

1977

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

THREE HUNDRED YEARS
OF
BRITISH PORTRAITURE

1977

INTRODUCTION

"Three Hundred Years of British Portraiture" does not survey the entire lineage of portraiture. Rather, the exhibition focuses upon a select number of paintings from New Zealand collections, some acquired at their institution's foundation and quite a number purchased through various Trust Funds over the past two years. Some paintings are outstanding, others minor, but all are by important British painters, over a period commencing mid-seventeenth century with Cornelius Johnson, through to Augustus John.

It is not without reason that the exhibition concentrates upon the proliferation of portraiture in eighteenth century England, spurred on by the works of Flemish and Dutch artists such as Sir Peter Paul Rubens*, in particular Sir Anthony van Dyck*, and Sir Peter Lely*. Later William Hogarth* and Sir Joshua Reynolds, two giants of painting, not only developed and consolidated the British portrait genre but became significant theorists on aesthetics.

William Hogarth, the first important British born painter, elevated the genre of child portraiture while Sir Joshua established the archetype of the official portrait. Representative works by Allan Ramsay, George Romney and Henry Raeburn, widened the scope of British portraiture now casual or dashing, officially imposing or refined. Portraiture covered in the three hundred year period to the early twentieth century reveals a variety of stylistic and philosophical approaches, culminating in the work of Augustus John, one of the last of that breed of artist of the flamboyant era in British art which reflects the late Victorian cult of personality in arts and letters.

One important factor which should not be overlooked in the history of British portraiture is the marked contrasts it reflects in economic, social and intellectual life during the three centuries.

The exhibition "Three Hundred Years of British Portraiture" has been organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery. Works have been selected from the collections of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, the Auckland City Art Gallery, the Mackelvie Trust and the M.A. Serra Trust - a newly established memorial fund which recently acquired for the Auckland City Art Gallery the splendid seventeenth century 'Portrait of a Lady' by Cornelius Johnson. We are indebted to Mr Les Lloyd and the staff of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery for their work in carrying out cleaning and restoration of works from their collection and to the Conservation Staff of the Auckland City Art Gallery for major restoration work carried out on newly acquired works for the permanent collection, in particular, the Mackelvie Trust's recent acquisition: Sir Joshua Reynolds' the portrait of Viscount Allan.

*Not included in the exhibition.

Ernest W. Smith, Director

DANTE GABRIEL CHARLES ROSSETTI
British, 1828-1882

Pre-Raphaelite painter and poet. His father, Gabriel Rossetti was an Italian refugee, and professor of Italian at King's College. Entered RA Schools 1845. Pupil of Ford Madox Brown for a few months in 1848. Together with Hunt and Millais, Rossetti played a leading role in the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 1848-9. In 1850 he met Elizabeth Siddal who became his favourite model, his mistress, and later in 1860, his wife. Because of the furore aroused by the paintings of the PRB, he never exhibited his pictures in public again, preferring to sell through agents or direct to collectors. From this period until about 1864 he preferred to work in watercolour. He was wrestling with re-refractory substances, and perhaps for that very reason his work has the intensity and inner glow so often lacking in the painter who attains a surface of superficial ease. He always considered himself primarily a poet (as was his sister Christina). The subjects of his works in the 1850's were mostly taken from Dante or Morte d'Arthur and Elizabeth Siddal appears in practically all of them. In 1862, after the tragic death of his wife from an overdose of laudanum, he turned back to oil painting, concentrating on allegorical female portraits or groups of females. Although he used several models, the same facial type, languid and sensual, features in all of them. From 1871-4 Rossetti began to suffer mental disturbance, and became dependent on chloral, and the quality of his work declined. Burne-Jones and Morris both thought that Rossetti's best work was done before 1860, but the influence of his ideas and his personality, transmitted through Burne-Jones and his many followers, remained a potent feature of English painting even into the early 20th century.

Elizabeth Siddal

Pencil

345x235mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
(Smythe Collection)

Head of a Young Woman (Attributed to Rossetti)

Pencil

240x190mm

Signed with monogram and dated 1853 inscribed Vittoria Roma

Attributed to Rossetti by Smythe but the cursive monogram does not resemble Rossetti's, and there is no evidence that he was in Rome in 1853.

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
(Smythe Collection)

JOSEPH WRIGHT, A.R.A.
English, 1734-1797

Joseph Wright, A.R.A., was born at Derby and studied in London under Thomas Hudson. He settled in Derby as a portrait painter in 1758.

Wright went to Rome early in 1774: there he spent his time studying the antiquities and the works of Michelangelo in the Vatican. He began to paint landscapes in the Italo-Dutch tradition, producing moonlights, grottoes with their opportunities of chiaroscuro.

On his return Wright continued as a portrait and landscape painter, hoping to succeed to the practise of Thomas Gainsborough R.A., who had left Bath for London. His expectations were not realised, and he returned to Derby in 1779. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1778 and became A.R.A. in 1781. He later refused election as R.A.

It was early in the 1760's that Wright became fascinated with moonlight and candlelight effects of a sort that had not been painted since the early seventeenth century.

Wright's most famous picture, A Philosopher giving a Lecture on the Ornery, painted about 1764-6, is one of the remarkable compositions of the age. His work is characterised by Realism and integrity, combined with a quiet poetry, and foreshadows some aspects of the Romantic moment. Portrait of the Hon Mrs Boyle is a superb example of Wright's use of light and sensuality as a painter of portraits.

Bibliography: Harold Osborne, ed., The Oxford Companion to Art, 1970, p.1224

Portrait of the Hon Mrs Boyle

Oil on canvas

762x635mm

Unsigned

Provenance: Thos. Agnew & Sons Ltd., purchased 1956

Collection: Mackelvie Trust (Auckland City Art Gallery)

GEORGE ROMNEY
English, 1734-1802

George Romney, one of the most popular portrait painters in London in the second half of the 18th century, was born in Dalton-le-Furness, Lancashire, England, on December 15, 1734. His only artistic training was from Steele, a painter in Kendal. Steele was an expert in grinding and mixing colours and was responsible for imparting to Romney a sound, technical knowledge of colours. In his paintings, Romney used only a few colours, but they were durable and are as fresh and pure today as when they were applied. Romney lacked systematic training in anatomy during his youth. This resulted in his inability throughout his career to render easily and accurately the human form in all its various attitudes. In 1756, while in the north of England, he married a Miss Mary Abbot of Kirkland whom he deserted for the better part of his career. In 1762 Romney moved to London where he gained two premiums from the Society of Arts. He took the traditional "finishing school" trip to Italy in 1773 to study the Old Masters. He remained there for two years. Upon his return to London he became one of the most sought after portraitists, sharing the limelight with Sir Joshua Reynolds and Thomas Gainsborough. In 1797 because of ill health, he moved to Hampstead and rejoined his family. He died in Kendal on November 5, 1802.

This late portrait of the artist's son and writer of his Memoirs, painted a few years before Romney's retirement, does not show the same falling off as his late fashionable portraits. Naturally it shows none of the bland consciousness of rank and breeding that made Romney so successful in the 1770's and 80's. It is broadly, almost impatiently painted, showing the direction of the brushstrokes stating the planes of the head. The coat collar is perfunctorily stated.

When Romney visited Italy, he spent most of his time in Rome seeing the antique and Raphael's frescos at first hand, but he also studied Titian in Venice. And it is both a Venetian breadth of handling and a feeling for the classical planes of the head that make this portrait memorable.

Bibliography: Ward, Roberts and Waterhouse.

The Reverend John Romney

Oil on canvas

765x640mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(purchased with funds from the Peter Smeaton Bequest through the National Art-Collections Fund)

Provenance: Miss Romney, 1894: Executors of Abel Fackley of Pyecroft Hall, Audenshaw, Lancashire, 1909; bought by the Gallery.

Exhibited: Manchester City Art Gallery, 'Old Masters', 1909.

The Reverend John Romney (1758-1832) was the only son of the artist.

MICHAEL DAHL
British, 1656-1743

Portrait painter, born in Stockholm, was pupil of the Danish painter Klocker. In 1678 he came to England, and after a short residence there, travelled and studied in France and afterwards in Italy. In 1688 he settled as a portrait painter in London, and gradually attained repute and large employment in his art. He was patronised by Princess (afterwards Queen) Anne and Prince George, and by many of the nobility, in whose family galleries most of his works still extant are to be found. The portrait of Charles XI of Sweden at Windsor, the series of portraits of admirals at Hampton Court, and the portrait of Lord-Justice-General Mackenzie, known at Earl of Cromarty, painted in 1708, and now in the Parliament House in Edinburgh, are from his brush. His own portrait is engraved in Walpole's "Anecdotes", and another and earlier portrait by himself, and a very good example of his style of work, is in the collection of Mr Tregellas of Morlah Lodge, Brompton. His work is characterised by care in execution and faithfulness of portraiture. His colouring is good, and the accessories are rendered honestly, though in the conventional and rather tasteless style of the time. It must be confessed, however, that his work is not distinguished by either originality or genius. He was content to represent his patrons as he found them in accordance with the rules of portrait-painting as then understood, though in regard of the number and position of his clients he has been styled the rival of Kneller. He died in London on 20 October 1743.

Bibliography: National Biography

King George I

Oil on canvas

1194x965mm

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

(Presented by His Excellency the Governor General

Sir Willoughby Norrie, 1957.)

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS
English, 1723-1792

Joshua Reynolds was the son of the headmaster of the Grammar School at Plymton St Maurice in Devon, the seventh of eleven children. His father collected books and in his library Joshua found Posso's book on perspective and Richardson's Essay on the Theory of Painting which aroused in him the desire to become a painter.

After being apprenticed to Thomas Hudson in London 1740-43, he practised as a portrait painter in Devon and London, then in 1749, took the opportunity of going to Italy with Commodore Keppel. On the way back to England in 1752 he spent three weeks in Venice making sketches of the compositions of Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese, particularly their patterns of light and shade. In 1753 he set up his practice in London and rapidly became distinguished, Ramsay being his principal rival.

An English empiricist, Reynolds approached each new sitter afresh and gave each portrait a relevant structure. He put the kind of invention appropriate to history painting into the portrait, making use of a vast visual memory ranging through antique sculpture, Raphael, Michelangelo and the Bolognese classicists.

Bibliography: Graves, Cronin, Waterhouse, N.A.C.F.

Maria, Countess Waldegrave, later Duchess of Gloucester (1739-1807)
daughter of Sir Edward Walpole

Oil on canvas

915x715mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(Purchased with funds from the Peter Smeaton Bequest through the National Art-Collections Fund)

Provenance: Edward Wheeler Mills (1801-1865); Mrs Cooper; Brig. R.J. Cooper; Christie's 12 December 1947, lot 12, purchased by the Gallery.

Exhibited: Burlington House 1886, no.20; Auckland City Art Gallery 'Old Master Paintings from the Private and Public Collections of New Zealand' 14 May-14 June 1959, no.11

James, second Earl Waldegrave died in 1763. Another version of the present portrait, showing the sitter in widow's weeds, is in the Cummer Gallery of Art, Jacksonville, Florida. Reynolds had painted full-length portraits of the Earl and Countess in 1759. The portrait is Kit-cat size, that is 36x28 inches.

Portrait of Fifth Viscount Allen, named Joshua, in the Uniform of a
Lord Lieutenant

Oil on canvas

752x641mm

Collection: Mackelvie Trust (Auckland City Art Gallery)

Provenance: Aquarius Fine Arts, Hamilton (Ian Johnson)

Painted February 1762 (Artist Sitter Book)

ALLAN RAMSAY
Scottish, 1713-1784

Portrait painter, son of Allan Ramsay the poet, born in Edinburgh. He studied in London under Hans Hysing (1678-1752/3), a Swede, in Rome under Francesco Ferdinandi (Imperiali) and in Naples under Solimena. When in 1739 he settled in London he brought a cosmopolitan air to British portrait painting. His portraits of women have a decidedly French grace (The Artist's Wife, N.G. Edinburgh, 1854/5). In 1760 he was appointed Painter-in-Ordinary to George III. He travelled considerably. His literary productions, e.g., Dialogue on Taste (1754), gained his success in intellectual circles, and Hume and Rousseau were among his sitters. He ceased to paint after an accident in 1773. Ramsay was the most considerable portrait painter of the generation between Hudson and Highmore and has been called a link between the portraiture of Hogarth and Gainsborough and was the Scottish counterpart of Reynolds.

Bibliography: National Biography

Portrait of a Man, (c1750)

Oil on canvas

760x640mm

Unsigned

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

(Purchased with assistance of Art Gallery Associates)

Provenance: Thos. Agnew & Sons, purchased 1975

Sir Edward Kynaston of Hardwick

Oil on canvas

1270x 1020mm

Signed and dated (LR): A. Ramsay 1750

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(Purchased with equal contributions from the
National Arts-Collection Fund and the Smeaton
Bequest, through the N.A.C.F.)

Provenance: John Kynaston of Hardwicke: Colnaghi from whom purchased.

SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE
English, 1769-1830

He was a child prodigy who by the age of ten years was well known for the pencil profiles he drew at his father's inn in Devizes. From 1780 to 1786 he was in Bath, where he worked in pastel and by 1787 had settled in London, where he began to use oils. He was almost entirely self-taught. He was commanded to paint Queen Charlotte (N.G. London) in 1789 and this commission, with Miss Farren (Met. Mus., New York, 1789), brought him astonishing success. He was elected A.R.A. in 1791 and R.A. in 1794. For the next 20 years he consolidated this early triumph without showing any great development, though on the death of Hoppner in 1810, he was recognised as the leading portrait painter of the time. The great opportunity of his career came in 1818, when he was sent to Europe, as the envoy of the Prince Regent to paint the heads of state and military leaders on the occasion of the allied victory over Napoleon (Windsor Castle). As a preliminary gesture he was knighted, and on his return in 1820, he succeeded Benjamin West as President of the Royal Academy.

Lawrence was devoted to the memory and example of Reynolds and in some respects he was the last of the great portrait painters in the 18th century tradition. His fluid, brilliant, and sometimes careless brushwork was imitated by all the younger portrait painters and a Lawrence tradition held good in English portraiture until the advent of Watts.

Lawrence was a man of great taste and his collection of old master drawings is one of the finest ever made.

Bibliography: National Biography

Portrait of a Young Lady

Pencil, heightened with white touched with
ink wash and colour

272x228mm

Signed (LR) T. Lawrence

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
(Smythe Collection)

Portrait of a Young Girl

Black chalk, heightened with chinese white and
touched with colour

235x203mm

Signed (LR) Thos. Lawrence

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
(Smythe Collection)

ANGELICA KAUFFMANN, R.A.
British, 1740/41-1807

Swiss Decorative painter. She travelled with her father J.J. Kauffmann from an early age in Switzerland and Italy; on her later visits to Rome she was greatly impressed by the Neo-Classical vogue on which she formed her style. She there painted a portrait of Winckelmann (Kunsthaus, Zurich, 1764). Kauffmann came to London in 1766 where her work and her person were vastly admired. She was a friend of Reynolds and became a foundation member of the Royal Academy. Her association with Reynolds was attacked by the Irish painter Nathaniel Hone in a satirical picture The Conjuror (National Gallery, Dublin), which also seemed to accuse Reynolds of plagiarism.

In a somewhat timid manner she adapted the allegorical and historical subject matter of contemporary French painting to the Neo-Classical convention. Her best work was on a small scale and the brothers Adam frequently employed her in the decoration of ceilings, walls and furniture for the houses they designed. Good examples may be seen in London at 20 Portman Square and 30 Berkeley Square.

She married her second husband, the decorative painter Antonio Zucchi, R.A. (1726-95) in 1781 and settled in Rome in 1782.

Bibliography: National Biography

Study of a Head

Red and black chalks

288x245mm

Inscribed in pencil (LL): A. Kauffman

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
(Smythe Collection)

THOMAS BEACH,
English, 1738-1806

Portrait painter, was born at Milton Abbas, Dorsetshire in 1738. From his earliest years he evinced a strong predilection for art, and under the patronage of Lord Dorchester's family he became in 1760, a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, resorting at the same time to the St Martin's Lane Academy. He afterwards settled at Bath, then the favourite resort of the fashionable world, and was much employed in painting portraits and portrait groups, usually of a small size, which are well drawn and by no means devoid of merit. He was a member of the Incorporated Society of Artists, and a contributor to its exhibitions from 1772 to 1783. From 1785 he exhibited yearly at the Royal Academy until 1790, but not again until 1797, when he was residing at Strand-on-the-Green, near Kew, and sent a portrait of the Prince of Wales. He died at Dorchester on 17 December, 1806.

Bibliography: National Biography

Portrait of a Lady

Oil on canvas 743x616mm

Inscribed (LL): T. Beach Pinx. 1782

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

(Purchased under terms of Sir Arthur Myer Bequest 1928)

WILLIAM DOBSON
British, 1611-1646

He was a pupil of Francis Cleyn and possibly assisted him with decorative work in the 1630's. Dobson's technique appears solidly Venetian rather than Van Dyckian and it might be considered that access to works in the Royal Collection helped in the development of his style. His authenticated works date from October 1642 in Oxford during the Civil War when he was Court Painter making portraits of courtiers and soldiers. When Oxford surrendered to the Parliamentarians in 1646, he returned to London and was eventually imprisoned for debt but released to die in poverty in his house in St Martin's Lane. He was buried in St Martin's on 28 October 1646.

Bibliography: Aubrey, Brief Lives (1669-96)
M. Whinney & O. Millar, English Art 1625-1714 (1957)

Charles Gerard, First Earl of Macclesfield

Commander of the Bodyguard of Charles I

Oil on canvas

1830x1535mm

Lettered with name of sitter

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(purchased with funds from the Robert Hay Bequest)

Provenance: Earls of Stamford, Dunham Massey Hall; Sir John Foley Grey
Bart of Enville Hall, near Stourbridge, Worcestershire, purchased
through Leggatt Brothers.

Exhibited: Auckland City Art Gallery 'Old Master Paintings from the
Private and Public collections of New Zealand', 14 May -
14 June 1959 No.2.

The sitter, who had commanded infantry at Edgehill in 1642, was distinguished at the first battle of Newbury in 1643; commanded Charles I's bodyguard escorting him to Oxford, where the present portrait was probably painted, thence to Hereford and afterwards to Chester in 1645; wounded at Rowton Heath, retired with the King to Newark but was dismissed his service for a disorderly protest against the supersession of Sir Richard Willis: rejoined Charles at Oxford in 1646 and raised a troop of horse; went abroad after the capitulation eventually returning with Charles II in 1660 at the head of the Life Guards. Supervised defences of the Isle of Wight against the Dutch 1666-7. Created Earl of Macclesfield in 1679. He survived to command William III's bodyguard in 1688. He died in 1694.

MARY BEALE
English, 1632-1697

Portrait painter, born in Suffolk in 1632. She is said to have learned the rudiments of painting from Sir Peter Lely but it is more probable, as Vertue thought, that she received instruction from Robert Walker, and only copied the works of Lely.

Mrs Beale was one of the best female portrait painters of the seventeenth century and was employed by many of the most distinguished persons of her time. She painted in oil, water-colours, and crayons; her heads being very often surrounded by an oval border painted in imitation of carved stone.

Mrs Beale died in Pall Mall, London, 28 December 1697.

Bibliography: National Biography

Sir Nicholas Stuart Bart.

Oil on canvas

765x644mm

Inscribed: Sir Nicholas Stuart Bart (LL)

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

Presented by Dr Hugh Wansey Bayly 1940

Sir Nicholas Stuart (1616-1709/10)

First Baronet of Hartley Maudint, Hertfordshire.

Created baronet 27.6.1660. Acted as Chamberlain of the Exchequer.

AUGUSTUS EDWIN JOHN, O.M., R.A.
British, 1878-1961

Augustus John, portrait painter, muralist, draughtsman, etcher, lithographer and on occasions, sculptor, was one of the last of that breed of artists of the flamboyant era in British art which reflected the late Victorian cult of personality in arts and letters. From his student days, John was established as a legendary figure, a unique character whose gifts as a painter and draughtsman were soon to be recognized throughout the British Empire and America.

As a young student at the Slade School he was largely responsible, through his enormous power as a draughtsman, for creating a new awareness of, and injecting a new vitality into the art of drawing. So successful were his efforts that his student drawings were in great demand both by his peers and by collectors.

His active and independent personality found a home with the gypsies, at whose caravans he was always welcome and in whose midst he could draw and paint. Portraits became his main interest as well as his livelihood. By 1910 his progress as a painter began to match his abilities as a draughtsman, culminating in the superb portraits that appeared in the First World War years and in his unfinished murals.

Throughout a long career, playfulness, virtuosity and effectiveness of execution are apparent, both in his 'finished' and short-hand portraits. No profound system or confining dogma seems to interfere with the consistency of his work. His almost child-like delight in common and everyday people, coupled with the enormous vitality that he infused into his subjects, transformed what could have been a lesser artist's sentimentality to the level of a vital force in British art.

John considered himself a painter in the grand tradition, owing much to the past. As a man, he appears endowed with a strong personality and an inexhaustible reserve of energy. As an artist, he was aware of the social implications and demands placed upon him as a painter of the socially prominent. But it is in his paintings that reflect his friendship with the gypsies, his inclination toward the life of the caravan, that he realises the fullness and richness of his gifts.

Bibliography: N.A.C.F.

Portrait of a Lady

Oil on canvas

507x402mm

Signed (LR) John

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(purchased with funds from the Peter Smeaton Bequest through the National Arts-Collection Fund)

Provenance: Howard Young Galleries

Exhibited: Auckland City Art Gallery 'Modern European Paintings in New Zealand' June-July 1960, No.18

SIR WILLIAM BEECHEY, R.A.,
English, 1753-1839

The painter was born in Burford, in Oxfordshire, 12 December 1753. He is stated by Hayes to have begun life as a house-painter. From other accounts it would appear that he was articled to a solicitor at Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, and afterwards transferred to a lawyer in London. In London he made the acquaintance of some art students, who led him to get his articles cancelled, and he became in 1772, a student of the Royal Academy. In 1775 he exhibited some portraits and from that time he practised in London with tolerable success. In 1781 however he removed to Norwich. He stayed there some four or five years before returning to London. In 1793 he was elected A.R.A. and painted the same year a portrait of Queen Charlotte, which procured him the appointment of painter to Her Majesty. A large equestrian group of George III with the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York reviewing the 10th Hussars and 3rd Dragoons, gained great celebrity. This work, now hanging at Hampton Court, is considered his best. Although a clever and somewhat showy group of portraits, it has little of real nature, and is full of painters' artifices. In 1793 he was knighted and elected a full member of the Royal Academy.

He was for a long while a fashionable portrait painter, but the great reputation of Lawrence had outshone his own some years before he finally retired. 'His colouring', according to Redgrave, 'was pleasing'. He excelled in his females and children; but his males wanted power. His draperies were poor and ill-cast, and he showed no ability to overcome the graceless stiffness which then prevailed in dress. Yet he possessed much merit and his portraits have maintained a respectable second rank.

Bibliography: National Biography

Miss Windham
Oil on canvas
1270x1020mm

Signed with initials and dated 1828

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

Provenance: Purchased from Leger Galleries, London 1976

Mary Christina Windham, fourth daughter of Admiral William Windham of Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk. The sitter married Richard Hare in 1835. She died in 1888. This portrait would perhaps have been painted at the same time as Beechey painted the sitter's Father in naval uniform. (Leger Galleries Catalogue)

WILLIAM POWELL FRITH, R.A.
English, 1819-1909

Painter of historical genre and scenes of Victorian life. Born near Ripon, Yorkshire, Frith was forced by ambitious parents to take up painting against his will. This perhaps explains his materialistic and commercial attitude to art, which persisted throughout his life. Studied at Sass's Academy and RA Schools, elected ARA 1845, RA 1852. Early subjects all historical and literary scenes, painted in a very sentimental style; the subjects being taken from such sources as Shakespeare, Moliere, Scott, Goldsmith, Dickens and Sterne. In his autobiography Frith claims that he was always 'strongly drawn towards illustration of modern life'. It was not, however, until the Pre-Raphaelites had made modern genre acceptable that Frith tried his hand at this type of subject. A visit to Ramsgate in 1851 gave him the idea for his first panorama of Victorian life, Ramsgate Sands, exhibited at the RA in 1854. The picture was an enormous success and was bought by Queen Victoria. Encouraged by this, Frith went on to paint a succession of similar panoramas, for which he is now best known. In addition to these, he continued to paint historical and sentimental subjects, becoming steadily more repetitive, his colours growing thinner and dryer. Frith exhibited at the RA for sixty years, from 1840-1902, and also at the BI and SS. A self-portrait is in the MacDonald Collection at the Aberdeen Art Gallery.

La Marquise

Oil on canvas

762x609mm

Signed (LR) W.P. Frith 1885

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

Provenance: Barrington Galleries purchased 1975

Pope Makes Love to Lady Wortley Montagu, 1852

Oil on canvas

1180x942mm

Signed (LL) W.P. Frith 1852

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

FRANCIS COTES, R.A.
English, 1725-1770

Portrait painter, born in London about 1725. Young Cotes became a pupil of George Knapp, and soon outstripped his master. He became eminent for his portraits in crayons, in which branch of art he surpassed all his predecessors, though it has been said that he owed something of his excellence to the study of the works of Rosalba. He also painted in oil colours with considerable ability, and his portraits are often good pictures, although somewhat hard and coarsely pencilled. Cotes was at one time a member of the Incorporated Society of Artists, but he seceded from it and was one of the artists who memorialised George III for the establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts, of which he became one of the first academicians. He enjoyed a reputation in his day, and fashion followed him from London to Bath, and back again. He was very early in life afflicted with stone, to which he fell victim and died on 19 July 1770 at Richmond, Surrey, where he was buried. His residence 32 Cavendish Square, London, was afterwards occupied by Romney, and then by Sir Martin Archer Shee. Among his best portraits in oil are the group of Joah Bates and his wife, in the possession of Mr Henry Littleton, the full-length portrait of Admiral Hawke at Greenwich Hospital, a portrait of Mary, Duchess of Norfolk, at Arundel Castle, and that of his father, his diploma work, in the Royal Academy. The only portrait of him which ever existed was a large miniature painted from memory by his brother, Samuel Cotes.

Bibliography: National Biography

Lady Diana Beauclerk

Daughter of the Duke of Marlborough

Oil on canvas

978x695mm

Lady Diana Beauclerk (1734-1808), a daughter of Charles Spencer, second Duke of Marlborough, she became an amateur artist of some celebrity. Married Frederick, second Viscount Bolingbroke in 1757. Divorced in 1768. Two days later married celebrated wit Topham Beauclerk. Widowed in 1780. She illustrated Burger's "Leonora" (1796), Dryden's "Folkes" (1797) and also designed for Wedgwood.

JOHN HOPPNER, R.A.
English, 1758-1810

John Hoppner was born in Whitechapel. His mother was one of the German attendants at the Palace and he started off as a chorister in the Chapel Royal. When he showed an inclination to art, the King made him a small allowance and he was admitted to the Royal Academy Schools in 1775. He studied diligently, gained a gold medal in 1782 and the same year married a daughter of Mrs Patience Wright, a modeller of war portraits.

His first devotion was to landscape but he turned to portraiture with success and no doubt kept some friends at the palace, for, in 1785, he exhibited portraits of three of the Princesses. His style was modelled at first on Reynolds' portraits of the mid 1770's and also on Romney, later on Lawrence and Raeburn. In 1789 his desire to please was rewarded when he was made portrait painter to the Prince of Wales and came to be regarded as a rival of Lawrence. But his art was confined to portraiture and he made few attempts at 'Higher Art', so it was not until 1793 that he was elected Associate of the Royal Academy and 1795 when he was elected a full member. He exhibited from 1780 until 1807.

Redgrave remarked that his best portraits were of women and children and noted "his handling was free, his execution unlaboured, but his drawing often faulty. His colouring was deemed brilliant by his contemporaries; it has become hard and horny by time, and from the use of defective materials many of his pictures have fallen into a sad state of decay."

The present head and shoulders portrait avoids glaring faults of drawing and, happily, though there are signs of the use of bitumen in the darks, the paint has retained much of its quality. The sitter's sharp features were shown from a carefully chosen angle and the textures rendered with breadth and harmony.

Bibliography: Waterhouse, Painting in Britain 1530-1790

Portrait of a Lady

Oil on wood

795x570mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(Purchased with funds from the Peter Smeaton Bequest)

Provenance: Leggatt Brothers

CORNELIUS JOHNSON
English, 1593-1661

Cornelius Johnson often referred to as Janssens van Keulen, was born in London in 1593. His parents had fled from Antwerp during the religious persecutions and settled in London. It is not known where the young Johnson received his training as a painter, which is as likely to have been Dutch as English.

Although his early works are still obscure, Johnson is the only painter 'in large' working in England in the 17th century who signed and dated a considerable number of his pieces. We can trace his development year by year up to and beyond his departure for Holland in October 1643. The earliest date on a portrait signed by Johnson is 1617. A pair of portraits dated 1619 at Lamport Hall are valuable documents for his early style. They are already set, though not very happily, within the painted oval which Johnson used so constantly and which was a popular form in Anglo-Dutch portrait painting and engraving.

Johnson's development during the 1620's, from the meticulous and enamelled manner of his early work in to something freer and more sensitive, was partly hastened by his increasing use of canvas instead of panel. Johnson had, however, a delicate sense of colour, an increasingly light and feathery touch, and a fineness in painting such details as the lace collars of his sitters which is never allowed to upset the balance of a portrait. His quiet and fragile charm is seen at its best in such portraits as Dorothy Godfrey, where the painted oval is used to great effect.... But although he was sworn in as 'His Majesty's servant in ye quality of Picture Drawer' on 5 December 1632, he never seems to have attempted to build up so illustrious a clientele as that served by Mytens or Van Dyck.

There are subtle changes in Johnson's style during the last ten or twelve years of his life in this country (England). Van Dyck was responsible for a slight increase in elegance in his smaller portraits and for a rather more liquid technique. In his larger compositions Johnson was wholly under the new influence.

In 1643 he left England and went to Holland where he became a member of the painters' guild at Middleburg, and from there went to Amsterdam where he continued painting until his death somewhere between 1661-62.

Bibliography: Finberg (Walpole Soc.Vol.10), Waterhouse, 1953.
Whinney & Millar, 1957

Portrait of a Lady

Oil on panel

790x630mm

Initialed and dated 1635

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery
(Gift of M.A. Serra Trust)

Provenance: Thos. Agnew & Sons Ltd., purchased 1976

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH,
English, 1727-1788

Painter of portraits, landscapes and fancy pictures, born at Sudbury, Suffolk. He went to London in 1740 and worked with the French engraver Gravelot, returning to Sudbury in 1746. In 1752 he set up as a portrait painter at Ipswich. His work at this time consisted mainly of heads and half-lengths but he also painted some small portrait groups in landscape settings... He developed a free and elegant mode of painting seen at its most characteristic in full-length portraits after moving to Bath in 1760.

In 1774 he moved permanently to London where he further developed the personal style he had evolved at Bath, working with light and rapid brush-strokes and experimenting with a palette of delicate evanescent colours... He became a favourite painter of the Royal Family, and one of his masterpieces is Queen Charlotte (Buckingham Palace).

Gainsborough's early works show the influence of French engraving and of Dutch landscape painting... He was an independent and original genius, able to assimilate to his own ends what he had learnt from others, and he relied always mainly on his own resources. While he had not the scholarship of Reynolds, nor any strong convictions as to the etiquette and status of his profession, he had a natural sense of style, a gift for painting, and an eye for character far surpassing any of his fellow academicians.

Even when he set out to paint the conventional portrait as a pot-boiler his delight in painting and his individuality won through. He is one of the few British painters whose work can take its place in the European tradition.

Bibliography: Osborne

Self-Portrait

Pencil

117x103mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
(Smythe Collection)

Portrait of John Sparrowe Esq., Bailiff of Ipswich

Oil on canvas

1270x1016mm

Collection: Mackelvie Trust (Auckland City Art Gallery)

Provenance: Purchased from Thos. Agnes & Son Ltd. 1956

The painting hung in the Sparrowe Ancient House in Ipswich until recent years, and was painted just prior to Gainsborough's departure from Ipswich for Bath, being similar in style and composition to the Portrait of William St. Quintin painted in Bath 1760-61. John Sparrowe (d1762) was thirteen times Bailiff of Ipswich.

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH
English, 1727-1788

Charlotte, Countess Talbott (1754-1804)
(Gainsborough and HOPPNER, John (1758-1810))

Oil on canvas

2380x1455mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

(Purchased with funds from the Peter Smeaton Bequest through the National Arts-Collection Fund.)

Provenance: Sir William Boothby or Sir Brooke Boothby;
bought by 6th Duke of Devonshire, formerly hung at
Hardwicke Hall, later at Chiswick; Christie's
27 June 1958 whence bought through N.A.C.F.

Exhibited: R.A. 1784 no.379 as 'A Lady of Quality'

Waterhouse commented on this portrait: "The head appears to be very late Gainsborough; the rest is finished by another hand, traditionally Hoppner's." Two quotations from The Letters.... seem relevant to this portrait; the first from a letter to Mr Robert Edgar dated March 13th 1758, with regard to the loose painting of the face: "You please me much by saying that no other fault is found in your picture than the roughness of the surface, for that part being of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by; in short being the touch of the pencil, which is harder to preserve than smoothness."

The second from a letter to William Jackson, composer and organist of Exeter, records Gainsborough's attitude to the drapery painter: "There is a branch of Painting next in profit to portrait and quite in your power without any more drawing than I'll answer for your having, which is drapery and landskip backgrounds. Perhaps you don't know that whilst a Face painter is harrassed to death the drapery painter sits and earns 5 or 6 hundred a year, and laughs all the while..."

Bibliography: McKay, Roberts, Waterhouse
The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough (Mary Woodhall)

SIR HENRY RAEBURN, R.A.
Scottish, 1756-1823

Portrait of Robert Burns

Pencil

155x30mm

Inscribed on the back: belonged to Mrs Cosway, wife of R. Cosway
the famous miniature painter

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

SIR HENRY RAE BURN, R.A.
Scottish, 1756-1823

Born near Edinburgh in 1756, Henry Raeburn was orphaned at the age of six. Supported by a fund for needy boys, he was maintained and educated at Heriot's Hospital until the age of fifteen when he was apprenticed to a jeweller and goldsmith. His first lessons in art were provided by a friend of his employer, a seal-engraver by the name of David Deuchar, who noted the boy's talent and offered to instruct him. Soon after, Raeburn was able to cancel his indenture in order to devote himself to the execution of miniatures. The acquaintances he made during this period soon brought him commissions for large canvas paintings; hence the transition was made. Lacking the traditional academic training, Raeburn's early work exhibits definite limitations in technical accomplishments. Yet it was precisely this lack of instruction, and hence the need to rely on his own observation, which caused him to develop so fresh and direct a style with his remarkable ability for the frank rendering of character. His marriage in 1778 to one of his sitters provided him with independent means; hence, he was able to travel with his wife to Italy in 1785. Although there is no record of his engaging in actual study, he must have increased his technical competence while there, for his work afterward was richer, fuller and more confident. His return to Edinburgh in 1787 marks the beginning of a more productive thirty-five years in which Raeburn painted practically all of the most distinguished people in Scotland. His success was recognized by his election to full membership in the Royal Academy in 1812 and by the honor of knighthood which was bestowed upon him in 1822, a year before his death. Raeburn's handling of lighting made him one of the few innovators within the range of portraiture established by Reynolds. The sitter is transformed by a searching raking light and its reflections. The present portrait shows a play of silvery light on the side of the professor's head and his cravat throwing reflections up under his chin and leaving most of his face in shade. This play of light is carried through to the details; the sitter's right hand is bathed in light reflected from an open book and the lid of an inkwell throws light on to the underside of a book which lies across it. Few portrait painters would have used such directly observed passages in the treatment of accessories. Raeburn is reputed to have used brushes with handles a yard long and apparently started painting the face directly on the canvas without preliminary drawing of the whole such as Lawrence practised. Raeburn's vision, grasp of character and use of light were well suited to portraits of mature and professional people.

Bibliography: Edward A. Pinnington, Sir Henry Raeburn, 1904, p.226

William Richardson, Professor of Humanity at the University of Glasgow and a friend of Sir Walter Scott

Oil on canvas

3050x2365mm

Collection: Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Master James Hay, c1814

Oil on canvas

745x621mm

Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery

Provenance: David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney (Bought in 1974)

Reference: Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly no.61

