the first generation of New Zealand writers, which is a matter of some interest, and to give point to the parallel he merely refers to, that between the poets and the painters of the 'thirties—the second New Zealand generations. He might then have seen why E. H. McCormick in his *New Zealand Literature* rightly deals with Katherine Mansfield as a New Zealand writer, and have understood that he must deal similarly with Frances Hodgkins, instead of totally ignoring her—he says only that Nerli influenced her, as if assuming that readers will be familiar with her life and work, includes her in a list, and gives one reproduction of her work with a note beneath. Although she spent her last thirty years in Britain and made her name there, Frances Hodgkins remains the finest New Zealand painter just as Katherine Mansfield is still the finest New Zealand writer. To omit any account of her work as Mr Tomory does is nonsensical; lack of space will not excuse it.

He states that 'the major steps in the evolution of twentieth century painting in this country were taken by New Zealand born artists' (which is open to question, put baldly like this), but hardly draws the necessary distinction between Van der Velden, Nairn and Nerli, or even the painters of Mr Keith's period, and the first native-born painters. These were painters born in the new world and not in the old. Both what they see and how they see are New Zealand: New Zealand, natural and man-made, is their native ground and element, and in no way strange to them as it was (and is) to men who grew up seeing the old world. The distinction seems to me essential.

Although Van der Velden and Nairn settled here and remained for life, they could not become New Zealand painters because they did not see as New

Zealanders: they had learned to see as Europeans. So today the strangely beautiful work of Margot Philips, which could only have been painted in New Zealand, yet shows the country as no native New Zealander would see it. Her work, like theirs, enriches our painting, but the distinction needs to be made. Mr Tomory notes that 'the emerging artists of the thirties . . . remained in New Zealand' (during the war, that is); Mr Young records that 'for twenty years Woollaston and McCahon painted New Zealand through eyes that had known no other country'; but the central point is that, like their co-evals Rita Angus and Doris Lusk, they grew up seeing New Zealand and that their senses and their vision were developed among the forms, colours and lights of New Zealand. These four seem to us recognizably New Zealand painters; we find the country in their work, we see the country through their eyes. Yet Milan Mrkusich too grew up in New Zealand and indeed has never travelled and his accomplished, most moving art is no less of New Zealand than theirs—just as the poet Charles Spear is no less a New Zealand poet than Denis Glover and James Baxter. New Zealand art and literature will have many surprises for us: we do not know what they may be: they are as yet only just beginning to be born.

Mr Young, dealing with his brief years, writes first of the later work of Woollaston and McCahon and then of painters aged (he says) between thirty-five and forty-five, most of whom have studied abroad and returned home. None of the three authors has more space to give any one artist than E. H. McCormick had in his *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (1940) or than the catalogues of Auckland Art Gallery and the Newsletters of the Barry Lett Galleries (I omit the perverse articles of the *Encylopaedia of New Zealand*, which R. N. O'Reilly has justly exposed in *Ascent*). These booklets are then little more than a collection of notes, which add scarcely at all to what has been written before.

Yet notes even as slight as this might have been of value and of continuing interest if they had been well written. Unhappily none of the authors writes well. Their language is often very loose: 'The impact of the New Zealand scene was responsible for Kinder's style'; (Hoyte) 'demonstrated a sensitivity to the basic forms of the landscape'; 'Her subjects . . . were contemporary unvarnished literal truths'; 'Although these pre-first World War centres had experienced this uninspired period, they nevertheless had maintained, through both patron and artist, a serious attitude towards the art of painting'; 'there are certain basic tenets which have remained omnipresent: a religiousness, an optimism for mankind's future, a love of the land, and an intense humanism. At first these tenets were depicted specifically'; 'Both . . . had worked in reasonably detailed and abstracted styles'; 'The Doctor of Divinity was conferred on him'. This is the non-English of semi-literacy. It kills art criticism and art history, and betrays the work it deals with.

Moreover, the generalizations which all three writers indulge in suggest that not one of them has ever looked at painting or at the external world closely and lovingly, or has tried to think clearly. Mr Keith writes of 'the unique quality of the Pacific light' (p.3) and then of 'the unique quality of the New Zealand light' (p.6). Are these uniquenesses the same, or different? Is the Pacific light the same in the Campbell Islands, Auckland, Port Moresby, Panama, Honolulu, Victoria B.C., Anchorage Alaska? Is New Zealand light the same in Stewart Island, Cromwell, Greymouth, Wellington, Hamilton, Russell, and the same in each of these in summer and winter? Mr Tomory writes similarly of 'the bright Pacific light' and 'that sharp distinction of dark and light, typical of the North Island summer' (p.3), Mr Young of 'the quality of New Zealand's light' (p.4), and Mr Keith of 'the unique forms of the New Zealand landscape and the harsh clarity of its light' (p.3) and 'the New Zealand landscape' (p.6). It is hard to take seriously writers who are content with such unexamined generalization.

Then Mr Keith writes of 'imported concepts of painting' (p.3) and 'the irrelevance of imported artistic concepts and fashions to the visual facts of the New Zealand environment' (p.6). This implies a cultural nationalism which fails to make sense: what 'concepts of painting' in New Zealand were not imported, until very recently? and how did and do painters learn to see New Zealand to begin with if not in terms of the visual language of other painters (although through their own eyes), from Girtin, Constable, Turner, Monet, to Cézanne, Mondrian, Kokoschka and many others? Poets and novelists learn in the same way, to begin with, from other poets and novelists. How else can they learn?

The choice of painters mentioned and illustrated is somewhat arbitrary. Mr Tomory names more than thirty painters and Mr Young more than twenty. Among these there is no mention of Archi-

bald Nicoll, Louise Henderson, John Drawbridge, Margot Philips, while Evelyn Page, Doris Lusk and Keith Patterson are named only in meaningless lists. That is some measure of the writers' reliability as guides to 'the principal artists'.

In the first booklet, in which no artist has more than two plates, Gully does not deserve two of works in the same style—his more pretentious style; Ashworth's very ordinary architect's sketch is a plate wasted; and the Martin, the von Tempsky and the Warre are curiosities but little more. A Hodges or two and a Webber (Mr Keith does not mention the latter) would have been much more valuable as preludes to the work of Mr Keith's period.

In Mr Tomory's booklet three well-chosen plates illustrate Van der Velden's landscapes—but one plate should give an example of his no less important figure painting or interiors. The Maori head by Frances Hodgkins is a goodish example of its early period but totally inadequate as the only reproduction of her work in the series. Weeks is given one rather mediocre water colour by which few people will recognize him—where are his oils? The Perkins and the Hipkins are too poor to be worth reproducing. The three early McCahons in this booklet must be taken with the three later ones in Mr Young's. Mr Tomory's are an unhappy choice as a group, and might well lead someone who does not know McCahon's work to dismiss it—not only because of the grossly bad reproduction. The *Takaka—Night and Day* although belonging to Auckland Art Gallery is one of the unsuccessful experiments in which Mr McCahon was feeling his way; its rather mechanical alignment of hills is flat and obvious. The similar *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* in Mr Young's group is decidedly better but still far from the painter's best work of the kind, and it was wasteful to choose both while ignoring for example the three monumental Otago Peninsula landscapes, and *On Building Bridges,* and above all the series of eight landscape panels bought by the Arts Council and now in Dunedin, which is one of the grand works of New Zealand art. *Spring, Ruby Bay* is quite uncharacteristic and out of place here. The Lee-Johnson is another experiment useful to the artist but far from a success and Mr Tomory once again shows astonishing lack of judgment in representing him by it.

Mr Young gives a Sutton oil of a kind that cannot reproduce well in black and white; two Binneys which make a genuinely original painter look sadly thin and empty—the *Kotare* shows his bird-shape in very over-blown, corrupt, enfeebled form; one good Ellis, the earlier, and one of his tired inflated repetitions of the same city theme—and it is the bad one which is given in colour. One of the two Peebles ought to have represented that fine Wellington Harbour series in deep blue oils with which he made his reputation, instead of the *Linear Series No. 16,* a poor example of his work and only a year later than the relief construction also illustrated — one wants some clue to a painter's development where possible. Two Illingworths, like two Ellises, seems quite unjustifiable when besides the painters I have mentioned above Michael Smither, Quentin MacFarlane and Trevor Moffitt are neither shown nor named. And Ralph Hotere's *Red Square* has been photographed against a background so distracting that it is very hard to see—again, as so often in these booklets, one asks why editor and publishers weren't on the job.

Finally, production. The booklets, measuring 9½ x 7 inches, are on art paper throughout printed in Japan in a sans serif display face which is suitable for captions and notes under reproductions but not for a body of text. The newspaper-style double column, which hardly goes with a work on art, is headed on the first page by a narrower body of text in single column in a larger size of type; a very ugly effect. The title-page looks like an advertising sheet of singularly repellent coarseness. The inking and alignment of Mr Keith's p.6 in the two copies I have seen have got out of control, with sad results. The inking of Mr Tomory's p.3 (again in two copies) is far heavier and blacker than that of any other page in the series: the effect is brutal. While the colour plates are often fairly good (but note the glaring discrepancy between the cover reproduction and the plate of Rita Angus's portrait, which makes one distrust both), the black and white is generally far too heavy and extreme, losing most of the gradations of tone. One cannot properly see works so badly reproduced. The layout of type beneath the reproductions is unbelievably amateurish and chaotic; I have rarely seen such irrational and messy pages. Again, a complete failure of editing. None of the reading lists strays outside New Zealand, not even to name Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific.* As for the tables of comparative dates, they look like the result of a lucky dip.

I have given these booklets far more space than they deserve, because they were much trumpeted in

advance, and while meaning well, perform so deplorably; and because under cover of Mr Tomory's name they want to foist on us so much muddled thinking, false assumption and bad writing. I have touched only on obvious points, and there is much more that needs questioning. The 'student or layman' mentioned in the note opposite the title-page needs to be warned of their inadequacies. It is hard to credit that Mr Tomory would lend his name to such productions; to state that he edited them looks like libel.

CHARLES BRASCH

AUGUSTUS EARLE IN NEW ZEALAND, Anthony Murray-Oliver. Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd, Christchurch, 1968. 167 pp., 60 colour plates. N.Z. $15.00.

Augustus Earle, gentleman and artist, strayed to the northern shores of New Zealand in the latter part of 1827. He left his impressions of the land and its people in a series of memorable paintings and in a diary, which he subsequently published. He came at a time when European wanderers were welcome to take part in Maori life. They lived by the rules of that society or knew the consequences. Eagerly sought as desirable adoptions, they were hazardously subject to the will of their protectors; it was an experience made vital by its own inherent risk. Earle was happy to sample Maori life, casually, intimately, knowing it to be a momentary encounter. His powerful interpretative capacity sets him apart from many other early nineteenth century visitors and establishes the mood of both his writings and his paintings.

Earle's watercolours are superb examples of that tradition: the medium seems to free his particular vision. By contrast, many of his oil paintings tend to ponderous form and literary association and his *Waterfall in Australia* shows affinity with James Ward's *Gordale Scar* (Tate Gallery). The coloured lithographs also tend to be mannered and less forceful as images.

The editor, however, in attempting to assess Earle's abilities in the separate media, seems unable to decide how to evaluate Earle's work. He cites others who have variously written about Earle's paintings: the artist is described, inappropriately, as working in the ' "great English tradition of social satire in art" ', as one in revolt ' "against the academic tradition in which he was trained",' and yet as one who is ' "steeped in the classicism of the age" ' (p. 33). The confusion left is unreal: the ' "dark and soulful romantic" ' traits which characterize much early nineteenth century European art are, to a degree, recognizable in Earle's works relating to the human figure, but this issue, being one relating to a whole artistic epoch, is secondary to the more enduring qualities of Earle's images. The 'Homeric' element is not pre-eminent in the better of Earle's works. *The Meeting of the Artist with the Wounded Chief Hongi, Bay of Islands, November 1827,* although historically interesting is artistically 'period furniture': the headlands of the Bay of Islands come emotionally close to the Greek isles. One could equally conceive this beach to be the site of Shelley's burning as the asylum of the dying chief of Ngapuhi.

Earle's most satisfactory works are those which are freed of such associations. *The Wye Matte, a Water Fall near the Kiddy-Kiddy* and *The Entrance of the E.O.K. Angha River; View taken from the Bar* stand as significant works, neither by virtue of period figuration nor for their enduring fidelity to the actual physical landscape, but for the fortunate phenomenon of Earle's idiosyncrasies finding their consummation in a vision of a new land, unimbued with cultural stereotypes.

In *Ranghe Hue a New Zealand Fortified Village,* Earle sheds the devices of the Byronic epoch to provide a painting which can be evaluated objectively. Literal fidelity is there; although the *pa* dwellings and the stockades have vanished, and the terraces of Wharepoaka's hill are today abandoned to stands of Californian thistle and a herd of wild goats, this view of Rangihoua, the headland, and the islands beyond are as Earle painted them. But this work is of even greater interest when one relates its qualities of image to those which have recurred in the works of a number of New Zealand painters from the early nineteenth century to the present. What Earle has attempted to handle and has to a large degree succeeded in doing—the spatial light of a vast waterway, where peaks give way to great hammers of land striking into the sea—Colin McCahon also deployed in his *Otago Peninsula,* almost one hundred and twenty years later. The lineal and spatial qualities in this watercolour by Earle place this work as close to many contemporary artists in New Zealand now as to the crowned heads of European art of his time and one would have liked to have seen such matters considered in the editing of this book, rather than the recurring preoccupation with the presence or absence of the neoclassical traditions.

Instead, one is left at liberty to question whether this large monograph has been conceived and presented with any recognition, or even knowledge, of what subsequent images have been derived from the same land that compelled Earle to look beyond the strictures of his era. While the biographical introduction 'may venture to claim' Earle's unique rôle in New Zealand art, virtually no appraisal is made of the relative status of even Earle's close contemporaries, Charles Heaphy and George French Angas.

Nor has there been a sustained attempt to examine Earle's work as an ethnographic record of a society undergoing change. Earle visited northern New Zealand when Maori culture was responding to the European intrusion in rather unexpected ways. Earle's several watercolours of the extravagantly decorated communal storehouses are among the earliest images of one of the well-known structures central to nineteenth century village life, but apparently unknown previously. There is no description of these ornate structures in the journals of the eighteenth century explorers: one could reasonably expect that such unequivocal carvings of human figures copulating would have drawn some comment! The efflorescence of the larger-scale carving seems to have been released by the introduction of iron cutting tools. It is one of a whole series of changes within Maori life of which Earle provides some indications. But by relying, to a considerable extent, on 'authoritative' later nineteenth century sources, Mr Murray-Oliver failed to appreciate some of the intrinsic qualities in Earle's writing and painting.

At this time, Maori society was more flexible and less hierarchic than it was later believed to have been. It was not unusual for a skilled tattooer, such as the handsome slave Te Rangi, whom Earle portrayed, to acquire prestige; it would not be contrary to the 'strict hierarchical social scale which usually operated' (p. 141). Slaves were prisoners of war, not hereditary victims of caste. Earle himself noticed the relative lack of scales of authority: every male, he said, considered himself 'on an equality' and each was 'independent in his own family'.[1] Conversely, his *Herald or Peacemaker,* captured in a mystical almost prophetic stance, is a unique figure; pre-European Maori society knew little of professionalism and little of peace. It lacked the economic diversity to support a stratified society and it had no recognized means for creating peace; such a man as Earle's 'Herald' would have been thrown up by the era of the musket, when warfare had gone beyond control and beyond sanity.

Overall, the editorial comments are adequate, but sometimes lack direction and are rather subjective. Mr Murray-Oliver is too possessive of Earle, who appears as 'our daring and impressionable young hero', as 'our unorthodox artist', and finally as one of 'our national' painters (p. 19). Even Mt Egmont is firmly declared to be 'ours', presumably to prevent any rival aspirants. There are also occasional errors —five distinct people, 'Tuhi' (Tuai), Titere, Titore, Hongi and Waikato, are interchanged on p. 31, and the Christian translation of the word *tapu* is misapplied to Maori storehouses, which were protected not 'sacred' buildings. Questionable is Mr Murrary-Oliver's decision to provide an historical context for the plates by selecting extracts from Earle's *Narrative.* Each reproduction is accompanied by an appropriate 'snippet', while the concluding discussion, 'The New Zealand Sojourn' is a similarly constructed pastiche. An analytical discussion of this singular period of New Zealand history would have been more satisfactory, particularly as Dr E. H. McCormick has recently fully edited the once rare 1832 volume.

In selecting his extracts, inevitably Mr Murray-Oliver found himself involved in the central conflict in Earle's *Narrative,* that between the Anglican missionaries and 'our hero'. He takes pains to point out Earle's Christian position, while failing to realize what the quarrels were about. It was a fundamental divergence between different kinds of Europeans. The missionaries shut themselves off, behind a ring of picket fences, from both the 'immoral' world of the Maoris and the 'immoral' world of the European itinerants. Earle was very willing to take part in these worlds. Not that he did not share many of the missionaries' prejudices, a fact often overlooked. Earle, too, believed that ultimately the Maoris must be 'civilized', that they must be 'elevated' in the scale of mankind: 'as soon as they are occupied by commerce, or the useful arts, their barbarous rites will gradually be discontinued, and will speedily cease altogether'.[2] Only the 'useful' man will be saved, asserted early nineteenth century capitalist Christianity. Mr Murray-Oliver recognized these

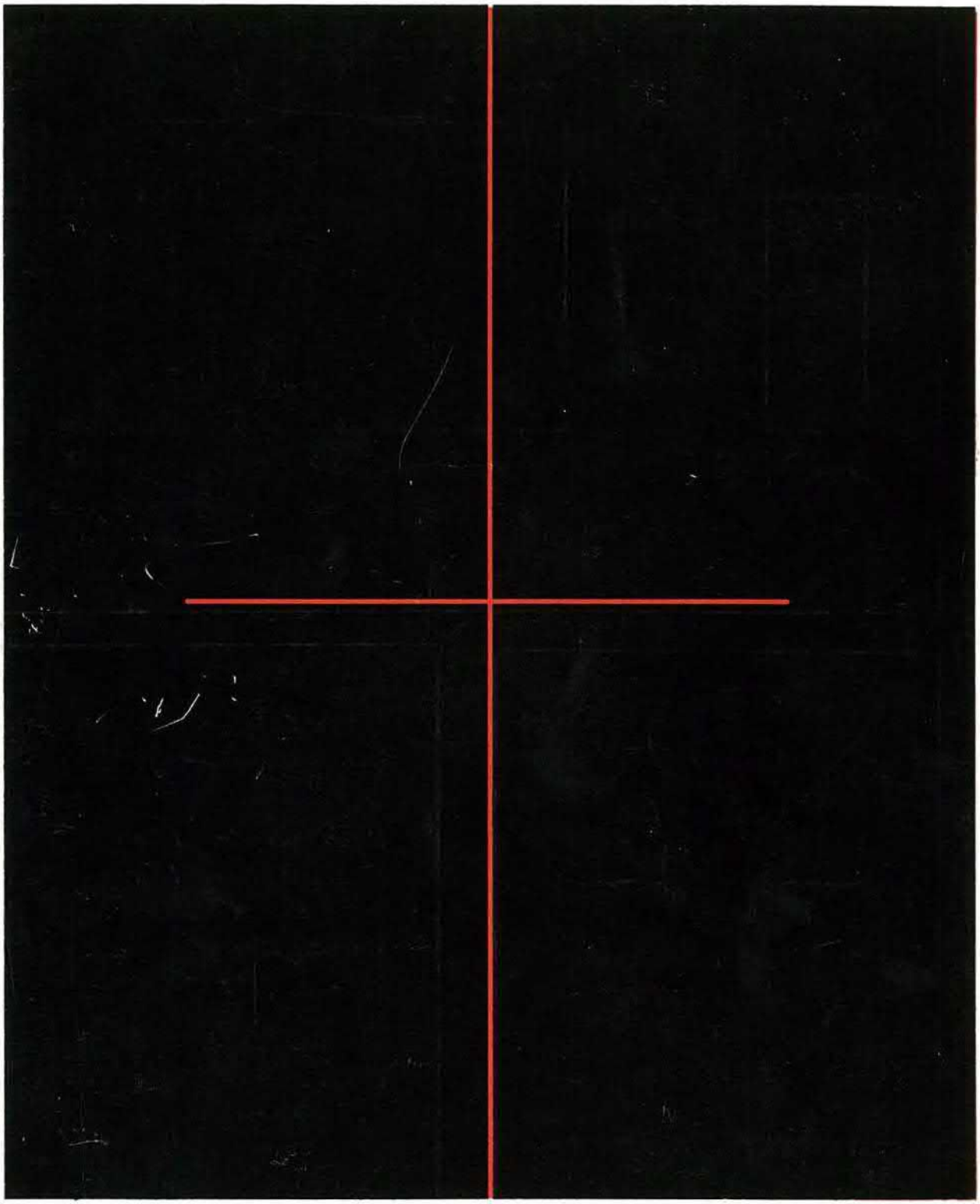
[1] Augustus Earle, *Narrative of a Residence in New Zealand,* ed. E. H. McCormick, Oxford, 1966, p. 186.

[2] Earle, p. 96.

'Anglo-Saxon attitudes' in Earle, but argues that if Earle had stayed in the land, teaching the doctrine of 'industry', it might be less difficult now for 'our Maori youth' to fit into the technological age (p. 142). He seems blissfully unaware that these very orthodoxies of middle-class English society were transplanted to New Zealand—by missionaries, by traders, by visitors, and by colonists—and provided the source for the cultural stereotype of the 'lazy' Polynesian.

Earle was not an objective commentator; he cannot be compared with 'any good social scientist' (p. 139). He made moral judgments, favourable or otherwise, on most of the customs he recorded. He was observant and he was attracted by the physical beauty of the Maori; he was no hero. But he was most particularly an artist; his short residence here provided one of the country's earliest series of paintings, which are among the finest images of Earle's career. This volume, including as it does all of Earle's New Zealand works, is a substantial and attractive anthology, in generous physical format. While the watercolour reproductions suffer at times from a tendency towards a blue-brown bias in colour, the surface qualities, details, and tonal balance are well retained. So, too, are the inherent values of Augustus Earle's lonely, itinerant, and compelling vision. As Una Platts has said, he 'managed in both prose and painting to lay claim to that part of the country that takes in Hokianga, the Bay of Islands, and the land that lies between. He shares it with others; but it is still his.'

DON and JUDITH BINNEY



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