Quarterly

Auckland City Art Gallery Number Fifty-four/1973



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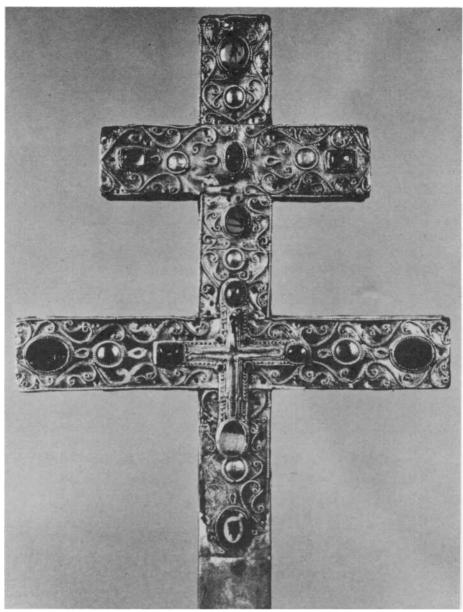
This issue of the Quarterly is devoted to aspects of the Gallery's exhibition Mediaeval Arts in France. References in the text correspond to numbers in the exhibition catalogue, in which can be seen a reproduction of any piece not illustrated on these pages.

COVER ILLUSTRATION (Catalogue number 29) King Childebert Painted stone, c1240 From the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Pres, Paris (Musee du Louvre, Paris) ABOVE (Catalogue number 64) Scene from The Passion Stained glass panel, c1245 (Musee Municipal, Sens)

The Mediaeval as interim

There was a period, around AD 970, when serious legal documents were dated 'sometime before the End'.

If we are to understand the mediaeval spirit or the arts of those centuries, perhaps we should examine such statements. The Gospels, if taken literally, had emphatically designated the Millenium (however calculated) as Apocalypse. The year 1000 stood, therefore, beyond the Armageddons of the Barbarian invasions which had destroyed the Roman empire, and in the belief



(Catalogue number 46) *Reliquary crossfor the True Cross* Gold and gilt silver on a wooden core with gem stones, second half of the twelfth century (Musee des Beaux-Arts, Angers)

of many, the summit of all culture past or to come. The implicit prediction is what is most important here.

Architecture, the principal art, was thus, a retrospection, though memories were clouded as to splendours past. Charlemagne, the initiating Imperial mediaevalist, had been long gone - crowned in AD 800. Long gone indeed. But the Millenium is the operative factor in the objects which this Gallery is presenting to the public of Australasia. Without it, the fervour that illumines

the earliest works is inexplicable. Without it, the joy of the climate in which the later ones came to be created is equally unexplained.

The cliche: 'the Ages of Faith' used to explicate the massive beauty of Canterbury or Autun, the soaring grace of Beauvais or Westminster or Cologne is, perhaps, facile at times. The Age of the Cathedrals is more complex, less pure in many ways. But, if not acts of faith, what can account for the surge above a peaceful rural, flat horizon of such a gesture of piety as Chartres? Such a

humanistic flamboyant, monument as Rouen? Such an affirmation as, again, the Autun of Ghislebertus, the sculptor?

Saint-Denis may be the 'Gothic' masterpiece of one man, Abbe Suger, committed by his love of the divine to ecstacies of architectural fervour; sainted Louis ix, king in much more than political or hereditory ways, may have raised the Sainte-Chapclle within a single year to house what he thought was the true crown of thorns of Jesus. But, generally, the great monuments of the Mediaeval centuries were vast, uncoerced, public, communal undertakings. Hence, if we do not wish to idealize the unwashed man in the filth of



the mired street of those times, we find no clue to the dogged persistence that accounts for creative stone-cutting and stone-carving yards surrounding churches, cathedrals or abbeys for decades or centuries.

In the course of mankind's history, power, centralized, regal, imperial or class-structured, had or would produce towering feats, such as Egyptian pyramids, Mayan temples - or Versailles. But the monuments of Mediaeval Europe rose up and towered above fragmented lands where power, though crude or oppressive, had no resources massive enough or continuous enough to impose the burdens either fiscal or as forced or bartered labour, to raise Beauvais or Laon or Lincoln or Reims above the countryside, the thatched cottages of the villages, the timbered houses of the walled cities. This majesty came from the volition of multitudes of obscure unsung, 'little people': an unparalleled phenomenon. There had been the Dark (the indescribably dark) Ages. Charlemagne had ordered the creation of 'scriptoria' within the ecclesiastical communities under his control, in order to copy sacred or surviving secular texts to illumine, by transmitted language, the wealth of inherited knowledge. Walter Scott described Europe as a dark land wherein the libraries and scriptoria of the monasteries stood as a constellation of beacons upon distant hills. The image is forceful and apt. Germigny-les-Pres, built the year Charlemagne was crowned, belonged to both of these feats of persistence by man for the survival of his spirit. With alabaster instead of glass in its small windows, it is a gem of pre-Romanesque, a Dark Ages marvel -- but no cathedral. It belongs, however, to the Benedictine spirit to come, exultingly expressed in the grandeur of St-Benoit-sur-Loire, just a few miles away, built after the Millenium, started, in fact, in 1026. In the extraordinary surge of emotion, invention and incarnate faith which we call the Mediaeval, it was to take two hundred years to complete, without a tyrant, without a Pharaoh.

LEFT (Catalogue number 54) Crozier with Saint Michael vanquishing the dragon Chased gilt and enamelled copper, middle of the thirteenth century From the Abbey of Anchin (Musee de la Chartreuse, Douai)

BELOW (Catalogue number 3) Scenes from the life of Saint Remi Ivory, ninth to tenth century (Musee de Picardie)





The capital in Mediaeval architecture: notes on the exhibition Mediaeval Arts in France

Romanesque and Gothic architecture, in an effort to create a more open floor plan, made extensive use of arcades of pillars and arches. Where the pillar is of massive construction, equal to or greater than the bases of the arches, the thrust weight of the arches could be carried directly on to it without an intervening member (although, in practice, the springing line of the arch was normally marked by a moulding or by a simple abacus - a shallow often square block at the top of a pillar, deriving its name from the Greek word for 'tablet'). Where a pillar is smaller in section than the spring of the arches, then an intervening member must be introduced to concentrate the weight of the arches on to the support - the capital.

This, then, is the architectural function of the capital - literally the 'head' of the pillar - and this function determines the capital's basic form: a block increasing the area of the cross-section from bottom to top.

So simple a form and function little presaged the wealth of imagination that would imbue mediaeval capitals with more than functional meaning and make them a microcosm, a 'recapitulation' one might say, of the forms of Mediaeval sculpture. In the capitals we can trace many of the trends in style and iconography of the times, and can see the changing emphasis in modes of religious and artistic expression. In the

capitals, especially in the less important areas of the building, we come closer to the craftsman/artist than is possible in the major monuments - the porticoes, the tympana, the altars and the shrines. Here, the sculptor, most often anonymous, had greater freedom of expression and wider latitude in his selection of subject. In the capitals we can trace Mediaeval sculpture back to its classical and post-classical sources of inspiration and study how it adopted and adapted earlier forms.

Roman influence was strong in Gaul, the area that was to be the heartland of Romanesque and Gothic art, and Roman remains were still extensive in the Middle Ages. Purely Roman buildings were sometimes adapted to monastic or ecclesiastical use, especially in the earlier period leading up to the tenth century. The church of Notre-Dame of Melun, for instance, was built over a Roman temple of Mercury; Chartres and Reims and Aries over pagan shrines, and not these alone. Generally, however, buildings were dismantled and the stone re-used, particularly the worked blocks of pillars, bases and capitals. This procedure was forced on the builders both by reasons of economy and by the almost general

ABOVE LEFT (Catalogue number i) Column capital in marble, seventh century (Musec des Beaux-Arts, Agen)
BELOW (Catalogue number 10) Ornamented capital in stone, middle of the twelfth century From the former church of Saint-Arigle, Nevers (Musee archcologique du Nivernais, Nevers)



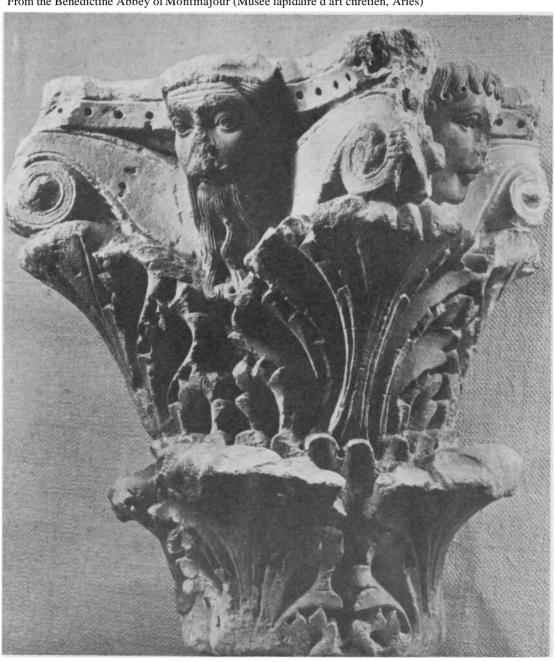
eclipse of monumental sculpture after the fourth century.

The earliest capitals in Mediaeval churches, therefore, were frequently re-used marble capitals from Roman buildings conforming to the Corinthian order, by far the most favoured of the three orders - Doric, Ionic and Corinthian - taken over by the Roman architects from the Greeks. The Corinthian capital is a deep inverted bell-shape, uniformly decorated on all four faces with two

rows of acanthus leaves, one above the other, rising from the base; pairs of tall leaves spring out from these to the corners of the abacus under which their tips curl down and outwards in a tight volute; in the centre of each side is a small pair of similar spirals in relief, surmounted by a palmette, placed directly on the centre of the edge of the abacus. The abacus is concave.

When the supply of Roman capitals became exhausted and Mediaeval stone-masons were

(Catalogue number 12) Capital with masks and foliage in stone, end of the twelfth century From the Benedictine Abbey of Montmajour (Musee lapidaire d'art chretien, Aries)





(Catalogue number 5) *Capital in stone: The Last Judgement*, end of the eleventh century From the cloister of Notre-Dame de la Daurade, Toulouse (Musee des Augustines, Toulouse)

compelled to carve their own, they naturally copied the earlier models. They were not governed by the rigid traditions that had standardised the Classical orders, however, but could combine features from separate elements of the architectural orders or could even introduce new elements into their compositions.

In the earliest work in the exhibition Mediaeval Arts in France (catalogue number i) for instance, the fluting from the column and the egg-anddart moulding of the entablature are combined with the acanthus leaves and volutes of the capital, whilst the volutes themselves are further decorated with small rosettes. In the capital from Nevers (catalogue number 10) the volutes are transformed into masks in high relief, with fronds of foliage acting as hair, whilst the two rows of acanthus leaves become an arcade sheltering palmettes. In the centre of each face is that typical Mediaeval device - a foliate mask, replacing the central volutes and palmette. The capital from the Abbey of Montmajour, near Aries, in Provence (catalogue number 12) is closer in spirit to its models and reminds us that the Roman remains were more thickly strewn in this southern part of France than elsewhere in the Teutonic Empire, and that some workshops had survived there and preserved the Classical tradition. The acanthus leaves and the volutes are enlarged, as they are in the Composite order, a sub-order of Roman Corinthian; the abacus has the correct concave-sided shape; and the masks, which occupy the same positions as the foliate masks in the last piece, are deeply carved, expressively handled stylisations of bearded faces, owing much to the Hellenistic tradition.

Strictly speaking, the introduction of masks into the decoration of these capitals was not an innovation; the propylaea of the sanctuary at Eleusis, near Athens, built in the first century B c, had winged animals in place of the corner volutes; evidence of strong Near-Eastern influences and small-scale human masks had appeared, sporadically, even earlier. Their use in Romanesque art, however, does seem to have been an independent development; and this is certainly true of the next feature to be developed - full figures and scenes which appear in the long series of historiated capitals, that most distinctive feature of Romanesque art.

Before considering these newer forms we must turn to the other main source of inspiration - the

Barbarian nations who settled in Western Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries, the most important, to us, being the Goths and the Franks. These tribes, Asian or Teutonic, originally nomadic, had no traditions of architecture or of monumental sculpture, but they were gifted in the minor, portable arts of weaving, ornamented bronze, silver and goldworking. What has survived is mostly jewellery and weapons incorporating polychrome, repousse and filigree techniques with geometric, interlace and extremely stylised floral or foliate meander patterns of the type that, when we find it later in illuminated manuscripts, we must call tracery. Human figures and domesticated animals such as the horse appear alongside wild and fabulous beasts, all so stylised in posture and treatment as to appear unreal, contrived, heraldic.

Sculpture in the round had almost disappeared throughout the Barbarian-occupied areas. It was replaced by carved panelling in stone, illustrated in this exhibition by an early 'chancel' slab (catalogue number 2), employing the same designs of tracery and, in other cases, heraldic

figures that appeared in jewellery. The strength of this tradition in Romanesque art can best be gauged in the illuminated manuscripts and, naturally, in the precious metalwork, but sculpture also retained strong traces of the earlier traditions. The capital showing the Last Judgement (catalogue number 5) has both tracery and surreal beasts, birds feeding and pluming, in a broad frieze just below the abacus; and the one showing the Martyrdom of John the Baptist (catalogue number 8) has a sinuous floral frieze deriving from the same tradition.

The figures and scenes in these and other capitals are the most striking however, and these are, as has been said, a new development in the periods we are considering. Unconfined by rigid canons of architectural decorations, as in Classical times, Mediaeval sculptors were not bound by sculptural canons for, in a new art form, these had not yet had time to develop. After six hundred years of lying fallow in the wake of Barbarian desecration, the field of sculpture bloomed forth in a riot of imagery, pollenised by inspirations from every source, Hellenistic,

(Catalogue number 8) Capital in stone: The Martyrdom of John the Baptist, first quarter of the twelfth century Imbedded capital for twin columns from the cloisters of the Cathedral of Saint-Etienne, Toulouse (Musee des Augustins, Toulouse)





(Catalogue number 21) Capital in stone: The Visitation; The Nativity; The Message to the Shepherds, middle of the twelfth century From the collegiate church of Saint-Etienne, Dreux (Musee d'Art et d'Histoire, Dreux)

Byzantine, even Barbarian and also Near Eastern art. The scenes of the Martyrdom of John the Baptist and the Massacre of the Innocents (catalogue numbers 8, II) draw from Hellenistic conventions of high relief, which would have been familiar to Mediaeval sculptors through Roman sarcophagi and funerary stelae; whilst the Last Judgement (catalogue number 5) is more in keeping with the hieratic conventions of Byzantine art, that of the Eastern Church. Themes were drawn not only from the Old and New Testaments, but also from the popular fabulistic bestiaries of the period, which were survivals of Hellenistic compilations, from scenes in histories and legends and fables from daily life. Beneath this riot of imagery the basic Corinthian capital still lurks and peeps forth occasionally; the corner volutes betray its presence in the Last Judgement and in the Martyrdom of John the Baptist (catalogue numbers 5, 8).

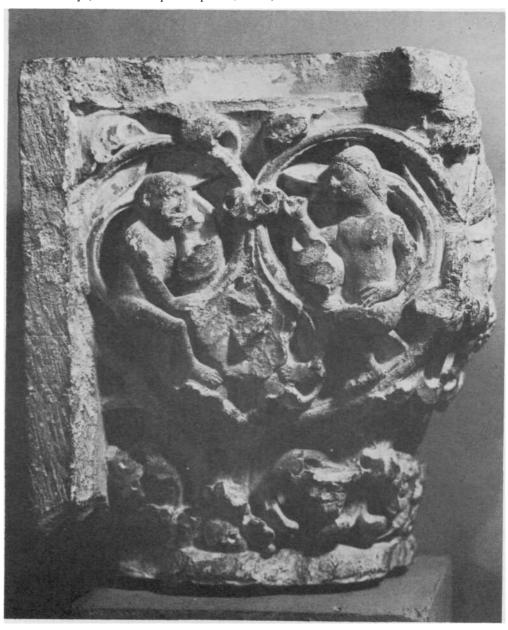
Beside these echoes of the past we see hints of

the future. The capital from the Collegiate Church of Saint-Etienne (catalogue number 21), with its scenes of the Visitation, the Nativity and the Message to the Shepherds, each framed beneath a small architectural dais in the Gothic manner, in contrast to the purely Hellenistic architectural setting of the Massacre of the Innocents (catalogue number II), displays a more Gothic feeling for space and naturalistic detail. The capital for a corner column (catalogue number 25) has an Adam and Eve conceived plastically in Gothic terms, encircled in a tracery of foliage which, Romanesque by inspiration and stylisation, is executed with a quite later Gothic understanding of space.

In the Gothic, sculpture achieved a stature often independent of architectural demands, and the strong traditions of historiated capitals came to a gradual end. The decoration of capitals reverted to foliage patterns, but not, however, the stylised foliage of the Corinthian order: rather, a closely

observed naturalistic foliage, reflecting man's rebudding interest in horticulture and botany. In the capital ornamented with fig leaves (catalogue number 27) we see a last echo of the Corinthian order in the fig leaves at the corners, massing and curling in a way reminiscent of the volutes of the original Greek prototype. At the same time, the fig leaf, symbol of Adam and Eve's fall from primal grace, reminds us that mankind was reawakening to a self-awareness which would reach true fruition in the Renaissance.

(Catalogue number 25) Capital in stone for a corner column, second half twelfth century (Musee historique et lapidaire, Reims)



(Catalogue number 69) Pagefrom the Book of Hours or prayer book of Metz Parchment, second half of the fourteenth century (Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris)



Mediaeval illuminated manuscripts: the Books of Hours

Of the seven very fine illuminated manuscripts brought to New Zealand as part of the *Mediaeval Arts in France* exhibition, two belong to the special category known as Books of Hours. Books of Hours are collections of prayers mainly intended for private devotion. Although they first appeared in the thirteenth century the books were most widely used during the mature Gothic period from around 1400 when manuscript illumination in the west is generally acknowledged to have reached its height. It is important to note that, in spite of the modest size of the manuscripts, illumination generally held a preeminent position among the minor mediaeval arts.

Following the decline of the first mediaeval style, that of the Romanesque, with its broad manner and emphasis on an abstract two-dimensional effect, the basis of Gothic art by contrast rests on a profound intellectual transformation. By the end of the Gothic period, a new awareness of reality had enabled the field of illumination, in its minute and refined way, to give full representation to the external world. Motifs eventually became rendered in relief and depth, with richness and great range of natural colour, and the treatment of the whole design was assured and subtle.

This trend toward naturalism moved gently into a world still dominated by the central idea of God; and even though ecclesiastical manuscripts began to break away from the strict liturgical texts, becoming more varied in character and often incorporating pictures drawn from secular themes, faith continued to be the primary source of inspiration.

The *Book of Hours of Metz* from Lorraine (or what is now eastern France) is perhaps the most interesting of our two examples. It was alleged, without foundation, to have belonged originally to Queen Isabeau of Bavaria because the prayers are in the feminine gender. Comprising 176 parchment leaves, it belongs to the second half of the fourteenth century.

Stylistically, this book's illumination is typical of the period, with elegant pictorial illumination taking the form of decorated letters, designs and painted scenes in gold and colours. We see a change from the Romanesque decorative emphasis on the border of the text and on the initial letters - both treated in a rather stylised manner - to the treatment of Gothic illumination, which flowed more freely. In Gothic illumination figures and decoration assumed the air of being placed at random. This acted as a parallel to the theory governing the period: that of the incalculable forces of nature.

As we see in the page reproduced the border is no longer closed and rigid, as it had been earlier. It has become vine-like, putting forward at intervals intricate branches bearing leaves and fruit. Also springing from it are the grotesques (imaginary figures and creatures) which had been especially prevalent in manuscripts from the north of France and England at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It is the Age of Chivalry, and in this page the humorous fantasies, the droleries, take the form of a dragon and knight in confrontation. Thus the border, in its light and entertaining manner, introduces us to the chief theme of the text, Christ's Passion. Unusually for books of this type the Passion is used as the primary subject throughout. This prominent position was more customarily given to the Childhood of Christ, which in our example is relegated to historiated initials. These miniature scenes within richly decorated initials were the main stylistic characteristic of the scriptorium of Metz, which is known to have been the seat of one of the most original European schools of illumination.

More generally applicable, however, to Gothic art, the ornamented initials have elongated terminals which develop as part of the border. Symbols in which religious doctrine is embodied are incorporated in our particular work in the vine-like border bearing cruciform leaves, and the timid rabbit at its base, which from the earliest times of the Church represented the inoffensiveness of the Christian.

Similarities in the style of the *Book of Hours of Metz* can be traced through to the magnificent

manuscripts from the studios of the French illuminators, Master Honore and Jean Pucelle, whose innovations reached their greatest achievement in the Book of Hours for the Duke of Berry, largely produced by the Limbourg brothers, some time before 1416. In this work the miniatures which make up the calendar reveal the new awareness of nature: the daily activities of men shown in association with the course of the seasons and planets as set in motion by God. Appropriate to the sacred character of these books is their rich mediaeval binding; which also applies to our example, made of cloth embroidered in gold and silver.

(Catalogue number 67) An angel Woollen tapestry woven by or under Nicolas Bataille, c1380 Fragment from the Tapestry of the Apocalypse from the Treasury of the Cathedral of Angers (Chateau du roi Rene, Angers)



Most illuminated manuscripts were luxury items destined for a highly refined and sophisticated public. In the middle and late Gothic periods illumination tended to move from the secluded, purely monastic scriptoria to lay workshops under the guild system. Patronage for the manuscripts no longer came solely from the clergy but included the nobility as well. In the fifteenth century man began to re-define his position in the universe. The age of the Renaissance was on its way. Mediaeval art declined when interest in material reality reflected a new curiosity, calling for descriptive skill, no longer being dedicated to expressing God's love for his creation. Most pertinent to the decline of the tradition of the Books of Hours and illuminated manuscripts in general was the invention of printing during the second half of the fifteenth century. Books were no longer the precious possessions of great ecclesiastical and secular patrons, but rather became accessible to a new and broader public. ANNEKIRKER

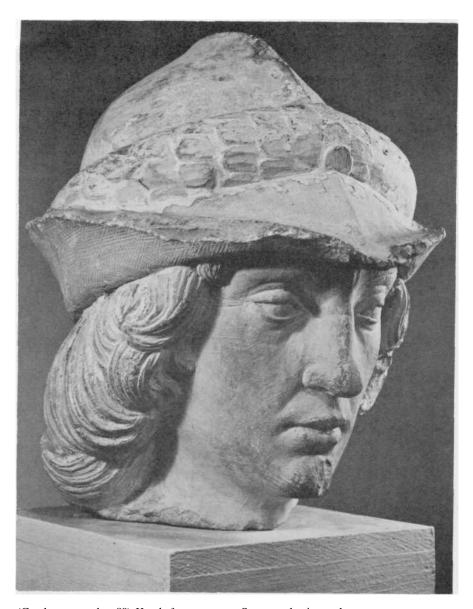
Fund raising for the exhibition Mediaeval Arts in France

Never before has the Auckland City Art Gallery undertaken to present such a rare, historically important or magnificent exhibition as *Mediaeval Arts in France*. And never before have the Auckland Gallery Associates Incorporated been so deeply involved in fund raising in order to participate in bringing an exhibition to Auckland and to raise such a sum as \$10,000.

Several months ago the Director, Mr Richard Teller Hirsch, who is an *ex officio* member of the executive committee of the Associates, requested the committee to co-operate with the Auckland City Art Gallery, the Auckland City Council, The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, UTA Airlines, the *New Zealand Herald*, and the *Sunday Herald* by guaranteeing a sum of money towards the cost of bringing the exhibition here.

The costs associated with the exhibition are concerned with freight (six and one-half tons), insurance cover and curatorial escorts from Tokyo and Paris.

The executive committee responded by suggesting that the sum of \$10,000 be aimed for, to be raised through a series of events arranged during the months from October to March -



(Catalogue number 80) *Head of a young man* Stone, early sixteenth century From the Cathedral of Moulins (Musee d'Art et d'Archeologie, Moulins)

occasions to which Associates' members would be invited.

A sub-committee was appointed to plan for a variety of events. Among these was an auction of paintings, sculpture and *objets d'art*, donated by the patron, vice-patrons and members of the committee. This was followed up by a second auction, three weeks later, consisting of works donated by artists and members of the Associates who are themselves collectors sympathetic to this project.

A programme by Francis Batten's group, *Theatre Action*, in their final Auckland performance before leaving to make their headquarters in

Wellington, was held in the West Gallery. A poetry programme, *The Courts ofLove*, presented by the *Mercury Theatre* actors Jan Bashford and Raymond Hawthorne, provided a further entertaining evening. On 28 November there was a programme of mediaeval vocal and instrumental ensembles, under the direction of Ronald Dellow, a noted authority on early music.

In addition to the above, the social convener of the Auckland Gallery Associates, Mrs Nancy Jordan, has organised a series of private functions - lunch, dinner and bridge parties -- to be graciously arranged by members of the Associates in their own homes.

BRENDA GAMBLE

EXHIBITION CALENDAR

NEW PHOTOGRAPHY USA

An exhibition of works by eleven photographers arranged by The Museum of Modern Art

FEBRUARY 13 TO MARCH 11

The Auckland City Art Gallery

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LOCATION: The new entrance to the Gallery is off Kitchener Street via the Sculpture Garden and the Edmiston Wing.

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GALLERY HOURS: Monday to Thursday 10 am to 4.30 pm. Friday 10 am to 8.30 pm. Saturdays and Sundays I pm to 5.30 pm.

AUCKLAND GALLERY ASSOCIATES: The aims of the Associates are to stimulate and sustain public inteiest 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 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 Honorary Secretary, c/o Auckland City Art Gallery.

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS: Gifts to the Art Gallery in the form *ofcash from income* upward to \$100 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.

The *Quarterly* is published by the Auckland City Art Gallery, and is concerned primarily with presenting information about works of art acquired by the Gallery.

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