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Cover Illustration

Bill Shepherd Speaks at Pratt St.

Camden Town. 1934

Lithograph. 288x447mm Ace. No. 1940/3/21

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EDITORIAL

Because uncorrected proofs instead of corrected ones were mistakenly returned to the printer, a number of errors unfortunately occurred in the double issue (62-63). It was requested that two articles be reprinted. The editor apologises for this unnecessary duplication of material.

JAMES BOSWELL

A NEW ZEALAND ARTIST IN LONDON

by Herbert Roth

James Boswell rates less than a single line in the *New Zealand Encyclopaedia*, less space than such a little known expatriate as the sub-editor of an English language newspaper in Caracas, Venezuela. The *New Zealand National Bibliography*, which lists Boswell's booklet on New Zealand published in London in 1945, knows neither his full Christian names nor his date of birth. Even Auckland University's School of Fine Art, where Boswell gained his first artistic education, has lost all record of his attendance. Of New Zealand galleries only the Auckland City Art Gallery has a representative collection of his graphic work but this is due not to any foresight by the gallery's curators but to the generosity of the artist himself.

In short, James Boswell is virtually unknown and unhonoured in his native land, yet his international significance is beyond question. *The Times* London, in a three-column obituary in 1971, wrote that he "became a leading spirit in the revived art of social satire in this country and helped to establish a new approach to social commentary that continues to this day with unabated vigour".¹ Paul Hogarth, one of Boswell's best known pupils, called him "this great illustrator, who was so very much a part of his time" and "the ideal synthesis of creative artist and man of action" and noted that Boswell had been a father-figure whose genial guidance gave many young artists a sense of direction.² According to the Princeton art historian Donald D. Egbert, Boswell in the postwar years had "more influence on socially radical, young graphic artists in England than any other British artist of his generation."³

James Edward Buchanan Boswell was born in Westport on 9 June 1906, the only son of an immigrant Scottish school teacher, Edward Blair Buchanan Boswell, and of Ida Charlotte Boswell (nee Fair), a draper's daughter of Irish origin whose birthplace was Charleston on the West Coast. The father was deputy headmaster of the local district high school, a position of some eminence in the small port town of 4,000 inhabitants. He was 46 years old when the boy was born, and when he retired in 1917 he moved his family to Auckland. Young Boswell who had been educated at a private school in Westport, entered the Normal School in Auckland and in 1919 he enrolled at the Auckland Grammar School.

"My father," wrote Boswell in an autobiographical letter, "helped to create surroundings which made simple and acceptable the idea of being a painter. He was a skilful amateur watercolourist who did little work but kept up a passionate interest in the arts. The house he designed and built in Westport was very much influenced by Arts and Crafts Movement ideas which he absorbed from *The Studio* (he subscribed to it from its beginning and kept it as well as all the year books and special numbers). He designed all the furniture as well and had it made from New Zealand woods... He was addicted to books. Never threw one away. The house was full of them and I lived off them. My mother told me much later that, when they married, my father owed the local bookseller a debt larger than his year's salary... This bookish world was the background to a lot of activity. He collected shells... He collected botanical specimens... He collected geological specimens, worked industriously as an amateur topographical photographer, designed furniture and made it in carved wood and beaten brass and round about April every year he took to watercolour painting (on a small scale). My mother claimed that these spells began and ended always on the same dates. As a result of these various interests he never persisted at anything for long enough to excel at it but he managed to create in his home a cultural circle which attracted people from all over New Zealand. It was much the same in Auckland - we moved there in 1917 and seemed to have an open house. Being a painter seemed to me the most natural and easy thing in the world, once I had persuaded the family that they didn't need a doctor in the family".⁴

Former fellow-pupils at the Grammar School describe young Boswell as a friendly and pleasant boy, well built, of above average height, and at home in the open air ("His shirt was invariably unbuttoned"⁵) Though active in the scout movement, he was far more interested in reading than in sports. Ruskin's works in particular made a lasting impression on him, and the family background of learning and culture undoubtedly fostered his developing talent for literary and artistic expression. He started drawing on rolls of wall paper, to the surprise of his parents, but he then took a correspondence course in art and also attended evening classes. His early interest in sketching and writing found expression in the pages of the *Auckland Grammar School Chronicle*. The issue for Term III in 1923 lists J.E.B. Boswell as chronicler for Form VIB and carries an article from his pen, but in a much earlier issue for Term III of 1920 there are two drawings of a school boy signed JB. Boswell's scholastic record was above average but only just so - in his last year at the school, Form VIB in 1923, he was in the upper half in his class in all five subjects, English, Latin, French, mathematics and science.

Boswell left the Grammar School to attend the Elam School of Art but he spent only a year there. By 1925 he was in London, enrolled as a student at the Royal College of Art. A.J.C. Fisher, the director of the Elam School and himself an Associate of the Royal College, gave



A Shilling a Day. 1934

Lithograph. 425x285mm Ace. No. 1940/3/29

Boswell much encouragement. "Fisher," wrote Boswell about his Elam days, "was like a gale of fresh air in the place. He threw out the plaster casts, made enemies everywhere and drove out the old ladies who used Elam as a Sketch Club. For us young ones he was a great stimulus. Even if he didn't have a great knowledge or sympathy for modern painting he had acquired a great respect for Renaissance drawing when working with Leon Underwood in London. He passed it on to us and it either became a springboard or a ball and chain for

the students'.⁶ Fisher possibly suggested Boswell's removal to London, and so certainly did another local artist, John Baillie, who had gained much knowledge of the British art world before returning to New Zealand in 1914.

An Auckland newspaper, in 1927, reported proudly that the young¹ New Zealander soon after arrival had won the first prize for a watercolour sketch at the Royal College of Art Students' Sketch Club. Boswell himself however recalled how the principal of the College, Sir William Rothenstein, had thrown him out because of the alleged poor quality of his work ("Don't dare to come back here until you can do better than *that*")⁷ The dislike was mutual. "You can have no idea," wrote Boswell later, "how provincial and awful London was in the 1920's. Painting was dreary, academic and rubbishy. I was fascinated by modern painting but couldn't find anyone to talk to about it until I met Fred Porter".⁸ Porter, a fellow Auckland, had gone to Paris in the early 1900's where he remained for a number of years. He became Boswell's close friend, took him in after Boswell had been fired from the R.C.A. painting school, and taught him to paint. "When I went back to the College they left me alone and I went on with my work. I took my diploma and won a scholarship to go on painting. But I was too restive to work in the place and spent most of my time in my studio and so they fired me again".⁹

Porter was also vice-president of the London Group where Boswell first exhibited his work in 1927: seven oil sketches, eight watercolours, a backcloth design for a ballet, three pen-and-ink drawings, and three woodcuts. His style, reported an Auckland paper, was "progressive, a little daring and extremely original". His work was said to show great promise and he had "attracted the attention of some of the finest artists in London" who were "watching his progress with extreme interest". He had also received several commissions, among them the design of a cover jacket for a book by another fellow New Zealander, "Solemn Boy" by Hector Bolitho.¹⁰

Other commissions followed. Imperial Airways, for instance, ordered a painting showing the arrival of the first African air mail at Croydon. Boswell showed paintings and watercolours, mostly landscapes and seascapes, fairly regularly at the London Group and at other mixed shows in London and in the provinces, and in 1929, the year he left the Royal College of Art, he first exhibited lithographs at the Senefelder Club.

Life however was tough for young painters and money flowed in sparingly. "In the years between the wars," he was to write, "a great deal of the artist's energies were used up not in painting or in carving but in devising ways and means of keeping alive".¹¹ The census of 1931 gave a figure of 10,000 artists in Britain but of these only seven hundred claimed to earn their living by painting. Boswell was not one of these lucky seven hundred. The New Zealand artist Eric Lee-Johnson who came to London in early 1930 found Boswell ensconced in a studio in Fitzroy Street, patronising the local tavern



Pompey. 1934

Lithograph. 285x220mm Ace. No. 1940/3/17

and living a "rather dowdy vie de Boheme". Another painter, James Holland, had a studio in the same building and "one dark night Boswell and Holland, having an embarrassing number of paintings on their hands, went round Fitzroy Square distributing a neglected masterpiece in each doorway".¹²

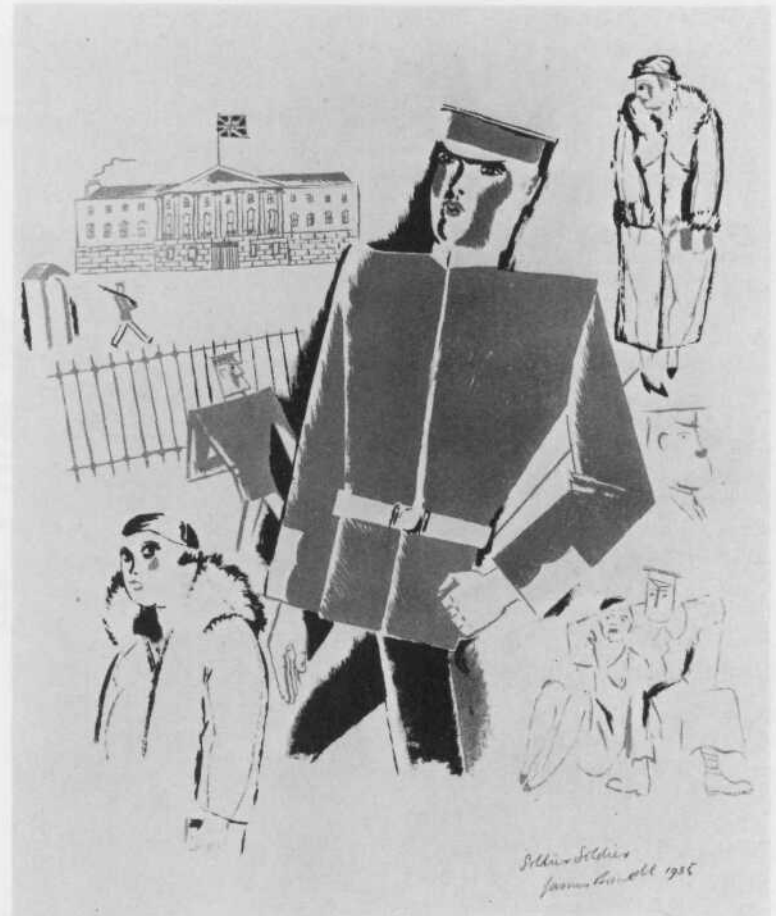
The worsening economic depression caused extremes of poverty such as Boswell had never witnessed in New Zealand. It made a profound impact on his thinking, and in 1932 he made two major

decisions which were to alter his whole future life: he gave up professional painting in favour of commercial work, and he joined the Communist party. The latter may seem the more revolutionary step, but turning from pure art to vulgar commerce was then almost as earth-shaking. As Boswell wrote in what appears to be an autobiographical passage: "It seemed natural and correct in those days for a young man who is today a respected painter and a respected commercial artist as well, to say, genuinely believing it true, 'Me do commercial art? I'd cut my throat first'. His listeners, as well, believed it true and applauded his resolution".¹³

Henceforth his art was at the service of the workers' cause and no task was too small, whether it was illustrating articles in the *Daily Worker* (for which he used the pseudonym of "Buchan") or painting banners for hunger marchers (as well as feeding them and finding accommodation for them, which Boswell did in early 1934). As James Holland explained later: "Economic crisis killed the active but indiscriminating patronage that the younger English artists had enjoyed since the war... these artists were faced with the choice of a cut-throat competition for what crumbs of patronage remained, continuing to paint until overtaken by starvation, giving up art, or using their abilities to discredit a system that makes art and culture dependent on the caprices of the money markets. The last has always seemed to me the only realistic course".¹⁴

Boswell soon became a key figure in the Communist Party's efforts to enlist left-wing artists in a new organisation, the Artists International. The initial meetings were held in 1933 in the studio of Misha Black who was to become the first president of the new body. About two dozen people attended, most of them pupils of James Fitton, an instructor in lithography at the L.C.C. Central School of Arts and Crafts. Nearly all of the early members, Boswell recalled, "had only the crudest ideas about art and Marxism" but "we nearly all felt the need to do something practical so we painted banners, posters and drew cartoons and gradually drawing in support and interest widened the base of the association".¹⁵ One of the first publications of the Artists International was a cyclostyled book of cartoons about the hunger marches.

The three Jameses, Boswell, Holland and Fitton, formed the inner core of the organisation. They also contributed most of the illustrations to a new radical cultural monthly, *Left Review*, which made its appearance in October 1934. "With the cartoons that have appeared in *Left Review*", wrote Holland, "we believe that we have broken away from the middle class and infantile code of 'Good Taste' that has reduced English cartooning to emasculated illustration of religious hysteria".¹⁶ The chief inspiration was the German artist George Grosz, a fellow communist who had managed to escape from Hitler's clutches in 1933 but whose works were to feed the Nazi bonfires of "degenerate art". *Left Review* illustrations, comments Professor Egbert, "were exceptional in British art of the time in being



Soldier Soldier. 1935

Lithograph. 445x287mm Ace. No. 1940/33/27

so politically propagandistic... Even the English artists who insisted on social realism sought simply a realistic statement of appearances without either the deliberate idealization of the working class or the sharp social satire directed against the 'capitalistic' bourgeoisie found in the cartoons of such artists then on the far Left as Boswell, Holland, and Fitton".¹⁷ *Left Review* was closely aligned with Communist Party policies, and its literary and artistic progress was watched eagerly in Moscow. After the first two issues had appeared, a Soviet critic commented that the artists were not as well represented as the writers. Their drawings showed "more technical virtuosity than



The White Horse. 1934

Lithograph. 260x210mm Ace. No. 1940/3/33

content" but, he added, "with what is already known of their work, there need be no fears. This is a particularly gifted group".¹⁹

Yet it seems that in Russian eyes at least the group did not fulfil its early promise. When the three Jameses exhibited their work in Moscow in 1937, the critic Alfred Durus deplored the fact that these artists had chosen Grosz as their model rather than the classical English masters, Hogarth and Rowlandson. "Unfortunately", he wrote, "the great English traditions of caricature have not hitherto served to any important extent as the immediate starting point of the

artists represented at the exhibition, and a linking up with the great artistic legacy of Daumier is also missed... The exhibitors are at their best (like George Grosz) where they tear the mask from the bourgeoisie to show them as the beasts of prey that they are and where they throw a searchlight on the political rottenness of capitalism. They fail, however, to give an adequate portrayal of the heroic struggle of the working class and are not yet able to give a historically and **psychologically** true picture of the militant workers. In this respect they have still much ground to cover".¹⁹

The Artists International greatly expanded its influence in 1935. Membership was not confined to supporters of social realism but included surrealists, constructivists, abstract artists and followers of other schools. To emphasise its new approach, the group changed its name to Artists International Association, and organised a very successful exhibition "Artists against Fascism and War", which was held in a Georgian mansion in Soho Square. Many major British artists were represented, among them Augustus John, Laura Knight, Eric Gill, Henry Moore, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, and such famous foreign artists as Fernand Leger and Frans Masereel. More than 7,000 people visited the show, which was a record for any English exhibition of the same scale. Boswell took part, as he had in the A.I.A.'s first annual exhibition the previous year, with social and political drawings, including his contributions in *Left Review*.

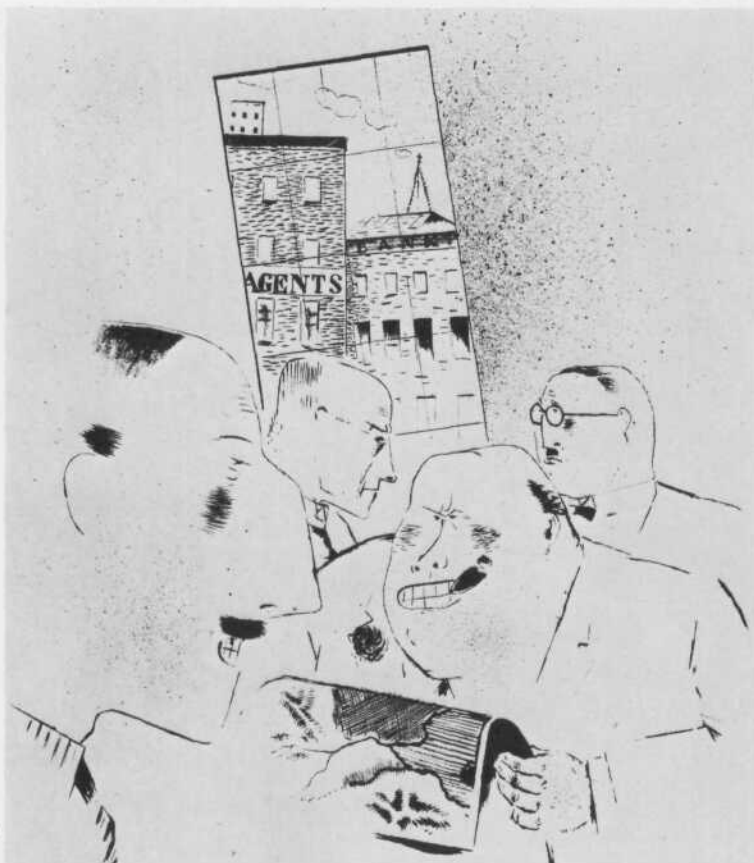
In 1936 Boswell became art director for the Asiatic (later Shell) Petroleum Company but he continued to devote his spare time to revolutionary causes, working, as he explained later, for commercial art "all day and trying to create a new world all night".²⁰ Indeed, he made unexpected use of his commercial contacts: "Like Daumier and Grosz", wrote Paul Hogarth, "he had a passion for justice, and the opportunities his executive post gave him to observe City of London types - crooked stockbrokers, lawyers and bankers - enabled him with a few strokes to define what he felt could be villainy and double-dealing".²¹

Shell Petroleum, like the London Passenger Transport Board, achieved fame for the quality of its advertising work, but Boswell felt that even the most liberal-minded and generous business firms debased the creative artists they employed. "If we compare their patronage with that of the Christian Church five hundred years ago the difference is very clear", he wrote. "Under the Church's patronage the artist was working for a religious concept which he endorsed emotionally. For the commercial organisations he works entirely independently, and these great corporations are merely subsidising his point of view if it suits them. Their attitude to the world is, when all is said and done, that they are in it to make profits and that there is merit in making them, but we have yet to see frescoes of artistic worth showing the bankrupt in hell and the shareholder in heaven".²²

The war in Spain soon absorbed the energies of the A.I.A. The



Les Girls. 1934
Lithograph. 210x264mm Ace. No. 1940/3/32



Empire Builders. 1935

Lithograph. 384x255mm Ace. No. 1940/3/26

association organised exhibitions and concerts to raise funds for an Artists' Ambulance, and Boswell illustrated pamphlets, such as a "Basque Song Book", in aid of the Republicans. (After the fascist victory, he organised the supply of artists' materials to prison camps for Spanish refugees in Southern France). The A.I.A. also gave support to the International Peace Campaign, but anti-fascist propaganda was only one aspect of its work. In 1936 the association jointly with the Society of Industrial Designers (of which Boswell was a Member and later a Fellow) produced a Code of Fair Practice in an effort to protect the economic and professional position of commercial artists.

Boswell continued to contribute drawings to *Left Review* until 1938, when it ceased publication. In 1939 he executed a set of lithographs



Leicester Square. 1934

Lithograph. 395x323mm Ace. N6. 1940/3/25

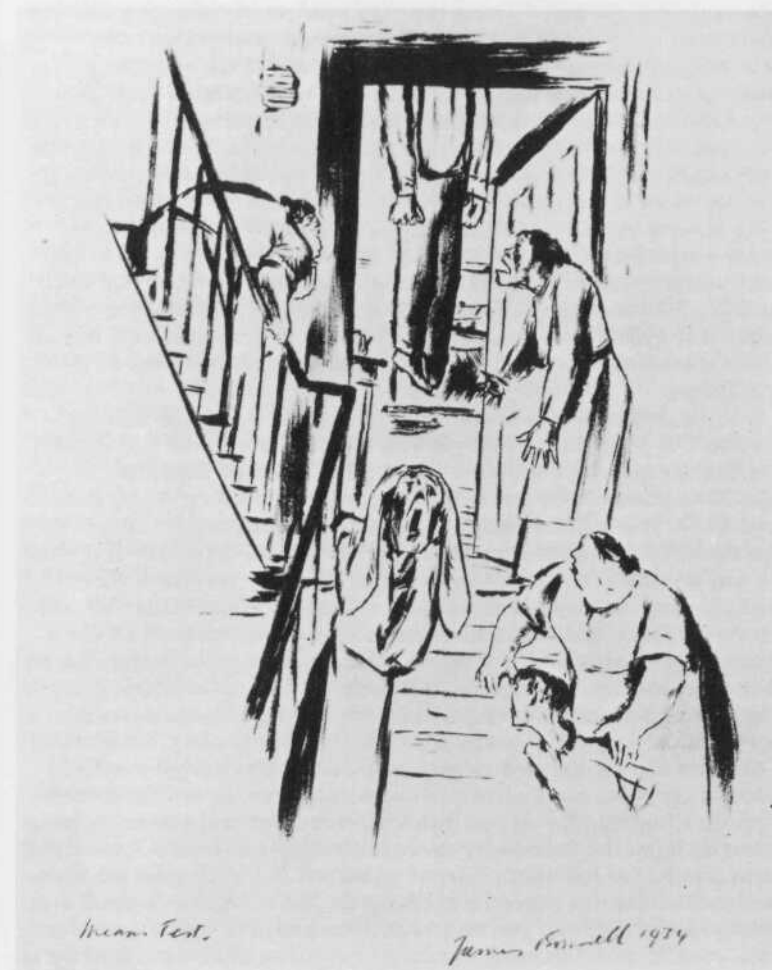
representing British democratic liberties which were shown in the British Pavilion at the New York World's Fair. His work was included in an exhibition of graphic art by British and American artists held in China during the war against Japan, and which was shown in Hong Kong, Nanking, Shanghai, Chungking and other centres. He also took part in the A.I.A.'s annual showing that year and contributed about twenty prints to an exhibition, "Britain To-day", which toured the provinces, being shown in Trade Union and Co-operative Society halls. This attempt to bring art to the people was taken further with a scheme of A.I.A. Everyman Prints, original lithographs by Boswell and other artists, which sold at the incredibly low price of 1s and 1s6d each.

By no means all his drawings of the late thirties were militant



The Gosfield Murder. 1934
Lithograph. 326x255mm Ace. No. 1940/3/16

propagandist. A visit to Paris in 1939 resulted in a superb series of ten large drawings depicting life in the celebrated brothel Le Sphinx. But above all Boswell loved London and its people and many of his lithographs show ordinary people following their ordinary pursuits - eating in cafes, drinking in pubs, bargaining at market stalls, shopping, waiting in bus queues or thronging the amusement arcades. He faithfully recorded London life during the blitz and when, after a year of confusion, a new radical cultural journal appeared - *Poetry and the People* which soon changed its name to *Our*



Means Test. 1934
Lithograph. 285x220 Ace. No. 1940/3/34

Time - Boswell again became its artistic mentor, contributing drawings, articles and book reviews.

Despite all this activity, Boswell said later that his work "became gradually worse and worse in this period, largely due to a confusion in my mind about its purpose".²³ He undoubtedly felt very deeply the conflict between his political and artistic ideals and the world of commerce where he was forced to earn his living. Advertising, he wrote later, had never inspired anything but derivative work, and he referred to "the kind of artistic impotence which follows the

absorption of the artist into commerce" and to "the flagging and exhausted imaginative powers of the average commercial artist".²⁴

But equally important in causing him to doubt the purpose of his work must have been the outbreak of war in September 1939. For years the A.I.A., and its communist members in particular, had urged resistance to fascist aggression, yet when war came Soviet Russia not only stood on the side-lines but was linked by an equivocal pact with the aggressor. Many member left the Communist Party in protest, but even among those who did not resign — and Boswell was among them — doubts must have persisted in many cases. The A.I.A., like other communist-influenced organisations, was deeply divided over its attitude to the war, but it avoided an open split by resolving not to adopt any official position. Only in 1941 did Hitler's attack on Russia allow communists to give their wholehearted support to the British war effort.

1941 was also the year when Boswell was called up for military service. For four years he served as a radiologist with the Royal Army Medical Corps which took him through the Middle East and Mediterranean war zones — Iraq, the Western Desert, Algiers, Malta and Sicily. His military duties left him time for drawing and he filled his sketchbooks with scenes of army and hospital life, recording what he saw around him, but also expressing his deep revulsion at the brutality and viciousness of war and militarism. These latter themes fill three sketch books which remained unknown, apart from some drawings published in *Our Time* in 1942, until the recent exhibition of Boswell's work in Nottingham in November-December 1976. They came as a revelation, causing the *Sunday Times* to devote a special illustrated article to the Nottingham show, in which the critic Richard Cork described the war drawings as the "unforgettable climax" of Boswell's graphic work. These small sketchbooks, he wrote, "packed with drawings so intense that Boswell's nib constantly threatens to carve through the thin paper, suddenly allegorise the war as a bestial farce conducted by bulls... I know of no parallel in English art for Boswell's ability...to expose and denigrate the senseless waste of a conflict which 'official' war artists approached with such muted emotions."²⁵

In 1944 — he was then stationed in London — Boswell held his first one-man show at the Charlotte Street Centre, run by the marxist art critic F.D. Klingender. Entitled "On Duty in the Desert" it showed his less controversial drawings and paintings and was very successful; the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Imperial War Museum were among the buyers, and so was the New Zealand Government which purchased two paintings. When Misha Black retired as president of the A.I.A. in 1944, Boswell was elected to succeed him. The army too recognised his abilities by giving him a commission and more responsible work. He was transferred to the Bureau of Current Affairs and Captain James Boswell, now of the Pioneer Corps, spent the last year of the war at a desk job in London helping to edit the



The Press. 1939

Lithograph. 270x210mm Ace. No. 1940/3/2

army's *Current Affairs* bulletin.

Boswell refused re-election as A.I.A. president the following year, and he also failed to renew his Communist Party membership. Though he returned after demobilisation to his old job with the Shell Petroleum Company, he soon moved to a new post as art director for the magazine *Lilliput*. The war years, an almost total break with his previous life, had caused Boswell to look at the world around him in a new light. His break with the Communist Party, as he explained later to Professor Egbert, "wasn't a political decision in the accepted sense of the term...I'd had plenty of time to think in the Army and had decided there were things I wanted to do that I would need time for. Painting was one of them."²⁶ From now on Boswell wanted to be an



The Bar Room - Night, (n.d.)
Woodcut. 225x156mm Ace. No. 1930/6/3

artist first and foremost, free as far as possible from political or commercial commitments.

Of course, he found it impossible to avoid business entanglements altogether. He soon took over the editorship of the house magazine of the Sainsbury grocery chain and he later produced the firm's centennial booklet. Nor could he still his conscience; he remained a man of the left, contributing with fine impartiality to Communist and Labour Party publications. In 1964, for instance, he designed the publicity for the victorious Labour Party election campaign. His job with *Lilliput*, four "very crazy drunken years in Fleet Street", ended in December 1950. During this time he published his thoughts on the place of the artist in society in a small but influential booklet, "The Artist's Dilemma", and it was then that, in Paul Hogarth's words, "under his magnetic leadership and influence drawing in London underwent a renaissance. A richly linear idiom, laced with a mixture of Rowlandson, Cruikshank, 'Dicky' Doyle and Samuel Palmer, reached its peak in the mass-circulation monthly, *Lilliput*... Around Boswell there gathered a group of young illustrators and satirists, among them Arthur Horner, Ronald Searle, Gerard Hoffnung, the painter John Minton, Fritz Wegner and myself. Again, he set the example, contributing intensely-observed, witty and sometimes savage drawings that always delighted because they were so finely and exquisitely drawn."²⁷

In 1952 Boswell made another radical break in his career by returning to professional painting which he had given up twenty years earlier, and he gradually made a name for himself as a painter of seascapes and later of abstracts. On 15 April 1971 James Boswell died in London of cancer, still only 64 years old.

Professor Egbert uses Boswell's career as an example of an artist whose development was stunted by his political commitment. Boswell seems to have agreed, to some extent, with this judgment. "I don't think much of it was any good until the war came"²⁸ he said of his political and social satire. Curiously enough, both Daumier and Grosz turned to painting late in life and regretted or renounced their earlier graphic work, but their reputations rest firmly on their achievement as social satirists. The same can be said of Boswell for, whatever acclaim his later paintings achieved, his importance to us is due to his work in the thirties and forties.

The left-wing writers of that period — Auden, Day Lewis, MacNeice, Orwell, Grassie Gibbon, O'Casey, to name but a few — have been dissected time and again by the literary critics, but the artists of the left have been almost totally neglected. Only very recently has come the long overdue recognition of Boswell as an important figure in British art, with a retrospective exhibition of his work at Nottingham University, followed by a BBC television programme, a radio talk, and a special article in the *Sunday Times*. The Auckland City Art Gallery is in the unique position of owning a representative collection of drawings from Boswell's most vital period.

They were put on show in 1940 but since then, with few exceptions, they have not been seen by the public. The planned exhibition of Boswell's work will therefore constitute a well-deserved and long overdue tribute to a New Zealand-born artist who until now has been a virtual stranger in his homeland.

A Note on Boswell's Works in New Zealand

- 1930 In July 1930 the director of the Auckland Art Gallery purchased three prints by Boswell from his father for 4 guineas. One of these, a lithograph "The New Dress", is dated 1920, the other two, an etching of a cafe interior and a woodcut of a bar room interior, are undated and untitled.
- 1940 When the National Centennial Exhibition of New Zealand Art was held in Wellington that year, the only works by Boswell available for showing were the three prints owned by the Auckland Art Gallery. Biographical details required for the catalogue had to be sought from the artist through his mother. Boswell must have been embarrassed at being represented at this important exhibition by three rather immature works and this could have been the reason behind his gift of a representative selection of his recent work to the Auckland Art Gallery. This unfortunately is pure supposition because the correspondence can no longer be found, but 44 lithographs executed between 1933 and 1939 were donated by Boswell to the Auckland Art Gallery in 1940.
- 1944 Two paintings from Boswell's one-man show in London that year were purchased by the New Zealand Government, according to a report in *Arts in New Zealand* of January 1945. Enquiries as to their present whereabouts have been unsuccessful.
- 1948 In June Boswell spent some weeks in Australia and New Zealand, his only return visit to the country of his birth. Two topographical drawings from this visit, street scenes of Sydney and Auckland respectively, were reproduced by Eric Lee-Johnson in *the Arts Year Book* for 1950.
- 1960 The publishers Blackwood and Janet Paul asked Boswell to illustrate and design a jacket for a book by Betty Holt, "All This and the Family Too, London Journal of a New Zealand Housewife." This was published in Hamilton by Paul's Book Arcade in 1960.
- 1964 In 1963-64 Boswell corresponded with Charles Brasch, the editor of the literary quarterly *Landfall*, and sent him 21 photographs of his works. Four of these illustrations were published in the June 1964 issue of *Landfall*, together with a short biographical note supplied by the artist. As a result of this contact, the Hocken Library in Dunedin bought a large abstract oil painting from Boswell, entitled "Maui's Fish" and executed in 1963.
- 1967 In that year the National Art Gallery in Wellington purchased

- an abstract oil painting by Boswell, entitled "Summer Shore".
- 1970 For its new BP House in Wellington the British Petroleum Company commissioned from Boswell a large mural entitled "The Golden Day", which is on display on the tenth floor of the building. It consists of five panels, Dusk, Night, Dawn, Noon and Day, and has for its theme the passing of a day, represented by the sun and moon set against the flowing tidal waters of a river mouth. This was Boswell's last major work before his death the following year.

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Little Gold Mine. 1936
Lithograph 609x473mm Ace. No. 1940/3/39

WILLIAM BEECHEY

MISS WINDHAM

The portrait of Miss Windham was bought with the assistance of the Auckland Gallery Associates. Little or nothing has been written on Beechey since the inadequate biography by W. Roberts published in 1906. The following brief notes were gleaned from scattered sources.

- 1753 Born at Burford, Oxfordshire, one of thirteen children. Due to the early death of the parents, the upbringing was left to an uncle — a lawyer who tried to make Beechey follow the same profession. Once Beechey escaped from an attic in which he had been locked to study, and was last seen on that occasion swimming a river to get away from the pursuing uncle. He begged his way to London where he worked briefly as a carriage painter. But eventually he returned home to resume his studies.
- 1772 His association with art students led to his enrolment at the Royal Academy, an institution then in its fourth year. He was probably a pupil of Zoffany, and is said to have frequented Reynolds's studio.
- 1776 First exhibited at the Royal Academy. In the following six years he changed his address six times.
- 1782 In Norwich painting portraits of gentry and conversation pieces in the style of Hogarth. He was commissioned to paint a number of full-length portraits of prominent citizens for the civic collection. It was during this period that he met and encouraged John Crome, and as a result, Beechey may have been responsible in part for the birth of the Norwich School.
- 1787 Beechey returned to London, apparently lured there by the extravagant promises of a rich patroness who, it seems, let him down completely. Of sixteen portraits offered for exhibition, fifteen were rejected by the Academy Council. They were exhibited instead by the dealer Vandergucht. The press commented favourably on these pictures but criticized the Academy, suggesting that their rejection had been motivated by jealousy. Academy records show, however, that Beechey had broken the rules by putting more than one picture in a frame. In this incident there is the first hint of Beechey's rumbustical nature. Much later Lord Lyttelton let it be known that he had always hesitated to invite Beechey to his parties because of his offensive language. And towards the end of his life Beechey confessed that he had often had great cause to regret "his apptitude to talk carelessly and often imprudently from which he on reflection suffered while remembering it the following morning." (Farington v.8)

- 1790 Beechey first attracted the serious attention of the critics. Royal patronage began as a result of the following incident. When Beechey's portrait of Lord Cardigan was refused by the Hanging Committee, or the pictorial hangmen, as they were referred to by the press, the good peer was so incensed that he sent the painting to Windsor for a Royal inspection. The King not only approved of the portrait, but sat for Beechey himself. Beechey's fortunes were secure from then on.
- 1791 Beechey arrives at his final style.
- 1793 He became official portraitist to Queen Charlotte. Made ARA. Beechey was widely regarded as the most original of artists then working — all the rest being "diseased with all Sir Joshua Reynolds's worst habits." The critic John Williams (alias Anthony Pasquin) championed Beechey's cause, together with that of Turner. Williams was a wild funny man, but, at the same time, he was a very astute critic; a sort of Paganini of criticism later accused of blackmailing actors. Mention of Sandby as Beechey's closest friend.
- 1795 The *Morning Chronicle* praised Beechey for an "originality and taste... seldom seen equalled." But John Opie, on the other hand, expressed surprise that Beechey had put up his prices to thirty guineas for a head, and complained that his work, compared to that of Hoppner and Lawrence, was "mediocre in taste and fashion" and that it was "fit only for sea captains and merchants." But Beechey was unpopular for other reasons. It seems he had been prematurely introducing to society his future second wife as Mrs. Beechey while he was still legally married to his first wife. On one occasion Benjamin West told the King that Lady Beechey was not really Beechey's wife at all and that consequently she was not fit to be presented to the Queen. Beechey suffered the indignity of having to prove the legality of his marriage.
- 1796 Beechey threatened to stop exhibiting if not elected RA, that is, a full member of the Royal Academy — a self styled elite group of forty. The Associates, to which Beechey already belonged, were a supplementary group of smaller fry. Since new RAs were usually elected to replace dead ones, one can well imagine that academic deaths were eagerly awaited. In two hundred years fewer than ten percent of members have ever retired while still (physically) living.
- 1797 Sawrey Gilpin, a Royal favourite, elected RA in preference to Beechey; a non-event commented on in the press sympathetic to Beechey. The King is reported to have told Beechey "to laugh at the Academicians" if he was not elected, but according to Farington this was a "silly story told by Beechey." The King is supposed even to have sneered that Beechey would probably never get elected simply because he was the best painter. It was rumoured too that the King would order

the Academy to confer the RA, yet at the same time no one seriously believed he would interfere with an election. Previously in 1790 the King's futile and embarrassing attempt to get Lawrence elected had become a national affair. On that occasion the Academicians had voted against the King and a newspaper poet had written "...those fellows have not learnt to crawl, to play the spaniel, lick the foot and fawn..." At one point Beechey is supposed to have resigned his Associateship, but there is no record of this. However he did manage to create a sensation by threatening to withdraw his pictures, including several Royal portraits, from the 1797 Annual Exhibition. As Queen's portraitist he was more popular than Hoppner and Lawrence. The King insisted that Beechey exhibit and compensated for the election failure by commissioning the now famous equestrian portrait, *George III Reviewing the 10th Dragoons* (Kensington Palace). Beechey never gave up hope of being elected and believed that the main obstacle was a quarrel he had had with Hoppner, who, incidentally was rumoured to be the King's son — a claim that Hoppner did nothing to dispel. The quarrel had arisen over an attempt on Hoppner's part to reduce the number of exhibits in an exhibition. Hoppner had offered to remove one of his paintings if Beechey would do the same; but Beechey had angrily refused. By and large it would seem that most of Beechey's problems arose because the King, taking literally his honorary title "Patron, Protector and Supporter" of the Academy, tended to interfere too much in the affairs of that institution. But since the Academy required its members to be of "fair moral character", it is possible that Beechey was objected to on grounds other than the quality of his painting: his rudeness perhaps or the complications of his second marriage.

Beechey went to Windsor to paint the portrait of the Prince of Wurttemberg, but was kept waiting so long that when the Prince eventually appeared, Beechey was on the point of leaving in a huff. During the sitting the Prince fidgeted so much that Beechey told the King to stand in such a position that the Prince would not have to keep turning his head to talk. Finally the Prince departed without looking at the portrait, leaving the Princess to reason with Beechey to be more tactful.

On another occasion Beechey went to Windsor to petition the King for a knighthood, but the head page not only refused to see him but also refused him his usual accommodation at the Queen's Lodge. He was given the bed of an absent page. He overstayed his welcome, such as it was, and took a room in town. Eventually the King saw him and agreed to the knighthood on condition that Beechey paid the 100 fee himself. Beechey was taken aback, since he had expected the

King to pay, as he had been known to on occasions.

- 1798 Beechey elected RA, filling vacancy left by William Hodges, and for "no apparent reason", knighted (Whitley/v2/p217). Both Hoppner and Lawrence had done Royal portraits, but up to this time neither had been knighted. Hoppner was never knighted. Some thought the knighthood was a reward for the equestrian portrait, while others assumed the Queen had pulled strings on his behalf. But according to another account connected with the equestrian portrait and told some eighty years later by Charles Catton's daughter, Beechey was not very good at painting horses and got Catton to do them. Catton heard someone enter the temporarily erected studio at the Royal Riding School, thought it was Beechey and asked "Well how do you like the horses?" "Very well sir, very well indeed" came the prompt reply. When Catton turned he saw not Beechey but the King. And when Beechey appeared a moment later the farce was complete. Fortunately the King saw the funny side and later teased Beechey that Catton would get a knighthood. Catton, embarrassed, refused the honour and the knighthood ricocheted onto Beechey. Yet another reason suggested for the knighthood was that the King enjoyed acting perversely in the face of the Establishment. It was said that the King's illness — now better understood — caused him to behave like a spoilt child.
- 1799 Rivalry between Lawrence, Beechey, Hoppner and Opie at its height. All had Royal patronage.
- 1800 According to James Northcote, Beechey and six others, among them Sandby and Copley, decided to establish a club in opposition to that of the Royal Academy, its meetings to take place on the same day as the Academy Club, but at the Thatched House Tavern. The King approved the plan.
- 1802 Beechey voted against Turner being made an RA.
- 1803 Beechey moved to 13 Harley Street, where Lady Beechey became known for holding parties more lavish than any of the others held by artists's wives. Lady Hamilton and her daughter were guests. There were enormous internal rows at the Academy. Beechey appears to have lain low. Copley, on the other hand, was suspended with four others.
- 1804 On going to Windsor to restore his own pictures, Beechey quarrelled with the King. Later they fell out again, and according to Farington, who got it from that appalling old gossip Benjamin West, the King "rebuked him so severely that Beechey in his fright ran to the Queen who also gave him such a reception that it caused him to faint or have a sort of fit." The King had accused Beechey of having taken advantage of his illness by over-ordering in the matter of some picture frames. The King told Beechey he did not like his colour sense and that he did not want any more of his pictures. Beechey

stepped back into the group attending the king, took some snuff and was heard to mutter, "I've had enough to last me for some time."

- 1806 Beechey's paintings and those of Flaxman, Farington and Nollekens absent from the Academy exhibition. Many established artists exhibit at the newly formed British Institution instead.
- 1809 Beechey's deputising for West as Academy President when the latter's gout was bad is some indication of Beechey's status, though it was Lawrence who, with youth in his favour, was to replace West when death replaced the gout.
- 1828 Painted the portrait of MISS WINDHAM. Beechey held an exhibition including works painted thirty-nine years previously, one of which was seen by the *Atlas* critic as having been influenced by Gainsborough: "...it is to be regretted that Sir William did not paint fifty pictures of the same class...they would be worth all the acres of canvas he has covered with portraits of ladies." Presumably MISS WINDHAM was a portion of that acreage.
- 1836 Retired to Hampstead.
- 1839 Died aged 86 survived by twelve of his eighteen children from two marriages.
- 1851 Beechey's eldest son Henry emigrated to New Zealand, but not in 1855 as suggested by the *National Biography*. He arrived at Lyttelton on the *Castle Eden* on 7 February 1851 with his wife Harriet and family. Roberts exaggerates by saying that Beechey acquired land now covered by the city of Christchurch and that he disposed of it before it became valuable. He died eleven years after his arrival, aged 73 at his house in Governors Bay.

T.G.

References: Burke, J./English Art 1714-1800/1976
 Farington Diary/8v/1922-1928
 Roberts, W./Sir William Beechey, R.A./1906
 Whitley, W.T./Art in Englad 1800-1820/1928



Sir William Beechey, R.A. (1753-1839) British
Portrait of Miss Mary Christina, Windham, fourth daughter of Admiral William Windham of Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk.
 Oil on canvas, 1270 x 1020mm. Ace! no. 1976/25
 Previous collections:
 (i) Sitter and husband, Lt Col. Richard Hare.
 (ii) Col. R.C. Hare (1844-1916) son of the above (i)
 (iii) Miss Dorothy Hare, daughter of the above, (ii)
 (iv) Miss K.M. Windham (d.1974) daughter of the above's (iii) brother, Reginald.

ANDY WARHOL

Campbell's Soup Can

It is being increasingly suggested in the literature these days, rightly or wrongly, that to survive wholly — some would say autistically — on its own terms, high art has had to abandon the world for the geriatric enclaves and intensive care units of the art museum, where visitors turn into cultural voyeurs. However, Warhol, by his close affiliation with popular culture, is well able to elude such charges, and, indeed survive well beyond the territories of all institutions. Yet he has chosen not to — this, curiously at a time when the *avant garde's* half-life is already so short that a new idea is no sooner born than it decays into the stable death of received opinion. Warhol is full of this sort of contradiction which, because it is cultivated, may make his art appear cynical; and cynicism today, in politics at least, is "as American as blueberry pie". Also there is a contradiction between his expressed ideal of an anonymous collective art and the promotion of his own art as an expensive platform for his signature. Warhol says painting is "... the reproduction of an art which has been designed to be reproduced. A great many prints can be made from a photographic plate, for example, and there is no sense in asking which is the authentic one. The moment the criterion of authority in art breaks down, the entire function of art is transformed. Its basis in ritual is replaced by a basis in another area of practice, namely, politics". (R. Crone, 1970. p. 10). These are fighting words, but unlike Hans Haacke, Joseph Beuys, Terry Smith and others, or even Goya and Grosz for that matter, Warhol has never taken his art into the political arena. He remains a dealers's child, though in fairness it should be mentioned that at the 1964 World Fair, Governor Rockefeller ordered down the mural poster THIRTEEN MOST WANTED MEN because it was too hot for the occasion. Warhol painted them out. But Warhol, furthering his contradictions, denies there is any significance in his choice of imagery, much of which in the past has been connected one way or another with violence of some kind. But with its imagery too thin formally to carry much aesthetic weight, the meaning of Warhol's art must inevitably recede into the *circumstances* of its creation: his sensational occupancy of the art category and his pre-occupation with mass production. And his whimsical word-play at interviews throws people off the scent of seriousness. Yet, as long as Warhol's work continues to be seen, hung,

framed and dealt in in old fashioned ways and places, people can hardly be blamed for thinking of it in the way they would Rembrandt or Picasso. Revolutionary art needs a revolutionary place to go and Warhol's tragedy, and perhaps that of many others, is that he has no place to go but the bank. While Warhol's verbose denigration of a message in art may be little more than the last fling of an "art for art's sake" doctrine first leaked to the world during a lecture at the Sorbonne by Victor Cousin in 1818, it puts him fairly and squarely into the burgeoning school of artists for whom words have gained the upper hand. A frenetic public word life appears to be as necessary to the contemporary artist as a bravura life style was to the Romantics. When the art/life differentials widen, words rush in to fill the gap in order that illusions of integrity be maintained. The rise of modern criticism appears to relate to the widening of this gap.

Though not as technically vain or as depressingly labour intensive as the *supe'r-realists* whom he admires, he is as much a realist as they are. Wyeth is one of his favourites. But if, contrary to his expressed wishes, we do take his imagery seriously, then his version of reality becomes the thing T.S. Eliot said we could not bear too much of. Otherwise we are left merely with his preoccupation with mass production manifest in his "choice of emblems: news photographs, posters, wallpaper, postage stamps, bank notes, commercial packaging, labels etc. - in short, the visual background noise of our culture most of which, for reasons of mental economy, we tend to forget, and, for reasons of super affluence, dump and generally pollute with. Warhol coprophagiously ingests this effluent of affluence and recycles it back to us as art. While Duchamp, with whom Warhol is often compared, chose the more durable objects for his aesthetic canonisations, and performed with the high intellectual trumps up his sleeve that eventually brought on the divine indolence, Warhol remains the fetishist of mass produced ephemera and unceasingly persists in his modish role of an establishment Midas for whom art *ritual* has mindlessly interposed itself between the touching and the quite considerable gold. But perhaps Warhol's originality lies more in the illusion created that his soup labels etc. are the originals of which all the millions of "real" labels in the supermarkets are fakes. There is a certain grandeur in this idea, sending, as it does, a salutary ripple of unease throughout the artlover's world. The corollaries are legion, an obvious one being the proposition that the quality of our reaction to CAMPBELL'S SOUP CAN is a fairly reliable index to our feeling for our culture as a whole - the underlying assumption here being the ancient notion that the whole is reflected in the parts. That Warhol in his prime could generate ideas more successfully than most of his contemporaries, was, and still is, something very much in his favour, and while people persist in the habit of thinking, it is hard to see how Warhol could be anything but didactic.

T. GARRITY

SOME RECENT SCULPTURE ACQUISITIONS

In the past professional sculpture in New Zealand has been essentially an elitist adventure; the costly and relatively unknown half-brother to the more egalitarian medium of painting. The growth and recognition of sculpture in New Zealand did not parallel that of painting, for the production of classic, European influenced bronzes and metal work had to wait upon the arrival of imported or improvised machinery and trade skills. Historically, major attention had always been reserved for painting, which from its beginning, drew heavily upon the unique qualities of local landscape. With minor European artists working for brief periods in New Zealand, a small audience devoted to painting had emerged, yet only with time, the artistic sophistication of monied patrons, and the availability of production methods, did sculpture of any real merit begin to appear in New Zealand. Another drawback for the initial growth of a distinctly New Zealand school of sculpture seems to have been its dogmatic adherence to Victorian modes and techniques. While painting had incorporated elements of the New Zealand experience, sculpture remained only vague pastiches, and sculptors, mere valets for overseas trends. Unlike easel painting (which had no counterpart in Maori art) sculpture had to compete with the force and drama of Maori carving, an art form which had already reached maturity through generations of production. Because of the Europeans' negation of Maori artifacts in their initial attempt to establish a 'little England' in the South Pacific, European-influenced sculpture disregarded the vast, indigenous well of Maori carving.

Contemporary New Zealand sculpture however has made considerable advances in its borrowed, international styles. Modern sculpture has lost its distance and elitism. With international (and consequently local) acceptance of unorthodox materials and techniques, New Zealand sculpture has drifted away from its academic beginnings and has established itself as an important, versatile and accessible art form.



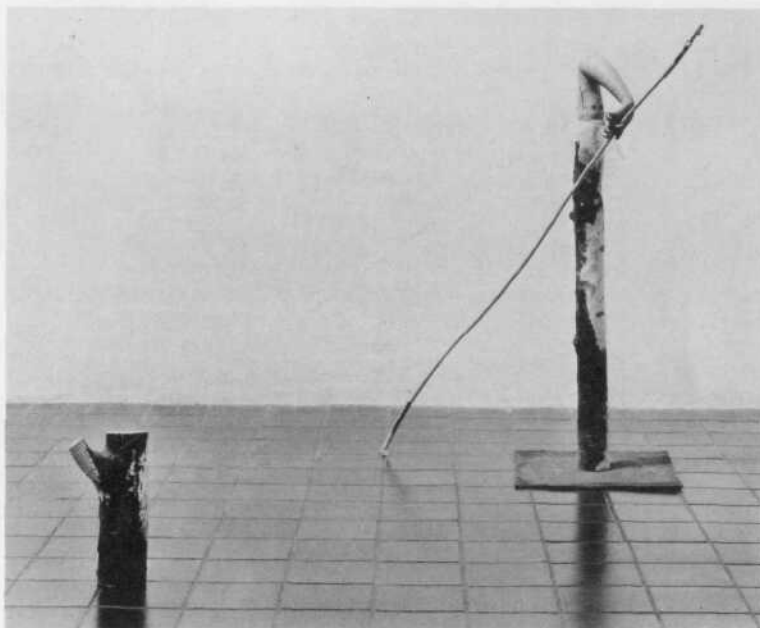
Christine Hellyar (1947-)

Award (c.1976)

Brass, rubber latex, feathers, wood 428 x 381 mm Ace. no. 1976/26

Inscribed: *Award* (T.C.)

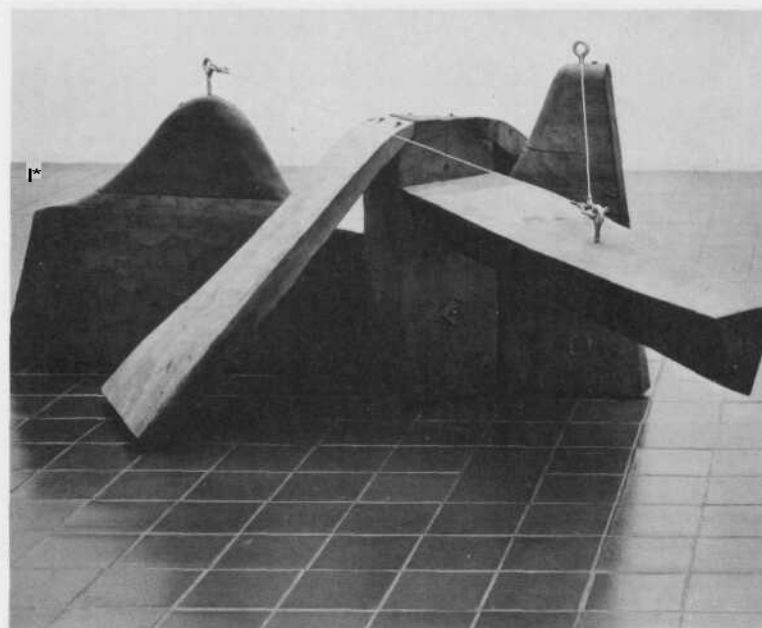
Denys Watkins is principally a printmaker, having studied at the Royal College of Art, and although his sculptural output is relatively small, there are nevertheless works which deserve attention. *Han Shan's Sling Shot* (from the *Swamp Dwellings* series), is constructed from odd bits of wood, canvas, steel plate, a decomposing mannequin arm, and painted nylon string — all material which could be collectively described as the waste or unwanted junk from an affluent society. It is



Denys Watkins (1945-)
Han Shan's Sling Shot/Swamp Dwellings Series (1975)
 Canvas, ceramic, wood, string etc. 1143 x 1778 x 2159mm Acc. no. 1975/40/2
 Unsigned

perhaps the most anarchistic work of the recent sculpture acquisitions. Permanence of material has been negated (the mannequin arm was already in a state of decay when the artist constructed the piece) and in its place is a feeling of temporary assemblage, much in line with the works of Edward Kienholz, and to a lesser degree, the works of the Dadaists. *Han Shan's Sling Shot* is a temporary selection of material presented in a visual entirety through the artist's own invention. By using discarded and ready-made objects, Watkins has translated a literal idea into a visual composite. Whether we read the tree branch section as a stylised body from which the mannequin arm piece projects, or intellectually reconstruct the exploits of the abstractly presented hero is entirely up to us. Watkins has left all intellectualisation and intrinsic meaning with the viewer. His assembled sculpture is a stimulus for personal viewer investigation, not (in the classic sense) a formalised, visual end in itself. Watkins's bizarre distortion of human aspect, and his almost Dadaist irreverence for 'classic' sculptural technique and material, presents an indictment against the de-humanizing forces of modern life.

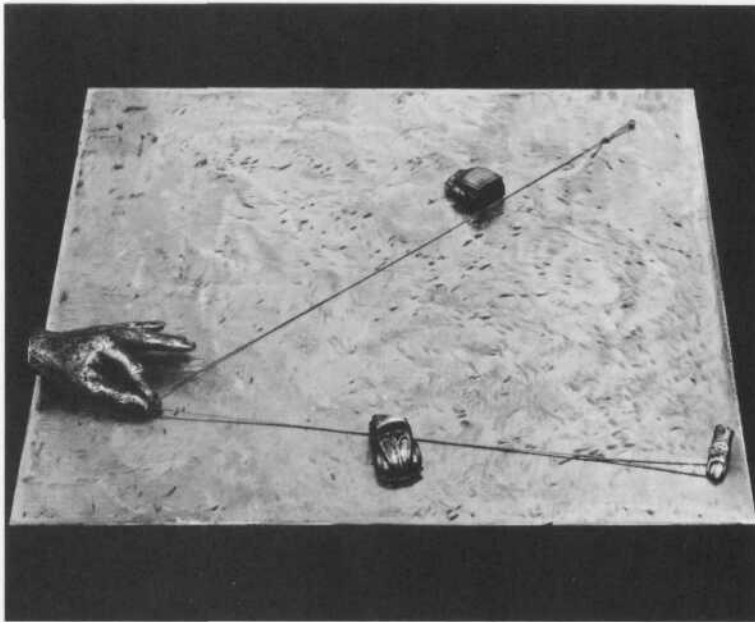
In direct contrast to the anarchistic sculptural expression of Denys



Peter Nicholls (1936-)
New Land III (1975)
 Wood and steel 990 x 2700 x 2000mm Acc.no. 1976/38/1
 Inscribed: PN (stamped on)

Watkins is *New Land III* by **Peter Nicholls**. Nicholls has approached the problems of representing mass in space in a more academic, abstract construction of chiselled totara beams and corresponding wire and steel hinge tension supports. As with most New Zealand sculpture, *New Land III* owes much to international styles yet within the textural quality of the chisel marks and the selection of totara, a certain, distinctly New Zealand quality has been achieved. Unlike Watkins's *Han Shan's Sling Shot*, Nicholls's *New Land III* is a formal, finalised visual statement. It celebrates pure form and does not attempt social comment. *New Land III* does however suffer from its small scale. A sculpture with such solid feelings of mass, directional flows, and suspensions, requires a much grander scale in order that the work dominate space, not simply exist within it.

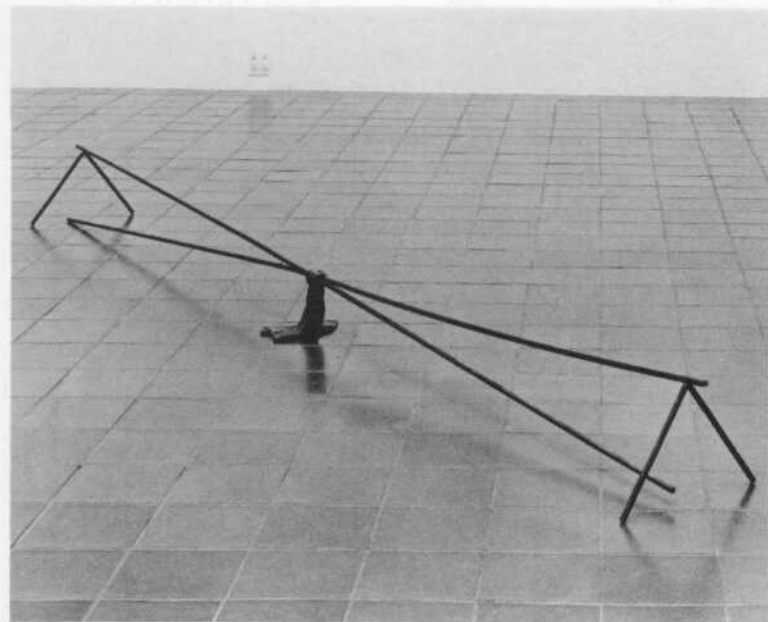
Ambiguity, social comment and humour characterise **Christine Hellyar's** brass and wood wall sculptured ward. The doubled, primitive club-like forms suspended from a wood backing by brass nails can be read on a subjective level as doubtful trophies to violence. Yet upon closer examination, the objects become coated brass assemblages of branch sections and filled, leaf-like fragile attachments. The selection



Greer Twiss (1937-)
VW Split (1974)
 Steel, bronze, string 760 x 610 x 70mm Acc.no. 1974/29/1
 Inscribed: Twiss 74/VW SPLIT

of frail materials, such as branches and leaves, is in direct contrast to their hard coatings of metal. What was once temporal and impermanent has been transformed (awarded?) with the dubious distinction of becoming an art object via its encasement in metal. Another contrast occurs through the placement of the finished brass objects upon untreated wooden board. The positioning of the plaque, inscribed "Award", acts as both the sculpture's title and as a reaffirmation of the presented ambiguities. Artificially coloured feathers further intensify the contrast of the various materials used, and act as types of centralising devices which optically frame the suspended objects. The light and airy quality of the feathers becomes the antipathy of the once fragile leaf and branch sections which are now permanently translated into metal. *Award* has a formal understated and austere quality principally through its symmetrical format and its limited, unorthodox use of objects.

In *Photo Distorted Head*, through the subtractive method of carving, **Terry Stringer** has presented a bust form complete with intended optical distortions. The work is taken further in an attempt at exaggerated perception by the use of painted features, shadows and an octagonal pedestal. Stringer has redefined those qualities found in



Greer Twiss (1937-)
Barrier II (1976)
 Steel, bronze 3022 x 355 x 228mm Acc.no. 1976/59

distorted, or fish-eye lens photography in terms of a three dimensional, pedestal standing sculpture. The use of a sculpted head, observable from several angles, accentuates Stringer's desire to show exaggeration of form. While a camera can present only one present viewing angle, the employment of distortion in a three dimensional format allows viewer observation from several angles at once. The semi-realistic treatment of his subject matter has enabled Stringer to establish not only the optical distortions intended by emulating the camera, but also lends itself to an abstracted, primitive feeling of portraiture, reminiscent of those qualities found in African masks or the postcubist figure sculptures by Picasso. The overall solid, oblong shape of *Photo Distorted Head* also establishes a feeling of density and weight not usually associated with sculpture created in plaster.

Greer Twiss is the oldest and most established sculptor in this group and is represented by two bronze and steel sculptures, *VW Split* and *Barrier*. Within *VW Split*, Twiss explores the visual perception inherent in contrasts of scale and the interrelationships of isolated objects held in suspension. As with Christine Hellyar, Twiss's game is one of ambiguity and contrast. In scale, opposition and ambiguity are created by the use of a life-sized cast of a human hand and finger, and the dissection of a

bronze coated, toy-sized VW automobile. Held string pieces form a line of directional dissection, and the boundaries of the bottom plate establish an additional angle of upward dissection of the hand and isolated finger portion. While there is a certain story-telling quality in *VW Split*, no one literal meaning can be formalized. All specific references to social comment connotations have been minimised through Twiss's intellectual, impersonal handling of the objects and composition.

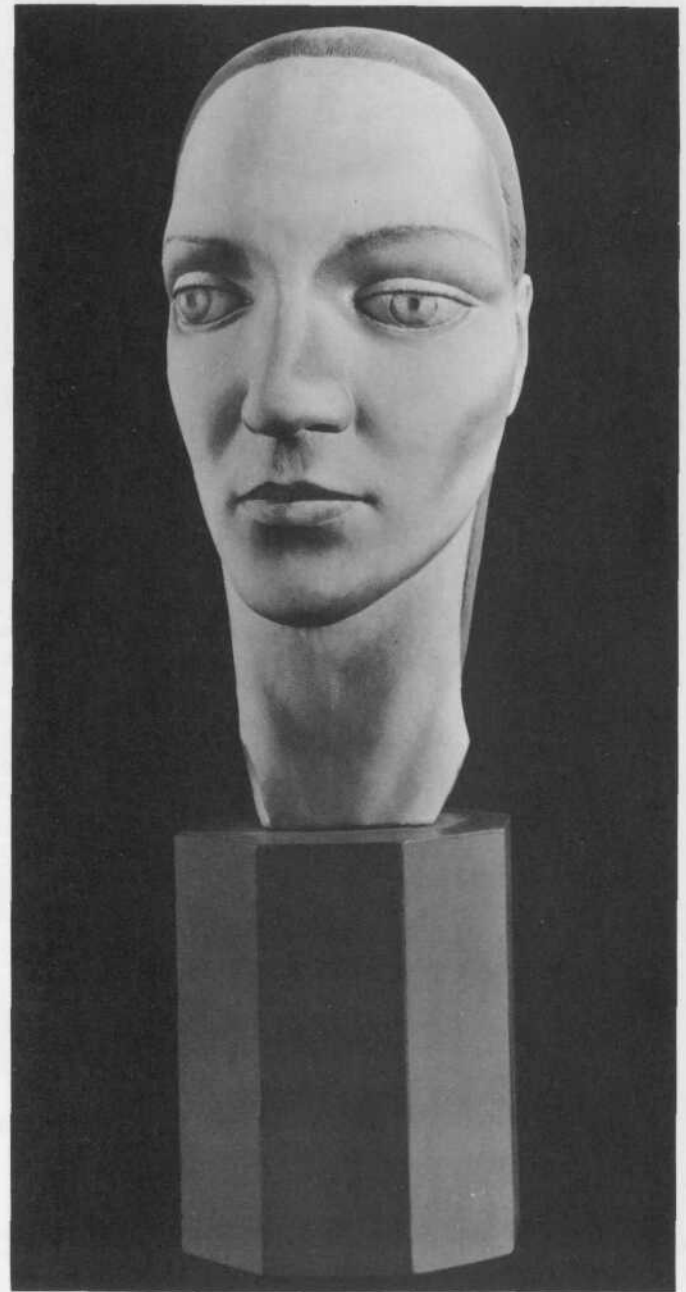
Unlike *VW Split*, *Barrier* defies any attempt at literal translations. Its purpose is to show pure form, and an attitude of non-movement. Two steel bar sections are held centrally by an overlapped bronze coated cloth. From the weight of their own extensions, the bars curve gently to the floor. This sloping movement from the centre creates (and at the same time detracts from) a central focus. It establishes a doubled, directional flow which slides the viewer's attention outward along the curved bars, or inward towards the convergence of the central cloth area. Similar to Twiss's earlier works, a subtle red colour has been introduced into the folds of the bronze cloth centre piece to further accentuate the effects of shade.

On a general observation, based upon these recent sculpture acquisitions, one can derive the apparent lack of any particular common driving force or subject matter preoccupations in contemporary New Zealand sculpture. All the artists represented are involved in independent and mostly unrelated alternatives to the questions of representing object-form in space. Yet through these independent creations one can begin to feel a certain sense of collective identity. With sculptural references to alienation, ambiguity, destruction and distortion, perhaps an embryonic national composite has begun to emerge, one which parallels our modern moods and obsessions.

The possibilities for contemporary sculpture are limitless. Investigations not only into object-orientated sculpture but in such fields as minimal and conceptual events indicate that the importance of contemporary sculpture rivals (and at times surpasses) that of current trends in painting. The successes of contemporary sculpture, and its numerically inferior position to painting in the permanent collection, would seem to necessitate an active and sustained programme of purchase in order to bring New Zealand sculpture into a proper representation, and balance the entire New Zealand collection in terms of contemporary art.

JOHN TARLTON

Terry Stringer (1946-)
 Photo Distorted Head (1976)
 Fibreglass 260mm Acc.no. 1977/3/1
 Signed: Terry Stinger (L back)



ROYAL ACADEMY PICTURES:

Works in the ACAG Permanent Collection which have been exhibited at the Royal Academy, London

In the course of investigating the provenance of the paintings in the Art Gallery collections in preparation for a descriptive catalogue, I drew up a list of paintings that had been purchased from Royal Academy exhibitions or had at some stage been exhibited by the Royal Academy. So many paintings, I found, had this connection that it seems feasible at some stage to mount a special exhibition which would illustrate the "official" tastes and changes of taste of the period from the middle of the nineteenth century until the beginning of World War I.

The mounting of such an exhibition will require some years of study and above all of conservation and restoration, for this is a section of the collections that has in recent years been allowed to stagnate and deteriorate. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties the Auckland City Art Gallery had, with certain notable exceptions, other interests, priorities and preferences: the classic periods of painting in Europe down to the eighteenth century, the modern non-academic schools and New Zealand art in general. This is not a matter of censure, since the Art Gallery was reflecting overseas interests. During the nineteen sixties and seventies, however, there has been a general revival of interest overseas in nineteenth century academic painting, a tendency that has resulted in a number of our more important works in this category being sent to Australia for inclusion in large thematic exhibitions.¹ It seems worthwhile, therefore, to publish the list of Royal Academy paintings for the benefit of colleagues at home and overseas.

1. Victorian Olympians, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1975 Victorian Social Conscience, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1976

ERIC YOUNG

- RA 1820 (98) **Thomas Stothard RA** (1755-1834) *The Dance: Boccaccio's Decameron (7th Day) (A Group of Dancers)* oil on millboard 339x238 mm. Sir George Grey Collection, ace. no. 1887/1/29
- RA 1839 (717) **Henry Pierce Bone the younger RA** (1779-1855) *Corin and Philida* enamel on iron plaque 260x336 mm. signed and dated. J.T. Mackelvie Collection, ace. no. M1885/1/209
- RA 1842 (1045) **Alfred Joseph Woolmer** (1805-1892) *The Proposal (Reflection on Shadows)* oil on canvas 355x251 mm. J.T. Mackelvie Collection, ace. no. M1885/1/29



- RA 1847 (233) **Thomas Creswick RA** (1811-1869) *England (Old England)*
- RA 1847 (233) **Thomas Creswick RA** (1811-1869) *England (Old England)* oil on canvas 1473x2267 mm. signed and dated. Presented by Moss Davis, ace. no. 1930/18/2
- RA 1850 (160) **Daniel Maclise** (1806/11-1807) *The Spirit of Justice* oil on canvas 2591x1524 mm. J.T. Mackelvie Collection, ace. no. M1881/1/1
- RA 1851 (469) **Sir John Watson Gordon RA PRSA** (1790-1864)/o/m Conolly, M.D. 179-4-1866 oil on canvas Presented by the family of John Conolly, ace. no. 1917/1/1
- RA 1852 (336) **William PowellFrith** (1819-1909) *Pope Makes Love to Lady Wartley Montagu* oil on canvas 1180x942 mm. signed and dated Presented by Sir Frank Mappin, ace. no. 1974/59
- RA 1860 (69) **John Joseph Barker** (ac. 1835-1866) *Chatterton in his Room* oil on canvas 355x457 mm. signed and dated, Sir George Grey Collection, ace. no. 1887/1/3
- RA 1872(41) **Edward Armitage RA** (1817-1896) *Dawn of the First Easter Sunday* oil on canvas 1170x1832 mm. signed and dated, J.T. Mackelvie Collection, ace. no. M1883/1/1
- RA 1881 (1365) **Edmund Blair Leighton** (1853-1922) *Un Gage d'Amour* oil on canvas 1524x1016 mm. signed and dated Presented by Dr. G.W. Drewett, ace. no. 1947/11
- RA 1882 (1490) **Edward Armitage RA** (1817-1896) *Sea Urchins* oil on canvas 430x684 mm. signed and dated J.T. Mackelvie Collection, ace. no. M1883/1/2
- (1462) **Frederick Lord Leighton** (1830-1896) *Melittion* oil on canvas 1219x914 mm. Presented by Moss Davis, ace. no. 1927/2/1



RA 1891 (1138)

Frank Bramley ARA (1857-1941) *For of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven*

- RA 1884 (403) **Philip Richard Morris ARA** (1836-1902) *Sweethearts and Wives* oil on canvas 1245x2006 signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1886 (124) **John Reinhard Weguelin RWS** (1849-1927) *The Obsequies of an Egyptian Cat* oil on canvas 835x1283 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1888 (452) **John Macwhirter RA** (1839-1911) *Silver Birches* oil on canvas 1451x949 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1921/1/4
- RA 1889 (236) **Marcus Stone RA** (1840-1921) *Her First Love Letter* oil on canvas 954x1540 mm. signed Presented by Moss Davis, ace. no. 1930/2/1
- RA 1891 (1138) **Frank Bramley ARA** (1857-1941) *For of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven* oil on canvas 1829x2540 mm. signed and dated. Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1913/1
- RA 1892 (211) **Sir John Everett Millais PRA** (1829-1896) *Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind* oil on canvas 1080x1550 mm. signed and dated Presented by Moss Davis, ace. no. 1933/1/3
- RA 1894 (385) **Albert Goodwin RWS** (1845-1932) *The First Christmas Dawn* oil on canvas 1235x2015 mm. signed and dated Presented by the artist, ace. no. 1925/2



RA 1860(69)

John Joseph Barker (ac. 1835-1866) *Chatterton in his Room*

- (190) **Frederick Lord Leighton PRA** (1830-1896) *The Spirit of the Summit* oil on canvas 1987x1016 mm. Presented by Moss Davis, ace. no. 1926/4
- RA 1895 (595) **Sir Ernest Albert Waterlow RA** (1850-1919) *The Water Mill* oil on canvas 1286x1026 mm. signed Presented by Moss Davis, ace no. 1921/1
- RA 1896 (901) **Walter Dendy Sadler** (1854-1923) *Married* oil on canvas 1276x971 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1913/4
- RA 1897 (521) **Edmund Blair Leighton RI** (1853-1922) *In Time of Peril* oil on canvas 1245x1689 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- (217) **Sir Ernest Albert Waterlow RA** (1850-1919) *Jutomn Floods* oil on canvas 1070x1832 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1898 (960) **James Aumonier RI** (1832-1911) *A Wide Pasture* oil on canvas 1283x1917 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1898/1
- (898) **Henry John Yeend-King RBA RI** (1855-1924) *Blackmore Vale* oil on canvas 1219x1829 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1898 (91)** **Sir John Everett Millais PRA** (1829-1896) *Grace* oil on canvas 1422x889 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1925/1

- RA 1899 (209) **William Logsdail RBC** (1859-af. 1929)4 *Venetian Interior of the XVIIIth Century* oil on canvas 1594x1200 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1899/1
- RA 1900 (1017) **John Alfred Arnesby Brown RA** (1866-1955) *After the Heat of the Day* oil on canvas 1270x1816 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1900/1
- RA 1901 (314) **Margaret Isabel Dicksee** (1858-1903) *The First Commission: Sir Thos. Lawrence PRA as a Boy* oil on canvas 914x1295 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1902 (156)** **George Dunlop Leslie RA** (1835-1921) *The Last Ray* oil on canvas 927x1479 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1904(461) **Fred Hall** (1860-1948) *Silver and Gold* oil on canvas 965x1232 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- (145) **T. Hodgson Liddell RBA** (1860-1925) *The Estuary of Aberdovy* oil on canvas 870x1327 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- (510) **Osmund Pittman** (b 1874) *The Bend of the River* oil on canvas 911x1368 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- (864) **George Ogilvie Reid RSA** (1851-1928) *A Spate on the River Dochart* oil on canvas 635x940 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- (88) **George Wetherbee RI** (b 1851) *The Year's at the Spring, the Day's at the Morn* oil on canvas 743x921 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1905 **William Frank Calderon** (1865-1943) *On the Sea-beat Shore, where Thracians Tame Wild Horses* oil on canvas 1829x3785 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
Charles M. Padday ac. 1890-1906) *Alone: a Wrecked Buccaneer of the XVIIIth Century* oil on canvas 1022x1403 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1906 **Arthur Wardle** (1864-1949)/I *Sylvan God* oil canvas 1371x1016 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1907 **Edgar Bundy ARA** (1862-1922) *The Day of Sedgemoor* oil on canvas 1511x1511 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1921/1/7
- RA 1908 **Sir Alfred East ARA** (1849-1913) *Outside the Bull Ring* oil on canvas 1067x1270 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- Briton Riviere RA** (1840-1920) *Androcles and the Lion* oil on canvas 1327x1105 mm. signed and dated Presented by the artist, ace. no. 1915/3



- RA 1820 (98) **Thomas Stothard RA** (1755-1834) *The Dance: Boccaccio's Decameron (7th Day) (A Group of Dancers)*
-
- RA 1909 **Henry William Banks Davis RA** (1833-1914) *In the River Bed, Upper Wye* oil on canvas 1273x1016 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1913 **Hon. John Collier ROI** (1850-1934)4 *Fallen Idol* oil on canvas 1676x1371 mm. signed and dated Mackelvie Trust Collection, ac. no. M1921/1/11
- RA 1913 Winter **Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema RA (1836-1912)** *Egypt 3,000 Years Ago* oil on panel 645x900 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, ace. no. M1921/1/3
- RA 1914 **Arthur Meads RWA ROI** (b 1863) *The Gurnard's Head* oil on canvas 1327x1981 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.
- RA 1930 **Herbert Davis Richter** (1874-1955) *The Artist's Home* oil on canvas 765x638 mm. signed Mackelvie Trust Collection, unacc.

JEAN-PIERRE NORBLIN DE LA GOURDAINE

A Discovery in the Auckland City Art Gallery

By Dr. Walter Auburn

A few years ago the director of the Auckland City Art Gallery asked me to inspect and evaluate a collection of unidentified etchings which were not listed in the Gallery's catalogue.

Here was a collection of seventy-five etchings which varied in size from that of a small postage stamp to that of a folio page. They all appeared to be from the same hand, and they were obviously the work of an accomplished admirer and follower of the great Rembrandt.

Most of them showed a very fine spidery monogram, reading N.f., but on some of them the name Norblin could be deciphered. I had never heard the name before, but reference to Arthur Hind's "A History of Etching and Engraving", provided a short but appreciative reference to the work of Jean-Pierre Norblin. He says, "the model for his style is the delicate etching of Rembrandt's little CHRIST AMONG THE DOCTORS, of 1630; and he combines an exquisite sense of the effects of chiaroscuro in plates of miniature dimensions."

Finally, I decided to write to the Director of the Print Department of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, asking whether they had in their possession a *catalogue raisonne* on the artist. I received a copy of a slim volume published in 1877 in a small French provincial paper, **La Revue de Champagne et de Brie**. Its title is **Catalogue des estampes qui composent l'oeuvre de Jean-Pierre Norblin, peintre Francais, graveur a Peau-forte, redige par Frederic Hillemacher**. It contains a short biography from which I quote the following in translation: "Jean-Pierre Norblin de la Gourdain was born on July 1st 1745 at Misy-Faut-Yonne near Montereau in the Champagne. He first studied in Dresden under Francesco-Giuseppe Casanova (1727-1800)

the battle painter. Having been recommended to the Marquis de Marigny, Director-General of Buildings, he entered the school as a *protege*. The paintings he produced in the style of his teacher, and of Le Bourguignon, drew the attention of several art lovers to his work. One of these, the Polish prince Adam Czartoryski, who especially admired his paintings, persuaded him to enter his service, and so followed him to Poland in 1774.

"Norblin established a school painting in Warsaw where he trained some distinguished artists such as Michel Plonski and Alexander Orlovski. His studio became the meeting place of the foremost courtiers. King Stanislas Auguste himself often honoured the painter with his visits, and attracted him to court, and went as far as creating him a nobleman so that he could attend Parliament which he painted in some fine pictures. A major work from this period was "THE BATTLE OF ZBOROW AT THE TIME OF WLADISLAS IV" Also he became the superintendent of ornamentation of royal residences, and found time to paint many other works such as the colossal ceiling painting, "THE CHARIOT OF AURORA" for Prince Radziwill. During the Polish wars he took up a rifle to defend his adopted country.

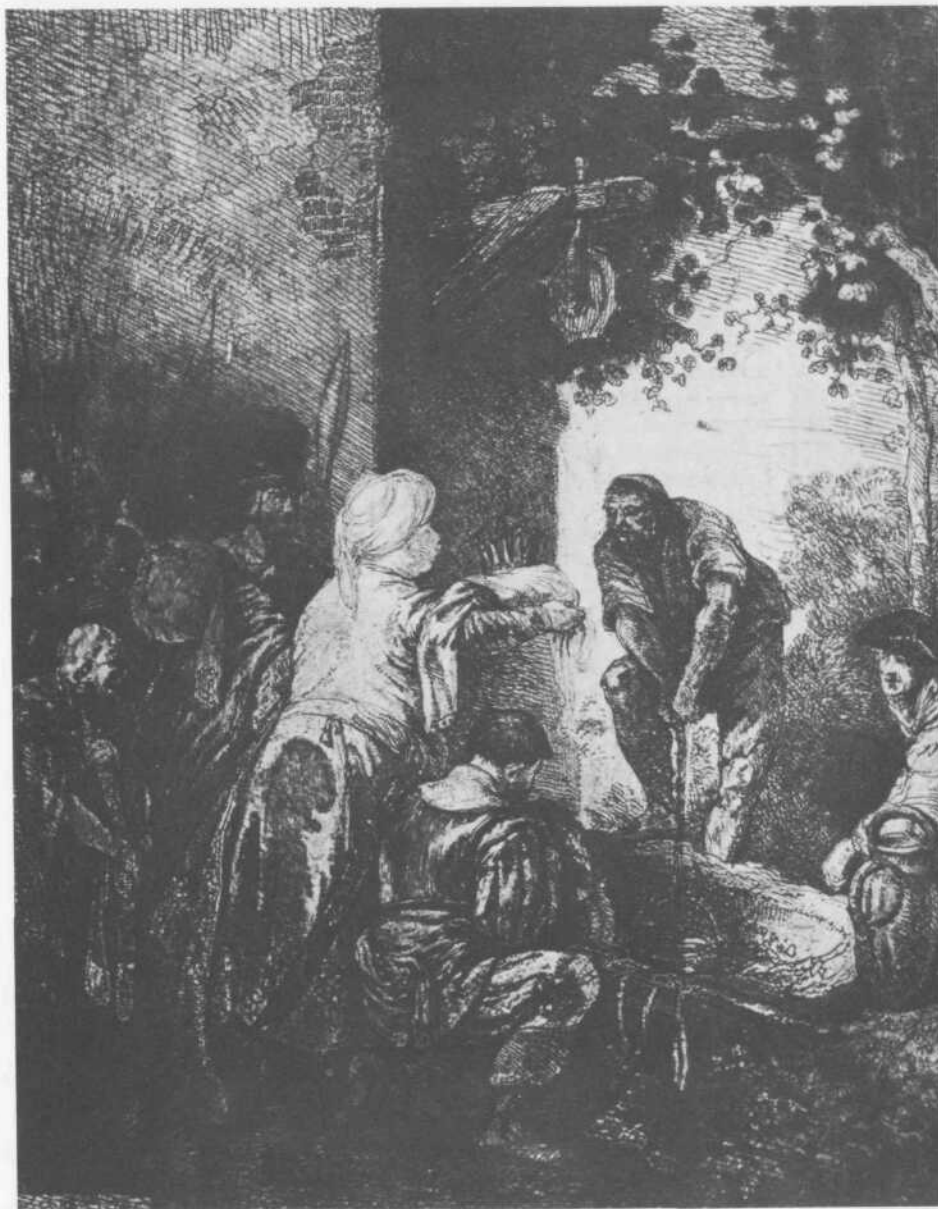
"At this time Norblin began to practice the art of etching. An ardent admirer of Rembrandt to the point of trying to reproduce his technique, he was inspired by the magical effects that illuminate the works of the great Dutch master which he has recalled with success. His shadows are vigorous and consistent, his chiaroscuro is astonishingly even and fine, and his picturesque figures, often dressed in Polish or Oriental clothes, are intriguing...

"In spite of efforts to persuade him to stay in Poland, Norblin returned to his home country in 1804, and there, enjoying the fruits of his travels, he continued to practice his art, not with the burin, which he had abandoned in 1789, but with crayons.

"Simple in his tastes while living in retirement, he did not trouble to exhibit his watercolours which did not come to light till after his death. He enjoyed collecting old master prints, especially those by Rembrandt of which he managed to assemble a fine collection. Norblin died on February 23rd 1830 at the age of 84."

Out of Norblin's total production of ninety-three etchings, the Auckland City Art Gallery possesses seventy-five, which is the highest proportion of the total *oeuvre* of any artist in the Gallery's fine collection of old master and modern prints.

The quality of most of these etchings, especially the larger and most ambitious ones, is exceptionally fine, although some of the miniatures show the ravages of time and are in need of the conservator's attention. They will be presented to the public for the first time within the frame-work of an exhibition devoted to the "Little Masters", whose exquisite small etchings were the delight of collectors over the period of four centuries from 1500 - 1800. Since then graphic artists have produced their images mainly on a larger scale, a development favoured by the invention of lithography.



Jean Pierre Norblin (1745-1830) French
The First of the Piast Dynasty 1776 etching
 Hillemacher 13



Jean Pierre Norblin (1745-1830) French
Self-portrait Seated at a Table etching
 Hillemacher 1



Jean Pierre Norblin (1745-1830) French
Beggar etching
 Hillemacher 32



Jean Pierre Norblin (1745-1830) French
The Smaller Player of Bagpipes 1781 etching
 Hillemacher 28
 (Reproduced actual size)



Jean Pierre Norblin (1745-1830) French
The Smaller Player of Bagpipes 1781 etching
 Hillemacher 28

TELEPHONE: 792-()20 POSTAL ADDRESS:
Auckland City Council Private Bag.

GALLERY HOURS: Monday to Thursday 10 am to 4.30 pm, Friday 10 am to 8.30 pm, Saturday and Sundays 1 pm to 5.30 pm.

REFERENCE LIBRARY OPEN FOR PUBLIC ENQUIRIES: Weekdays 10.30 am to 12 noon, 2.00 pm to 4 pm.

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS: Gifts to the Art Gallery in the form of *cash from income* upwards 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.

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 paintings, 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.

The *Quarterly* is published by the Auckland City Art Gallery and is concerned with presenting information about works of art acquired by the Gallery. Subscriptions: \$2.00 a year; single copies 50 cents; free to members of the Auckland Gallery Associates.

Printed by Wakefield Press Limited, 34 Wakefield Street, Auckland 1.

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

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