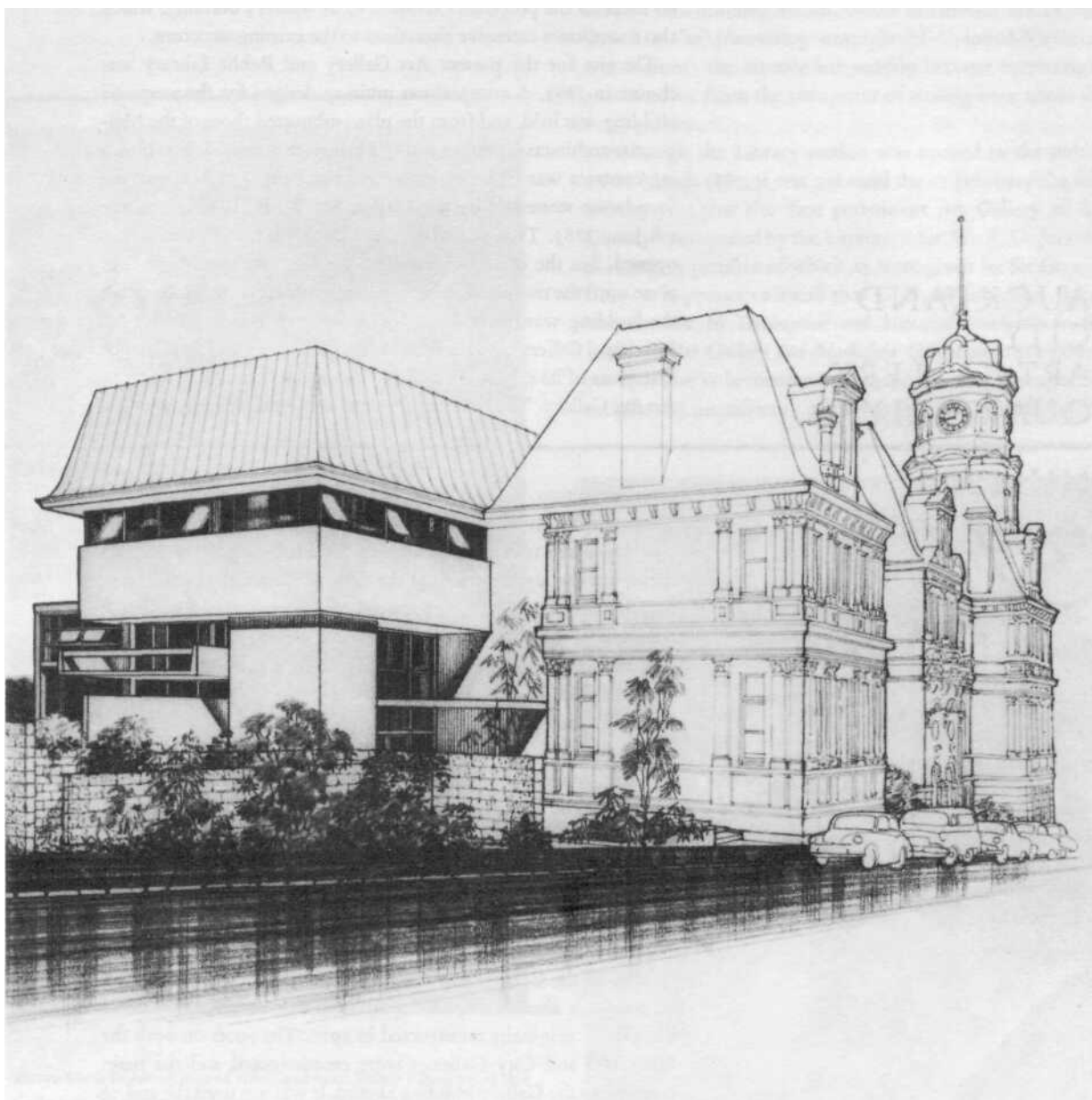


NUMBER 37 1967

AUCKLAND CITY
ART GALLERY

QUARTERLY



COVER

A perspective view of the proposed extension to the Art Gallery building.

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AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY QUARTERLY

NUMBER

37

1967: EDITORIAL

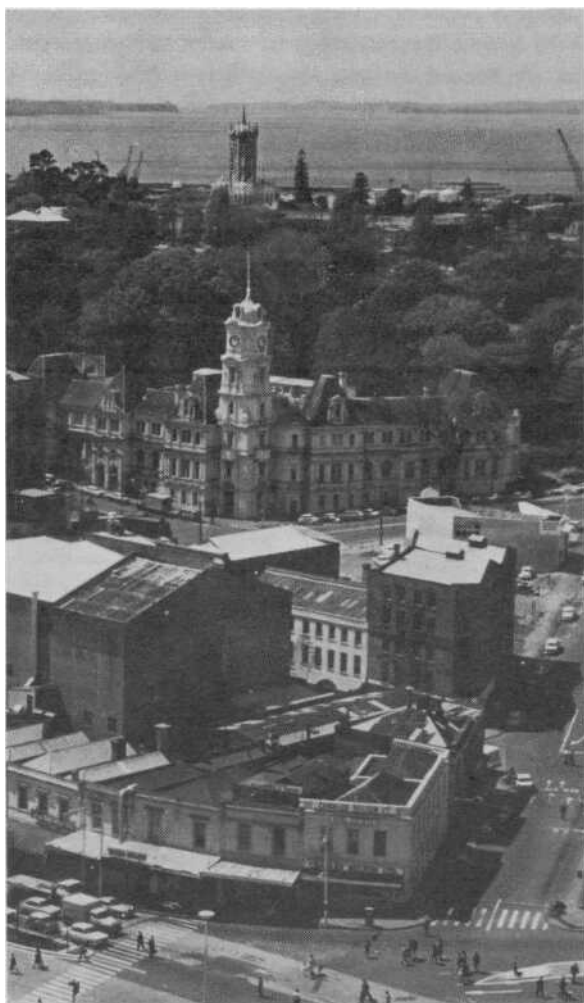
In this issue the Director, Mr Gilbert Docking, has put forward his ideas for the proposed extension to the Gallery building, which also necessitates extensive alterations to the existing structure.

The site for the present Art Gallery and Public Library was chosen in 1883. A competition inviting designs for the proposed building was held, and from the plans submitted those of the Melbourne architects Grainger and D'Ebro were accepted. The building contract was let to Malcolm and Price for £21,851, and the foundation stone laid by the Mayor, Mr W. R. Waddel, on the 4th June 1885. Two years later, in March 1887, the Library was opened, but the official opening of the Art Gallery did not take place until the middle of February the following year. From when the building was opened, part of the space was occupied by the Municipal Offices; and the Elam School of Art and Design, for the first years of its existence, was also located in rooms belonging to the Art Gallery. The first major extension to the original building

was the erection, in 1893, of the Mackelvie Gallery. With the completion of the Auckland Town Hall and the transfer of the Municipal Offices in 1911, the Art Gallery obtained some of the vacated space, but the rapid growth of the City and Mackelvie collections required more room if they were to be adequately accommodated. Alterations, which took several months, were undertaken to this end, and a new gallery, called the City Gallery, opened to the public on the 28th January 1913. However, it was still considered that the wall space provided was inadequate. In 1914 the ratepayers gave approval to the raising of a £4,000 loan for the erection of an additional gallery. This gallery (now transformed into the Sculpture Court and Office) was opened by the Mayor, Mr J. H. Gunson, on the 12th December 1916.

Between 1913 and 1952 the Art Gallery was in the charge of Mr John Barr, the City Librarian, but in 1952 Mr Eric Westbrook was appointed as the first Director of the City Art Gallery. About two years later an extensive scheme to completely modernise and redecorate the Gallery was adopted. Included in the scheme were considerable alterations plus the addition of a mezzanine floor to the gallery originally constructed in 1916. The roofs on both the Mackelvie and City Galleries were reconstructed and the main entrance to the Gallery building altered. It was not until the end of 1959 that the work was completed. The latest structural addition to the building was the Loading Bay and Coffee Room, which was finished in January 1964.

NEW PLANS FOR THE CITY ART GALLERY



ABOVE View showing part of Auckland with Public Library and Art Gallery in the centre. (Photograph: New Zealand Herald)

RIGHT The Mackelvie Gallery, 1966. (Photograph: Birch Rising Ltd)

In March 1967, the Chairman of the Edmiston Trust Board and the Mayor of the City of Auckland announced that an agreement had been reached between the Corporation and the Board whereby a substantial sum of money would be invested by the Board and Council in a reconstruction of the building occupied by the Auckland City Art Gallery. At present the City Gallery is housed with the Public Library in a building which, whilst its exterior can be described as 'an interesting example of Colonial-Victorian architecture', the interior has steadily become increasingly anachronistic from the viewpoint of serving basic needs for a city gallery.

Although the Library section was opened to the public on 26 March 1887, it was not until the 17 February the following year that the 'first permanent Art Gallery of the Colony' was opened by the Governor Sir W. F. D. Jervois, showing 35 pictures of which 25 were given by Sir George Grey. It is proper to recall that C. D. Whitcombe, in his introduction to *Descriptive and historical handbook to the Auckland Art Gallery and Mackelvie Collection*, 1888 points out that the collections commenced 'mainly through the enlightened munificence of two great public benefactors' -



Sir George Grey and James Tannock Mackelvie (Mackelvie's gifts arrived later). Very loyally, C. D. Whitcombe goes on to say that 'Auckland is placed in the proud position of owning a collection of art treasures not merely superior to that contained in any, even the largest and wealthiest centre of either of the Australian Colonies, but actually surpassing in value intrinsically and aesthetically the whole of the other public collections in the whole of Australasia, including New Zealand'. It is worth recalling these words not so much to question the accuracy of the statement but, to remind ourselves of the enormous confidence existing in a young city not fifty years old and of the clear understanding of two pragmatic principles basic to the formation of public collections because, the writer goes on to say, 'The collection will thus not merely gratify the senses, but also educate the mind.'

Gallery professionals the world over agree that it is the quality of a permanent collection which establishes, more than any other single factor, the renown of a gallery and in turn the City which is far-seeing enough to provide substance for its growth, and the benefactors who add to its accessioning power by supplying the necessary financial

strength to purchase on world markets. But there are other factors which become increasingly difficult to solve as the years go by, and as the collections grow in size, value and range. These factors are not only internal ones but also external. With the changing condition of the world, new sociological and educational problems arise. How is the Gallery to meet the needs of the new Society that is very rapidly forming? A public gallery which fails to meet the demands of the new Society simply ossifies and becomes a dead limb attached precariously to the living trunk of the tree. Society has its own ways of disposing of useless appendages! A public art gallery is an institution with the least valid reason for becoming an anachronism in modern society. Because the heart of the gallery is the art collection which is a very tangible thing made up of created objects produced by the minds and hands of men - artists who lived at a specific time and in a particular environment, these objects (in cases where they have been wisely selected) will tell the observant a very great deal, not only about the person who has produced the object, but about the society in which he lived or is living. But if that was all, it would end merely with instruction. A fine collection holds works of



LEFT AND ABOVE Two views of the area to be occupied by the Sculpture Garden.

RIGHT First floor plan showing the proposed development of the Art Gallery building.

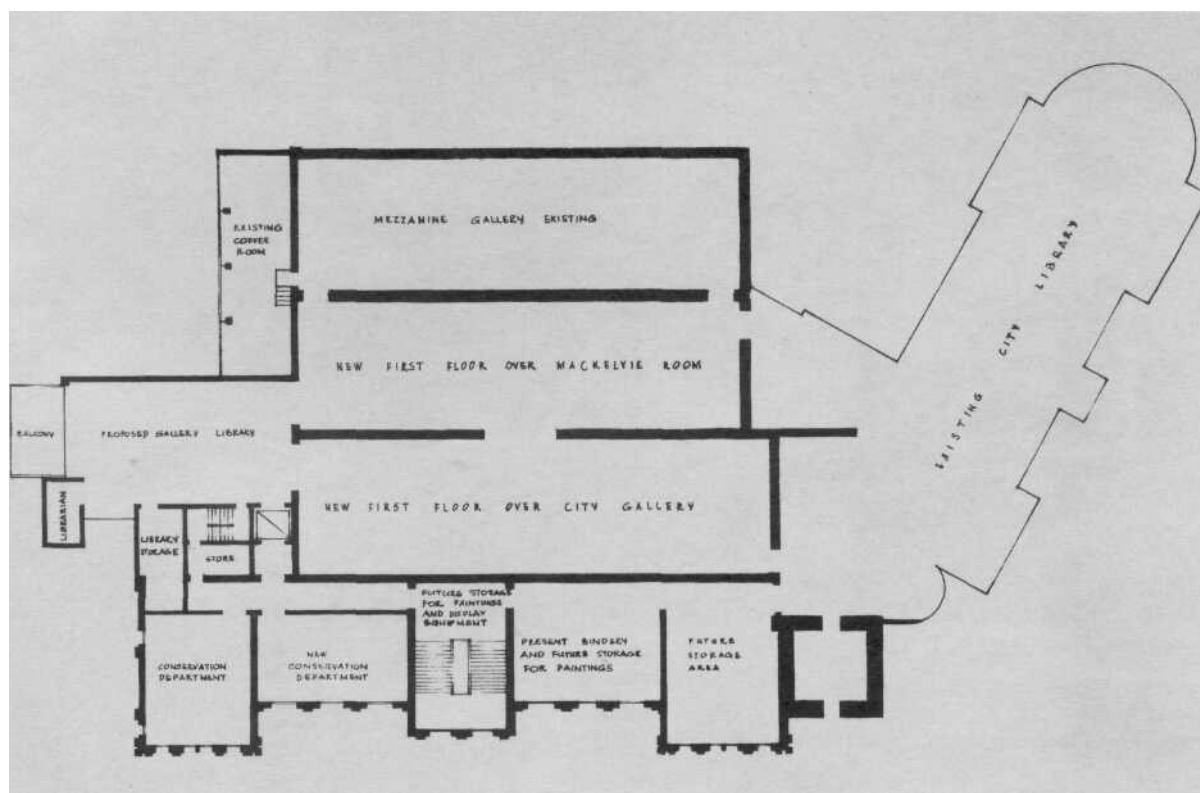
art which as Sir Kenneth Clark stated in his essay *The Idea of a Great Gallery*¹: 'lift us out of our ordinary lives'. This is the realm of inspiration and illumination without which the human spirit languishes. In countries where the standard of physical life is high, there is a real danger that the life of the spirit and of the imagination will wither. We all need to see the actual works of great artists both of the present and the past - 'This is the illumination which it is the first function of a great gallery to provide'.

But what happens when one calls at the Auckland City Art Gallery as it stands at present?

To get down to prosaic levels: One is aware of a very steep and ugly flight of stairs with scratched handrails and a faint whiff of toilets coming from somewhere nearby, an angular and dark entrance leading on to extensive floor areas of brown pitted linoleum and red tiles, of small pictures on huge walls, of some barn-like spaces echoing, of a variety of architectural detailing and ceiling illuminations, of this and that. Then suddenly one is aware of a beautiful Italian 17th century Furini painting with its lovely richness of form and colour and historical allusions to Antiochus Prince of Syria and Stratonice his Stepmother but, the

quickening mood is suddenly snapped by catching sight of a superb 'Christ in Majesty' - an hieratically severe wood-carving from early 13th century Spain. It is as though one is beginning to listen to a delicious piece of Baroque music when the austere sounds of Gregorian chant suddenly begin to intervene. How much more desirable it is to visit a gallery and step into separate sections or rooms where the paintings in that area have a fair chance of making their own appeal, for the time the visitor is prepared to dwell there! When this situation is multiplied many times, it is altogether too naive to think that by a makeshift arrangement of screens we can establish sympathetic environments for these works we already possess.

To provide appropriate settings we need to more than double our exhibition areas, to improve the proportion and space of the galleries, to install controlled lighting which can be used judiciously to illuminate individual works of sculpture and paintings and objects in a way that allows the works to 'speak' for themselves, and communication can be at once established with the minimum of intrusive elements. The quality of a gem stone is readily appreciated in a well-designed setting but not when mixed-up with other stones



in a cardboard box! If, on the other hand, the visitor happens to be aware of the physical structure of works of art, he will quickly notice - especially on a summer day - that the atmospheric conditions in the City Gallery are not conducive to the well-being of the works of art. The thermohydrograph can be read to show huge daily changes in the critical humidity range - going from as low as 40RH up to 88RH in one day! When told that a fairly steady 55RH is most desirable for the longevity of works of art - one becomes rather appalled by the daily physical stresses placed on the collection. Like ourselves, these stresses can be absorbed when the body is young and pliable but with the onset of age, the story is a different one.

It is not enough therefore simply to be anxious to collect works of art - they must be housed in an environment that will give them a chance of long survival. If we go to the trouble and expense of collecting rare works, it is absolutely obligatory on our part to see that these do not disintegrate in our hands. Obviously, it is not only the major display areas requiring controlled humidity and temperature conditions but also the storage areas. Once this is understood, an examination of the existing building reveals that nothing

less than a major internal reconstruction will provide these desired conditions.

The situation for the Auckland City Art Gallery is still complicated but a path forwards can be discerned. Factors bearing on the position are many and varied. In 1953 the City Council made it a matter of policy regarding the 'erection of a new Central Library with the Art Gallery to take over the present Library' areas. A start on the new Central Library building on the acquired site across the road is dependent on labour and loan funds and the Building Programmer's approval to proceed - but construction of Stage I may just possibly commence late this year and be finished by May 1970. With the Central Library in its new quarters, a comprehensive internal reconstruction of the whole building could commence, after May 1970. But there are many intangibles involved and work may not commence on the new gallery until a later date. However, if the Library project is delayed indefinitely, and as finance is available from the Edmiston Board for reconstructing the City Gallery area, Council may be in a position to gain approval for proceeding with the Gallery project. If this eventuates a floor of the Town Hall has been reserved to serve as



ABOVE The old East Gallery before the alterations. (Sparrow Industrial Pictures)

CENTRE The East Gallery during the construction of the Mezzanine Floor. (Photograph: Rod Harvey)

RIGHT The sculpture Court looking up onto the Mezzanine Gallery. (Photograph: Rod Harvey)



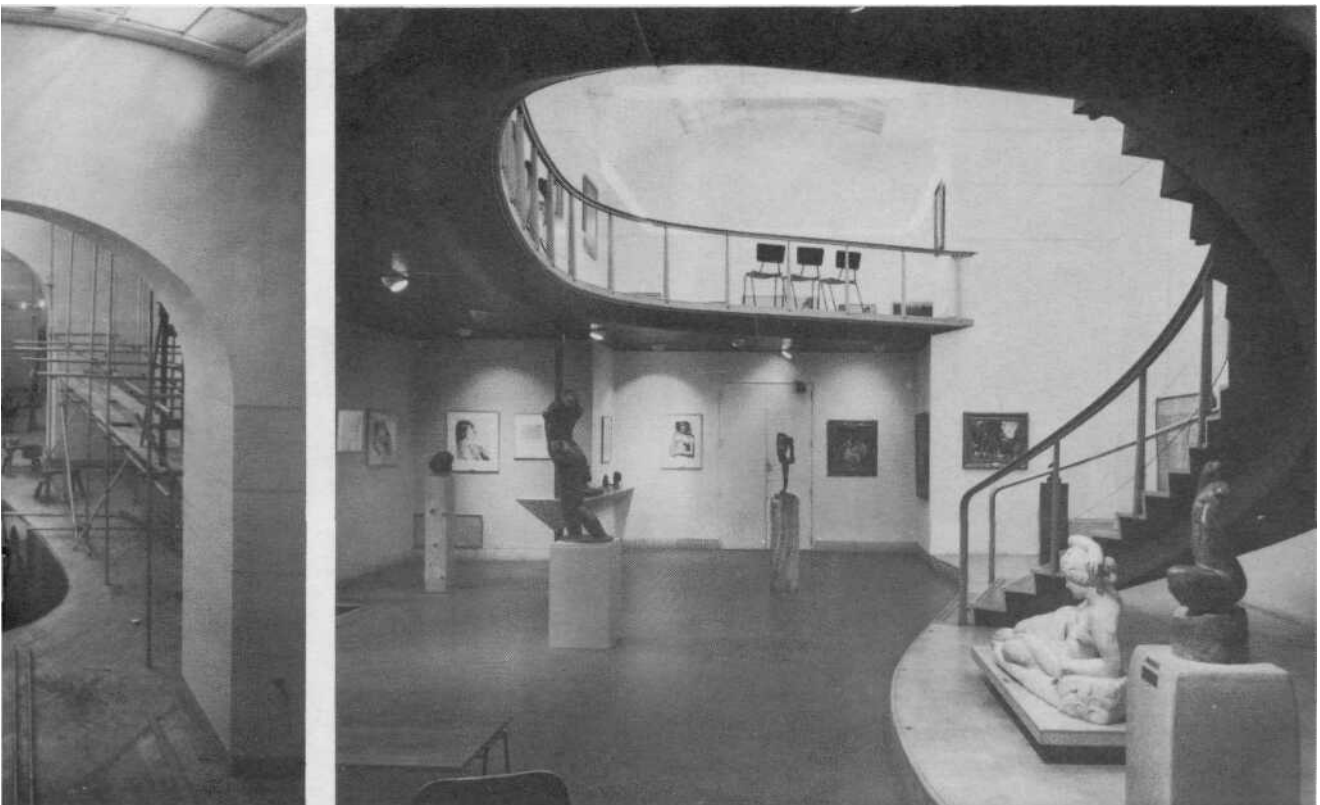
a temporary exhibition centre throughout the reconstruction period, which may last from 18 months to 2 years. Another factor we have to bear in mind is that to increase floor areas in the City Gallery, the height of the building must rise in some sections as extensions onto park-land are wisely prevented by legislation.

Having described the situation facing the City Gallery, let us look at the Edmiston Bequest. The late Philip Augustus Edmiston was a prominent citizen of Auckland and general manager of the former New Zealand Accident Insurance Company. He died in Sydney in 1946, aged 93. Shortly afterwards the City Council was advised of the general terms of the provisions of the late Mr Edmiston's Will benefitting the City of Auckland. The Edmiston Trust Board set-up in 1958 to control the Trust Fund were given powers concerning the use of the capital and income and the Trustees felt that as far as possible, the general wishes of the donor were to be respected. Very briefly, the Will stated that provided in the opinion of the Trust Board, a suitable site was made available within the Provincial District of Auckland for the erection of a Gallery, the Board could erect or co-operate in financing the erection of a Gallery

building. (The late Mr Edmiston indicated that perhaps it could be erected in proximity to the Auckland War Memorial Museum). Also the Trust Fund could be used to purchase works of art as well as beautifying any public place or park. If in the 'uncontrolled opinion' of the Trust Board, these objectives were incapable of fulfilment then the Board could use the Trust Fund for charitable purposes. A decision had to be made by March 1968.

On examining the Will, it can be seen that the Trust Fund was not necessarily 'earmarked' to help the existing Auckland City Art Gallery. It could in fact be read to mean that a second "Auckland Art Gallery" be built. Over the years, the Trust Board made it very clear that in their opinion, the major part of the Estate should be invested in a gallery building and only then, could a substantial part of the Estate be allocated for purchasing works of art.

In reviewing the whole situation the following becomes apparent: It is estimated that the population of Auckland will surpass the million mark in the 1980's - an increase of 30 times the 1888 population. In 78 years the City Gallery collections have grown and its services increased but it has become obvious that, unless radical improvements are made



as outlined earlier in this article, the gallery will in a decade decidedly fall below recognized international standards.

Following briefings given by the Gallery, new plans for the City Gallery were draughted by the City Architect's Department. It is accepted that the present site of the City Art Gallery is ideal. Not only is it situated close to the business heart of the city but it forms part of an established cultural grouping linking Albert Park, the new Central Library, the University, the Technical School and the Civic Centre - all within a few minutes walking distance of each other. Thus a valuable, accessible and suitable site has been set apart. It was necessary though, to formulate the new plans in such a way, that the physical problems of co-ordinating all areas into a unified new Art Gallery plan were completely resolved. This has been achieved. The redevelopment programme is phased in three sections, but each section is closely related to produce a City Gallery of practical and visionary qualities. Externally, changes will only take place on the north facade facing the proposed sculpture garden. The Colonial-Victorian street facade is preserved. In the redevelopment plan the major work involves internal reconstruction and remodelling of the

existing art gallery areas. It involves the demolition of the Wertheim Room, the Newspaper Store and Photographic Studio situated above. On this cleared site will follow the construction of a new block containing a basement with four floors above ground level. The new block will have a garden entrance to replace the steep Kitchener Street entrance. The garden entrance will lead into a new internal Sculpture Court at ground floor level, with an Art Reference Library above; offices on the second floor and staff rooms on the top level.

A structure will be erected within the walls of the central (Mackelvie) and western (City) galleries to carry entirely new gallery display areas at first floor level, thus increasing the exhibition space by some 6,656 square feet. These new first floor galleries will then link-up with the floor level of the existing eastern (Mezzanine) gallery and most importantly - will directly relate to the existing second floor level, consequently, provision will be made for a whole new sequence of gallery display spaces, without extending the walls of the building.

Two elevators will serve all floor levels - one from each end of the building (Main Entrance and Garden Entrance),



ABOVE Stairs and old Entrance. (Sparrow Industrial Pictures)



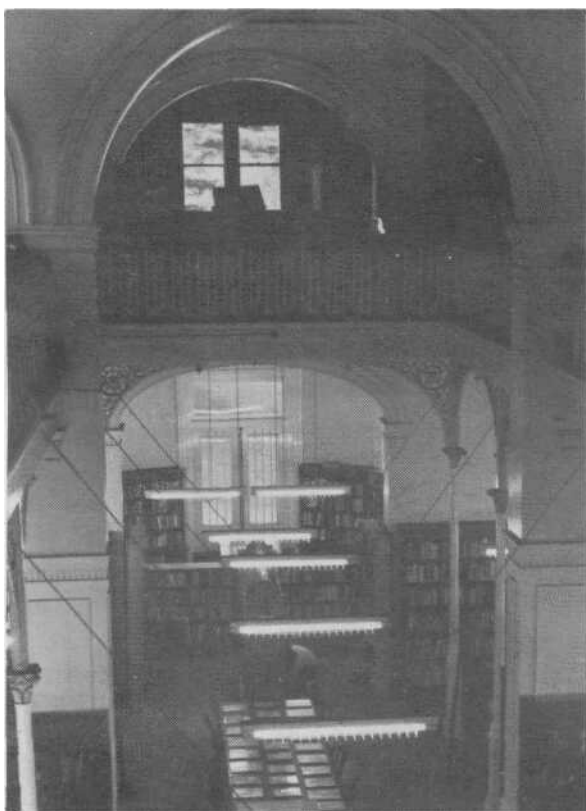
RIGHT The old Entrance. (Sparrow Industrial Pictures)

thus ensuring that all exhibition areas will be easily accessible to visitors.

It is proposed that these five main central galleries will be principally devoted to the Permanent Collections - European and New Zealand, and allow scope for the housing of Pacific and Oriental collections when these are established. The principal exhibition areas, storage rooms and conservation studios will be fully air-conditioned and great care will be given to fittings, lighting, and the scale of exhibition spaces. Monotonously long galleries will be avoided by using moveable walls to form environmental settings for different periods and cultures. Such techniques, when meaningfully applied, can develop a better appreciation of the works displayed. The gallery workshop areas and ancillary services will be re-planned and extended to provide better handling facilities for moving travelling exhibitions and gallery materials.

It can be appreciated therefore that lifting the existing gallery areas to international standards is a vital yet expensive operation. The cost is estimated to be £237,000. We are extremely grateful that the Edmiston Board of Trustees have decided to assist with this expenditure. As an integral

part of the redevelopment programme the Edmiston Board will also direct any surplus funds to help finance the conversion of the triangular area of land adjacent to the northern wall of the Gallery and fronting Kitchener Street into an open air Sculpture Garden. The Sculpture Garden will not only be an adjunct to the Art Gallery, but it will provide an attractive addition to Albert Park. Hence another aspect of the P.A. Edmiston Will is met - 'the beautification or adornment of a public place or park.' Patrons of both park and art gallery will have freedom of movement through the sculpture garden from many points and at all times. The existing pohutukawa trees will become an essential part of the sculpture garden by providing shade, colour and contrast to the surrounding areas. The Sculpture Garden plan has resolved itself into a series of terraced patios partially screened from the street. The change of levels has been exploited to provide a degree of independence to each patio or open-air court and an element of discovery as the visitor comes upon each new level. Here will be seen sculpture bathed in the ever-changing light of day and standing in the treed setting of the park. Large areas of glass in the North wall of the new Gallery entrance overlooking the Sculpture



ABOVE Auckland Public Library and Art Gallery: circa 1890. (Photograph: Auckland Public Library)

LEFT The Reference Department, Auckland Public Library.

Garden, will allow the garden to be visually integrated with the gallery itself.

The March 1967 Agreement between the City Corporation and the Edmiston Trust Board places with Council the responsibility of financing the conversion of the existing Central Library areas (Wellesley Street Wing) into a unified art gallery plan at the cost of about £150,000. Here will be the front entrance to the new City Gallery. Leading off from the reception area will be two independent galleries for presenting travelling exhibitions; steps and elevator will lead to the first floor where a Gallery Hall will accommodate about 300 people. The Hall will be the centre for a wide range of educational activities - lectures and film screenings, music and intimate theatre.

A lounge-foyer, exhibition spaces, and offices for future Education and Gallery Extension Sections, will be situated adjacent to the foyer, also rooms for loan and rental exhibitions and a series of small galleries along the Kitchener Street frontage for displaying print and drawing collections in settings conducive to contemplation.

The second floor will house the Gallery Associates room; another small exhibition area and access to the balcony of

the Gallery Hall. Most importantly this floor level will coincide with the level of the new galleries to be built within the framework of the building. Existing rooms will also be converted to serve as storage for the City Collection and accommodation for the Conservation Studios. On the third level around the clock tower are rooms planned originally to serve as living quarters. A resident caretaker who will be responsible for the security of the building against fire and burglary, will also be in charge of the air-conditioning and heating plant and cleaning services will be accommodated here.

The Wellesley Street Wing scheme, whilst it is an integral part of the City Gallery, has the great merit of independent operation. This will be of value during evening hours when public functions are held in the Gallery Hall leading to security and reduced operating costs.

In conclusion, it can be seen that this programme of construction and redevelopment of a complicated building into a unified art gallery is a major and extensive undertaking. The end result will undoubtedly be a vastly improved civic asset and a City Gallery which is planned and furnished according to a well related and harmonious scheme, pro-



ABOVE The Mackelvie Gallery before the final stage of modernization. (Photograph: Rod Harvey)



RIGHT TOP The Wertheim Gallery looking into the Mackelvie and City Galleries before the galleries were modernized. (Sparrow Industrial Pictures)



RIGHT BOTTOM The City Gallery after the first stage of modernization. (Sparrow Industrial Pictures)

viding in its building, its collections and services, a living link between the past and the present. In this particular way, the life of a distinguished citizen of Auckland, the late Philip Augustus Edniiston, will be perpetuated and will continue to work in the interests of all citizens.

I *In honour of Daryl Lindsay: essays and studies*, edited by Franz Philipp and June Stewart. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1964.

NOTE ON GRIESHABERPRINT

The woodcut by H. A. P. Grieshaber reproduced as *Composition* on page 10 of the last number of this periodical can now be given its correct title. It is called *Cat, fish and bird*. The woodcut was printed in 1960 and offered, in the form of the annual bonus, to members of the Karlsruhe Art Society. The editor wishes to thank Margot Fuerst for kindly supplying this information.

ACQUISITIONS

The recent additions to the Auckland City Art Gallery Collection given below continues on from the previous list published in the last issue of the *Quarterly*.

William Blake, 1757-1827

- 67/1 *William Cowper* (after George Romney) 1802
Engraving, 9 x 5 ins
Purchased

Roland Wakelin, 1887-

- 67/2 *Blue's Point, Sydney Harbour* 1933
Oil on board, 23 x 34 ins
Presented by Air New Zealand

Barry Cleavin, 1939-

- 67/3 *Gentle Suspension* 1966
Etching, 15! x 13J ins
Purchased

John Drawbridge, 1930-

- 67/4 *Windflow* 1966
Acquatint, 15 x 19§ ins
Purchased

James McLachlan Nairn, 1859-1904

- 67/5 *Mending the net* 1899
Oil on board, 12 x 18 ins
Purchased

Walter Wright, 1866-1933

- 67/6 *Shelley Beach* 1916
Oil on canvas, 12 x 20 ins
Purchased

Joseph Jenner Merrett

- 0/240 *Portrait of a man* 1850
Watercolour, 14 x 9 ins
Deposited by Auckland Public Library

John Barr Clark Hoyte, 1833-1913

- 0/241 *Rangitoto from the lake*
Watercolour, 9 x 15 ins
Deposited by Auckland Public Library

Charles Blackman, 1928-

- 67/7 *Head of a Girl*
Charcoal drawing, 20 x 27 ins
Purchased

E. Roper

- 67/8 *A New Zealand pig hunt: an old boar bailed up cijijo*
Watercolour, 10 x 20 ins
Purchased

Dorothy Kate Richmond, 1861 -1935

- 67/9 *Miners emptying a track*
Charcoal and watercolour on brown paper, 10j x 13J ins
Purchased

Alfred Wilson Walsh, 1859-1916

- 67/10 *Lake Ryan* 1900
Watercolour, 11x 16 ins
Purchased

Alfred Wilson Walsh, 1859-1916

- 67/11 *Across the Fox River* 1910
Watercolour, 10 x 14 ins
Purchased

Rei Hamon, 1920-

- 67/12 *Bell Rock, Kauranga Valley, no 14* 1966
Pen and black indian ink, 16 x 17 ins
Purchased

William Robert Allen, 1922-

- 67/13 *Crucifix II* 1966
Aluminium, bronze, silver and wood, height 30 ins
Purchased

The *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* is published by the Art Gallery, Parks and Library Division, Auckland City Council.
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Printed by the Pelorus Press Limited, 38 Airedale Street, Auckland.
Layout and typography by G. H. B.

Exhibition Calendar: *Modern European paintings from National Gallery of Victoria* 11 May - 5 June
Sir David Low. 90 cartoons 1927-1949 11 May - 5 June
Marcel Duchamp: the Mary Sisler Collection 11 May - 5 June
The Landscape: prints and drawings June and July
Kenneth Armitage 12 - 30 July
The photographic eye 1-31 July
Paul Wunderlich prints July
German Expressionist prints August and September

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY: WELLESLEY STREET EAST: AUCKLAND

Location: The Gallery is located at the corner of Kitchener Street and Wellesley Street East, next to the Public Library. The entrance is in Kitchener Street.

Telephone: 21-796

Hours: Monday 12 noon to 4.30 pm, Tuesday to Saturday 10 am to 4.30 pm: Friday remains open until 8.30 pm. Sunday 2 pm to 4.30 pm.

Coffee Room 11 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday.

Gifts and Bequests: Gifts to the Art Gallery in the form of *cash from income* upward to £25 are allowable for purposes of income tax deductions. Gifts in the form of paintings, or other property do not qualify for such deductions. Gifts to the Art Gallery of money or property would not attract gift duty, and the value of such gifts made during the donor's lifetime would not form part of his dutiable estate. An exception to this is where an intending donor declares a gift to the Art Gallery, but reserves to himself, during his life, an interest in the property so that the full beneficial interest does not attract duty, but the property remains part of the donor's estate and qualifies for purposes of estate duty.

Auckland Gallery Associates: The aims of the Associates are to stimulate and sustain public interest in the Art Gallery; to extend the Gallery's influence throughout the community; and to acquire funds through gifts, subscriptions and bequests, for the purpose of adding to the Art Gallery's collection of New Zealand painting, drawings and sculpture.

Any member of the public is eligible for membership. Members are invited to previews of exhibitions arranged by the Art Gallery, to lectures, discussions, film evenings, and social functions arranged by the Associates. Regular newsletters are sent out, and Members also receive the Art Gallery's *Quarterly*. Further information can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, c/o Auckland City Art Gallery.

Publications: The latest publications from the Auckland City Art Gallery are listed below, and are available from the Reception Desk at the Gallery. Postal orders should be addressed to the Gallery and should include postage.

Modern European painting from the National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne. 1967

1 sheet 25 x 44 cm, folded to 25 x 17 cm.

Brief introductions by Eric Westbrook and G. C. Docking, with list of works in exhibition.

Price: One Shilling.

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