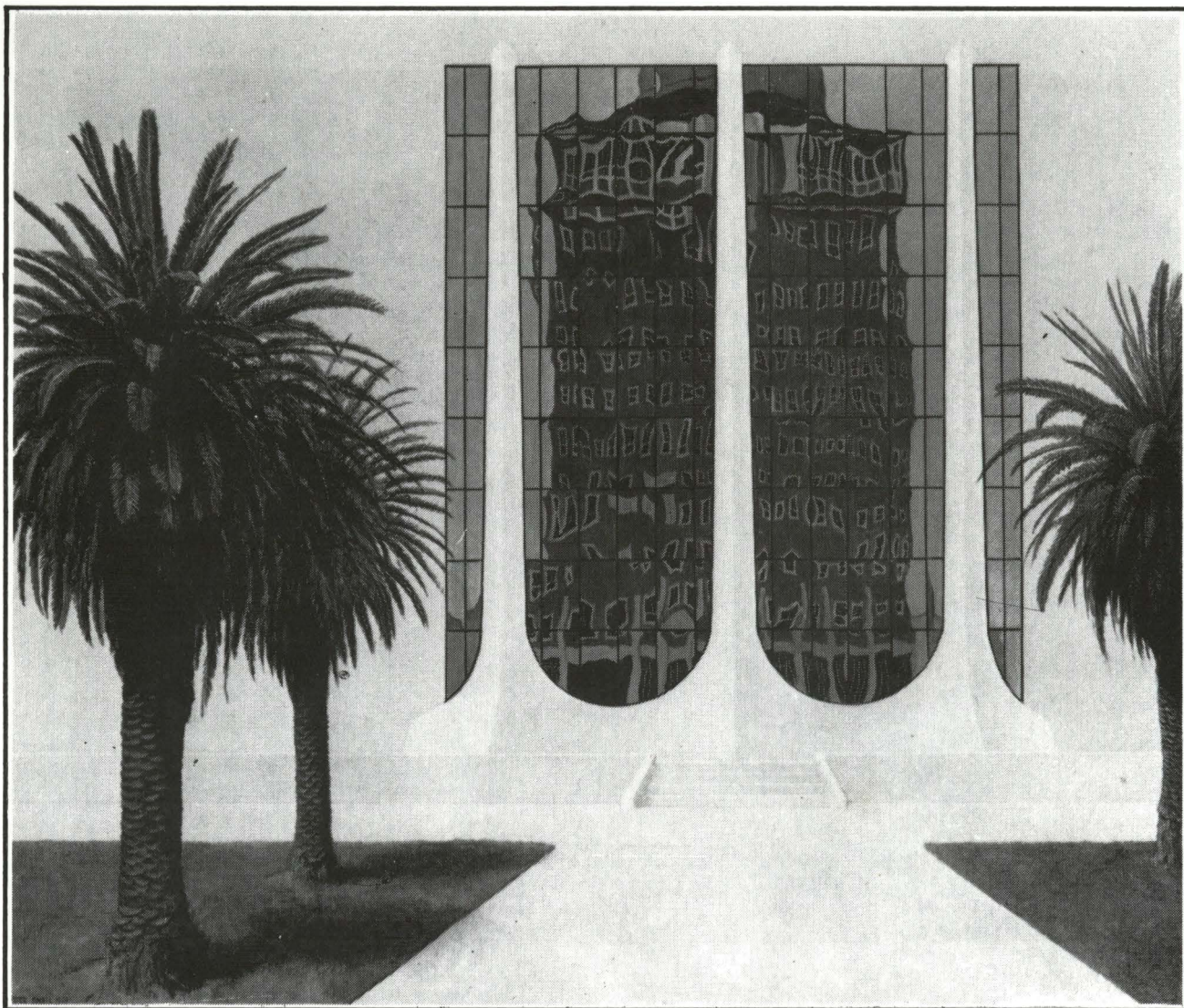


1979



NO 24 PETER SIDDELL WATCHTOWER

CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND REALIST PAINTINGS

INCLUDING WORKS ON LOAN FROM
ARTISTS AND PRIVATE COLLECTORS

AUCKLAND ART GALLERY
26 OCTOBER - 2 DECEMBER 1979

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1979

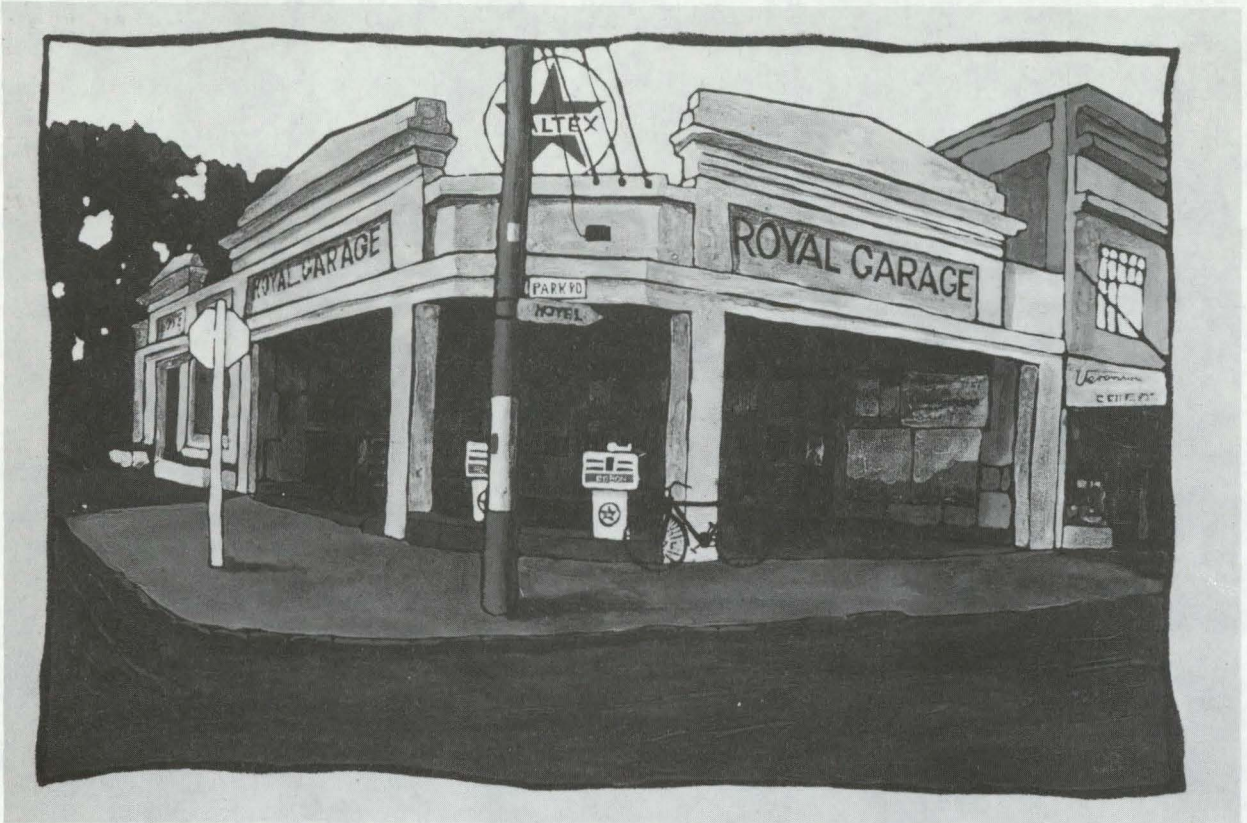
This exhibition is a selection of paintings by New Zealand artists working in a realist mode. It is obvious that much of what could be described as 'figurative' painting - painting which is based to some extent on recognisable subject matter - is not included. The intention was rather to show the range of styles evident in the paintings of artists who work within the bounds of a more definite realist convention.

The influences of photo-realism, of naive painting, and of European study are perceptible in some of the works; but there is also evidence of the continuing influence of New Zealand's own short tradition of realism - of flattened shapes and definite outlines - which has come through Rita Angus to the work of painters like Robin White.

The exhibition is intended to give Aucklanders the opportunity of seeing the work of some artists who seldom exhibit in the north.

My thanks go to the artists and collectors who willingly lent paintings for the exhibition, and to Barbara Brooke, Elya Bett and Patricia and Kobi Bosshard.

Alexa M. Johnston
Curator of New Zealand Painting & Sculpture



1. GEORGE BALOGHY

Royal Garage 1979
oil and acrylic/canvas 610 x 910 mm
Collection of the artist

George Baloghy was born in Budapest in 1950 and came to New Zealand in 1956. He attended the School of Fine Arts in Auckland University from 1973 to 1976 where he studied photography. He teaches art in Auckland and exhibits paintings regularly. In May of this year he won the Tokoroa Art Award with Margie's Place; a painting of an old villa in Herne Bay. Of the work shown here he writes:

"There is nothing much to say about the building itself. It is ordinary and unassuming, perhaps a little seedy - reeks of another era when motoring was a much more graceful affair."

This sense of an earlier age is re-inforced by the absence of motor vehicles and the presence of an elderly bicycle. The painting is an affectionate record of the facade of a building, shown in its entirety, and bisected by the omnipresent telephone pole. The influence of photography is manifest - the view comes to us in an unedited form. George Baloghy's use of warm colour, and the definite, though wobbly outlines which are characteristic of his work, create a memorable image of a familiar inner-city building.

LEO BENSEMANN

2. On the Takaka Hill 1979
oil/board 610 x 865 mm
Courtesy of the Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
3. Cathy at Schaumburg 1979
oil/board 655 x 535 mm
Collection of the artist

Leo Bensemann was born in Takaka in 1911. He has had a life-long involvement in book design, typography and publishing, and was one of the founders of Christchurch's Caxton Press, with Denis Glover. His wood engravings have illustrated numerous books and he designed and printed the journal 'Landfall' from its founding in 1947 until his retirement last year. Leo Bensemann was an early member of 'The Group' in Christchurch and designed the catalogues for their exhibitions for over thirty years. He is fluent in German, an avid student of Goethe and he visited Germany in 1970 when he received an Arts Council Fellowship. He is there at present on a two month stay.

Leo Bensemann's skill in portraiture has always been evident in his fine pencil drawings and it is displayed here in the painting of his daughter, Cathy. Her pose is characteristic of much sixteenth century German portraiture - the work of Durer and his contemporaries - and this association is strengthened by the static nature of the figure and the contrast with a fantastic location.

Bensemann has often painted the strange rock formations in the Takaka area; paintings which have a disquieting, mystical quality created by the cool monochrome of the limestone and the apparent distortions of scale. They are wilderness landscapes.

Both these works were shown in an exhibition of Bensemann's work held earlier this year in Christchurch; it was his second one-man show.

DON BINNEY

4. Last Flight of the Kokako, Pureora 1978
oil/board 2,100 x 915 mm
Collection of W. & K. Brown
5. July, Tokatoka 1979
oil/board 450 x 950 mm
Collection of the artist
6. Tokatoka - Black and Yellow 1979
oil/board 600 x 645 mm
Collection of the artist

Don Binney was born in Auckland in 1940. He studied at the Auckland University School of Fine Arts from 1958 - 1961. He graduated with a Diploma of Fine Arts and has been painting since then. In 1967 and 1968 he travelled in Europe and Northern America on a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Fellowship. He has exhibited widely in New Zealand and overseas and is at present a lecturer at the School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland.

He writes:

"These and virtually all other works done during this year have been produced in my city studio in the wooden mansions building, Auckland University School of Fine Arts.

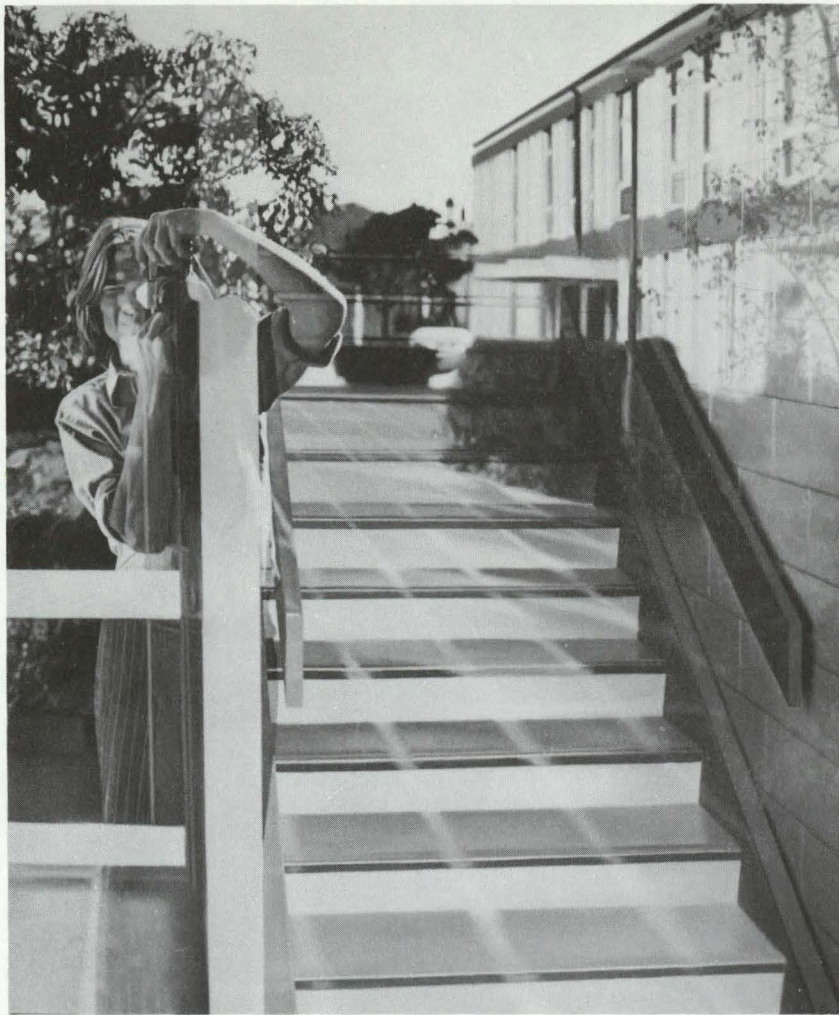
"Last Flight of the Kokako, Pureora"

During the years following the West Auckland Tip Issue, a lot of my work has become more related to environmental concerns (see the notes in my Homecoming & Other Places catalogue, Barry Lett Galleries, 1974). This large painting is no exception: the content, based as it is upon Bruegel's "La Chute d'Icare" which I was fortunate to come to know quite well a few years ago in Brussels, is essentially concerned with what has been happening and is happening in the Central North Island Podocarp forests.

"Two Tokatoka Works"

These are two of what I trust will be a large series, talking about the curiously vertical volcanic plug formation between Ruawai and Dargaville. Western coast volcanic structures, looking seaward and dominating a rural and wetland environment, Tokatoka is one example, an extension, Northward, of the Anawhata-Te Henga area rock faces, islands and headlands. It also links up a lot with the pitons of Mauritius, which were part of my "Other Places" of '73-74."

Don Binney, October 1979



7. KEES BRUIN

Self Portrait in Armagh Court Window 1977

acrylic/canvas 1,000 x 1,200 mm

Collection of Mr. G.R. Lascelles, Christchurch

Kees Bruin is a graduate of the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts and lives in Sumner. This is a painting belonging to a tradition created by the photographic realists of Britain and America. It embodies their common preference for bright, sunlit subjects - or rather 'objective' photographs of them - and their fascination with the highlights and reflections which are so much a part of our cities built with acres of glass. The subject of this self-portrait is a photograph of a place, not the place itself. The reflections create an odd situation in which the viewer is not looking only at what was in front of the camera lens, but also at the photographer behind it. Instead of looking deep into an illusionistic picture-space, the emphasis is reversed and we look at what is 'behind' the surface.

The fascination of this work lies in the way Bruin presents a portrait of a photographer who is also the painter of the photographed portrait. This dichotomy mirrors the painting's space-surface ambiguities and further complicates the image. Such psychological self-absorption is a distinct move away from the tenets of a strict photo-realist tradition.

JOAN FANNING

8. Portrait of Helen Stewart 1975
oil/canvas 890 x 640 mm
Courtesy of Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington

Joan Fanning was born in Wellington. She was taught watercolour painting by T.A. McCormack and drawing by Helen Crabb, who exhibited under the name of Barc. Miss Fanning spent a number of years as an art student in Britain at St. Martin's School of Art and later at the Slade School, where she graduated in 1958. She later attended the Oscar Kokoschka Summer School in Salzburg.

This painting is one of a number of portraits by Miss Fanning of Wellington women artists; other subjects were Betty Clegg and Gwen Knight. Helen Stewart lived for many years in Sydney but travelled several times to Europe in the 1930's and 40's where she studied under Andre Lhote. She was a founding member of the Australian Contemporary Arts Society, and has exhibited her work in New Zealand and Australia. She is shown here with one of her own paintings.

Both Joan Fanning and Helen Stewart are long standing members of the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in Wellington.

TONY GEDDES

9. Southerly Change 1978
liquitex/hardboard 210 x 910 mm
Courtesy of the Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch

Tony Geddes studied at the Canterbury School of Fine Arts, graduating with honours in 1970. He has been painting and exhibiting since then and in 1976 won the Zusters Art Council Award for a young Canterbury painter, which enabled him to paint and study in Australia. His use of sombre colour animated by dancing accents of brilliant, yet watery, light is particularly successful in this painting.

JANICE GILL

- 10 Pokororo 1979
acrylic/board 590 x 700 mm
Collection of the artist

Janice Gill was born in Winton, Southland in 1947. She had no formal art education, but has been painting most of her life; much of her work depicting the daily activities of a small community. She now lives in Richmond, Nelson and paints her surroundings and neighbours with an element of gentle satire in her consciously primitive style.

Of this work she writes:

"The annual craft fair, held on the banks of the Motueka river, Nelson. A microcosm of New Zealand; genuine crafts-people, Mrs. NZ Housewife selling plaster rabbits, and trendy, Indian-skirted women just "getting into" pottery appreciation. So, who's real?"

LOUISE LEWIS

11. The Un-sat-on Chair 1975
acrylic/canvas 1,290 x 930 mm
Courtesy of Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington
12. Woman in a pink hat (Mrs. Posh) 1975
acrylic/canvas 1,290 x 930 mm
Private collection

Louise Lewis was born in 1927 and had early drawing and watercolour lessons from Rita Angus. She studied at the School of Fine Arts, Canterbury University in 1947 and 1948, and then taught art in secondary schools and to private groups. In 1975 she had an exhibition at the Barry Lett Gallery in Auckland called Kind Hearts and Gentle People. Many of the paintings in the exhibition were of ladies less well-heeled than Mrs. Posh, but still unmistakeably New Zealanders; she often painted old people sitting on the riverbank opposite her house in Christchurch. In the exhibition catalogue she wrote:

"I want to record for New Zealanders the little people, people who live lives of infinite obscurity. These are people we don't particularly want to know about... In some paintings I show the oppression of people, their resignation, and acceptance of their lot."

The Un-sat-on Chair was also in the above exhibition. The bulky, well-stuffed chair can't quite be fitted inside the frame and has a commanding presence of its own, needing no occupant.

Louise Lewis says that she uses colour symbolically for the maximum emotional impact. Her skilful use of strong colour is particularly evident in the two works shown here.

DORIS LUSK

13. Benmore I 1974
acrylic and pencil/canvas 610 x 1,025 mm
Collection of the artist
14. Variation on a theme at Halswell 1978
acrylic/canvas 600 x 840 mm
Collection of the artist

Doris Lusk was born in Dunedin in 1916. She studied at the Dunedin School of Art and moved to Christchurch on her marriage in 1941. There she exhibited with 'The Group' and the Canterbury Society of Arts. Her work has been shown widely throughout New Zealand and she is represented in most public collections. In 1967 she was appointed lecturer at the Canterbury School of Fine Arts. Her reputation as one of New Zealand's most important painters rests primarily on her penetrating studies of the South Island landscape.

In Benmore I the artist has created a view in which the stark concrete dam is contrasted strongly with the massive mountains behind, although the absence of figures creates intriguing ambiguities of scale.

In Variation on a theme at Halswell she achieves in acrylics the subtle haziness of distance more often associated with watercolour. Again she contrasts the warmth and subtle colouring of the landscape with sharp, white buildings which seem to float against it.

MARY McINTYRE

15. Untitled 1977
acrylic/canvas 690 x 690 mm
Collection of W. & K. Brown, Auckland

Mary McIntyre has been exhibiting her work for eight years. She lives and works in the Waikato.

This painting of a dead camellia with new leaf-shoot emerging is a departure from the artist's usual pre-occupation with landscape. The large scale, the 'close-up' quality of the work and the use of sombre reds and greens, contribute to its melancholy and brooding aspect.

RICHARD McWHANNELL

16. Suit and Tie John 1979
oil/canvas 1,015 x 805 mm
Collection of Mr. P. Little, Auckland

Richard McWhannell was born in Akaroa and studied at the Canterbury School of Fine Arts from 1970 to 1972; graduating with a Diploma of Fine Arts. He has had a number of one-man shows in Christchurch, Wellington and most recently Auckland, where he now lives and paints full-time.

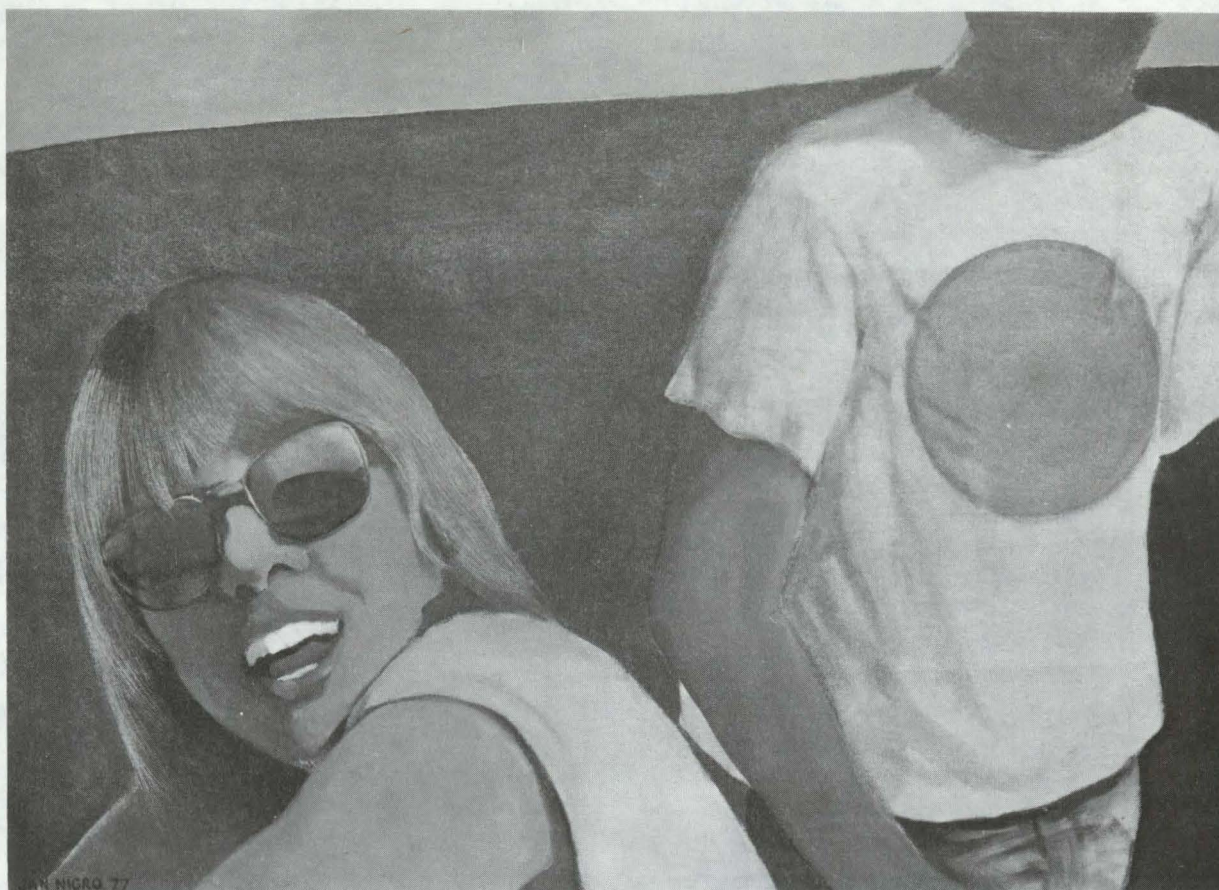
In this interesting work there is no eye contact between the viewer and the person depicted. A yellow-suited man combs his hair with total self-absorption. A study in narcissism.

G. T. MOFFITT

17. The Heroes Return 1979
oil/board 735 x 598 mm
Courtesy of Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington

Trevor Moffitt was born in 1936 and studied at Canterbury University School of Fine Arts, graduating with honours in 1959. He trained at the Auckland Teachers College and has taught art in several colleges in the South Island. He has been art critic for 'The Press' in Christchurch since 1969.

The work exhibited here is from a series of paintings called 'My Father's Life' in which Trevor Moffitt illustrates some of his father's experiences of school, the army, work and family life. There is a narrative flow from painting to painting in the series as well as a story told in each work. Narrative content is an important facet of Moffitt's approach to painting. Much of this series is based on photographs from family albums; here flags wave gaily as four soldiers march into the picture towards a huddled welcoming group.



18. JAN NIGRO

Summer Days 1977
oil/canvas 820 x 1,024 mm
Collection of the artist

Jan Nigro was born in Gisborne in 1920. She studied at the Auckland University School of Art from 1937 until 1939. She spent some years in Australia and studied there under George Bell. She has exhibited her work widely in Australia and New Zealand and is represented in many private and public collections. Jan Nigro now lives and paints on Waiheke Island.

The composition of this painting is strongly comparable to that of a snapshot photograph - a moment caught on a summer's day - a captured moment. But Jan Nigro's style is not photo-realist and the affinity with photography is achieved through adherence to some of the conventions which we accept in that medium. Chanced cropping, short depth of field and a formalist interest in surface not psychology - features common to recent modern photography - are apparent in this work and are particular to her present style.

JOANNA PAUL

19. Round Window 1979
oil/particle board 1,020 mm diameter
Collection of the artist

Joanna Paul was born in Auckland and studied at the School of Fine Art, graduating in 1969. She describes herself as 'a painter and poet: Chiefly concerned with household objects, landscapes and metaphors'. She now lives in Dunedin and has published 'Images' a book of poems and 'Unwrapping the Body'.

The horizontal and vertical accents of door frames, windows, chairs and gates, prominent in most of her work are here curved to echo the shape of the painting. There is a resemblance to a view through a distorting lens; a view of a frenetic space shaped and organized by the artist's vision of domesticity.

CHRIS PEARSON

20. Shaped Bushes 1978
enamel/board 919 x 1,064 mm
Collection of the Auckland City Art Gallery

Chris Pearson was born in 1950 in Tauranga. In 1968 he graduated from the Auckland Technical Institute Graphic Arts Course and now works as an advertising artist.

The group of bushes shown in this painting are in the Auckland Domain on a bank above the Bowling Club. Pearson also produces meticulously detailed collages, and his use of paint in this work echoes the methods of collage - of small 'pieces' of colour building shapes and objects.

PAUL RADFORD

- 21 Hawaii 1979
liquitex on canvas, 1,150 x 1,170 mm
Courtesy of Barry Lett Galleries

Paul Radford was born in Brisbane in 1957, he studied at the Auckland University School of Fine Arts from 1975 to 1978 and had his first exhibition in 1978.

Of his work he writes:

*"I wanted images that didn't already have 'Art' connotations
- so now I get my source material from postcards, travel
brochures and calendars.*

*Using images that are already known (precognitive) allows
me to consider the image free from the great myths of
depth, significance - pananthropism."*

This is not a picture of a bikini-clad woman; it is a reconstruction of a photograph of a bikini-clad woman. The bland vulgarity of the postcard view is re-inforced by the word 'Hawaii' written in the foreground.

GLEND A RANDERSON

22. Dining Room interior with Magnolias 1975
acrylic/canvas 1,750 x 1,015 mm
Collection of Mr. B.P.N. Corban

Glenda Randerson was born in 1949 and studied at the Auckland University School of Fine Arts, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in painting. The subjects of her paintings are usually domestic interiors produced with delicate drawing, soft colours and a formal composition which suggests a nostalgic stillness. The work has a reflective, magical quality.

PETER SIDDELL

23. Homecoming 1976
acrylic/board 1,130 x 1,486 mm
Collection, Auckland City Art Gallery
24. Watchtower 1979
acrylic and oil/board 625 x 740 mm
Collection of the artist

Peter Siddell began painting in 1965 when he was thirty, and held his first exhibition in 1972. The interest in reflecting surfaces which was evident in Kees Bruin's painting (No.7) is apparent also in this work. A mirrored building permits no glimpse of human activities taking place inside; instead we see the reflection of another building - the Auckland Central Police Station - an ominous and distorted fortress. The avenue of palms in the foreground adds to the sinister and compelling appearance of the building.

OLIVIA SPENCER BOWER

25. Four Spinners 1979
acrylic/board 588 x 1,195 mm
Collection of the artist

Olivia Spencer Bower was born in England in 1905. She came to New Zealand in 1919 and studied at the Canterbury School of Fine Arts. She returned to England in 1929, studying at the Slade School and at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art. She travelled widely in Europe, then returned to New Zealand and studied at the Elam School of Fine Arts. Since that time she has lived in New Zealand, often travelling and exhibiting widely. She has had numerous one-woman shows, including two retrospectives, and has exhibited regularly with 'The Group' in Christchurch. She is best known for her watercolours, but also paints in oils and acrylics. This work is from a series of studies of women spinning.

GRAHAME SYDNEY

26. Rozzie at Pisa 1978
egg tempera/gesso 610 x 610 mm
Collection of the artist
27. Limp Sock 1977
egg tempera/gesso 600 x 510 mm
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. J. Keith Skinner, Dunedin

Grahame Sydney was born in Dunedin in 1948. He graduated with a B.A. from Otago University in 1969. He taught in secondary school until 1972 when he travelled to Europe. In 1975 he was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grant for painting, and in 1978 was Frances Hodgkins Fellow at Otago University. He now lives and paints at the Mount Pisa Station cottage in Cromwell.

In the catalogue of an exhibition in which both these works were exhibited, he wrote:

"Representational artists speak in images and the painter's visual language is full of lies; these paintings, though based on sharp observation, are not necessarily what the eye saw: truth is far from important in my work and none of these images tell the truth, save perhaps the portraits. It is not the reality which should concern the viewer but the effect of that visual language on them. The painting succeeds according to its ability to generate thought and wonder, its capacity to linger and sparkle in the mind of the spectator, performing its peculiar magic there. Such works are not realistic representations - they are re-arrangements, conjuring tricks played with visual elements, sleights-of-hand and eye, for within the frame a painting is a world unto itself, and its effectiveness depends completely on what happens within those chosen borders."

Grahame Sydney, 1978

ROBIN WHITE

28. Fish & Chips, Maketu 1975
oil/canvas 609 x 914 mm
Collection of the Auckland City Art Gallery
29. Glenda at Tahakopa 1978
acrylic/canvas 2,050 x 2,050 mm
Collection of Neil and Jean Smith

Robin White was born in 1946 in Te Puke. She studied at the Auckland University School of Fine Arts from 1965 until 1967. Her paintings and screenprints are in numerous public and private collections. She now lives in Portobello and paints full-time. Her interest in the simple and flattened forms of small New Zealand buildings is evident in these two works. Robin White has recently accepted a commission to paint a mural for the new wing of the Dunedin Public Hospital and expects to be working on this project for the next two years.

BRENT WONG

30. Green Hill - Pink Cloud 1976-1979
acrylic/hardboard 695 x 680 mm
Collection of the artist

Brent Wong was born in 1945 in Otaki and has lived in Wellington since 1949. He studied briefly at the Wellington Technical College and Wellington Polytechnic, but is largely self-taught. He has been painting full-time since 1970 and has exhibited his work widely. His carefully worked landscapes using as many as eight or nine thin layers of acrylic have a clarity of colour and atmosphere which produces a still and timeless quality. Brent Wong works on most of his paintings at intervals over several years and of this work he writes:

*"The idea I started with for this painting was more or less as can be seen in the finished work - hills - clouds etc., with only minor changes to the positioning of the elements within the picture frame.
The work may be interpreted symbolically."*

Brent Wong

PAMELA WOLFE

31. Jana and Mandy 1979
enamel/board 900 x 1,065 mm
collection of the artist

Pamela Wolfe was born in 1950 and studied at the Auckland University School of Fine Arts from 1968 to 1971. She has exhibited her work regularly. This portrait of her neighbour's daughters is a good example of her style. She strives not for an illusion of space and depth but for a carefully composed and decorative distribution of objects on the surface; a composition in which the figures have no more significance than anything else in the view. Her subjects are patterned interiors, created with bright enamel colours which give the paintings a 'storybook' appearance.

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