M.T.WOOLLASTON
COLIN McCAHON

A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION

M. T. WOOLLASTON

COLIN MCCAHON

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

MAY 1963

FOREWORD

Over the past seven years this gallery has mounted several exhibitions of contemporary New Zealand painters: the *Eight New Zealand Painters* series and the more recent yearly anthologies were, and are, intended to make more familiar to the public the range and quality of contemporary painting in this country.

These exhibitions were arranged, not with the purpose of establishing an artistic élite, but of presenting serious painting as fairly as possible.

However, no true assessment can be made of any artist until it is possible to see his work in retrospect; and it is with this idea in mind that the present exhibition has been arranged.

M. T. Woollaston and Colin McCahon need no introduction, for their painting careers have been long and consistent, and both have exerted a considerable influence on their contemporaries. They both share an experience which is rare amongst creative artists in New Zealand, in that neither has made a prolonged visit overseas. So that their work has been evolved entirely within a New Zealand environment.

The aim has been to represent as fully as possible the earlier rather than the recent periods, for the former are the least familiar. And it is hoped that in this way the public may recognize the consistency of style and imagination which have informed both artists since the thirties. (We had hoped to include Rita Angus in this retrospective, but it was found to be impossible).

We owe our grateful thanks to all the private owners who have so willingly parted with their pictures; to Mr André Brooke and Professor Frederick Page, who were so helpful in organizing visits to private homes; and lastly to the artists themselves for their interest and invaluable help in tracing the whereabouts of their paintings.

May 1963

INTRODUCTION

This Auckland Festival exhibition devoted to the work of two New Zealand painters is of historical importance. For nearly two hundred years, European painters have been recording, with European eyes and more or less fidelity, picturesque details of New Zealand life and landscape. Thus professional artists accompanied the European explorers; the colonists included many who had been trained in English schools of art; further professional painters came from Europe to teach the settlers' children as New Zealand schools and Universities developed; and for several generations their most gifted pupils travelled back to Europe to study and to practise an essentially European art. In the brief history of New Zealand painting, this is the first large-scale exhibition of work by painters born, trained and domiciled in New Zealand. European influences destroyed classic Maori culture. Only now is New Zealand life growing rich enough again to express itself in terms of a distinctive art.

Born on a Taranaki farm in 1910, M. T. Woollaston held his first one-man exhibition in Dunedin in 1936. In the interim he had worked as a farm labourer in Taranaki, Nelson and Otago, attended art schools occasionally, sought out and learned from certain teachers recently returned from Europe, and above all painted hard for some years endeavouring always to reconcile contemporary art theories with his own vision of the different landscapes which he knew intimately and loved. In 1934 he had built a clay-brick cottage on an orchard at Mapua, in the Nelson province.

Of that district he has written: The landscape was not an easy one, its attraction wasn't readily noticed by a casual visitor . . . To paint it, one must go through a process the opposite of first deciding, or hearing that something is beautiful and then setting out to record that beauty. These low



yellowish hills, freckled as they were with bracken and gorse, descending unemphatically to farm flats or inland tidal reaches, being lived in for a number of years, gradually clarified into the form and essence of beauty... So began my fifteen years of concentration on that landscape with none but occasional breaks; or rather, it might be more correct to say, of living in that landscape, with occasional periods of concentration on painting, these becoming briefer and more sparse as time went on and the increasing needs of a growing family, and greater pressure on every member of the public to conform to a higher standard of living, made more and more wage-labour obligatory... In all my years there, I painted only a few landscapes over and over again, especially one view from my house. I seldom succeeded in doing what I wanted — which was to reach at one stroke the essence of the feeling I had for the landscape, and to pay adequate homage to Cézanne*...

The paintings of this one view, looking across a corner of Tasman Bay past Nelson city to the mountain Horoirangi, are among the most resolved and beautiful of his work.

At Mapua, and later in Greymouth where he moved in 1950, M. T. Woollaston has painted with a single-minded devotion which had no precedent in New Zealand. He would quote Georges Rouault's saying:

It is not the worldly eclecticism of multiple knowledge that enriches, but perseverance in a favourable furrow and the loving silent effort of a whole life.

With difficult subjects and often intractable materials he has persevered for many years. Despite the struggle, this silent effort has enriched New Zealand life; laying a foundation; and producing as its harvest a wealth of vivid figure-drawings and portraits and many calm enraptured paintings of a New Zealand landscape whose warmth and dignity and depth the paintings themselves are teaching us to see and understand.



^{*}The Far-away Hills, Auckland Gallery Associates 1962

'See, whoso by grace see may'

At one stride Colin McCahon broke through the domestic constraints of imitatory New Zealand painting. Like William Blake he showed that humanist conviction and religious insight together can be strong enough in any time or place to forge their own manner of art. Portraying paradise and hell, and the light and dark of our lives set in a land of such bare beauty that few of us dare look upon it, for twenty-five years he has spoken as the conscience of New Zealand.

His paintings in this exhibition are based on a profound study of western art, an acute visual perceptiveness comparable only with the musician's sense of perfect pitch, and many years of unremitting labour, painting, testing, rejecting, learning and continually progressing. They result from the dedicated creative painter's unassuagable need and his ability to impose order upon disorder; to transpose insights into visual images and these in turn into works of art; to create. They derive, too, from an intuitive knowledge of the world as it is today revealed by modern science in so much diversity, glory and horror; and from a prophetic vision of the world as it ought to be and as it will by grace become. They thus express visual aspects of the world which we had not hitherto perceived, aspects of our human nature we usually prefer not to admit, and consequences of scientific discovery of which we had been unaware. Pre-eminently, they celebrate the goodness of man, the splendour of his achievements, and the justness of God's design.

Despite public ridicule and private scorn his work has never faltered. As Goethe said: The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates. He knows Beethoven's dictum: The true artist has no pride; unhappily he sees that Art has no bounds. Obscurely he feels how far away he is from his aim, and even while others may be admiring him, he mourns his failure to attain that end which his better genius illumines like a distant sun.

The titles and quotations written with unerring calligraphy in the paintings give a key to this high purpose. They are their own best vindicators. Collected they would sound out like a poem:

There is only one direction

The Blessed Virgin Compared to a jug of pure Water and the infant Jesus to a lamp

I Paul to you at Ngatimote

he calls for ELIAS let us see whether Elias will come to save him

On Building Bridges

Here I give thanks to MONDRIAN

HOW IS THE HAMMER OF THE WHOLE EARTH CUT ASUNDER AND BROKEN

GATE

By Gate I mean a way through, he has written.

The great Gate series of panels on nuclear weapons concerns the destiny of man. Because of so much newness and scalding truth and faith, we may

shield ourselves from the beauty of these pictures and the call to action which all such beauty must contain. But if we ourselves work; if we inspect the paintings searchingly, patiently, fearlessly, with open minds and honest hearts, then, transported by the resounding music of their great shapes, subtle colours, space and light always encompassing the dark, beyond the cyclones of change and ruin girdling creation now towards an order man dare hardly dream of, we may by grace see.

Only a change of heart can let mankind enter the kingdom of tomorrow. The purpose of these paintings is to change our hearts. They offer a way through for New Zealand art as well.

JOHN CASELBERG

WOOLLASTON CHRONOLOGY

1910-Born at Toko, Taranaki 1928—To Nelson (Riwaka). First

paintings (watercolours)

1929-Taranaki

1930-To Nelson (Motueka). Tuition from Hugh Scott. First oils

1931—Mapua (Nelson), Christchurch (two terms at Canterbury School of Art)

1932-To Mapua, then Dunedin. Studied under R. N. Field (King Edward Technical College for two terms. Painted on Otago Peninsula

1933-To Mapua, New Plymouth

1943-Built studio at Mapua. Brief tuition from Flora Scales

1935-At Mapua

1936-First one-man show at Dunedin. To Mapua

1937—At Mapua; four months in Dunedin

1938—At Mapua, Spring term at Canterbury School of Art. Visited Taranaki

1939-49-Mapua

1940—At Mahau Sound (Pelorus) for five months

1950—To Greymouth

1958—August, September, visited Australia for five weeks

1960-1-Visits to Nelson and Taranaki

1962-June-October, visit to Europe and America



McCAHON

MCCAHON CHRONOLOGY

1919-Born Timaru

1930-9—Dunedin

1929-30-Oamaru

1930-9-Dunedin

1933-5-Pupil of Russell Clark

1937-9—Pupil of R. N. Field, Dunedin School of Art (winter terms)

1939—To Nelson (Mapua)

1940—To Dunedin (Otago Museum) Nelson (Pangatotara)

1941-7—Nelson (Riwaka, Pangatotara), Wellington, Dunedin, Wellington, Nelson (Mapua, Tahunanui)

1947—First exhibition in Wellington

1948-To Christchurch

1949—First exhibition in Auckland (with M. T. Woollaston)

1953—To Auckland (Auckland Art Gallery)

From 1954—Kauri and Titirangi paintings

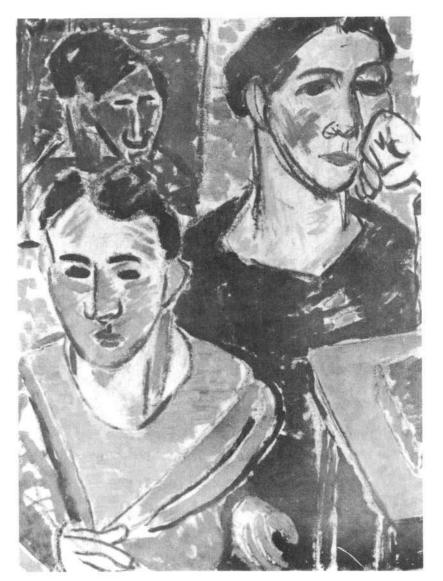
1957—Three months in USA

1958—The Northland Panels

1958-9-The Wake and Elias series

1960-1-First Gate series

1962—The Gate series



WOOLLASTON: FIGURES FROM LIFE (5)

WOOLLASTON

Sizes are given in inches: height before width

- 1 MAPUA (c. 1934) Oil 10½ x 14 MR R. N. FIELD
- 2 RODNEY KENNEDY Oil 14³/₄ x 10¹/₄ MR RODNEY KENNEDY
- 3 IVAN (c. 1936) Oil 18¼ x 12½ MRS V. MOFFAT
- 4 THE ARTIST'S WIFE (1936) Oil 25¼ x 19¼ S. Woollaston '36 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 5 FIGURES FROM LIFE (1936)
 Oil and Charcoal 24½ x 19½
 S. Woollaston
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 6 WELLINGTON (1937)
 Oil 17 x 19 S. Woollaston '37
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 7 THE ARTIST'S HOUSE, MAPUA (1937) Oil 19 x 17 THE ARTIST



WOOLLASTON: NUDE (10)



WOOLLASTON : HARMONIUM PLAYER (11)

- 8 LITTLE BROWN WOMAN (1938) Pastel & Oil 25¼ x 19¼ S. Woollaston 38 THE ARTIST
- 9 NELSON HILLS (1938) Oil 164 x 184 S. Woollaston 1938 MR CHARLES BRASCH
- 10 NUDE (1938) Oil 25 x 19 THE ARTIST
- 11 HARMONIUM PLAYER (1939) Oil 19¹/₈ x 17¹/₈ MRS M. HONEY
- 12 MAPUA LANDSCAPE (1939) Oil 18 x 15\frac{3}{4} MR RODNEY KENNEDY
- 13 THE ARTIST'S HOUSE WITH BEEHIVES (1939)
 Oil 19 x 167/8
 THE ARTIST
- 14 MAPUA AFTER RAIN (c. 1939) Oil 14½ x 18½ THE ARTIST
- 15 PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S WIFE (c. 1939)
 Oil 18 x 16 S. Woollaston
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY



WOOLLASTON: THE ARTIST'S WIFE (UK)

- 16 THE ARTIST'S HOUSE AT MAPUA (c. 1939)
 Oil 19 x 17
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 17 LANDSCAPE WITH PINE
 TREE (1940)
 Oil 16½ x 18 S. Woollaston
 MR RODNEY KENNEDY
- 18 HOROIRANGI IN A GREY LIGHT (1940) Oil 16½ x 18¾ THE ARTIST
- 19 MOUNT ARTHUR, NELSON (c. 1940)
 Oil 23\frac{3}{4} \times 23\frac{3}{4}
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 20 RED SHED Oil 23 x 23 MRS HALL-KENNY
- 21 EDITH WITH A LAMP (1942) Oil 25\frac{3}{4} x 14\frac{1}{4} S. Woollaston THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA
- 22 MAPUA (c. 1942) Oil 19¼ x 23½ S. M. T. Woollaston MRS SHAND
- 23 UPPER MOUTERE (1945) Oil 15 x 23½ MR CHARLES BRASCH

- 24 UPPER MOUTERE (c. 1946) Oil 23\frac{3}{4} \times 23\frac{3}{4} AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 25 FROM MAPUA (c. 1946) Oil 18½ x 24¾ S. Woollaston MISS IRENE O'NEILL
- 26 UPPER MOUTERE (c. 1949) Oil 24 x 24 S. Woollaston MR & MRS C. M. MANSON
- 27 HOKITIKA (1952) Oil 18½ x 32½ S. Woollaston 1952 MR CHARLES BRASCH
- 28 GREYMOUTH WITH TOWER (1952)
 Oil 22\frac{3}{4} \times 35\frac{3}{4} \text{ S. Woollaston '52}
 MISS O'NEIL
- 29 MAORI GIRL (c. 1952) Oil 24³/₄ x 19 (Verso: another subject) DR T. BARROW
- 30 GREYMOUTH, LATE AFTER-NOON (c. 1953) Oil 22½ x 27½ S. Woollaston VICTORIA UNIVERSITY STAFF
- 31 GREYMOUTH WITH TOWER
 (1953-5)
 Oil 35 x 23
 MR JOHN CASELBERG

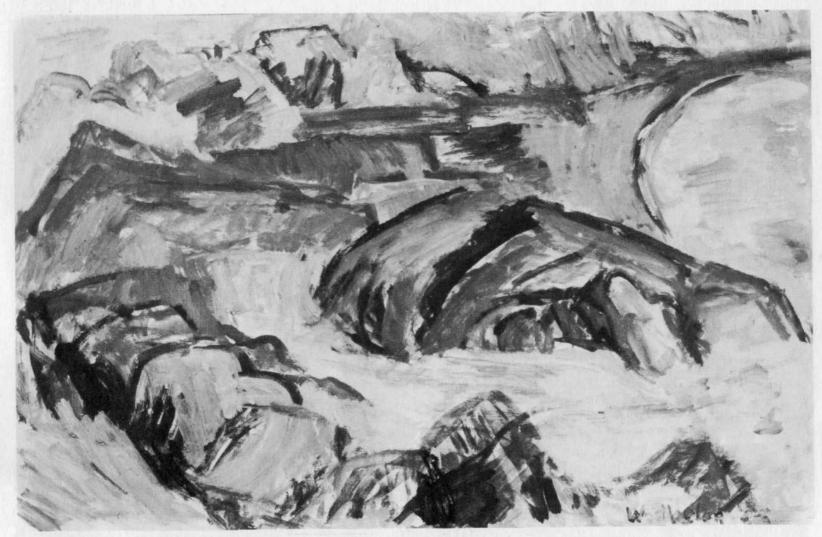


WOOLLASTON: THE ARTIST'S HOUSE AT MAPUA (16)



WOOLLASTON: UPPER MOUTERE (23)

- 32 MOON (c. 1954) Oil 23¼ x 19 S. Woollaston THE ARTIST
- 33 EDITH SEATED (c. 1954) Oil 35½ x 22½ S. Woollaston THE ARTIST
- 34 EDITH AND GREYMOUTH (1954-1955) Oil 35½ x 22½ S. Woollaston THE ARTIST
- 35 HOKITIKA (c. 1955) Oil 18 x 23 S. Woollaston MRS THOMPSON
- 36 LOOKING TOWARDS HOKITIKA (1955) Oil 23 x 36 S. Woollaston '55 DR YOUNG
- 37 TWO WHITE CHAIRS (1956) Oil 23\frac{1}{8} x 18\frac{1}{8} CANTERBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY
- 38 GREYMOUTH (1957)
 Oil 18½ x 23½ S. Woollaston '57
 MR R. N. O'REILLY
- 39 HOKITIKA RIVER (1958) Oil 17³/₄ x 23 CANTERBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY
- 40 WINDOW ON GREYMOUTH
 (1959)
 Oil 31½ x 24 S. Woollaston
 MR R. N. O'REILLY



WOOLLASTON: LOOKING TOWARDS HOKITIKA (36)

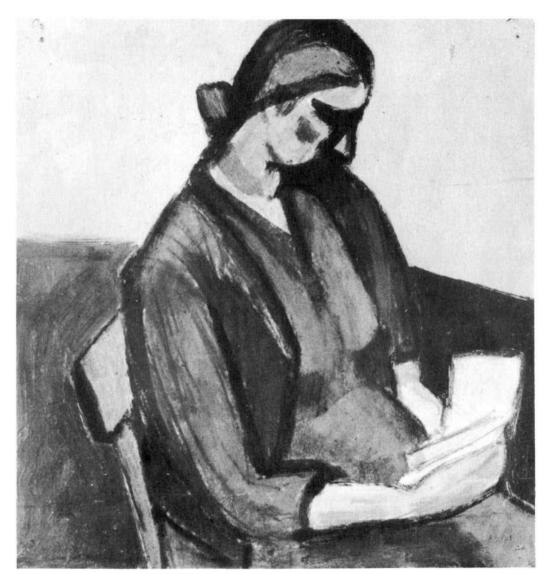
- 41 THE GREY RIVER AND
 MOUNTAINS (1960)
 Oil 36 x 47½ S. Woollaston '60
 THE ARTIST
- 42 TARAMAKU (1960)
 Oil 36 x 48 S. Woollaston '60
 CANTERBURY SOCIETY OF ARTS
- 43 TAKAKA VALLEY (1960) Oil 35½ x 48 S. Woollaston 1960 MR JOHN SUMMERS
- 44 LANDSCAPE WITH FIRE (1961)
 Oil 35\frac{3}{4} \times 48
 VICTORIA UNIVERSITY STAFF
- 45 WAIMEA (1961) Oil 36 x 48 S. Woollaston Jan '61 MR R. N. O'REILLY
- 46 LANDSCAPE, KUMARA
 (1962)
 Oil 35% x 48 S. Woollaston '62
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 47 KUMARA (1962) Oil 36 x 48 S. Woollaston '62 THE ARTIST
- 48 TARANAKI, MORNING
 (1962)
 Oil 24 x 32 S. Monogram
 THE ARTIST



WOOLLASTON: GREYMOUTH WITH TOWER (30)

McCAHON

- 49 OTAIO GORGE (1938)
 Oil 13½ x 15½
 S. Colin McCahon 1938
 MR R. N. O'REILLY
- 50 HARBOUR CONE FROM PEGGY'S HILL (1939) Oil 30 x 53 S. Colin McCahon 1939 MR & MRS J. K. McCAHON
- 51 PA HILL, RIWAKA (c. 1940) Oil 15½ x 19 S. Colin McCahon MR MARIO FLEISCHL
- 52 ROAD THROUGH BUSH (1942) Oil 24 x 194 S. McCahon '42 PROFESSOR & MRS F. WOOD
- 53 PANGATOTARA (1943) Oil 14½ x 18½ S. McCahon 1943 MRS JANET PAUL
- 54 HARRIET SIMEON (1945) Oil 21 x 18¹/₈ S. McCahon '45 (title inscribed) MR MARIO FLEISCHL
- 55 SPRING, RUBY BAY (1945) Oil 24 x 18 Dated 1945 (title inscribed) THE ARTIST

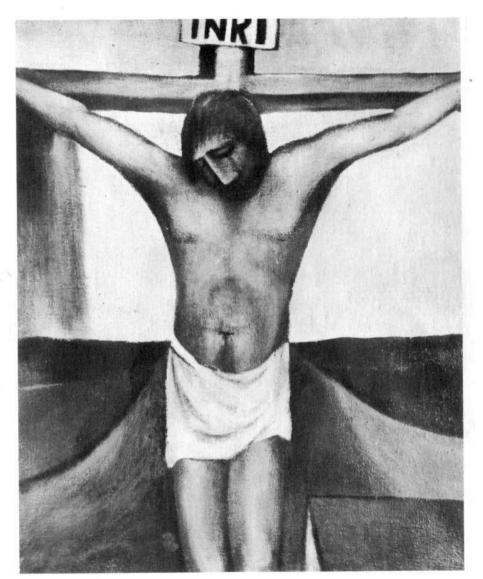


McCAHON : ANNE READING (56)

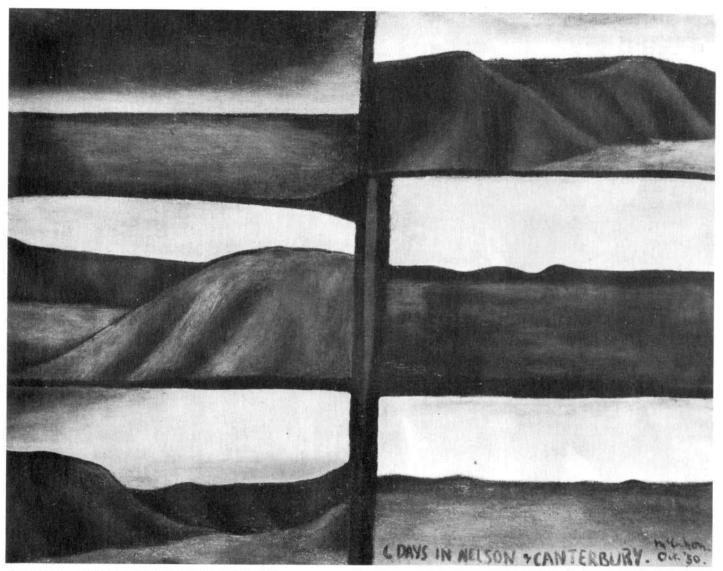


McCAHON: ENTOMBMENT, after Titian (62)

- 56 ANNE READING (1945) Oil 7½ x 7 S. McCahon '45 PROFESSOR FREDERICK PAGE
- 57 SINGING WOMEN
 Oil 16½ x 18½
 S. McCahon '45-6 (title inscribed)
 MR R. N. O'REILLY
- 58 OTAGO PENINSULA
 Oil 48 x 96
 MR RODNEY KENNEDY
- 59 CRUCIFIXION (1947)
 Oil 29³/₄ x 21¹/₄ S. McCahon '47
 Inscribed: For Rodney Kennedy
 MR RODNEY KENNEDY
- 60 THE ANGEL OF THE
 ANNUNCIATION (1947)
 Oil 25½ x 20½
 S. McCahon April '47 (title inscribed)
 THE ARTIST
- 61 THE KING OF THE JEWS (1947)
 Oil 25 x 20¼
 S. McCahon '47 (title inscribed)
 MR R. N. O'REILLY
- 62 ENTOMBMENT (after Titian)
 (1947)
 Oil 20½ x 25½ S. McCahon May '47
 THE ARTIST



McCAHON: CRUCIFIXION (71)



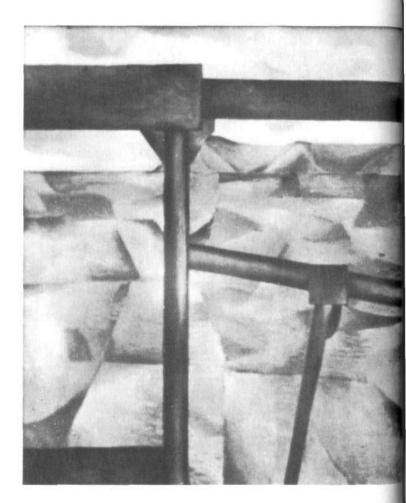
McCAHON: 6 DAYS IN NELSON & CANTERBURY (72)

- 63 CRUCIFIXION (1947) Oil 29³/₄ x 36¹/₄ S. McCahon July '47 MR CHARLES BRASCH
- 64 NELSON HILLS (c. 1947) Oil 17³/₄ x 23³/₄ MR R. N. O'REILLY
- 65 LIGAR BAY (1948)
 Oil 34³/₄ x 50
 S. McCahon Jan '48 (title inscribed)
 MR JOHN SUMMERS
- 66 TAKAKA NIGHT AND DAY
 Oil 35 x 83 S. McCahon July '48
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 67 THE GREEN PLAIN (1948) Oil 36½ x 15 S. McCahon Jan '48 MR PETER WEBB
- 68 I, PAUL (1948) Oil 25 x 17 (title inscribed) MR D. HOLLAND
- 69 ANNUNCIATION (1949)
 Oil 25½ x 20½
 S. McCahon JULY November '49
 (title inscribed)
 THE ARTIST
- 70 THE MARYS AT THE TOMB (1950)
 Oil 31³/₄ x 41¹/₂
 S. McCahon Jan-March '50
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

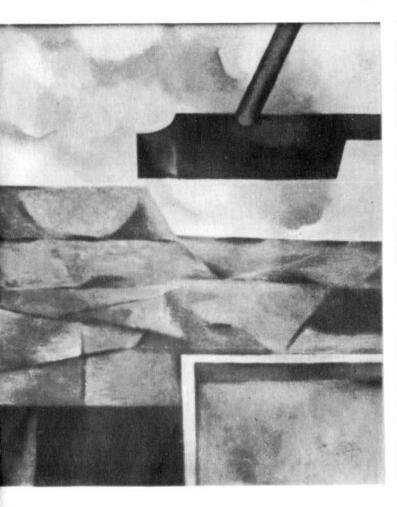


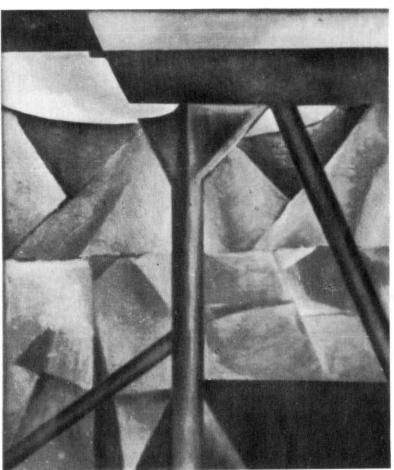
McCAHON: LET US POSSESS ONE WORLD (82)

- 71 CRUCIFIXION (c. 1950) Oil 35½ x 28½ MR JOHN CASELBERG
- 72 SIX DAYS IN NELSON & CANTERBURY (1950)
 Oil 35 x 46
 S. McCahon Oct '50 (title inscribed)
 THE ARTIST
- 73 VIRGIN AND CHILD (1950) Oil 44 x 33³/₄ S. McCahon May '50 THE ARTIST
- 74 A SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE (1950) Oil 35¼ x 41½ S. McCahon May '50 DR W. S. AUBURN
- 75 ON BUILDING BRIDGES
 (Triptych) (1952)
 Oil each panel 42 x 36
 S. (left to right)
 McCahon July-September '52
 August-September '52
 August-September '52
 AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
- 76 HOUSE IN THE TREES (1953) Oil 23 x 25½ S. McCahon '53 MISS UNA PLATTS



McCAHON: ON BUILDING BRIDGES (75)



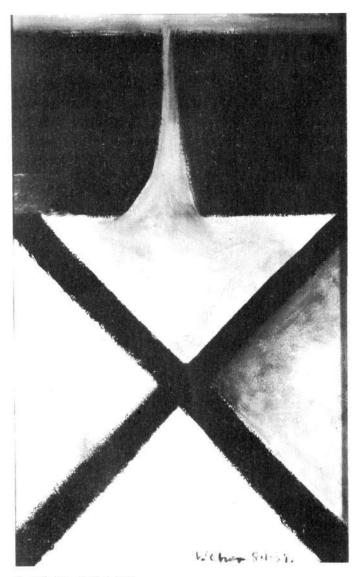




VICTORIA

SEPT. 14. 1957

- 77 KAURI (1953) (unfinished)
 Oil 42¼ x 28½
 S. McCahon Nov '53 (title inscribed)
 MR MICHAEL DRAFFIN
- 78 KAURI (1954) Oil 27 x 204 S. McCahon Feb '54 MR RODNEY KENNEDY
- 79 I AM (1954) Oil 14³/₄ x 20¹/₂ S. *McCahon Feb* '54 MR CHARLES BRASCH
- 80 SINGER (1955) Oil 24 x 20 S. McCahon July '55 MR MICHAEL DRAFFIN
- 81 THE RAPE OF DEJANIRA (after Michelangelo) (1955) Oil 22½ x 15¼ MR PETER WEBB
- 82 LET US POSSESS ONE
 WORLD (1955)
 Oil 30 x 22
 S. McCahon May July '55
 THE ARTIST
- 83 FRENCH BAY (1956)
 Oil 49\frac{3}{4} \times 38
 S. McCahon, June July Sept '56
 MR RODNEY KENNEDY



McCAHON: CROSS (91)

- 84 KAURI (1957) Oil 30 x 21½ S. C. McC. '55 '57 MR HAROLD BRAINSBY
- 85 FRENCH BAY (1957)
 Oil 23½ x 48
 S. McCahon Oct '57 (title inscribed)
 THE ARTIST
- 86 VICTORIA (1957)
 Oil 23½ x 16¾
 Dated Sept. 14, 1957 (title inscribed)
 MISS V. McCAHON
- 87 RED TITIRANGI (1957)
 Oil 30 x 22
 S. Titirangi C.M. July '57
 JUDITH & GRAHAM ECROYD
- 88 PAINTING (1958)
 Oil 47³/₄ x 30 S. C. M. March '58
 HAYS LIMITED, CHRISTCHURCH
- 89 TOMORROW WILL BE THE SAME BUT NOT AS THIS IS (1958)
 Oil 72 x 48
 S. McCahon 17.12.58 (title inscribed)
 THE ROBERT McDOUGALL ART GALLERY

- 90 HE CALLS FOR ELIAS (1959)
 Oil 26½ x 30½ S. McCahon Aug '59
 MR W. McCAHON
- 91 CROSS (1959) Oil 48 x 30 S. McCahon 8.1.59 THE ARTIST
- 92 GOLDEN (1959)
 Oil 48 x 30½
 S. McCahon July '59 (title inscribed)
 MR PETER TOMORY
- 93 WAIONEKE (1961) Oil 71½ x 48 S. McCahon May '61 (title inscribed) THE ARTIST
- 94 WAS THIS THE PROMISED LAND (1962)
 Oil 23½ x 23¾ (title inscribed)
 MR ROSS FRASER
- 95 NOW IS THE HOUR (1962) Oil 25 x 25 (title inscribed) MR HAMISH KEITH
- 96 YELLOW AND BLACK
 LANDSCAPE (1962)
 Oil 47 x 37½ S. McCahon 30.8.62
 THE ARTIST