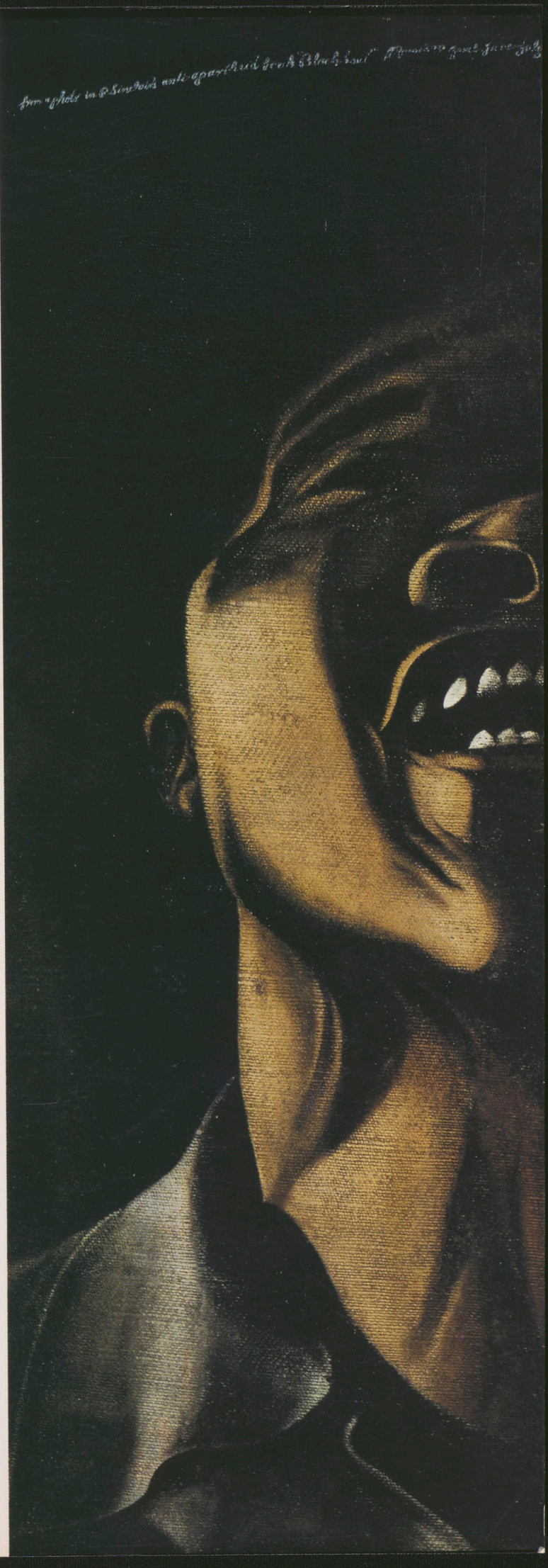
from a photo in P. Simpson's anti-apartheid book "Black Soul"

ANXIOUS IMAGES

Aspects of recent New Zealand art

Auckland City Art Gallery 1984

Cover:
Tony Fomison
From a photo in P. Sinclair's anti-apartheid book
'Black Soul' 1972
cat. no. 20

exhibition curator: Alexa M. Johnston
photography: Julian Bowron
designer: Ross Ritchie
registration: Geraldine Taylor
editor: Ronald Brownson

ISBN 0 86463 112 X

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Foreword

T. L. Rodney Wilson
Director, Auckland City Art Gallery

The exhibition series, *Aspects of recent New Zealand art,* was launched early in 1983 with *New Image.* Later in the year it was followed by *The Grid* and now, in 1984, the series continues with the third show, *Anxious Images.* More will follow.

In introducing the two previous exhibitions the "curatorial" nature of the series has been stressed. It has been stated that each of the exhibitions has sought to identify a prevailing concern of a number of artists, the themes they share and stylistic affinities they have. It has been remarked that while the artists grouped together by the exhibition curator may be aware of each other and even admire or have an empathy with one another's work, it is unlikely that they will have felt themselves part of any shared concern. It has been, quite unashamedly, the Auckland City Art Gallery's intention to bring together artists of like interest, to recognize and document areas of commonality. In so doing we have endeavoured to chart the passage of a number of key aspects of New Zealand art during the last decade or decade-and-a-half.

Anxious Images is curated by Alexa Johnston. She also has the overriding responsibility for the group of exhibitions as the series' organising curator. Since the late 1970s much of the attention of the international art world has focused upon neo-expressionist painting. It is very current. Yet in New Zealand a strong expressionist tradition has existed for a good deal longer than that. Although not confined to the South Island, much of the new expressionist energy has come from the south.

It is not surprising, therefore, to note that of the ten artists Alexa Johnston has included in this exhibition, seven have been exposed to South Island impulses during important formative years. The influence of the late Rudi Gopas provides a direct link back to earlier German expressionism, and accounts for much of the southern concern for anxious images. The expressionist tradition in New Zealand art of the last twenty years is extremely powerful; little surprise, then, to find in this group of seven painters, a photographer and two printmakers, such extraordinary intensity and potency.

Without the support of the artists, the private collectors and our institutional colleagues who so patiently and generously assist us in the considerable task of exhibition preparation, a show such as this would not be possible. We are indebted to all who have participated, especially the artists: Philip Clairmont, Barry Cleavin, Jacqueline Fahey, Tony Fomison, Jeffrey Harris, Vivian Lynn, Alan Pearson, Peter Peryer, Sylvia Siddell and Michael Smither; the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand for its generous support, and the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council as exhibition tour agency.

Anxious Images

by Alexa M. Johnston
Curator of Contemporary New Zealand Art

> "Sixty years after his death, Kafka epitomises one aspect of this modern mind-set: a sensation of anxiety and shame whose centre cannot be located and therefore cannot be placated; a sense of an infinite difficulty within things, impeding every step; a sensitivity acute beyond usefulness, as if the nervous system, flayed of its old hide of social usage and religious belief, must record every touch as pain."[1]

> "The relationships in art are not necessarily ones of outward form but are founded on an inner sympathy of meaning."[2]

The principal concern of the artists included here is the expression and communication of powerful emotion: unease, anxiety, anger, fear and pain. These are endemic to the human condition and have been experienced throughout history. Yet the social, political, domestic, sexual and spiritual unease confronted by these artists seems particularly evident in our age. Since the Second World War, none of our observations about the world can be made in comfortable isolation from the awareness that permeates all other concerns: the nightmarish possibility of a self-imposed apocalypse. We are faced with the inescapable knowledge that we have the power to destroy ourselves and our planet. Jean Paul Sartre wrote that we have reached the stage of having to *decide* to live.[3]

The works made by these ten artists share no overriding stylistic affinities; their similarities are to be found in content and intention rather than in outward form. If we look for a visual art tradition from which these works stem, it may be found in German painting, particularly that of the 1920s and 1930s which is characterized by an obsession with political and social realities expressed through "apocalyptic visions and hectic attitudes towards form".[4]

Ours is a sparsely populated country which can dwarf its artists. In its figurative art the landscape usually dominates its inhabitants. But the land is no longer a vast wilderness to be tamed; we have exploited it without mercy. New Zealand's people are left confronting themselves and each other with this knowledge, and the distress that such confrontations cause is reflected in the images shown here. They use the human face and body as an expressive medium and reflect our experience of ourselves and others.

Beauty

> ". . . the enduring, true value of a work of art resides solely in the feeling expressed."[5]

These artists are skilled in the use of their chosen media: paper and pencil, paint and canvas, camera or etching needle. Their enjoyment of colour, line, form and composition can lead to works of striking beauty, yet their subject matter remains unmistakably painful, and for this they make no apology. Emil Nolde wrote, "There is enough art around that is overbred, pale and decadent. . . . A little weakness, a little sweetness, a little superficiality and the whole world curries the artist's favour."[6] These artists do not seek to please; their intention is to communicate ideas and emotions, using the vocabulary of the visual artist.

Spiritual unease

What are the sources of the unease expressed in these works? What questions do they ask? The principal question underlying all the images is, what does it mean to be human? What is human life about? Is there a direction to the process of human change? These are questions of meaning, goal and purpose. They are indicators to the religious dimension of life, acknowledged by many cultures, but often scorned in the west, where religion is misconceived as belief in irrelevant and impossible supernatural beings and places. Religion is ultimately about human beings and their relationships with each other, and the world and its mysteries.

The world that these artists portray is not sealed off against transcendental intrusion. They do not assume that because the transcendental cannot be documented, it does not exist. Several of the artists convey distrust of, and anger towards, organised religion and the churches, yet remain aware of the problem of the loss of God which affects western people. In his discussion of Franz Kafka's heroes, Erich Heller writes that they know two things at once: that there is no God and that there must be a God.[7]

Politics

The inclusion of political comment in the visual arts is fraught with difficulty. It remains true that the only art which is truly political, in the sense that it has the power decisively to challenge received opinion, is propaganda. Yet political consciousness, whether overt or not, is discernible in most works of art. Tony Fomison once commented, "If you are involved in causes, you can't not paint about them."[8]

We live in a violent century and, through media such as television, our awareness of human misery is greater than it has ever been in the past. We are confronted by the oppression of the poor by the rich, black by white, the powerless by the powerful. Wars are a cataclysmic unleashing of violence, suffering and inhumanity and they provide a continuing bitter theme for many of these artists. Clairmont's *War Requiem: series IV Blitzkrieg* (cat. no. 3) is one of a number of his collages which evoke the terror and dislocation of the Second World War. Barry Cleavin's *Firearm* (cat. no. 9) leaves us in no doubt about where the guilt lies for the use of weapons of violence. Michael Smither's painting *Prisoners* (cat. no. 70), from his series *Paintings for the Revolution*, confronts us with bound and beaten hostages. In *Hill of bitter memories* (cat. no. 18), Jacqueline Fahey shows the Auckland War Memorial, festooned with wreaths, unleashing the dogs of war, and women moving across the battlefield searching for the bodies of loved ones. Jeffrey Harris's painting *My Lai* (cat. no. 32), based on a *Time* magazine photograph, communicates the numbing horror of that obscene massacre, one of the innumerable tragedies of the war in Vietnam. Tony Fomison's painting, *From a photo in P. Sinclair's anti-apartheid book 'Black Soul'* (cat. no. 20), evokes the anguish caused by the continuing subjugation of blacks in South Africa.

> "Political art holds the mirror up to the environment without offering directions for changing it. Its effect is to sharpen the focus on what the audience already knows and to disturb the precincts of art by bringing into them the noise and odours of the world outside."[9]

Sexual politics/sexual hatred

The period surveyed by this exhibition (1969 -1983) is one in which feminism has become more visible in western society. It has shown the reality of women's continuing subordinate situation; the unremittingly partriarchal nature of all society's institutions; the attacks on women, both verbal and physical, made by men who fear women's self-reliance and independence, and who need to feel superior to women in order to feel secure.

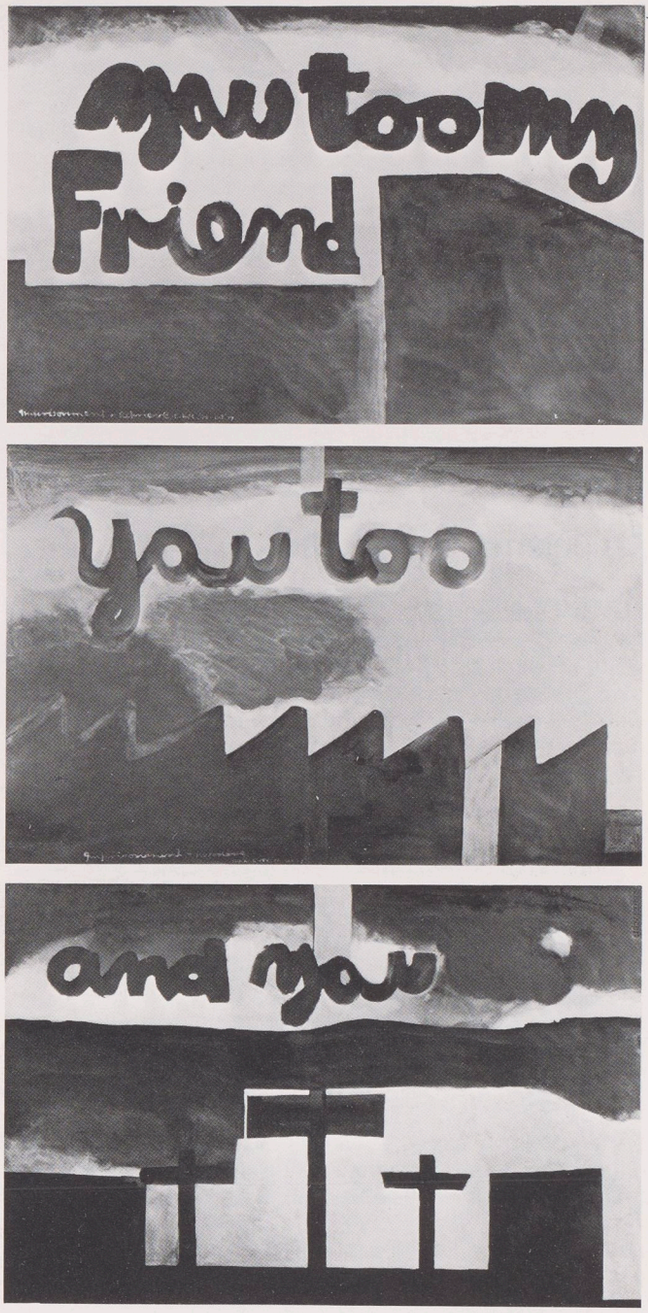
The resultant changes in the climate of interaction between the sexes is reflected in the visual arts. Fahey, Lynn and Siddell are all feminist artists, for they assert in their work the validity and importance of women's experience. In the writings of history, literature and art, the experience of men has been seen to represent the experience of the entire human race. The narrowness of this view is now apparent as feminist theorists and historians excavate works by women which contradict formerly accepted views. They are also discovering the limits to the opportunities women have had to record their own experiences in male dominated societies.

Existing throughout history, but more visible now because of women's struggle for self-determination, is a distrust between the sexes which at times degenerates into hatred. Evidence of this can be found in many works selected for this exhibition. Barry Cleavin's depictions of women are caustic and savage, characterizing women as vain, empty-headed, and sexually voracious monsters. Peter Peryer, Michael Smither and Alan Pearson also make images of women in which their ambivalent feelings are clearly evident. Vivian Lynn is savage in her depictions of men and she often uses witty word play in the titles of her works to underline their meanings. She shows powerful men as pompous, vain, selfish and vicious in their subjection of powerless people, both male and female, and exposes the tendency of male-created institutions and myths to degrade women. These are works which trouble viewers as they address human bitterness and distress. The most profoundly disturbing works shown here communicate the problems in male/female relationships today.

Domestic life

The images of domesticity found in the visual arts are limited in range. The home has been portrayed either as a haven of peace and harmony, or as a fatal trap for the creative personality, stifling individual inspiration under a load of financial and emotional cares.[10] The theme of men escaping from family to fulfilment in freedom and adventure appears often in New Zealand literature.

Many of the works shown in this exhibition depict home and family, but the blissful haven is nowhere evident. Michael Smither's interiors, inhabited by women and children, are frightening places. Philip Clairmont's bathroom washbasin is a ravening monster. Jacqueline Fahey evokes the alienating distance between people who should be close. Sylvia Siddell comments on the unremitting demands of tedious chores on the houseworker. Family life also has its joys, and some artists, principally women, have acknowledged that were not servitude and drudgery seen as the primary responsibility of one person, the pleasures of domesticity would be more accessible to all.



Colin McCahon *Imprisonment and Reprieve* 1978-1979
acrylic on paper 2181 x 1095 mm (overall)
Auckland City Art Gallery

A New Zealand condition

There are of course other New Zealand artists who refer to social, political and moral issues in their work. The most senior of these is Colin McCahon, who has long been concerned with the direction of human existence. He has often used traditional Christian symbols as a means of confronting the prevalence of soulless materialism in our culture.

Ralph Hotere has consistently referred to racial and environmental issues in his paintings. The threat of an aluminium smelter at Aramoana near Dunedin prompted several major groups of works. Hotere often includes the texts of poems in his paintings and these emphasize his concern with the land, its people, and their responsibility to each other.

Ross Ritchie has made paintings which are visual metaphors for his spiritual and political concerns. Although he often makes reference to particular political events, the implications of his works are universal.

Joanna Paul is both painter and poet and her paintings of domestic objects and interiors have a numinous quality which indicates the rich meanings in ordinary things.

Nigel Brown's works are reactions to the numbing dullness and isolation of suburban life and he often depicts the New Zealand poet James K. Baxter as a mythic hero.

Alistair Nisbett-Smith has devoted many of his paintings to the exploration of individual identity, making violent self-portraits which destroy notions of individual self-sufficiency and convey angry despair.

An international condition

The conclusions that artists make about human life cannot be considered in isolation from other people or from the world in which they live. Contemporary artists in many countries are concerned with politics and society, and their work has provoked much critical comment. In discussing recent figurative painting, Marcia Tucker makes an observation which is relevant to the artists exhibited here.

> "Violence is the single most prevalent theme in recent painting. Representations of violence are about power, oppression, victimization, control, and differences of class and race. These artists have not remained neutral. . . . Love and joy are not altogether absent, but tinged with a frenetic melancholy and fraught with contradiction. Much figurative painting of the past ten years results from the desire to recoup a visual language that can be shared by a larger public than the art community. There is a need to address ontological rather than formal issues in the work, to create content that participates in the concerns of the world at large."[11]

Social, political, moral, sexual, spiritual; these are the sorts of questions these artists are asking. Theirs is not the essentially trivializing notion of art for art's sake; it is art for the world's sake, art for our sake and for the sake of the people who made it. Anxiety is an appropriate emotion for our age. It remains for us to decide whether it is a negative and numbing emotion or a spur to action, an acknowledgment of the need for change.

Notes

1 *The New Yorker*, 9 May 1983, "Reflections, Kafka's Short Stories", John Updike, pp121-133

2 Wassily Kandinsky, *On the Spiritual in Art*

3 David Anderson, *The Tragic Protest,* SCM Press, London, 1969

4 Paul Vogt, *Expressionism, A German Intuition,* Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, 1981, p16

5 Kasimar Malevich, *The Non-Objective World,* Paul Theobald, Chicago, 1959 p67

6 Emil Nolde, *Jahre der Kampfe,* quoted in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 1968, p151

7 Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind,* Bowes and Bowes, Cambridge, 1953

8 Tony Fomison, *Kaleidoscope,* Television New Zealand, 1980

9 Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object,* Thames and Hudson, London, 1965 p220

10 Women artists and writers have drawn attention to the fact that women's creativity has often been crippled by the burden of domestic cares. The majority of successful women artists did not marry or, if they did, had no children. The successful woman artist who is married with children is a rarity.

11 *Artforum,* June 1982 Vol XX No. 10 "An Iconography of Recent Figurative Paintings — Sex, Death and the Apocalypse", Marcia Tucker, pp70-71

Catalogue of the exhibition

Notes to the catalogue

All measurements are in millimetres, height before width.

Unless acknowledged otherwise, the works in this exhibition are uninscribed and belong to each contributing artist's collection.

Works to be shown only at Auckland are indicated by an asterisk.

All photographs are by Julian Bowron for the Auckland City Art Gallery, except for the following:

32	National Art Gallery, Wellington
51,52,53,54,55	Peter Peryer

PHILIP CLAIRMONT

Born Nelson, New Zealand, 1949.
Enrolled at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in 1966; studying under Rudi Gopas.
Graduated with a Diploma in Fine Arts (Honours) 1970.
First solo exhibition — Several Arts Gallery, Christchurch, 1969. Elected as a member of the Christchurch Group, with which he exhibited regularly.
Moved to Waikanae (Wellington) with his wife and daughter in 1973.
In 1977 he shifted to Auckland and began to paint full time.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand grant, 1978.
Received Arts Council travel grant, and visited the USA, 1983.
He lives at Mt. Eden, Auckland, with Rachel Power and their son Orlando.

Since his graduation from Christchurch Art School in 1970, Philip Clairmont has had regular exhibitions throughout New Zealand, and has been hailed as a highly talented expressionist painter; one whose work clearly continues in the German expressionist tradition of "apocalyptic visions and hectic attitudes towards form".[1]

His works have been the subject of much discussion and critical comment. They reveal a frenzied vision of menacing and malevolent objects described as obsessive, demonic images showing intense emotion. They are violent and disturbing, seething with movement and brilliant colour, expressing personal and collective anxieties in an atmosphere of impending chaos. The past five years have seen the re-emergence of expressionism in Europe and America, and Clairmont's works now seem particularly at home in that international context. Michael Dunn's 1973 comment remains relevant today, both to Clairmont and to the works of many new expressionist painters.

> "Art, and the civilization it stands for, are revealed as a genteel facade, concealing our lack of progress with primitive passions, greed, self-interest and hate."[2]

Clairmont's work makes no concession to gentility. It is often concerned with breaking through exteriors to expose the tangled web of emotion which seems to characterize the human condition.

Self-portraits

Self-portrait heads which record changes in his mood and appearance occur frequently in Clairmont's work. He portrays himself as a haunted, sometimes tortured figure, by turns satanic or Christlike. In his 1971 *Self-portrait* (cat. no. 2), Clairmont shows his face disintegrating, flying apart as if his brain has exploded. This is a vision of mental anguish expressed in physical terms. Features dissolve into complicated patterns of paint which, in some places, are absorbed into the hessian; but around the eyes they sit on the surface in gobs like melted flesh. This is a ruined head, a lost and shattered person, a visual image of a curdling scream. This picture has also been exhibited with the title *Twentieth Century Head*[3], which indicates universal rather than personal disintegration.

The constant analysis of self and, through self, of other individuals and society generally, is evident in the works of most of the artists exhibited here. Clairmont seems to subscribe to the image of the artist as set apart from the rest of humanity; the visionary, the mystic or shaman, in touch

5 Philip Clairmont *Self-portrait* 1979

with the unexplained forces of the universe. It is a role which has historical precedents and heroic appeal, but one which can condemn the artist to a life outside society, watching from a distance the absurdities and tragedies of human life. Clairmont's 1979 *Self-portrait* (cat. no. 5) in which his face is composed and almost calm, has elements of this distanced view. Yet, although his gaze seems quizzical and cool, Clairmont is no detached and clinical observer. The space behind him is confused, and windows open on to nothing; he shares our uncertainties, acknowledging them with an expression of wry amusement.

Interiors

Philip Clairmont's interiors are not places of serenity or peace; they offer no respite from the difficult realities of the world. Instead, he transforms everyday household objects into distorted and disturbing beings with human or inhuman characteristics. Poltergeists are let loose.

Throughout his career he has painted the objects around him at home, and a list of his titles shows an apparently mundane choice of subject matter: lampstand, clothesline, bathroom door, fireplace, speaker cabinet, telephone, staircase, wardrobe, chair, table, bed. These objects are as much the inhabitants of the household as their owners, and equally individual.

> "The paintings are still 'figurative' because of the thin dividing line between figure and interior, obsession and object, personality and possessions."[4]

Although a chair or bed can evoke the people who have rested on it, there are other household objects which Clairmont makes express their own "character". His *Portrait of a Washbasin* (cat. no. 1) shows a contorted, writhing and ravening mouth, inhabited by frenzied demons. The overflow grate becomes a fleshy throat surrounded by

peeling and stained enamel teeth. This is a terrifying realization of the childhood fear of being sucked down the plughole by a noisy, greedy, slurping monster. But Clairmont was not a child when he painted this picture. It is adults who see blood in the washbasin, red smears on the white enamel in the painful glare of the bathroom at night.

A crucifixion

Clairmont's use of religious imagery in his work is often cynical and detached. He has made collages, using devotional pictures of Mary and Christ, which condemn what he sees as the churches' capitulation to the standards and values of a materialistic world. Yet he communicates his sympathy for the suffering of the historical figure of Christ on the cross, and for those who suffer in the world today. Clairmont greatly admires a crucifixion painting by Mathias Gothardt Neithardt (called *Grünewald*), which was painted in 1513-1515. It is the Isenheim Altarpiece, "one of the rare pictures which is both Protestant in spirit, and at the same time great art".[5]

The altarpiece is a polyptych which includes paintings of the Annunciation, Birth, and Resurrection of Christ; the central panel shows Christ on the cross. He is a green-hued corpse, scourged and tortured, fingers contorted by physical pain; a profoundly shocking and disturbing sight. Clairmont's triptych shows Christ on the cross with the two thieves beside him. In the central panel he slumps forward, head drooping, his body broken and greenish like Grünewald's Christ. This is the most traditional composition of the three, a narrow painting, topped with a painted arch. Above Christ's head is the title which was inscribed INRI, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Behind the cross is an explosion of searing yellow light, reminiscent of the dazzling light in Grünewald's Resurrection. In the side panels the view changes; we are now looking down on the figures of the thieves, hanging on their crosses. Both paintings give an impression of wild movement. In the right panel the mocking letters INRI appear again and, in the left panel, against a brilliant red background, Clairmont has twice painted the German word "Juden". Clairmont's *Crucifixion* represents the pain human beings cause one another, both emotional and physical.

Politics

In 1974 Philip Clairmont made a series of collages which he called "Degenerate Art". They were inspired by the Munich exhibition in 1937 which included works rejected by the National Socialists as the antithesis of "German Art". "German Art" was the propagandist art advocated by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. From 1937 all modern German works of art were officially classified as "Judo-Bolshevist" or "degenerate". In Clairmont's terms the truly degenerate "art" is that of war-making. His collage, *War Requiem (Blitzkrieg)* (cat. no. 3), is a compilation of photographs and prints held together with his own painted images. At the top and bottom of the work are fragments of an old engraving of the medieval German countryside; a peaceful panorama through which the river Rhine gently flows. A welter of warlike images explode across this idyll. A German helmet dominates a scene in which civilians flee in terror from gunfire; bullets and shells explode; aircraft fall from the sky and, in the centre, densely packed headstones in an enormous cemetery bear witness to the result of the carnage. How does the human spirit survive such a disaster? Clairmont places a haloed, Christlike figure at the bottom of the work, skeleton showing through flesh, wounded but alive.

In 1981 New Zealand underwent a traumatic experience which seemed at times to approximate a state of civil war. When the South African Springbok rugby team came here protests took place all over the country and, as the tour progressed, clashes between police, protesters and rugby supporters grew increasingly violent. Clairmont's large painting *Window, Mangamahu, No Tour* (cat. no. 6) is a reflection of the mood of the country, and an affirmation of his own opposition to the tour. In many of Clairmont's works he has used a doorway or window opening into a space, often as a symbol of the unknown, haunted areas of our lives, but in all his paintings of interiors there is seldom a view into the world outside. In this work we look out past the bowl of fruit, through the curtained window, to a landscape in turmoil. Trees thrash wildly in the wind, and hills heave on the horizon. This is no Garden of Eden, but a threatening and violent land. Clairmont paints the shock and fear felt by all those who protested. Inside, on a table, upside down, is a placard which reads NO TOUR.

Philip Clairmont's paintings express his ideas, beliefs and emotions, and attempt to set down in paint the way that these reflect the overriding mood of our time.

Notes

1 Paul Vogt, *Expressionism, A German Intuition*, Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York, 1981, p16

2 Michael Dunn, *Sunday Herald*, 11 November 1983

3 Peter Webb Galleries Newsletter 1, 1976

4 Philip Clairmont, 1972, quoted in an article in *Spleen* #4, 1976, by Alan Brunton

5 Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.III, Nisbet & Co, London, 1964, p210

Editor's note:
As this catalogue went to press we were grieved to hear of the tragic death of Philip Clairmont on 13 May 1984.

4 Philip Clairmont *Crucifixion; A triptych* 1974

2 Philip Clairmont *Self-portrait* 1971

1 *Portrait of a washbasin* 1971
acrylic with oil glazing on hessian on board 1175 x 903

inscribed
l.r. CLAIRMONT
PORTRAIT OF A WASHBASIN '71

reverse BLOOD IN THE WASHBASIN
P CLAIRMONT MAY-JUNE & JULY 1971

exhibited 1972 17 May - 2 June Christchurch
Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery,
solo exhibition
1973 5 - 16 November Auckland
New Vision Gallery, solo exhibition
1976 February Auckland
Peter Webb Galleries, solo exhibition

references *Landfall* June 1972 No. 102
"Philip Clairmont" Heather McPherson,
illus. p163

collection Robert McDougall Art Gallery,
Christchurch

2 *Self-portrait* 1971
oil on canvas on board 435 x 305 (sight)

exhibited 1976 February Auckland
Peter Webb Galleries,
solo exhibition

references *Peter Webb Galleries Newsletter No. 1*
1976 illus. on cover

collection Hocken Library, University of Otago,
Dunedin

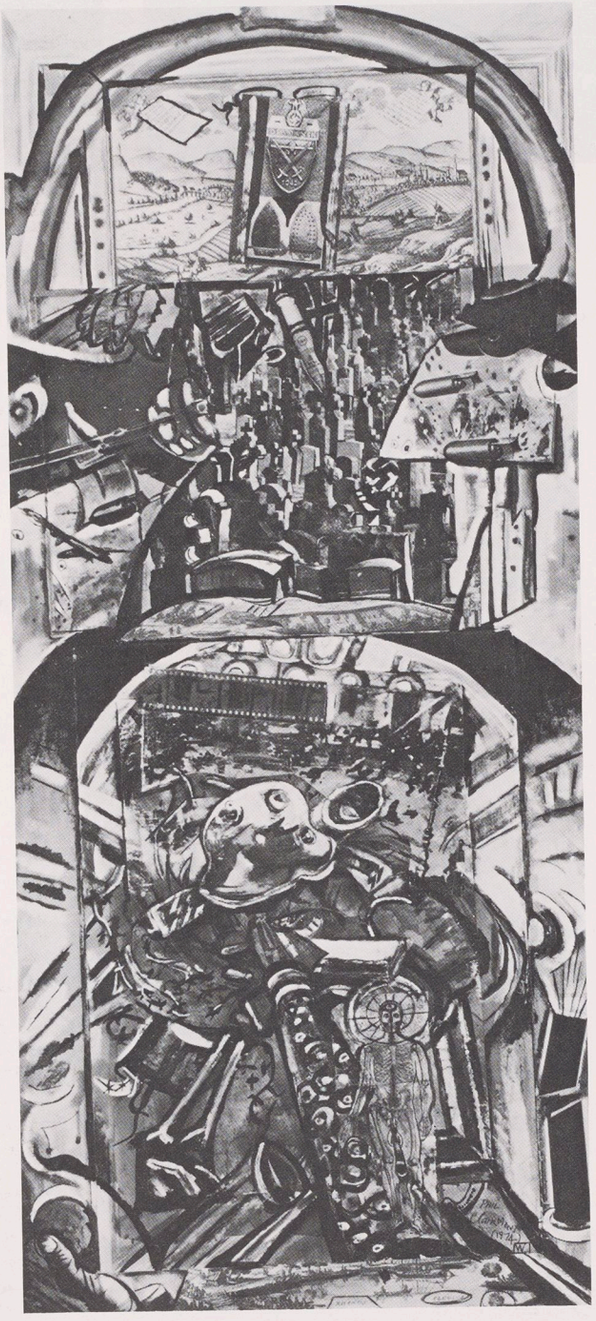
3 *War Requiem Series IV (Blitzkrieg)* 1974
mixed media collage 1090 x 477 (sight)

inscribed
l.l. on mat WAR REQUIEM SERIES IV (BLITZKRIEG)
SS PANZARGRUPPE BREACHING THE
"STALIN" LINE

l.r. Phil Clairmont (1974) IV

exhibited 1975 28 October - 11 November Auckland
Barrington Gallery
Philip Clairmont Recent Paintings, Collages, Drawings and Prints
Described in this catalogue as from the
Degenerate Art series 1974

collection Cohn/Vernon collection, Auckland



3 Philip Clairmont *War Requiem Series IV (Blitzkrieg)* 1974

6 Philip Clairmont *Window Mangamahu No Tour* 1981

4 *Crucifixion: A triptych* 1974
left panel oil and acrylic on hessian on board 1210 x 870
centre panel acrylic on board 1210 x 585
right panel acrylic on hessian on board 1210 x 920

exhibited 1975 28 October - 11 November Auckland Barrington Gallery
Philip Clairmont Recent Paintings, Collages, Drawings and Prints
1976 28 January - 13 March Wellington National Art Gallery
The Word in Art
1977 Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui, and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth *Philip Clairmont*

collection Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt

5 *Self-portrait* 1979
oil on canvas on board 610 x 515

inscribed
l.r. P.C.T. 79 Self Portrait

exhibited 1980 1 - 12 August Auckland Denis Cohn Gallery
Clairmont
Title in catalogue *Self Portrait with Cigarette*
1981 27 June - 30 September Cagnes-sur-Mer, France
Festival International de la Peinture
1981 December Lower Hutt Dowse Art Museum, exhibition with Tony Fomison

6 *Window Mangamahu No Tour* 1981
oil on canvas 1830 x 1420

inscribed
l.l. P Clairmont 81

exhibited 1981 11 - 30 October Wellington Janne Land Gallery, solo exhibition
Title *No Tour Moonlight Night Window — Mangamahu 1981*

collection private collection, Wellington

BARRY CLEAVIN

Born Dunedin, New Zealand, 1939.
Enrolled at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, 1963-66, graduating with a Diploma of Fine Arts (Honours).
Awarded Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand scholarship, 1967.
Joint winner of Manawatu prize for contemporary printmaking, 1971. Awarded Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand scholarship, 1972.
Attended Honolulu Academy of Arts; joint winner Honolulu printmakers award.
Awarded New Zealand US Education Foundation Fulbright fellowship, 1983.
Has exhibited throughout New Zealand and internationally since 1965.
Ewe and Eye survey exhibition of 160 works (1966-81) toured twelve New Zealand art galleries.
Senior lecturer in printmaking, University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, since 1978.
Lives in Christchurch.

The prints of Barry Cleavin, more than any other works in this exhibition, have aroused vehement public debate over their artistic merit and the acceptability of their subject matter. For many viewers his images are a source of suspicion and anxiety. Following in the European tradition of the graphic arts, Cleavin often criticizes society and uses his humour to draw attention to the many absurdities in human behaviour. Other artists who have had similar intentions include William Hogarth and Honore Daumier, both of whom were masters of the witty exposure of human pettiness and pretension. In his revelations and exposures of humanity, Cleavin often pares away the skin and flesh of his subjects, leaving the skeleton bare; a metaphor for his intention to reveal deeply buried human emotions, fears and self-deceits. These skeletal beings, both animal and human, are placed in bizarre and grotesque juxtapositions with other objects and greatly increase the macabre element which is one of the hallmarks of Cleavin's work.

Politics

Cleavin's subjects are varied and he often draws both literally and metaphorically on the heritage of European art history, sometimes using it to ridicule itself. Many of his works have strong political content which relates both to New Zealand and the rest of the world. *Firearm* (cat. no. 9) is from a series Cleavin made called *Offensive Weapons*. The image is a pun on the title of the work; it shows the skeleton of an arm which culminates not in a hand, but in a pistol. The visual transition from bone to metal is expertly made and like other prints in this series, this one comments on the truism that it is people who kill people; guns cannot do it on their own. There is an additional implication that if we own guns they can become part of us. A traveller who was going to a supposedly violent country was advised to take a gun. He refused, saying, "If I had a gun I would have to use it, and I'd rather not." The weapons of violence breed violence, not security.

A Nightmare, Mururoa, is another work in which Cleavin criticizes the world's fascination with weapons of all kinds. It shows a three-legged mutated child; an indication of the after-effects of nuclear radiation. The New Vision Gallery in Auckland commissioned the print to be used in one of two posters protesting against the French nuclear testing at Mururoa atoll in the Pacific. In these works, Cleavin's use of the grotesque is particularly appropriate and telling.

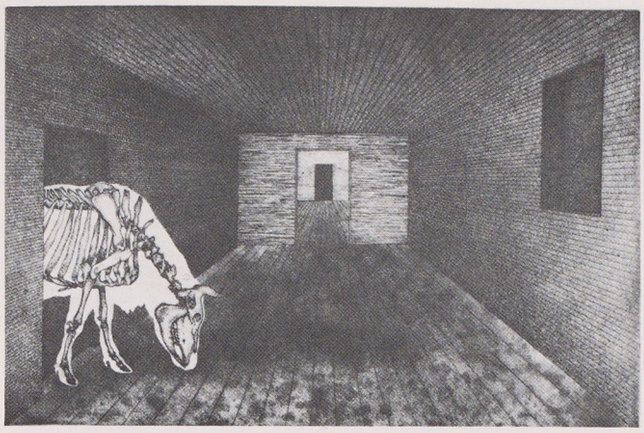
Religion, mortality and self

Cleavin includes himself in his visual discussions of human insecurities. *Self-portrait 21/4/73* (cat. no. 7) shows Cleavin's face as a smiling rubber mask covering his skull and held on with rubber straps. The eyes look ahead, pretending not to be aware of the skull and of the death it signifies. We are told that our brain cells die in thousands every day; dying begins the day we are born, yet we cannot live creatively if we carry that awareness too consciously. Intimations of mortality and of our trepidation at the prospect of death are frequent in Cleavin's prints.

7 Barry Cleavin *Self-portrait 21/4/73* 1973

Three recent etchings dwell on ideas of death, sacrifice, religion and eternity and they demonstrate Cleavin's ability to create sophisticated spatial illusions. All three show the skeleton of a bull enclosed in the transparent ghost of its former flesh and isolated in enormous wooden spaces. In *Alter Piece 1* (cat. no. 11), the bull is tied by its horns, like a sacrificial offering, to a cross on the wall of a room. There are allusions to crucifixion and to the slaughterhouse which are borne out in the title. This is an alternative altarpiece. At first we seem to be observing the bull from above, looking down from the ceiling of the room in which it is tethered. Then it becomes clear that the bull is hanging down by its horns, not tethered by them; the height of the cross would make it impossible for the animal's feet to reach the floor. So there it hangs; below it there is a black opening, an abyss into which it will fall when released from the cross. Cleavin enjoys playing with our perceptions and creating optical illusions. The spaces in his works are seldom straightforward.

In *Alter Piece 2* (cat. no. 12), the bull again confronts a cross, this time in a room whose dimensions are easier to comprehend. But the implications of Cleavin's symbolism



13 Barry Cleavin *Next to nothing — NADA* 1982

are unclear. The animal seems mesmerized, frozen in front of the three-dimensional cross, which is reflected both in a mirror on the far wall and in the shine on the floorboards. Unlike the cross, the bull has no substance, casting no shadow and making no reflection.

In the third print, *Next to nothing — NADA* (cat. no. 13) the skeletal bull appears again. Head bowed it enters a featureless wooden corridor which stretches away into the distance towards a black doorway; another abyss. This series of prints is enigmatic and compelling. The works seem to allude to dramatic events with universal implications, yet their symbolism remains mysterious.

Sexuality

None of the prints discussed so far seem likely to provoke outraged response, so what is the source of controversy in Cleavin's work? In his political works Cleavin's own political stance is clear. He uses his prints to reveal the absurdity of those who worship the power of weapons, and ignore their devastating effects. Yet in the works which refer to human sexuality his stance is less clear. Cleavin returns again and again to the mocking of human sexuality and sexual relationships, and frequently ascribes to women absurd sexual pretensions and sinister sexual desires. Cleavin professes to be bewildered by the angry responses which his images of women have aroused. In this he is echoing the response of another artist who made many "erotic" images of women, the Austrian, Egon Schiele. Schiele's work influenced Cleavin in his student years, although Cleavin subsequently developed a highly individual style. Egon Schiele was imprisoned for 24 days in 1912 on a charge of "immorality" which related to his art work. He wrote a diary during his imprisonment in which he bitterly attacked his critics:

> "No erotic work of art is filth if it is artistically significant; it is only turned into filth through the beholder if he is filthy."[1]

This is an appealing argument for many. It has often been used against feminists who abhor pornography, and against those who find Cleavin's images of women unacceptable. Male reviewers of Barry Cleavin's exhibitions have tended to pursue predictable paths in their assessment of his work. They usually begin with high praise for Cleavin's undoubted technical skills in phrases like "pristine draughtsmanship", "meticulousness of execution", "impeccable technical ability", all of which are important in Cleavin's chosen medium. They then refer to his international success, and to the superbly witty content of his prints. Here the assertions

Egon Schiele *Self-portrait* **1910**
crayon and watercolour 432 x 275 mm
Albertina, Vienna

become suspect, the writers positing their male views as the general human response to works which savagely attack women. They bemoan the lack of humour in those who find the works offensive, and appear to see misogyny as the height of wit.

> " . . . some of the most telling of his prints show a satiric misogynistic eye for the grotesque. But wit is only part of this splendid exhibition . . ."[2]
>
> "*Bad Beauty* is typical of Cleavin's ability to expose the trite . . . this print reveals the shallowness, indeed the ugliness behind 'covergirl's' smile.
>
> "*Girl on a swing* is so softly modelled that one feels sorry that such a desirable creature is so seriously handicapped by having no head."[3]
>
> "Two little Norman Rockwell kids . . . holding a mother's day gift behind their backs, looking up at a Mum who happens to be a sleazy naked tart."[4]

These critical responses reinforce the idea that far from mocking and exposing our society's tendency to undervalue women and to see them only in sexual terms, Cleavin is applauding it.

In a society which degrades and undervalues women, there will obviously be degraded women, and to mock them for their degradation is hypocrisy. Cleavin has either not caught up with, or chooses to ignore, the changing social climate of the past fifteen years. The ridiculing and bestialization of oppressed people by their oppressors is never acceptable,

Sue Balbrent *Equus Eroticus: boot and bridle*
from *Exotic* magazine, 1959

not even in the visual arts, despite these often being seen as free from society's constraints.

Cleavin's work *A small bull being tormented by a lady* (cat. no. 8) is an example of his depiction of a woman as a monstrous creature, and seems to have its origins in some bizarre bondage fantasy. An impassive little bull is tied to a chair while a woman wearing absurdly high-heeled shoes laced up her legs stands behind him removing her bra. It has been suggested of another work, *The Hare stripped bare by his bride even,* that Cleavin reveals our deepest, suppressed sexual fantasies. The point to remember is that these may be common male fantasies about female sexuality, but no woman fantasizes copulating with the skeleton of a hare. The surface quality of the etching in *A small bull . . .* is murky, seedy and unpleasant. Technique matches content.

Upon Reflection (cat. no. 10) is an example of Cleavin's frequent references to art historical precedent. He shows a woman with an animal skull head, lying back fondling her breasts while gazing at her reflection in a handmirror. The reflection she sees is not of the ghastly skull, but of a laughing young woman, a particularly extreme version of the "mirror mirror on the wall . . ." story. The subject also has parallels in traditional European paintings of naked women looking into mirrors, epitomizing the sin of vanity.

> "The mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of women. The moralizing however, was mostly hypocritical. You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting 'Vanity', thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure."[5]

Another historical parallel is the story of Death and the maiden in which a beautiful young woman embraces a skeleton. This was a frequent medieval pictorial subject, usually interpreted as intimating the inevitable death of youth and beauty. Cleavin's skull-headed temptress seems to imply a variant of this: that women bring death to men.[6] The call for humour in our reaction to Barry Cleavin's work is inappropriate. His work has an underlying serious intention in all his subjects, political, religious and sexual. In the end, humour cannot prevail.

Notes

1 Egon Schiele, quoted in Alessandra Comini, *Schiele in Prison,* Thames and Hudson, London 1974, p59

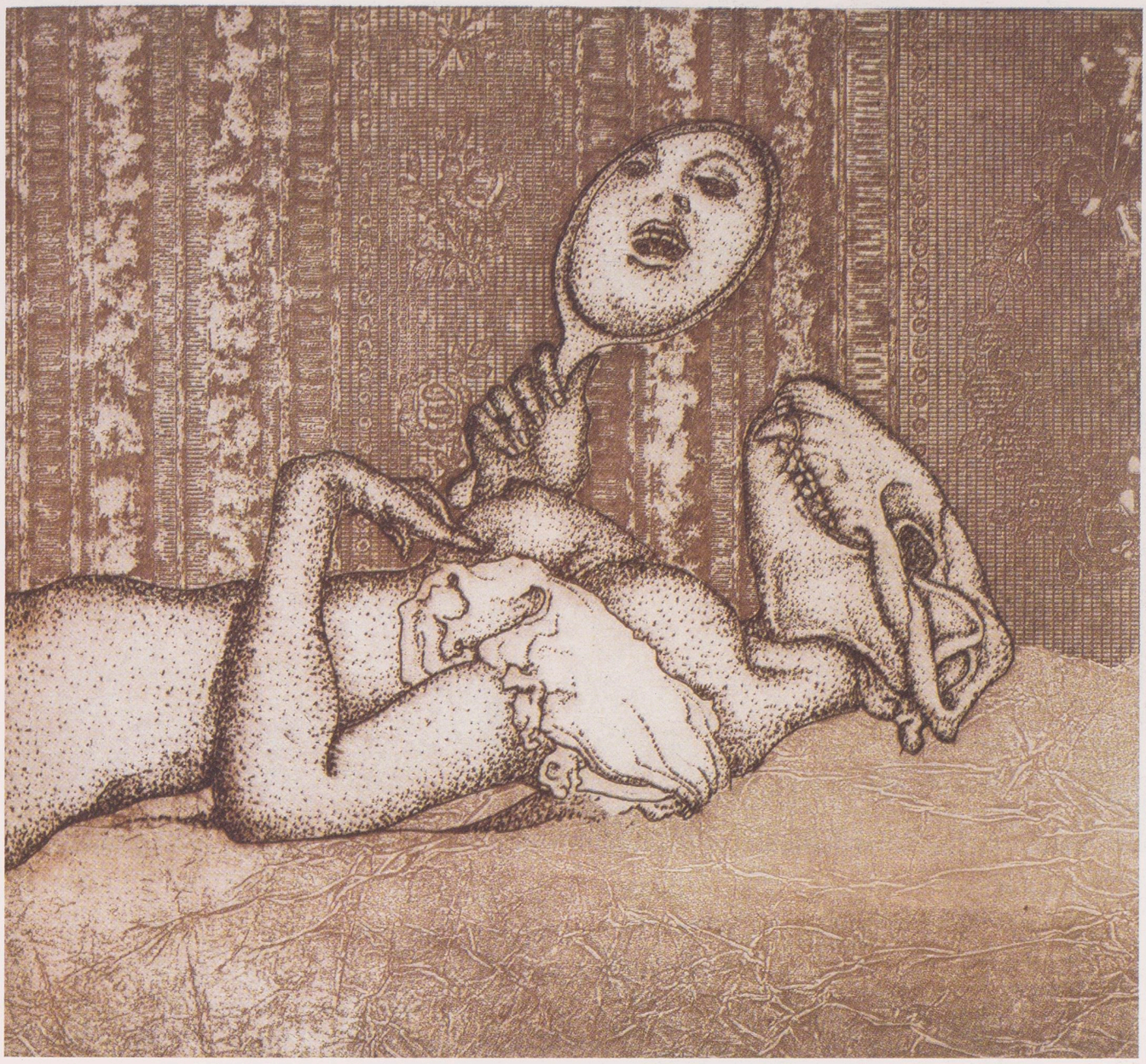
2 T.J.M., *New Zealand Herald,* 1 September 1969

3 G.T.M., *The Press,* Christchurch, 1 October 1971

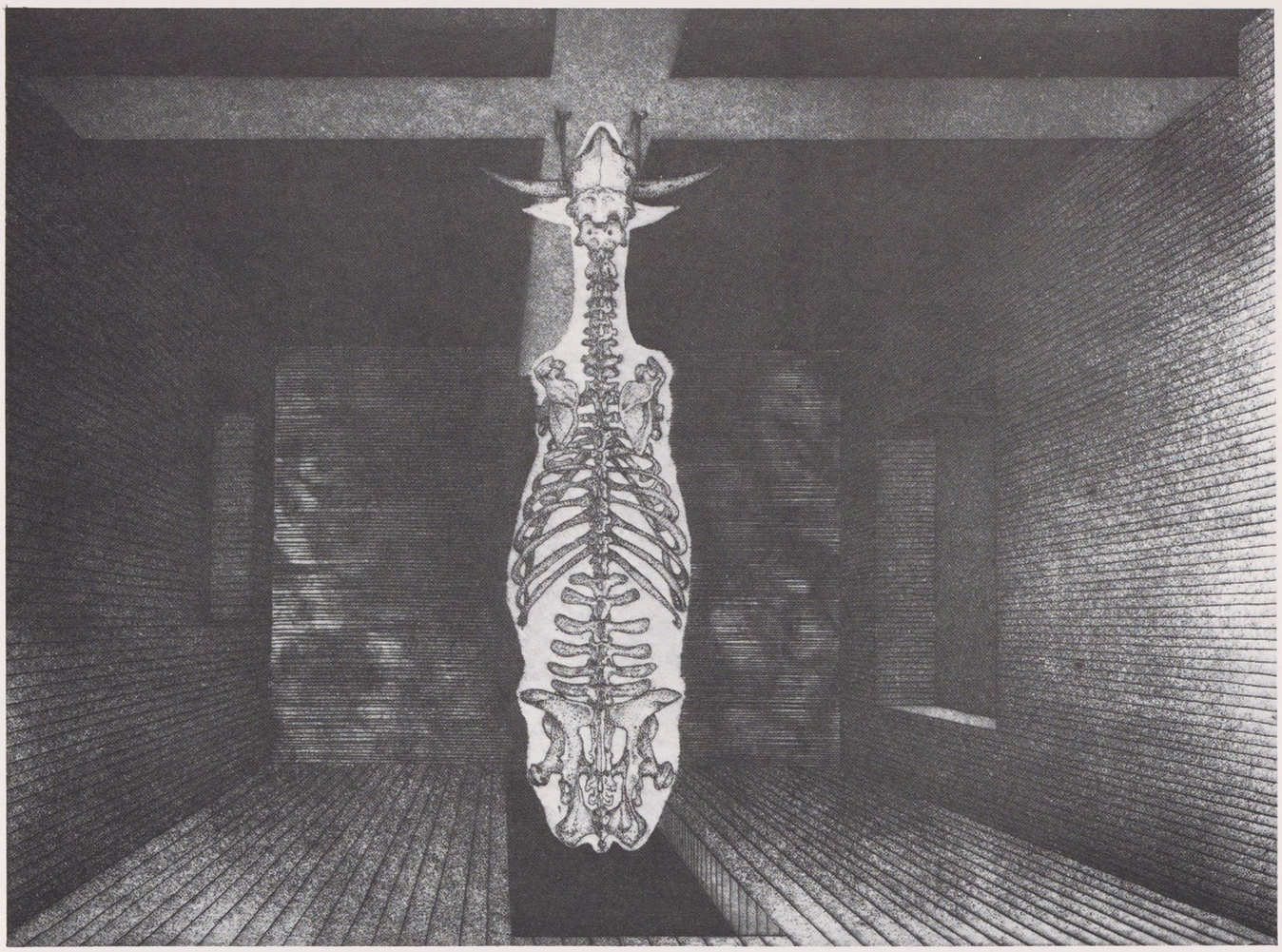
4 Brett Riley, *Christchurch Star,* 16 June 1982

5 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing,* London, BBC & Penguin Books, 1972, p51

6 Phyllis Chesler, *About Men,* London, the Women's Press, 1978, p76. "Often when men embrace women, they report a feeling of suffocation. They flee in terror from the intimacy, from the responsibility of becoming a father and of being trapped; they flee equally from the possibility that they will waste sperm with no gain, no profit, no family security.
"Men claim, in the voices of artists, that women represent death, that behind each seductive temptress, behind each virgin daughter of a wealthy father, lies the grinning skull of their own death. Yet how equally true is the opposite.
"How often have mortal women embraced men and died in childbirth? How often have mortal women embraced men without becoming pregnant, or, in becoming pregnant out of wedlock, faced the death of social approval and protection? How often have women 'paid' for the pleasure of children with loneliness, sexual and emotional deprivation, social death? And how often do women find themselves in the arms of Death upon embracing men?"



10 Barry Cleavin *Upon Reflection* 1977



11 Barry Cleavin *Alter Piece 1* 1983

7 *Self-portrait 21/4/73* 1973
etching 192 x 160 (image) 380 x 290 (paper)

inscribed
l.l. 8/30 Imp self portrait 21/4/73
l.r. cleavin

exhibited 1982 5 November - 1 December Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin
1983 20 January - 20 February Timaru
Aigantighe Gallery, followed
by national tour
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin

references Catalogue: Auckland City Art Gallery 1982
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin
cat. no. 62 illus. p2

8 *A small bull being tormented by a lady* 1974
etching and aquatint 185 x 152 (image)
380 x 290 (paper).

inscribed
l.l. 10.30 Imp
l.c. A SMALL BULL BEING TORMENTED
BY A LADY
l.r. cleavin 1974

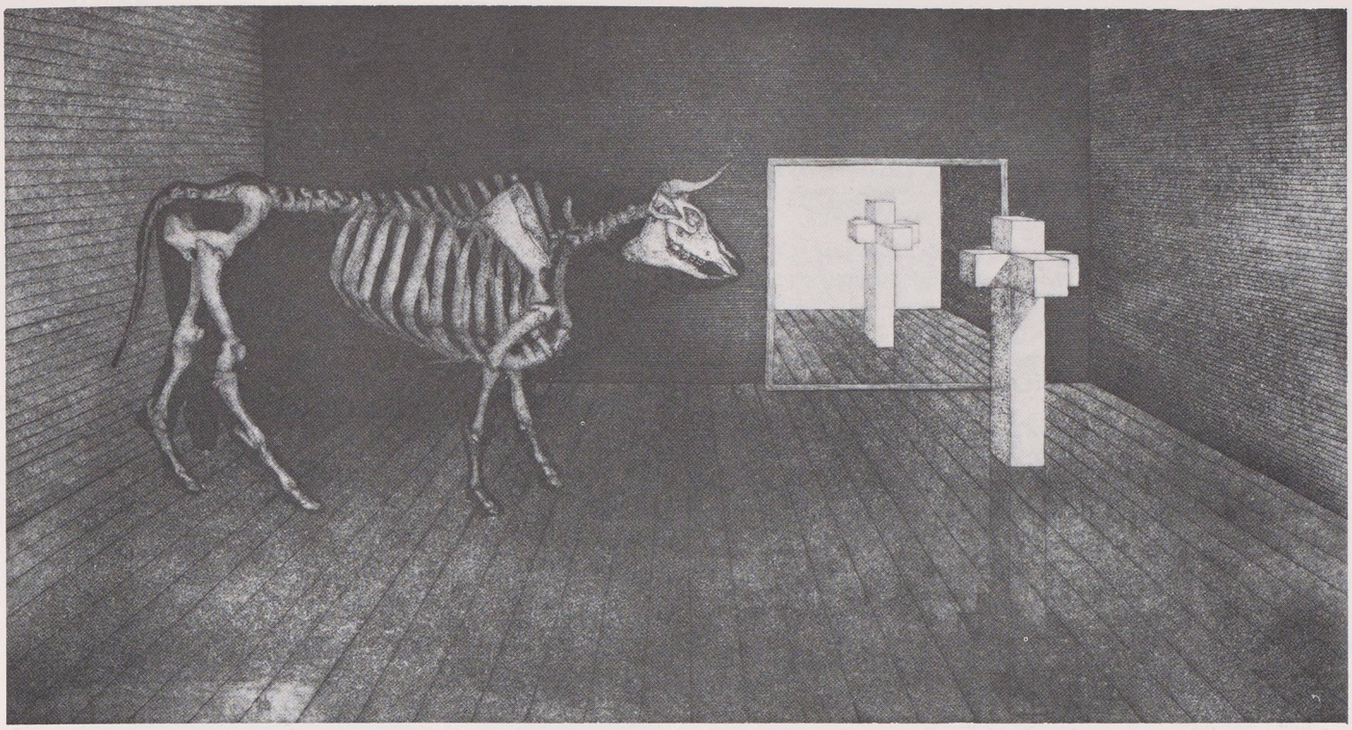
exhibited 1975 28 October - 7 November Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Barry Cleavin: new etchings
1976 31 August - 17 September Dunedin
Bosshard Galleries
Barry Cleavin
1979 1 - 12 October Wellington
Elva Bett Gallery
Barry Cleavin
1982 5 November - 1 December Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin
1983 20 January - 20 February Timaru
Aigantighe Gallery, followed by national tour
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin

references Catalogue: Auckland City Art Gallery 1982
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin cat. no. 78

9 *Firearm* 1976
etching and aquatint 125 x 300 (image)
290 x 380 (paper)

inscribed
l.l. 14/30 Imp — FIREARM
l.r. cleavin

exhibited 1976 31 August - 17 September Dunedin
Bosshard Galleries
Barry Cleavin



12 Barry Cleavin *Alter Piece 2* 1983

1977 12 - 23 September Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Cleavin

1979 1 - 12 October Wellington
Elva Bett Gallery
Barry Cleavin

1982 5 November - 1 December Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin

1983 20 January - 20 February Timaru
Aigantighe Gallery, followed by national tour
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin

references Catalogue: Auckland City Art Gallery 1982
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin
cat. no. 95 illus. p35

10 *Upon Reflection* 1977
etching and aquatint 151 x 163 (image)
380 x 290 (paper)

inscribed
l.l. 10/30 Imp — UPON REFLECTION
l.r. cleavin 1977

exhibited 1979 1 - 12 October Wellington
Elva Bett Gallery
Barry Cleavin

1982 5 November - 1 December Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin

1983 20 January - 20 February Timaru
Aigantighe Gallery, followed by national tour
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin

references Catalogue: Auckland City Art Gallery
Ewe and Eye – Barry Cleavin cat. no. 108

11 *Alter Piece 1* 1983
etching and aquatint 320 x 430 (image)
380 x 585 (paper)

inscribed
l.l. 3/40 Imp — ALTER PIECE 1
l.r. cleavin 1983

exhibited 1983 14 - 26 November Auckland
Portfolio Gallery
Barry Cleavin, Rodney Fumpston,
Denys Watkins – new prints

12 *Alter Piece 2* 1983
etching and aquatint 248 x 462 (image)
380 x 585 (paper)

inscribed
l.l. 4/40 IMP — ALTER PIECE 2
l.r. cleavin 1983

exhibited 1983 14 - 26 November Auckland
Portfolio Gallery
Barry Cleavin, Rodney Fumpston,
Denys Watkins – new prints

13 *Next to nothing – NADA* 1982
etching and aquatint 307 x 470 (image)
390 x 590 (paper)

inscribed
l.l. 7/40 IMP — NEXT TO NOTHING — NADA
l.r. cleavin 1982

exhibited 1983 14 - 26 November Auckland
Portfolio Gallery
Barry Cleavin, Rodney Fumpston,
Denys Watkins – new prints

JACQUELINE FAHEY

Born Timaru, New Zealand, 1929.
Enrolled at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts.
Studied under Russell Clark and William Sutton.
Graduated with a Diploma of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, 1953.
First solo exhibition, John Leech Gallery, Auckland, 1974.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand travel grant in 1980; visited New York.
Has exhibited throughout New Zealand and is represented in a number of major public and private collections.
She lives in Auckland.

> "When I use the term 'feminist artist' I mean I am a woman (and that helps), but by marrying, having children, and being confined by that experience, I am leading the life most women lead. I would even after that not call myself a feminist artist if I did not use that experience and physical world as the material to comment politically on that special way of spending one's life. However, it's not that I have consciously set out to do feminist paintings. It is how they have turned out, and I am glad they turned out that way.
>
> "Now this is not to say that another woman's claim to be a feminist artist, whose lifestyle differs widely from my own, has not an equal right to the title. Her experience of what it is like to be a woman is equally real. Her work may be an equally effective weapon, depending on the quality of her work and her unconscious intent and integrity."[1]

Jacqueline Fahey's paintings have always centred on her own experience of life, her domestic circumstances and her consequent perspective on social and political realities. Her paintings can be celebratory, bursting with enjoyment of life as they burst with painted objects. But they are just as frequently troubled, concerned with the distress which we can inflict on one another, both in our homes where we should be most supportive, and outside them. She is confident of the validity of women's perspective on reality however it expresses itself, but is aware that such perspectives are still viewed with distrust.

> "If in the arts the belief that what is right, normal and the proper way of seeing things is male, upper class and Pakeha, all other ways of seeing things are as difficult to comprehend as a new language. Maori art is still, even in New Zealand, seen in its decorative sense, and not for its challenging reality. If the tentative attempts for a new reality are never recognised in women's painting, that reality is never going to become complete. Art should come from what an artist knows about life, and if what a woman knows is not what a man knows, then her art is going to have to be different."[2]

Fahey acknowledges that art cannot communicate with everyone and that if feminist art is understood by and encourages other women, then it has achieved much. The domestic focus in painting is not confined to women artists but the women's experience of life at home leads to works which are usually very different from male artists' depictions of their domestic realities.

Fahey's works are colourful and visually arresting; her interiors are filled with brightly patterned objects which tumble across tables tilted to display their contents. The objects enrich the rooms and can suggest symbolic meanings or simply add to our understanding of the people who live in them. These people, usually Fahey, her mother, daughters and husband, often seem to be under stress, confused and uncomfortable. Yet the subjects of her paintings do not always emerge from experiences within her own family. She has said that her family often appear as models in paintings of troubled situations which she has observed among friends. So these works, though principally autobiographical, are also a response to wider experiences. Jacqueline Fahey's domestic paintings are compelling and disturbing, filled with beautiful objects and desolate people.

Jacqueline Fahey *No. 1* 1958
oil on board 813 x 863 mm

Pregnancy and feminism

Fahey's feminist painting is not the outcome of a recently awakened awareness. To place her present work in context, it is useful to look back to her earliest works responding to women's experience. She first began to paint the domestic isolation of women in 1959. She was thirty, had moved to Porirua with her husband and was expecting her first child. Her works predated most feminist painting or writing and she eventually destroyed them after they were turned down by a dealer gallery in Auckland. (She now sees her gesture as self-indulgent, but it is nonetheless understandable.) She speaks with some humour now of the circumstances which prompted her to paint them.

> "In 1959 Porirua was one of those hideous new experiments in women being isolated — on their own. There were a lot of pretty good women there whom I got to meet. I really wasn't involved in this (feminism) until I got pregnant and I suddenly realised what it meant — that you literally were bolted to the spot — at least for some time, and it came as a ghastly shock because I was so unrealistic I hadn't thought of that. And then when I got talking to other women I realised how brainwashed they had become — sitting in their rooms talking to each other. Then I did those really strong feminist paintings . . . I was telling the truth. I didn't realise until Anthony Stones interviewed me, that they were really very radical, and

Jacqueline Fahey *No. 2* 1958
oil on board 813 x 863 mm

> that I was showing these women as definitely emotional victims."[3]

Three of these paintings were reproduced in the magazine *Mate* in 1960 with an article by Anthony Stones who acknowledged that they were a new development in social realism.

> "Could the male painter have noticed this enormous world of frustration boxed in the sprawl of suburbia? Whereas the male 'social realists' see heroics at the kitchen sink these paintings view the same world candidly, bare of idealization. The simple symbols — tea cup, light bulb, window, bird and bulky bare forearmed figures — are set in compositions which cram these components to make the suggestion of claustrophobia complete, and the unease of women eloquent."[4]

The women in these paintings have fallen back on magic in their isolation. They are full of yearning and longing and wishes, constantly reading the tea-leaves and their palms because reality is so awful. Outside the window of one painting is the bluebird of happiness, but the women might as well be in prison; they have no chance of escape.

At home

Jacqueline Fahey painted *In Memoriam (Winter Conversation)* (cat. no. 14) in 1969, after not painting for several years while her children were young. Her father had just died and her mother came to stay. Both women are stunned with grief, and unable even to communicate with each other.

> "She is held by a wintry barren landscape and a constant monologue that tries to make sense of the past. We are using drink as a prop. The unmade bed indicates disorder."[5]

Grief and loneliness are implicit in both the still figures. The desolation of bereavement is an experience which we all come to know. It is one of the crisis points in life for which creative work is often an appropriate healing action.

In *Birthday Party* (cat. no. 15) Fahey's mother is again the focus of the painting, seated in the picture's top left corner, alone with her memories. She looks wearily out of the painting, unaffected by the gay confusion of her granddaughter's birthday party. The lower half of the painting is occupied by a wooden tabletop across which are scattered marbles, toys, cakes, sweets, wrapping paper and floating balloons. Behind the table two small girls in party hats hold an animated conversation about a toy bear. Fahey is able to fill a picture surface with apparently trivial objects yet retains in her subject the intensity of individual anxiety and isolation which she wants to communicate.

Instead of balloons, there are seagulls flying round the room in *Drawing room scene with Grandma, Emily and birds* (cat. no. 16). Birds indoors are considered ominous in Maori culture. Their presence inside seems unnatural and the stuffed owl on its perch transforms an ordinary room into a disturbed, menacing place. The child's lunchbox is displayed open on the table, and the red glow of a small electric heater emanates from the fireplace. Fahey's house is large and she keeps small heaters in most of the rooms; they often appear in her works.

Jacqueline Fahey *No. 3* 1958
oil on board 736 x 609 mm

The painting *Mother and Daughter quarrelling* (cat. no. 17) is one of the works which was influenced by Fahey's experience of a quarrel in another family.

> "I remember seeing a mother and daughter quarrelling dreadfully and the experience seared me. I could see the grief and loss that the older woman felt because her

14 Jacqueline Fahey *In Memoriam* 1969

> daughter was developing right away from her values and her idea of what was successful. It seemed to me to be the natural 'blood on the floor' part of the women's movement. The pain involved isn't necessarily towards husbands; it's often towards older women who are made to feel as if they have wasted their lives. As if, in fact, all the time there were other choices and they were too stupid and hadn't seen them."[6]

Fahey takes risks in the composition of this painting; breaking up the space and the figures to reinforce the rift and animosity between the two women. Gin spills from her glass as she yells at her mother who is torn in two, frozen and unable to respond. Scattered across the surface are photographs and paintings of her parents in earlier days. In the foreground Fahey has used a collage of cut-out paper pictures to indicate domestic debris and accentuate the confusion of the scene. From the U-shaped mirror the painter objectively observes her own screaming face, apparently surprised by her loss of control. The mirror presents a contrast between the apparent stability of the past and the chaotic pain of present reality. In this painting Fahey successfully combines form and content to create a memorable image of human distress.

Wars and women

When Jacqueline Fahey returned to New Zealand in 1962 after two years in Australia, she was active in a number of political groups, the first ban the bomb committee, and later the movement to stop the All Black rugby tour of South Africa. On the subject of the tour she painted a number of works showing the Pakeha enjoying themselves, while the Maori look on with resentment. These works she destroyed with her domestic paintings because they were seen as naive and unsophisticated in an art world which was dominated by abstraction.

In 1981 Fahey made a series of large paintings which centred on the Auckland Domain and its history; she included references to the violent months of protest against the Springbok tour of New Zealand that year.

Hill of bitter memories (cat. no. 18) is a painting which was prompted by her conversation with her mother on Anzac Day, and her mother's memories of the war. Mrs Fahey's anguish over the loss of her brothers in the war has worsened with time and she feels more bitterness now.

The Auckland Domain where the War Memorial stands is also a place of sorrow for Maori people. The Maori name for the hill on which the cenotaph stands is Pukekawa, which can be translated as hill of bitter memories, and refers to the many tribal wars in the Auckland area.

Fahey's intention was to view the battles which this hill commemorates from the women's perspective. In the centre of the painting the wings of a Maori kite cast a shadow over a group of women who bend over the bodies of their men, dead on the field of battle. Their arms are outstretched in horror, faces blurred with grief; there is no glory here. The picking up of the dead and wounded has traditionally been the role of Maori women in wartime, and Fahey took the group of women from a photo taken after the siege of Stalingrad. Despite the painful lessons of the past, the cenotaph is still not a place of peace. The sky is filled with lurid and threatening clouds, seagulls wheel and squawk, and from the base of the memorial draped with flags and ornamented with wreaths, the dogs of war leap out again, slavering for battle.

> "Women have no power to stop this 'senseless male killing' of the children — their own and the children of other mothers. No military force in the world requires a permission note from mothers before sons — or daughters — are drafted into war."[7]

Jacqueline Fahey's paintings confront painful questions and expose uncomfortable realities. They are paintings for our time.

Notes

1 Jacqueline Fahey, quoted in Juliet Batten's "New Zealand Feminist Artists", *Broadsheet* 110, June 1983, p21

2 Jacqueline Fahey, report to Arts Council of New Zealand, October 1980

3 Jacqueline Fahey, interview with Leona Bresnehan, Radio New Zealand, 1983

4 *Mate* 6 December 1980 "The Paintings of Jackie Fahey" Anthony Stones pp 25-28

5 see note 1

6 see note 3

7 Phyllis Chesler, *About Men*, The Women's Press, London, 1978, p128

18 Jacqueline Fahey *Hill of bitter memories* 1981-1982

16 Jacqueline Fahey *Drawing room with Grandma, Emily and Birds* 1974-1975

14 *In Memoriam* 1969
oil on hardboard 976 x 595

inscribed
l.l. FAHEY
exhibited 1974 16 July - 2 August Auckland
John Leech Gallery
Group '74
Title in this exhibition *Winter Conversation*
references *Broadsheet* June 1983 No. 110
"New Zealand Feminist Artists" Juliet Batten
pp19-32, illus. p21
collection Professor H. Sampson, Auckland

15 *Birthday Party* 1974
oil on hardboard 920 x 1220

inscribed
l.r. FAHEY
exhibited 1974 8 - 25 October Auckland
John Leech Gallery
Jackie Fahey

15 Jacqueline Fahey *Birthday Party* 1974

16 *Drawing Room Scene with Grandma, Emily and Birds* 1974 - 1975 oil on board 842 x 810

inscribed
l.l. FAHEY
exhibited 1979 28 May - 8 June Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
Jackie Fahey Paintings
collection private collection, Auckland

17 *Mother and Daughter quarrelling* 1977
oil on board 1200 x 600

inscribed
l.r. FAHEY
exhibited 1979 28 May - 8 June Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
Jackie Fahey Paintings
1981 3 February - 7 March Wellington
The Women's Gallery
Mothers
1981 16 March - 14 April Hastings
Hastings Cultural Centre,
followed by national tour
Mothers
1982 12 October - 3 November Sydney,
Australia
Antares Gallery
Mothers (Women and the Arts Festival)
references Catalogue: The Women's Gallery,
Wellington 1981
Mothers illus. p16
collection Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch

18 *Hill of bitter memories* 1981-1982
oil on canvas 1685 x 1678

inscribed
l.l. 1981-82
l.c. Hill of bitter memories
l.r. FAHEY
exhibited 1982 15 - 27 November Auckland
RKS Art
Jacqueline Fahey Paintings
1983 14 February - 5 March Wellington
Galerie Legard
Four Paintings by Jacqueline Fahey

TONY FOMISON

Born Christchurch, New Zealand, 1939.
Enrolled at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, 1956 graduating with a Diploma in Sculpture, 1960.
First solo exhibition, Canterbury Society of Arts, 1961.
Worked as assistant ethnologist at the Canterbury Museum, recording examples of South Island Maori rock art, 1962.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand travel grant, 1964; travelled extensively in Europe 1964-67.
Worked as exhibitions officer, Canterbury Society of Arts, 1969 -71.
Survey exhibition toured New Zealand, 1979-80. Has exhibited throughout New Zealand, and is represented in most major public and private collections.
He has lived in Auckland since 1973.

> "I'm not a pure painter — I stain my pictures with stories about the past, present and the future.
>
> "There are so many choices about to be made by society about technology and about the way our political system is run. I was right to paint several years ago about it. A lot of decisions are going to be made for better or worse and I don't think it's too late to help people make the right decisions when they have a voting chance. Decisions about the future — that's what we're talking about."[1]

Tony Fomison is committed to painting as his means of discussing the world with others. His hope is always that his paintings will communicate with as many people as possible, and so he regularly exhibits them outside the usual art gallery spaces. His paintings are enigmatic and often mysterious, yet they all seem to have stories to tell. Fomison does not reject the description "narrative" when applied to his work; but he is aware that the stories are different for each viewer, and that they change over the years, revealing new interpretations, even for the artist himself. He sees his work as a continuum, a long-standing conversation between himself and his paintings; he enjoys any opportunity to bring his works back together so that new connections between them can be established.[2] The stories which permeate his paintings are about uncertainties and choices in human life; about politics, about religion, about fate, and about himself and his community.

Physiognomy

Hands and faces dominate many of Fomison's paintings. They are an elementary index of fear and emotion. Hands in gestures of blessing or curse, healing or violence; faces which press up large against the picture surface, often distorted and too close for comfort. In *Study of a Hand* (cat. no. 19) the hand fills the surface of the picture, many times larger than life. It seems to be signalling to us, and emerges from darkness barely outlined with light. The thumb is relaxed and curves beside the fingers; its gesture almost a blessing. Fomison sees hands as a primary means of human communication. Hands are the tools of artists, all of whom do manual work. The movements of our hands can often reveal emotions more clearly than our faces can, and words are no substitute for the touch of a loving hand.

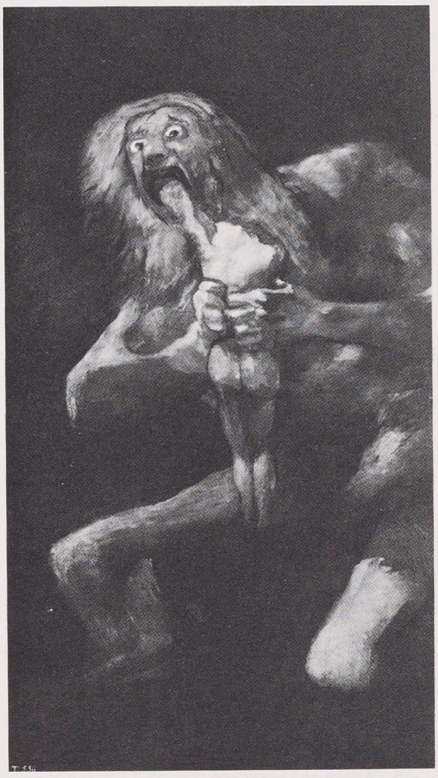
In the painting *No*[3] Fomison presses a tense hand up to the picture surface, fingers stiff and splayed. Behind the hand is a man's face — mouth tight and eyes rolled upwards. It is the opposite extreme of *Study of a Hand*, and the enormous size of the hand accentuates its message: keep away. *Study of a Hand* is subtitled, "from Roxburgh's book *Common Skin Diseases*" and, although the skin disease is not evident in this work, Fomison made other paintings in which the subject's affliction is frighteningly obvious. These were paintings which he intended would shock and disturb the viewer, and comment on the internal ills of society. He said of them

> "These sorts of faces have more form in them. I'm saying something about life today. I'm trying to use these forms as metaphors. I'm saying that society makes the insides of people like the outsides of someone whose face is covered with hair or boils or whatever."[4]

The outsider

A small figure struggling against the might of giants often appears in Fomison's work. It can represent the outsider, the person who rejects or is rejected by society, who doesn't fit in with society's norms. Or it can be the ordinary person battling with the might of bureaucracy. Fomison uses disparity in scale between the figures in his painting to reinforce their relationships of dependence or power, mockery, hatred or trust.

In *Hand of Fate* (cat. no. 25) a sinister hooded face dominates the painting. It clutches in its hand a small figure struggling to escape, with arms raised and fists clenched in defiance and determination. A historical parallel for the work could be Goya Y Lucientes' painting, *Saturn devouring his*



Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes *Saturn* 1820-1823
oil on plaster on canvas 1460 x 830 mm
Prado Museum, Madrid

children (1820-1823), in which Saturn is crazed with jealousy of his children, and devours them so they cannot supplant him. Although the Greek legend tells that Saturn ate his children at birth, in Goya's painting the child is a miniature adult, like the outsider in Fomison's work. Saturn was the god Cronus, or Time, and the meaning of the story is that time devours everything. Fomison's figure of Fate seems less vengeful than Goya's Saturn, but nonetheless powerful, inescapable and menacing. In Fomison's words, "The past is cloaked in its hood and the future tries to express itself while still in the clutches of the past."[5] Yet Fomison's approach to life is neither pessimistic nor fatalistic. It is always worth the struggle to survive, to develop and grow, to carry on with the journey.

Oppression

Tony Fomison's political ideas are an integral part of his painting. He has said that if you are involved with causes you can't not paint about them and he supports those whom any society oppresses. In the early 1970s he made a number of works, many of them detailed pencil drawings, in which he directed his attention to political prisoners, to the victims of the Vietnam war and to the oppression of blacks in South Africa. One such painting in which the anguish of the figure depicted is emphasized by the enormous size of the painting is *From a photo in P. Sinclair's anti-apartheid book 'Black Soul'* (cat. no. 20). This shows the head and shoulders of a black man, mouth open in a scream of rage and pain. The muscles in his neck are stretched tight, his head tilts away from the picture surface, eyes half closed. The frame of the painting cuts down through the centre of his face like the bars of a cell, isolating him in his torment.

The painting was made at a time when thousands of New Zealanders had protested against the 1970 rugby tour of South Africa and subsequent sporting contacts between the two countries. In 1978, as the protests continued, Fomison painted a grinning, blindfolded man in a rugby jersey, left the painting untitled and commented, "Football holds a day-bright candle to our own, home-grown racism."[6] It was becoming clear that New Zealand had no laurels to rest on in the area of racial harmony, and Fomison's own involvement with Maori and Pacific Island people has made him particularly aware of the devaluation of non-European culture and experience which is so prevalent in New Zealand. His long-standing interest in and knowledge of Maori rock drawings and Oceanic art in general has contributed to his work in many ways. In some paintings the heads of the figures have the appearance of Oceanic sculpture, not traceable to any particular Pacific tradition, but apparent nonetheless.[7]

Making choices

A blindfold of another sort appears in *See No Evil* (cat. no. 23). The person seems at first to be blindfolded by his own hands, smiling inanely and refusing to see what is in front of him. But on further study it seems possible that the hands are someone else's. Perhaps this is just a game, yet the austerity of Fomison's painting, the sombre colour which reveals the large face and two small tapering hands, implies something more serious. Whether this person is blindfolding himself or not, the significance is nonetheless grim. If we cannot see what is happening around us, or if we choose not to look, we cannot act.

The large heads which dominate many of Fomison's works are often unseeing and therefore difficult to confront. There are connotations of blundering bureaucracy refusing to acknowledge the reality of individual need. In *Isn't it my turn?* (cat. no. 21) Fomison paints a huge head with closed eyes, clutching in its hands some large white cards. On either side of it are small figures, each holding tiny white cards of their own. The left-hand figure waves its arms vainly, trying to attract the attention of the dealer. But the large figure remains impervious, holding what must be the winning hand. In works like this one, Fomison uses pictorial symbols and metaphor to great effect, and the painting has a theatrical quality. We feel that we are watching a morality play; the players have halted for a moment, frozen in their roles. It is up to us to determine the import of the scene. Of this painting Fomison said in a lecture, "The sun's gone down and we're playing cards — it's getting late — who's gonna win?"[8] The combination of chance and choice found in cards is a potent metaphor for the comments Fomison is making about human life.

Fomison often paints curtains at the sides of his pictures which accentuate the works' theatrical and allegorical qualities, and this dramatic purpose is also served by the use of boxes, or maze-like constructions, in which enormous impassive heads often conceal themselves. In *Each must decide* (cat. no. 22) the outsider is knocking with both fists against the walls of a large enclosure. Inside lurks a large face; a sleeping giant, not a benevolent one. The small figure turns towards us, seeming to seek our acknowledgment of its plight and possibly enlist our help. The image's implications of an inhumanly powerful bureaucratic machine are obvious.

One of the ironies illustrated by Fomison's little beings vainly battling for self-expression and self-determination is the depressing extent to which humans encourage others to control their lives. Many philosophers have observed the problem; Nicolas Berdyaev wrote, "Humanity loves servitude and easily comes to terms with it"; and Camus said, "The real passion of the twentieth century is servitude." In our time the demand for protective structures has led to the inhuman regime of the police state.[9] The outsider's enemy may not be bureaucracy itself, but those who choose to see no evil, to ignore or deny the complicated moral and political questions which are part of daily life. Governments and institutions become oppressive when people surrender their right to decide for themselves. Then individuals are lost within the mass and those whose aspirations differ from the accepted norm are kept out in the cold.

Self

In Tony Fomison's *Self-portrait* of 1977 (cat. no. 24) the artist appears behind a window frame, hand and face pressed up against the glass, trying to make out what is going on inside. He reverses the convention of the painter using a picture frame to create a window out on to the world.

If we try to look out through this window, we are confronted by the artist looking back in, scrutinizing us. Fomison often characterizes himself as an outsider, an observer of society, and in this work he presents himself almost as a peeping tom. He paints self-portraits regularly, seeing them as a means of keeping a check on the integrity of his painting. "Your brushes are only as good as your self-portraits; can you be honest about yourself on canvas?" He has portrayed himself in another role, that of the jester or fool, a recurring character in his repertoire of human types. For Fomison the jester is not the fool that he looks. The fool is the epitome of the outsider who observes society and tells it where it is self-indulgent, capricious, vain and cruel, always under the guise of wit and playfulness. The fool scampers about,

Tony Fomison *My Personal Christ* 1975-1976
oil on hessian 590 x 457 mm
Auckland City Art Gallery

staying ahead of the blundering giants who pursue him, angered by his barbed humour.

New Testament

In *The Agony in the Garden* (cat. no. 26) Fomison shows the small figure, this time dwarfed by an enormous tree, isolated and alone. It is the closest painting to a crucifixion Fomison has painted. He has painted Christ many times, usually basing his paintings on the work of European painters: Bellini, Holbein, Mantegna and Morales. Fomison resists the temptation to paint Christ on the cross as the ultimate representation of the sufferings of humanity and of the outsider/artist doomed to be misunderstood by society. He paints Christ as an embodiment of suffering and forgiveness rather than an anguished martyr. A particularly tender and moving work is his *Copy of Antonello de Messina's 'Salvator Mundi'*. In these works hands are again important in gestures of blessing and healing.

However, the diminutive figure in *Agony in the Garden* is not immediately recognisable as Christ. The New Testament title of the painting makes the implication of the work clear; but the painting itself gives us an indication of Fomison's awareness of the spiritual needs of humanity, often difficult to articulate or to understand. His knowledge of other cultures' spirituality, surviving better than that of western society, has enlarged his own long-standing interest in religious thought.

> "I wouldn't reject any attempt at religion . . . it wasn't until long after I stopped going to church that I realised that Christianity was not just the building on the corner called the Church, and that a Maori religion wasn't just a god-stick in a missionary's collection. They are both reminders that you've got to evolve; walk through a journey called your life. That's what my paintings are all about."[10]

Notes

1 Tony Fomison, interview with Alexa Johnston, 7 November 1983

2 Fomison's Artist's Project at the Auckland City Art Gallery in June 1983 was called "Bringing back the Scattered" and involved assembling most of his paintings from the last three years and hanging them together in the gallery with a new mural he was then completing.

3 Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch

4 *Canta,* March 1974, "Something nasty in the wood shed", Murray Horton

5 see note 1

6 Tony Fomison, quoted in *Tony Fomison: a survey of his painting and drawing from 1961 to 1979,* Dowse Art Museum, cat. no. 46

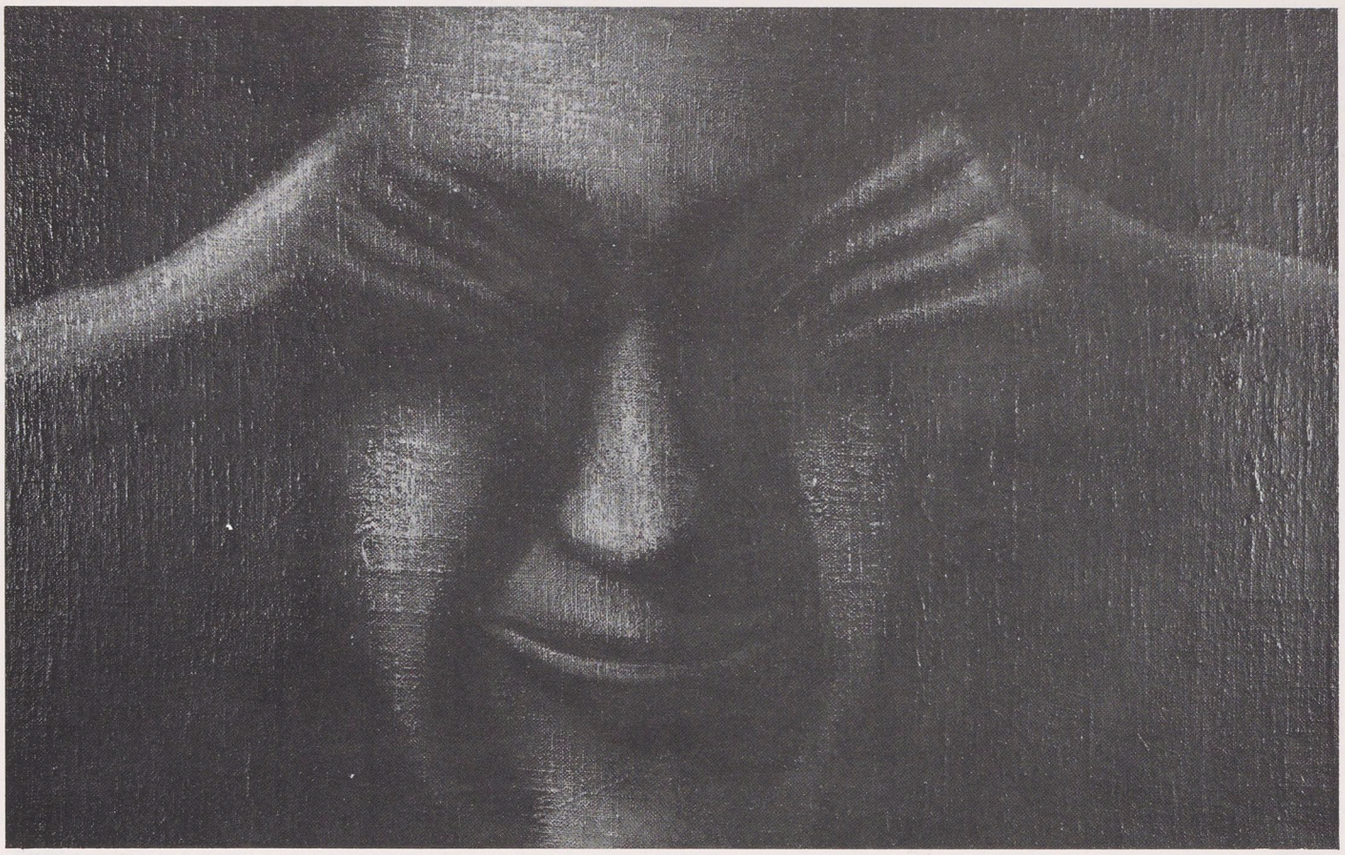
7 *Art New Zealand* October/November 1976 No. 2 "A singular vision: the paintings of Tony Fomison," James Ross pp21-23

8 Tony Fomison, in a lecture 15 March 1983, University Conference Centre, Auckland

9 David Anderson, *The Tragic Protest,* SCM Press, London, 1969

10 *City News,* 17 August 1976, "A provincial artist talks of religious compassion," Denys Trussell interviewing Tony Fomison

24 Tony Fomison *Self-portrait* 1977



23 Tony Fomison *See No Evil* 1976

19 *Study of a Hand* 1970
oil on hessian on board 845 x 580

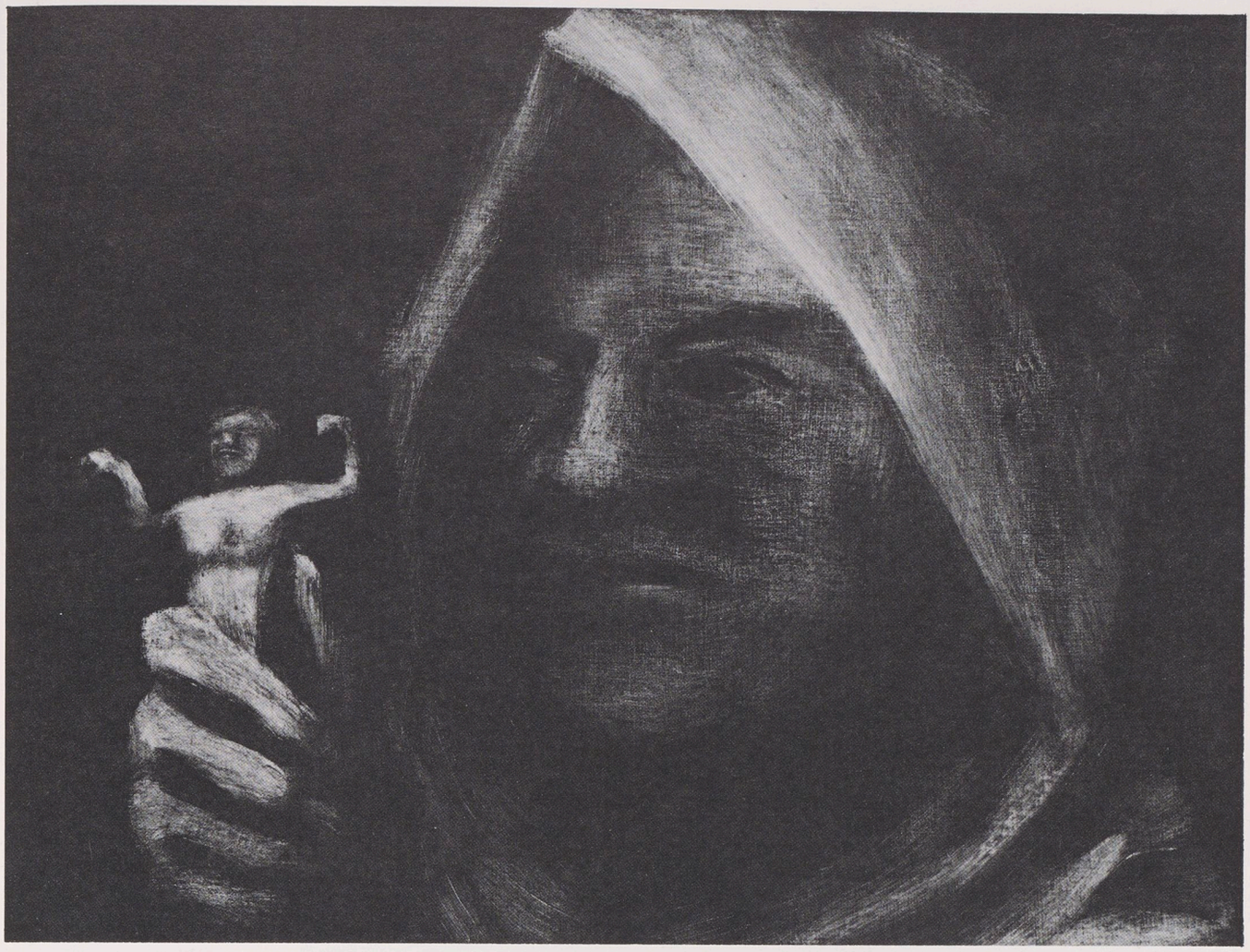
inscribed
l.l. A. Fomison 10-30.12.70
upper edge Study of a hand on p384 of "Roxburgh's Common Skin Diseases" 12th edition 1961
exhibited 1972 19 - 28 April Auckland
New Vision Gallery
solo exhibition
1979 1 October - 13 November Lower Hutt
Dowse Art Museum
Tony Fomison: a survey 1961-1979
1979 11 December - 13 January 1980
Palmerston North
Manawatu Art Gallery,
followed by national tour
Tony Fomison: a survey 1961-1979
references Catalogue: Dowse Art Museum 1980
Tony Fomison: a survey 1961-1979
cat. no. 10 illus.
Artis Vol. 2, No 2 April 1972 Michael Dunn
"Tony Fomison: a consideration"
pp10-14 illus. p3
collection Auckland City Art Gallery

20 *From a photo in P. Sinclair's anti-apartheid book 'Black Soul'* 1972
oil on coal sack 1565 x 600

inscribed
upper edge A. Fomison April-June-July 1972
exhibited 1973 January Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
New Year/New Works
1973 31 August - 14 September
Wellington
New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts
Eight Young Artists
Described in exhibition catalogue as
Anti-apartheid Painting
1979 1 October - 13 November Lower Hutt
Dowse Art Museum
Tony Fomison: a survey 1961-1979
1979 11 December - 13 January 1980
Palmerston North
Manawatu Art Gallery,
followed by national tour
Tony Fomison: a survey 1961-1979
references Catalogue: Dowse Art Museum 1980
Tony Fomison: a survey 1961-1979
collection private collection, Wellington

21 *Isn't it my turn?* 1976
oil on hessian on board 450 x 810

inscribed
u.l. # 122
u.r. Tony Fomison
April 1976
c.l. Isn't it my turn?
exhibited 1976 27 July - 6 August Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
solo exhibition
collection private collection, Lyttelton



25 Tony Fomison *Hand of Fate* 1979

22 *Each must decide* 1976
oil on muslin on board 399 x 443

exhibited 1978 June Wellington
Elva Bett Gallery
Group Exhibition (with Gretchen Albrecht and Philip Clairmont)

references Barr, J. and M. *Contemporary New Zealand Artists A - M*
illus. p76 Martinborough, Alister Taylor, 1979

collection Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North

*23 *See No Evil* 1976
oil on hessian on board 761 x 1200

inscribed
l.l. See No Evil
l.r. Tony Fomison 1976
reverse # 127

exhibited 1976 27 July - 6 August Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
solo exhibition

references *Art New Zealand* No. 2 1976 James Ross "A singular vision: the painting of Tony Fomison" pp21-23

collection Ralph Hotere, Dunedin

24 *Self-portrait* 1977
oil on board 415 x 750

exhibited 1978 Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
Six Figurative Painters (with Philip Clairmont, John Parker, Nigel Brown, Jeffrey Harris and James Ross)

1979 9 March - 8 April Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Recent Acquisitions

1980 27 June - 30 September
Cagnes-sur-Mer, France
Festival International de la Peinture

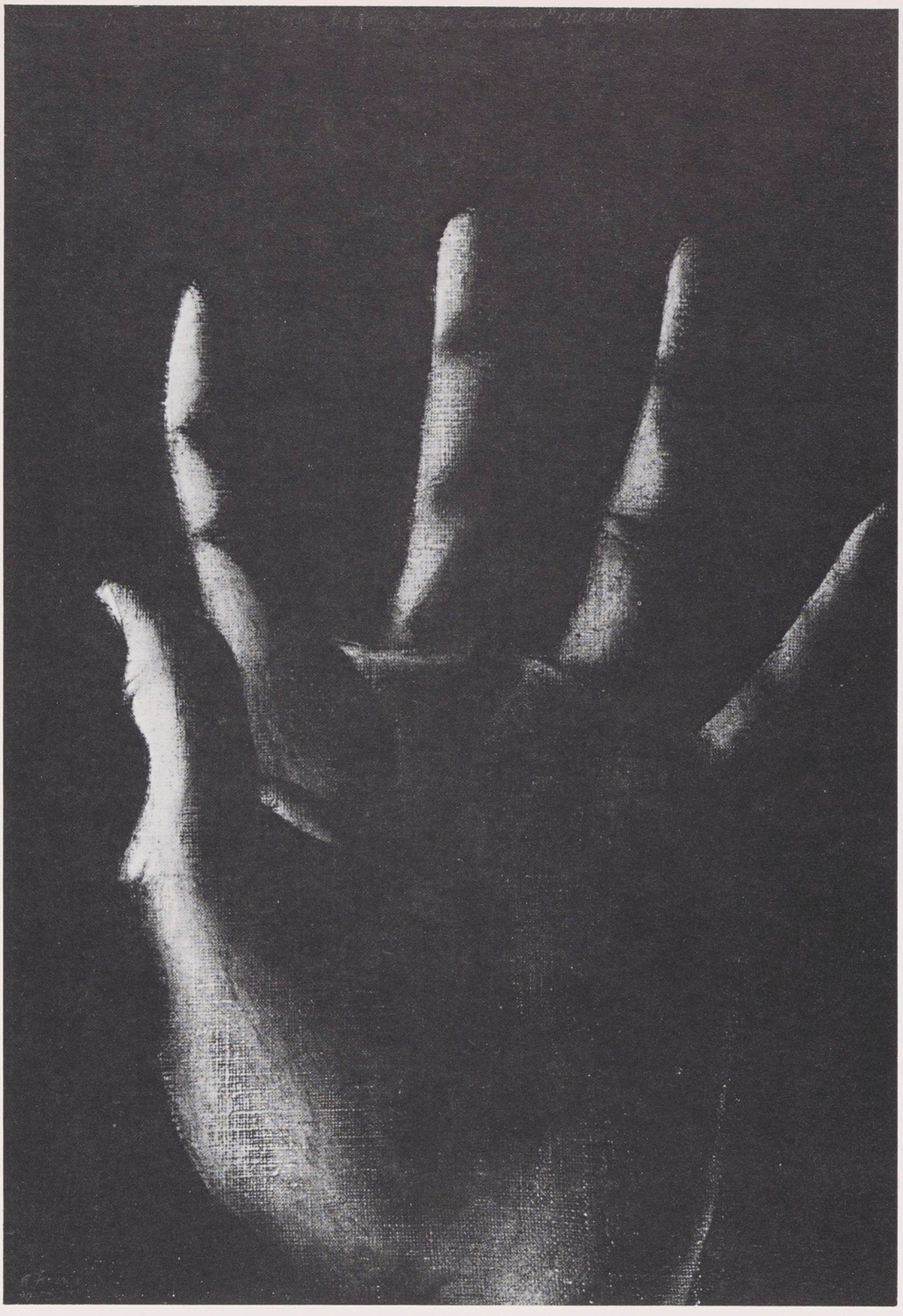
1981 December Lower Hutt
Dowse Art Museum, exhibition with Philip Clairmont

1982 February Wellington
National Art Gallery
Me by Myself group exhibition

references Catalogue: Barry Lett Galleries
Six Figurative Painters cat. no. 17

Barr, J. and M. *Contemporary New Zealand Artists A - M*
illus. p77 Martinborough, Alister Taylor, 1979

collection Auckland City Art Gallery



19 Tony Fomison *Study of a Hand* 1970

25 *Hand of Fate* 1979
oil on canvas on board 900 x 1200

inscribed
u.l. "Hand of Fate"
u.r. Fomison 1979
reverse #238 "Hand of Fate"
exhibited 1979 July Christchurch
Canterbury Society of Arts
solo exhibition
collection Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt (loan)

26 *The Agony in the Garden* 1982-1983
oil on hessian on board 610 x 610

exhibited 1983 June Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Artist's Project No. 4: Bringing back the Scattered
collection Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Napier

JEFFREY HARRIS

Born Akaroa, New Zealand, 1949.
First solo exhibition, Otago Museum foyer, 1969.
Self-taught; studied part time at Otago Polytechnic under Walden Tucker, 1971-72.
Has painted full time since 1970.
Received Frances Hodgkins Fellowship, University of Otago, 1977. Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand grants 1974 and 1978.
Survey exhibition of 86 works, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1981. Has exhibited throughout New Zealand, and is represented in most major public and private collections.
Represented New Zealand at the Carnegie Institute Biennale, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1982.
He is married to artist Joanna Paul; they live in Dunedin with their three children.

> "I am using 19th century materials, oil, paint and board to create a world not seen, but felt.
>
> "There is infinite beauty in life but always accompanied by intense pain —
>
> "Loss of hope, loss of faith gives any beauty a desperate quality.
>
> "A strong realisation of death, the years slipping away — the things that are beautiful, and were in the past are mixed with an unbearable sense of loss.
>
> "Only the brief moment when one can stand alone in some beautiful place is one filled with indescribable calm.
>
> "This calm, this interior peace is the most we can ask for."[1]
>
> "The self — terrible and constant, is for me the subject matter of painting."[2]

Jeffrey Harris's paintings begin with himself. Self-portraits appear in many of his works and his concern with individual identity is a constant theme. From this base Harris extends outward to include family, friends and relationships, occasionally political events, and further outward to realities beyond the physical world. These he often represents with religious symbols. Here the outward movement of subject matter becomes a spiral inwards, since Harris's religious paintings also include his family and self-portraits. The artist remains at the centre of his own journey of exploration.

Yet the communication in his paintings is not only with himself. In all of Jeffrey Harris's work we are aware of his determination to convey an intensity of experience; to create images which stay in our minds and which can clarify and enlarge our awareness. They are loaded and uneasy images which though contemplative are seldom calm.

In attempting to give some insights into Harris's work I will begin by looking at pictorial symbols he often uses and then discuss individual works in this exhibition. Harris himself is adamant that there is no "correct" reading of his paintings. They mean certain things to him but may convey different meanings to others.

Symbols

In religious painting of all traditions symbols are used to represent spiritual truths and mysteries, and in the past these symbols formed part of the visual vocabulary of the worshippers who looked at them. Today symbolic religious imagery is less familiar and artists who use symbols very often create their own vocabulary, making interpretation difficult for the viewer. Symbols by their nature are not reducible to single interpretations; they have multi-layered, sometimes opposing meanings and are a "bridge connecting humanity with a mysterious universe".[3]

Some of the symbols Harris uses are given below, with suggestions for meanings, most given by Harris himself.

boat — journey or transition; the ability to regenerate life
cross — crucifixion, human suffering
road — journey
blood — sacrifice, atonement
bird — the human spirit (an ancient Egyptian symbol)
severed heads and hands — sacrifice, atonement, repentance
noose — suicide
gardens and flowers — paradise

Harris is also aware of the emotional and symbolic value of colour and uses strong colour to add emphasis and intensity to his paintings. He commented on his own use of symbolic objects when discussing Albrecht Dürer's self-portraits:

> "Dürer surrounds himself with objects that are charged with meaning. . . . In my paintings I try to imbue all the objects that surround the central characters with as much significance as that. If you look at any of my pictures you should learn a lot more about what's happening in the centre of visual attention by looking at what's happening around it. My 1970 Self-portrait is based on Dürer's self-portrait as Christ. I've tried to integrate European art with my experience here in New Zealand."[4]

Self-portrait 1970

Jeffrey Harris's self-portrait of 1970 (cat. no. 28) is also about personal choice — a subject which greatly interests this painter. There is also a reference to that journey of exploration in search of what Harris termed "interior peace". Harris looks directly at us, his hands raised in a gesture of greeting or blessing. He is surrounded by objects and pictures within the picture which we should consider carefully. Behind him, framed on the wall is one of his own paintings of a crucifixion — three androgynous figures nailed to crosses, their heads raised, mouths screaming. The right side of the painting seems to offer Harris two possibilities for the future: a door opens out on to the landscape where a road indicates the possibility of new journeys, and a noose — an alternative to undertaking what may be a difficult journey. Laid out in front of him are books and objects which influence him. Several of the books are by artists who could not integrate with society. They include Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, the diary of Vladislav Nijinksy, and the Bible. There are other, untitled books, a letter, the artist's paintbrushes and, growing up towards him from the bottom of the painting, a small leafy branch.

In 1980 Harris painted another self-portrait in which several of the same elements appear. Again the artist contemplates a noose, and a bowl of water, symbol of redemption. A letter still lies on the ledge in front of him. Behind him is the landscape, this time with cliffs dropping steeply to the sea, and instead of a crucifixion, a mother and child are framed in yet another angular landscape above his head. Harris saw himself as facing the same questions about his life and the world as he did ten years before, but painting them more successfully.

> "The 1980 self-portrait is better than the 1970 one because it's more simplified. It's more loosely painted

but it's a tighter aesthetic unit. Maybe in another ten years there'll be a self-portrait that's better still. So even if my feelings aren't developing and I'm still having the same problems, as works of art they're getting better."[5]

The Terror of Modern Life 1970

Harris paints himself three times in this work. He is in profile, facing the drama which is taking place on the left side of the painting. Again there is a suggestion of choice: a door (labelled DOOR) outside which stand a woman and a young boy. Another woman standing inside holds scissors, and before her face dangles a noose. Outside, the landscape stretches away into the distance with a road winding through the hills. Perhaps the two women are the same person. Is the naked, scissor-holding woman deciding whether to use the scissors and noose or to step through the door to a different life with a child? None of the three heads of the painter have eyes; he cannot see what is happening. Like most of Harris's works the painting is enigmatic, paradoxical, open to many interpretations; all of them bounded by his uncompromising title, *The Terror of Modern Life* (cat. no. 27).

Figures in a Landscape 1970

Here Jeffrey Harris paints himself in the landscape (cat. no. 29), in a garden, but this is not paradise. His hands are clasped in front of him in a gesture of shame, his eyes no longer look out of the painting but are closed, looking inward. A woman holding gardening tools has her back turned to him, but between their heads is a bar of white light which connects them. Rising from that light is a shaft of red which opens out towards the top of the painting and within it are the branches of a leafy tree. On the right the ship of transition and new life seems to have gone aground. Leaves grow from the hole where its anchor chain should be and a fencepost is planted in front of it. Both figures appear rooted to the spot, caught and unable to move. These figures in the landscape are not in paradise, though the woman appears to have been working in the garden, making flowers grow. Between them, sitting stolidly in the distance, arms folded, is another woman who observes their unease. This painting is a good example of Harris's ability to place figures in the landscape, this time without the use of much strong colour, and make an integrated image which conveys the wretchedness and heartache we feel when our relationships with others are uncertain and difficult.

Deposition 1971

The Deposition or descent from the cross is an important subject for the tradition of painting. Christ's friends, grief-stricken, desolate and despairing, take his body down from the cross to place it in the tomb. The subject is human sorrow at the irretrievable loss of something good. It has all the elements of the intense experience that Harris looks for in his work and he painted it at a time when he was involved in a personal struggle with Christianity.

> "Just after I got married — my wife's a Catholic — I did a group of paintings about me confronting Christianity. . . . The paintings are about those struggles with myself. There are two or three self-portaits in some of them — so I'm confronting myself as well as Christ."[6]

Against a brilliantly coloured, explosive landscape a group of figures surround the reclining body of Christ. But he is not dead, his eyes are open, looking towards Harris on the right side of the painting, and his hands are raised in a gesture of blessing and forgiveness. The other figures look away from Christ and at each other, their eyes are focused, faces enigmatic. One woman, who seems to be Joanna Paul, the artist's wife, is holding the hand of Christ and looks sideways at Harris who is separate from the mourning group. His arm is folded across his chest in a gesture of protection or self-blame, his eyes seem to look inward and his face is stricken.

As spectators of the scene we are represented and included through the two figures at the left who also look on in the manner of patrons in traditional paintings of the Deposition. Behind the main group are other small naked figures, lost in the landscape. The cross does not appear, but the landscape is punctuated with cruciform power poles marching into the distance.

This is an unforgettable painting in which we find the "infinite beauty and intense pain" that Harris sees in life and communicates through his work.

In the paintings discussed so far, the disposition of hands, the direction of glances, the tilt of heads are of great significance within the works. This is particularly the case in *Deposition* (cat. no. 30) where the heads and hands of the figures make a pattern across the painting, and Harris uses a strong white in the eyes to emphasize the direction of each figure's gaze. Harris has commented on this element in the works:

> "Thinking about the importance of the hands in the earlier works, I think there is an analogy between these works and some of Kokoschka's portraits and double portraits of 1910-12 in which the hands quiver with an almost spiritual electricity."[7]

Hans Marie Wingler wrote of Kokoschka:

> "With the exception of a very few political allegories produced during the second world war, none of his pictures has any direct polemical intention. They are to be looked upon rather as metaphors which throw light upon the generally disastrous spiritual state of present day man, and upon the causes and consequences of that state so that those who have eyes and understanding may become alive to the dangers of the situation."[8]

Jeffrey Harris has made some paintings which are based on political events, although these make up a small part of his work and Harris sees them as general comments on the human capacity for brutality rather than reactions to specific political events. He usually bases these works on news photographs in which individual identity is lost but the message of violence, of suffering and loss, remains.

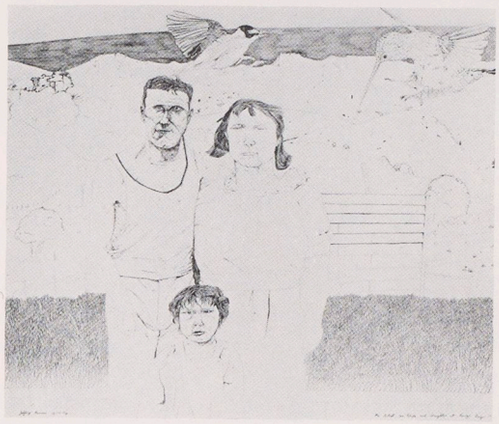
My Lai 1981, You May be a Woman 1981

The My Lai massacre exists in our collective consciousness as a particularly shocking example of the dehumanizing effects of war. The painting (cat. no. 32) is based on a photograph in *Time* magazine. It is brightly, almost gaily coloured, but its import is made very clear by the bitter face of the woman in the centre and the words My Lai written beside her head. She is surrounded by other weeping anguished figures whose eyes are closed — one of them attempts to comfort her. But she looks beyond them to another naked male figure, set against a red background on the left of the painting. Her eyes are accusing.

Jeffrey Harris used a photograph of a young woman hanged by the Nazis as the basis of the painting *You May be a Woman* (cat. no. 33). This is again a memorable image in which Harris uses beautiful colour in painting a tragic subject. Although the woman is apparently hanging by the neck — there is a suggestion of the rope above her head — the words "Sick on a Dream" painted above her seem to have a wider implication. Her features are twisted, her hair tangled, her eyes unfocused. This is where her dreams have led.

Discussing another of Harris's "political paintings", Jim Barr wrote:

> "This is not a localised act which can be explained by particular historical circumstances; it is a barbarity which must be confronted by us all. Harris has softened the original image and has created his own uneasy balance between the ghastly and the beautiful."[9]



Jeffrey Harris *The Artist, His Wife and Daughter at Barrys Bay* 1974
pencil on paper 357 x 430 mm
Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Family 1981

Family groups are a recurring subject in Jeffrey Harris's painting. In earlier works he often based the composition on old family photographs, and these are the source of the tense, stiff poses of many of his figures. Yet for Harris the subject of these paintings is not specifically his own family, but the idea of "family". The awareness of connections between people which, though often complex and difficult to analyse, are the most important elements in our relationships. And these connections need not be ties of blood but may be of ideas or insights. Harris uses the biological family as the pattern for such groupings. In *Family* (cat. no. 34), we see Harris himself on the right of the picture, separated from the group in the centre. This central group relates closely to a drawing Harris made in 1974 which was entitled *The Artist, His Wife and Daughter at Barrys Bay* 1974.

The drawing is like a family photograph. The figure of the artist bears little resemblance to Harris. He wears a singlet and stands stolidly before the landscape. In *Family* Harris has removed himself from the group, which is no longer in a recognizable landscape. His wife now holds a stiff bundle in her arms — a dead child, and their daughter Magdalena is several years older. Beside Joanna Paul is the figure of the artist from the earlier drawing, but he appears only in outline, without the three-dimensional reality of the other figures. Changes have taken place in this family as in all families. Positions and relationships alter, people grow older, and some die. The artist now lives in Dunedin, not Barrys Bay, and there are suggestions of city buildings at the side of the painting; and although the landscape has gone there are still plants and flowers in the garden.

32 Jeffrey Harris *My Lai* 1981

Unfinished

A final comment on an aspect of Harris's painting technique which has provoked some discussion. His paintings have been described as oddly unfinished in appearance. In parts of them the underpainting shows through and he does not conceal the development of the work from the viewer. The paint covers the surface unevenly, and while some areas are densely coloured others have only sparse outlines of objects and shapes. Yet in the end nothing but the artist's decision to let it alone decides whether a painting is finished.

> " 'The work of art' as Paul Klee put it 'is primarily creation; it is never experienced as a mere product.' The work is identical with the movement, psychological and manual, that creates it; when the movement stops, the work is done."[10]

Notes

1 Jeffrey Harris, statement in catalogue, New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts exhibition, August 31 - September 14 1973

2 Barnett Newman, quoted in *Saul Steinberg*, by Harold Rosenberg, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1978, p10

3 Betty Kathleen Duncan, *Jeffrey Harris: Art and Religious Symbolism*, a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate Diploma in Theology in Phenomenology of Religion, at the University of Otago, Dunedin, 1981. I am greatly indebted to Betty Kathleen Duncan's perceptive discussion of Jeffrey Harris's religious symbolism.

4 Art New Zealand 18, Summer 1981, *A Conversation with Jeffrey Harris* pp22-29

5 ibid.

6 ibid.

7 Jeffrey Harris, letter to Alexa Johnston, 4 December 1981

8 Hans Marie Wingler, *Oskar Kokoschka — The Work of the Painter*, Faber and Faber, London, 1958

9 Jim Barr, *A Record of Pain Completed*, Jeffrey Harris exhibition catalogue, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 4 April - 3 May 1981

10 Harold Rosenberg, "Arshile Gorky, Art and Identity", *The Anxious Object*, Thames and Hudson, London 1965, p99

34 Jeffrey Harris *Family* September-November 1981

27 *The Terror of Modern Life* July 1970
oil on hardboard 1223 x 1222

exhibited 1972 18 October - 2 November
Christchurch
Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery
Jeffrey Harris Paintings

1978 19 May - 7 June Palmerston North
Manawatu Art Gallery
Jeffrey Harris, Paintings 1969-1978

1978 18 June - 12 July Lower Hutt
Dowse Art Museum, followed by national tour
Jeffrey Harris, Paintings 1969-1978

1981 4 April - 3 May Dunedin
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Jeffrey Harris

28 Jeffrey Harris *Self-portrait* 1970

28 *Self-portrait* 1970
oil on hardboard 885 x 1217

exhibited 1970 23 October - 7 November Dunedin
Dunedin Public Library lecture hall
Jeffrey Harris Paintings and Drawings

1978 19 May - 7 June Palmerston North
Manawatu Art Gallery
Jeffrey Harris, Paintings 1969-1978

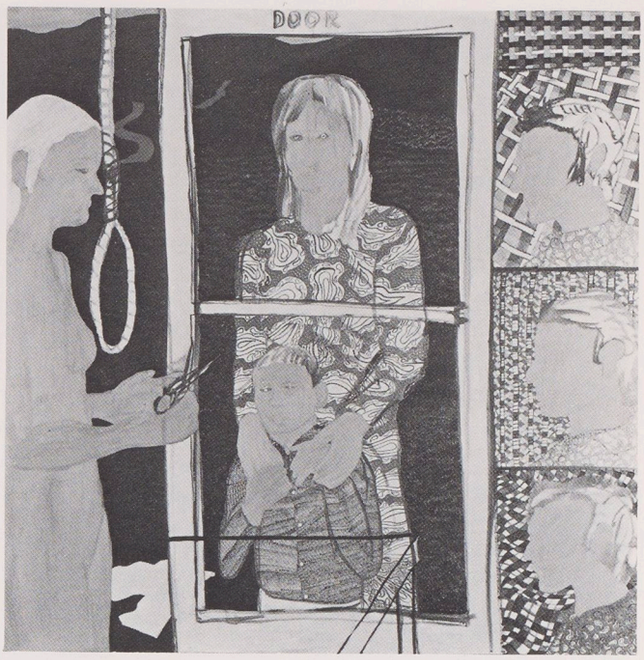
1978 18 June - 12 July Lower Hutt
Dowse Art Museum, followed by national tour
Jeffrey Harris, Paintings 1969-1978

1981 4 April - 3 May Dunedin
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Jeffrey Harris

references Catalogue: Manawatu Art Gallery, May 1978
Jeffrey Harris, Paintings and Drawings 1969 -1978 illus.

Art New Zealand Summer 1981 No. 18
"A Conversation with Jeffrey Harris"
pp22-29 illus. p23

Thesis: Postgraduate Diploma in Theology in Phenomenology of Religion.
University of Otago,
Dunedin, August 1981
Jeffrey Harris: Art and Religious Symbolism
B. K. Duncan illus. p45



27 Jeffrey Harris *The Terror of Modern Life* July 1970

29 *Figures in a landscape* 1970
oil on board 1218 x 1218

inscribed
u.r. Harris '70

exhibited 1982 7 October - 24 November Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Recent Acquisitions

1981 October - May 1982 Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Artichoke

collection Auckland City Art Gallery

30 *Deposition* November 1971
oilon hardboard 1220 x 1527

inscribed
l.l. Harris '71

exhibited 1972 14 February - 3 March Wellington
Peter McLeavey Gallery
Jeffrey Harris Paintings

1972 19 April - 3 May Dunedin
Otago Museum foyer
Jeffrey Harris Paintings and Drawings

1972 18 October - 2 November
Christchurch
Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery
Jeffrey Harris Paintings

31 *Judith* 1979
conté on paper 642 x 904

inscribed
u.l. For Judith
u.r. Jeffrey Harris 79

exhibited 1979 3 - 26 April Dunedin
Bosshard Galleries
Judith, 10 Conté Drawings 1979

30 Jeffrey Harris *Deposition* November 1971

32 *My Lai* January 1981
oil on hardboard 1202 x 1202

inscribed
l.l. J. Harris 1981
exhibited 1981 4 April - 3 May Dunedin
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Jeffrey Harris
1982 2 April - 30 May Wellington
National Art Gallery
Acquisitions 1981-82
references Catalogue: Dunedin Public Art Gallery
April 1981
Jeffrey Harris illus.
Catalogue: National Art Gallery
April 1982
Acquisitions 1981-82 illus: cover

collection National Art Gallery, Wellington

33 *You may be a Woman* 27/28 February 1981
oil on canvas 656 x 662

inscribed
l.r. J. Harris 1981
exhibited 1981 4 April - 3 May Dunedin
Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Jeffrey Harris
collection Anna-Lise and Marshall Seifert,
Waitati

34 *Family* September - November 1981
oil on canvas 1527 x 1374

inscribed
l.l. J. Harris Sept-Nov 1981
exhibited 1982 2 - 19 March Dunedin
Bosshard Galleries
Jeffrey Harris, Six Paintings on Canvas
collection Dunedin Public Art Gallery

VIVIAN LYNN

Born Wellington, New Zealand, 1931.
Enrolled at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, 1949.
Graduated with a Diploma of Fine Arts; and awarded Louise Lonsdale senior life drawing prize, 1951.
Worked as a full-time tutor in fine arts at the Hutt Valley Memorial Technical College, 1953-55.
Married 1956. Raised two children while continued to draw, paint and exhibit in group exhibitions.
First solo exhibition of paintings and drawings, Woodware Art Gallery, Christchurch 1966.
Began printmaking, 1968.
Undertook fact-finding tour of USA, working at and visiting various printshops: Honolulu Academy of Arts, Pratt Graphic Centre, New York, Tamarind Institute, New Mexico, 1972.
Began multi-media and three-dimensional work, 1973.
Part-time tutor in etching and lithography, Wellington Polytechnic 1974-1978.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand grants 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983.
Undertook fact-finding tour of USA and Europe, 1981.
Awarded Advisory Committee on Women's Affairs grant to facilitate New Zealand Women's Art Archive, 1973.
Awarded McKenzie Education Foundation grant to facilitate New Zealand Women's Art Archive 1983.
Has concentrated on sculpture since 1980.
Has exhibited throughout New Zealand and in Australia, Japan, Malaysia, USA and Germany.
Is represented in most major public and private collections in New Zealand as well as state and private collections in other countries.
She lives in Wellington, where she is a part-time tutor at St Catherine's College.

> "Artists have traditionally worked in the interest of the ruling class. The traditional language of sculptural form, the two-dimensional surface, conventions of line, tone and colour, perspective and symbolism developed to contain and disseminate the view of the world held by, and politically necessary for, the ruling class.
>
> "The most powerful artistic thrust forward during our century has come from artists who repudiated formal artistic convention by animating their work against established art and the ruling class.
>
> "Our century is one is which the anti-authoritarian ethic has been accompanied by anti-artistic events. At the beginning of this century avant garde exhibitions were closed down, and artists vilified, but today thousands of policemen are sent to protect international biennales. Art is clearly seen now to be allied with power and that was not clear sixty years ago."[1]

Vivian Lynn's work articulates her distrust of the unholy alliance between contemporary art, art institutions and society's male power structures. She asserts her point of view as a woman artist, a point of view which is dismissed as irrelevant by those it threatens, and consequently is rarely acknowledged.

At a time when the predominant move in the visual arts was to pare down images, to reduce them to simple, austere forms, Vivian Lynn chose to make her works more complicated, to build up layers of images, and layers of meaning which reflected her unease with political and artistic norms. She excelled at art school, but she feels that her work only began to reflect her ideas accurately seventeen years after she left.

> "My painting took on an explicit female perspective in 1968 with *Yellow Sleep*, synonymous in its imagery with the stirrings of political awareness I was experiencing. It was during this time that the need to formulate a *visual language* to contain my reality began to be understood as not just a matter of style. I was making prints and drawings but I also made a 'Hairy Jelly', I liked it. I had a studio full of experiments in plaster, jelly and stockings, but couldn't do anything with them — they were not within a New Zealand art context, and there was no existing feminist art context in which to place them. I worked in various print workshops in the USA during 1972, returned to Wellington in 1973 and embarked on my *Book of Forty Images*."[2]

Lynn decided to examine the cliches and taboos that encompass and confine women in New Zealand society by gathering information about women in the workplace, women in marriage, women and the Church, women as sexual objects, women in relation to war, the environment, and the beauty industry. The book combined visual images with written statistics and was produced by the silkscreen process with cheap materials. Lynn's aim was to make an object with form and medium which was equivalent to its content. In other words, the book contained material which criticized society and so she ensured that it did not conform to accepted ideas of book presentation.

> "The Book was an investigation which had social and political relevance and attempted to clarify and rehabilitate the social roles of men and women. The moral issue was in the content as well as the form."[3]

The *Book of Forty Images* marks the development of the visual language Lynn has been seeking, a language which she employs in the works included here. They are intriguing and often disquieting works: "I want a toxic image that psychically shocks — the conscious levels are split open — not a safe anchorage."[4] Lynn uses the technical facility she developed at art school to great effect in much of her work; even recycling art school drawings as elements of her collages. In *Shell Drawing III* (cat. no. 35) Lynn uses line drawing of the academic style, which she considers sterile, to emphasize the meaning of the work: a comment on restrictive social and political structures. Unlike Aphrodite who emerged from the sea standing calmly on a flat scallop shell, Lynn's figures struggle in vain to free themselves from the volutes which imprison them. Their bodies twist and turn in their beautiful but restrictive shells, separated from one another, each contained in her own empty space. None of these half-formed bodies have heads or eyes and their struggles seem blind and undirected.

Patriarchy

The Hypocrites (cat. no. 36), *Erection II* (cat. no. 37) and *Ichthus* (cat. no. 38) all contain further comment on the injustice and hypocrisy of the patriarchal system, and of any system which consciously restricts the power of many of its people. The towering edifice in *Erection II* remains upright only because its foundations are supported by a mass of soft-bodied creatures, both male and female. Some of the cells in which these organic beings are confined are padded with deep-buttoned plush; a cushioning which still leaves many of them writhing and without comfort. In contrast with its foundations the building is hard-edged and gleaming. Lynn combines western and eastern architectural styles, the western style building placed on top with enormous missiles and rockets projecting from its window arches. The entire mismatched structure appears to be moving along towards an unknown destination, weapons at

the ready. The question implicit in this work is, on whose backs are society's institutions, empires and palaces built?

The Hypocrites is a satirical work which is a response to long-standing male jokes about women gossiping. A group of puffed-up, blind, penis-like creatures with clacking beaks emerge from a soap-box to stand like self-important birds. Lynn's use of subtle colour and outline in this work gives a soft, sinister quality to the image. In *Juggernaut* (cat. no. 41) there is no humour evident. This is the most recent of the works shown here. Lynn sees the monstrous creature with its swollen gut and skull head as a metaphor for all the destructive forces of fear, greed, hatred and self-interest which seem to dominate the world. Like all juggernauts, this one brings destruction in its wake, its poisonous blue tentacles, like those of a jellyfish, dangle below it.

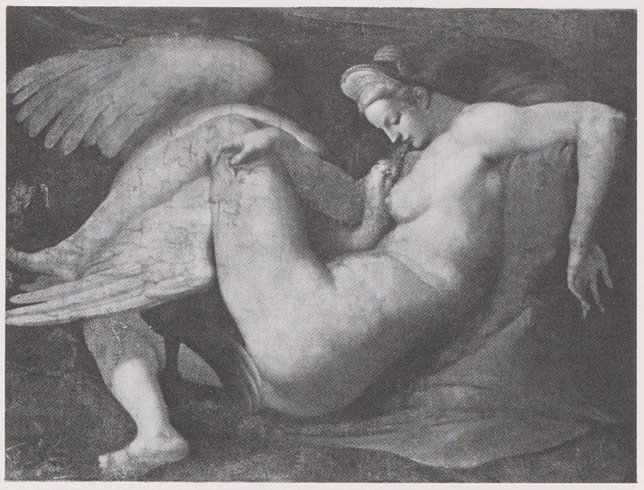
Male wisdom myths

The collage, *Their Impacted Wisdom* (cat. no. 40), is one of a large group of works Vivian Lynn made, using a wide range of materials, some from her art school past. She discovered a collection of her old life-drawings from the Canterbury School of Fine Arts and noticed the difference in the poses that male and female models were instructed to hold. The poses reinforced the antique world philosophy of difference in male/female roles. Lynn remembers one of the models as a witty and humorous woman, a good athlete and with none of the coy demureness of the poses she was expected to hold. By contrast, the male models held up their heads, confident, secure and outward-looking. Lynn cut up these drawings and combined them with other elements: etchings of her own, photographic negatives used in the silkscreen process, magazine photographs and new drawings, to make composite images with her usual complex overlay of symbol and meaning. *Their Impacted Wisdom* includes dental photographs which add emphasis to the work's witty and cutting title. Three men in classical poses are grim parodies of the heroes of antiquity. Janus-like, one of them has two faces, a normal human face and a screaming skull. Another appears to look aggressively out of the picture, but has no eyes, only ravening jaws. A spur is around his naked heel. The third figure is masked by a helmet over which a woman's body is spreadeagled in the manner of a military standard. These three heroes touch and support one another like the creatures in *The Hypocrites*.

Another reference to a patriarchal institution is found in *Ichthus (Jesus Hominum Salvator) Saviour of Men* (cat. no. 38). Lynn is alluding here to the compulsion of men throughout history to subdue and control women's sexuality. The drawing is a bitter comment on the male-dominated churches' damaging of women's self-esteem, depicted here as a rape. The worn and haggard female figure buries her face in her arm as an enormous fish violates her genitals. The Roman Catholic Church still holds up before women the unattainable role model of Mary, the virgin mother who, while embodying all the loving, self-sacrificing virtues seen as particularly womanly, has little substance as a strong individual.

> "In this celebration of the perfect human woman, both humanity and women are subtly denigrated . . . the Virgin Mary is not the innate archetype of female nature, the dream incarnate. She is the instrument of a dynamic argument by the Catholic Church about the structure of society, presented as a God-given code."[5]

In *Heraldic Symbol* (cat. no. 39) Lynn refers to the classical myth of Leda and the swan. Jupiter turns himself into a swan and makes love to Leda, the wife of a Spartan king. The story has been a favourite of artists since antiquity. They



after Michelangelo *Leda and the Swan*
oil on canvas 1054 x 1410 mm
National Gallery, London
Presented by the Duke of Northumberland, 1838

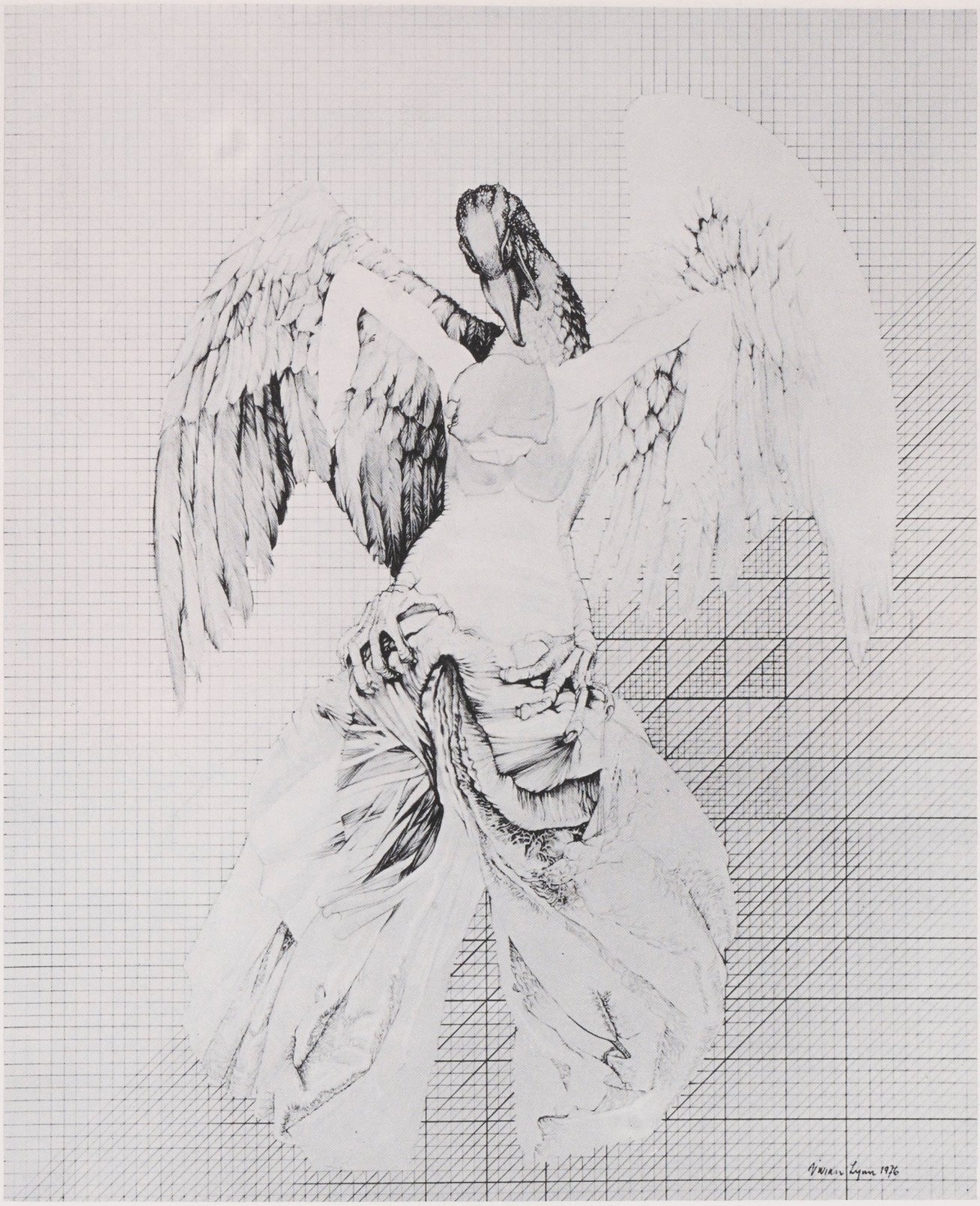
have usually shown a compliant Leda gracefully submitting to a beautiful white swan which has a long curving neck and soft white feathers. But this is in reality a story about rape. Swans are not gentle creatures, and in Vivian Lynn's *Heraldic Symbol* the swan has a vicious beak and sharp claws which rake open female genitals. Leda has collapsed unconscious.

In a statement about her more recent works Vivian Lynn discussed ideas which relate to some of the works in this exhibition.

> "My hypothesis is that present day attitudes towards women, having their roots in ancient myth, are deeply ingrained prejudicial attitudes and continue to be inimical to the physical and psychological health of women. It interests me that the garden throughout history has been animated by the female figure and through all the mythical garden stories, although the debate centred on the nature of reality versus illusion, nature versus art, truth versus beauty, or good versus evil, the female figure whether it be Alcina, Aeratia, Armida or Eve, has been a metaphor for corruption. When Milton in *Paradise Lost* writes of female hair as 'Wanton ringlets wav'd' and 'the close embrace of those twining vines' he portrays a female power than may ensnare and destroy. Her garden is a place of great danger to him. These major myths of our culture express his lust for her, his envy and fear of her, and his violence towards her, and formulate the conspiracy to destroy sensuality and denigrate the female principle. These myths are utterances from the minds and mouths of men. They are not the utterances of women."[6]

Many artists who criticize society face the problem of communicating from the art world to society at large. Lynn avoids this dilemma because her criticisms are directed also at the art world itself. She produces bitter works which make no concession to beauty. They are raw with misery and anger. She is a feminist artist who addresses directly the problems which beset relationships between men and women and the oppressors and oppressed of the world. She uses her work to analyse both past and present in the hope of change in the future.

> "I'd say that my feminism and my work are one and the same thing. And that having lived 51 years I've experienced enough to have become what some people call radicalized or, in other words, a feminist."[7]



39 Vivian Lynn *Heraldic Symbol* 1976

Notes

1 Vivian Lynn lecture, Wellington, May 1983

2 Vivian Lynn, quoted in Juliet Batten's "New Zealand Feminist Artists," *Broadsheet* 110, June 1983, pp19-32

3 see footnote 1

4 see footnote 2

5 Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980

6 Vivian Lynn — statement accompanying her survey exhibition at the Wellington City Art Gallery, February 1982

7 see footnote 2

41 Vivian Lynn *Juggernaut* 1982

35 *Shell Drawing III* 1975
pencil 565 x 445

inscribed
l.r. Vivian Lynn 1975
exhibited 1980 22 September - 4 October Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Vivian Lynn, Drawings, Collages, Prints, Book Construction
1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work
references *Listener* 20 March 1982
"Obsessions Articulated", Elva Bett

36 *The Hypocrites* 1976
pencil and coloured pencil 630 x 505

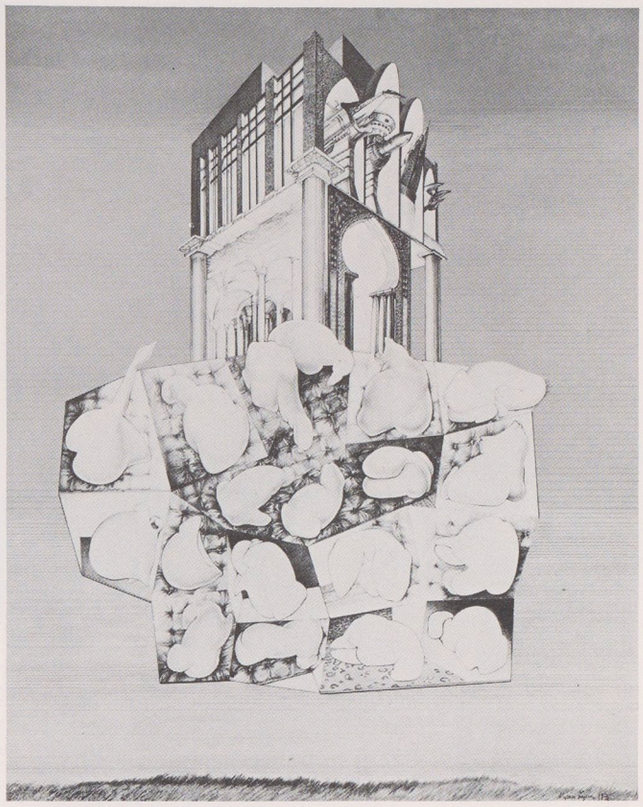
inscribed
l.r. Vivian Lynn 1976
exhibited 1980 22 September - 4 October Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Vivian Lynn, Drawings, Collages, Prints, Book Construction
1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work
references *Art New Zealand* 1981 No. 19
"Vivian Lynn" Gordon H. Brown p47

37 *Erection II* 1976
coloured pencil and gouache 635 x 503

inscribed
l.r. Vivian Lynn 1976
exhibited 1980 22 September - 4 October Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Vivian Lynn, Drawings, Collages, Prints, Book Construction
1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work
references *Art New Zealand* 1981 No. 19
"Vivian Lynn" Gordon H. Brown p47
Listener 20 March 1982
"Obsessions Articulated", Elva Bett

38 *Ichthus (Jesus Hominum Salvator) Saviour of Men* 1976
oil pastel on paper 622 x 505

inscribed
l.r. Vivian Lynn 1976
exhibited 1980 22 September - 4 October Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Vivian Lynn, Drawings, Collages, Prints, Book Construction
1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work
references *Art New Zealand* 1981 No. 19
"Vivian Lynn" Gordon H. Brown p46



37 Vivian Lynn *Erection II* 1976

39 *Heraldic Symbol* 1976
pencil and watercolour 630 x 513

inscribed
l.r. Vivian Lynn 1976
exhibited 1980 22 September - 4 October Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Vivian Lynn, Drawings, Collages, Prints, Book Construction
1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work
references *Art New Zealand* 1981 No. 19
"Vivian Lynn" Gordon H. Brown p47
collection private collection, Auckland

40 *Their Impacted Wisdom* 1979-1980
collage (see note) 780 x 630

inscribed
l.l. Vivian Lynn 1979-80
exhibited 1980 22 September - 4 October Auckland
New Vision Gallery
Vivian Lynn, Drawings, Collages, Prints, Book Construction
1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work
note This work is collage made principally from parts of Lynn's earlier work.
The principal elements are:
art school life drawings, 1949-51,
colour relief prints from 1960s,

40 Vivian Lynn *Their Impacted Wisdom* 1979-1980

etchings from 1968-1972,
photographic negatives preparatory
to silkscreen printing,
templates from sprayed paintings, 1969-70,
dental photographs,
recent drawings, 1979-80.

41 *Juggernaut* 1982
acrylic on paper 520 x 666

inscribed
l.r. Vivian Lynn 1982

exhibited 1982 February Wellington
City Art Gallery
Vivian Lynn A Survey 1972-80 & New Work

ALAN PEARSON

Born Liverpool, England, 1929.
Enrolled at the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts, 1957, graduating with a Diploma of Fine Arts, 1959.
Honours year at University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts (received 1st class Honours degree) 1961.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand scholarship; attended Royal Academy, London, 1964-65.
First solo exhibition, Vulcan Gallery, Auckland, 1969.
Received Arts Council travel grant; visited Europe and Britain, 1976.
Travelled extensively in USA, Britain and Europe, living for nine months in Italy, 1980. Has exhibited throughout New Zealand and internationally, and is represented in most major public and private collections in this country.
He is currently living in London.

> "When a community accepts rather than suppresses drama of character it will be a significant development; a real step beyond colonialism in recognizing not only the singularity of our landscape — that was an achievement of the thirties — but also the potential of the self, the universe of human psychology.
>
> "His palette is a veritable storm of tones blended as he thinks and paints. It is because he turns psychology into colour that he is, to a degree hitherto unknown in New Zealand, an expressionist painter."[1]

Alan Pearson's portraits are images of character and emotional and physical conditions. Pearson's penetrating use of paint is never gentle or sweet; he seems to carve out facial contours using saturated colour to intensify the mood. He sets himself the task of revealing the temperament of his individual subjects and intends his work to record an emotional and spiritual essence of humanity. None of his work is unreservedly joyful; his record of the human condition is disquieting, and often contemptuous. These various portraits of himself, of his wife and of other artists, indicate the range of individual character and emotion that he can communicate.

Self-portraits

Alan Pearson's self-portraits document his changing physical and mental states. He paints himself as heroically depressed, bruised by physical pain, suspicious, demented, and occasionally Christlike. The two self-portraits exhibited here, painted six years apart, show very different kinds of self-analysis.

Self-portrait as the Waikato Man (cat. no. 44) was painted during the year that he wrote this poem:

Morbid Green

God let me die!
in a desert bare
naked, bleached, taken up
rather than die under a Waikato moon
like a lamb, fleeced
devoured by the all-enveloping
green of vegetation
the pen of man's mental limitations
(coughed up green)
Best to be forgotten not seen
to survive
under grey clouds
the shroud over European endeavour
(Hobson's choice)
man without voice
listens to the bark of silent dogs[2]

Pearson has had several exhibitions in which his poems have been included alongside his paintings, broadening their context and offering further insights. A morbid green pervades many of Pearson's works, indicative of dense vegetation, depression or decay; a response to the New Zealand landscape and the stolidness of its people. In this painting the artist is alone in the verdant landscape, a heroic yet haunted figure. He conveys a sensation of physical inertia coupled with intellectual and emotional turmoil; an unpleasant tension.

> "His self-portraits . . . become powerful expressions of the New Zealand condition which Pearson sees as similar to that described by Patrick White writing of Australia in the nineteenth century as 'a stupor of mutton'."[3]

Pearson returned to Europe in 1980 and is again painting in London. The latest work in this exhibition is the 1983 *Self-portrait, Grey Day, London* (cat. no. 48). Here the painter is still a haunted figure, but this time he is frenzied and alarmed. Inside the frame of the picture is another frame which seems to fall away. Masks and hands force their way into the space. The painter looks threatened, attacked from all sides, eyes staring and mouth dropping open in horror. He wrote of this work:

"Reflections on petrol, concrete, dampness, egalitarian crassness, muggers, Brezhnev, Reagan, Mickey Mouse, Bernard Levin, Stalingrad, Beirut, Auckland,
Really! Crazy old Decadence
doesn't know where to begin
in the back, brain or skin
But
it's definitely trying to get IN!"[4]

This is a grey painting, just as the *Waikato Man* is a green one; the colours parallel both surroundings and emotions.

Alison

Pearson's portraits of his wife, Alison, are as frequent and as varied in mood as his self-portraits. The 1977 work *Alison II* (cat. no. 43) shows a strong and determined woman. Pearson's use of colour emphasizes her state of mind. Her wild hair and dress are brilliantly red, silhouetted against a strong blue sky. Shapes crowd in on her from the sides of the picture, yet she sits still and quiet, apparently calm. Only her eyes are questioning and apprehensive. Despite its beauty this is not a reassuring painting; there is a strong sensation of a person under stress, aware of change and attempting to meet it without fear. The 1980 *Portrait of Alison* (cat. no. 47) is a more contemplative work. She sits, hand to head, eyes dreamy and detached. She appears lost in reverie, her face half shadowed, and her expression sad. Her dress and hair are yellow now, their outlines curving and broken in hastily applied squiggles of paint. Colour and light are the solid realities here; by contrast the figure of Alison is almost incorporeal. Behind her, against a green background, yellow crosses writhe in the sky, a recurring motif in Pearson's work. Pearson says this portrait was painted while Alison was listening to a Liszt piano concerto; he usually paints to music and its rhythms are often evident in his work.

Nice ladies

In his 1975 *Portrait — Remuera Lady* (cat. no. 42) Pearson reveals a deep ambivalence towards women and, in particular, middle-class women. New Zealand is not a classless society and there is a frequent appropriation of working class antecedents by the educated male elite in the worlds of art and literature. Although men are seen as able to escape the stigma of bourgeois, middle-class attitudes, women are assumed to be trapped forever. Pearson has written a number of poems which spell out this idea.

Nice Ladies

Nice Ladies
sap.
the sun of man's rays
shrouded in the mist of the unknown
they wait with pink vulvad jewels with distaste
at man's inadequacy

The Head

Her head spite
writhes in the —
Night — Hidden in pillows of
Womans hate
body sure
Waits for revenge
Man its prey
Smiles when at play
pretends demure
thoughts of self
obscure
blame-the-mate
will die in hate
half married
women get together
laugh at man's displeasure
weep together
at his corpse
There is always another
of course![5]

Pearson's observations are cynical. This is not a painting of a "nice lady"; it is a savage attack. He wrote of it:

> "a lady's raging dissatisfaction at her failure in profound personal and social terms in getting what she chooses."[6]

Pearson shows no sympathy for her private pain; painting her as vigilant, brooding, greedy and monstrous, her face a pitiless mask, her mouth a vicious slash of red. This is a work which clearly indicates the lack of communication between the sexes and the classes in New Zealand, which is a source of anxiety and fear.

Fellow artists

Pearson's portraits of Tony Fomison and Denys Trussell are more sympathetic. *Portrait of the Poet, Denys Trussell* (cat. no. 46) has the poet sitting in the midst of a vividly green landscape, surrounded by waving tussock against windswept hills. Trussell is shown as a small, self-contained figure; a visionary in shabby coat and polished shoes. Pearson described the painting:

> "Denys painted as a poetic spirit of European descent in harmony with the light and dark forces which permeate the land of his birth. A consolidation of the European spirit with the Polynesian spirit!"

The implications of light and dark forces, of demons visible and invisible, are even more evident in Pearson's *Portrait of*

Chaim Soutine *Woman in Red (The Madwoman)* 1920
oil on canvas 959 x 693 mm
National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

Tony Fomison (cat. no. 45). Fomison is in his Auckland studio surrounded by the masks and faces which often haunt Pearson's subjects, but this time they are taken from Fomison's own works. They have become his attributes. Large and small heads peer out of boxes or around curtains. The skulls of ancestors and of the makers of rock drawings, which Fomison studies, are part of this reality. They appear to close in on him, reducing his space, and occupying his mind. Fomison is not alarmed; he has come to value these spectres and to learn from them. These two portraits are tributes to fellow artists.

Alan Pearson's concentration on the portrait as a major means of expression is unique in New Zealand's contemporary painting. In his gestural and symbolic use of paint and colour he demonstrates a debt to the German expressionist tradition, but his style and vision are his own. His works attempt to analyse individual states of mind and to comment on the reality of life in New Zealand and, in doing this, he does not conceal the prejudices and fears which he shares with many New Zealanders.

Notes

1 *Islands*, August 1979, Vol.7 No. 4, "Alan Pearson: Cartographer of the Singular Man," Denys Trussell, pp389-404

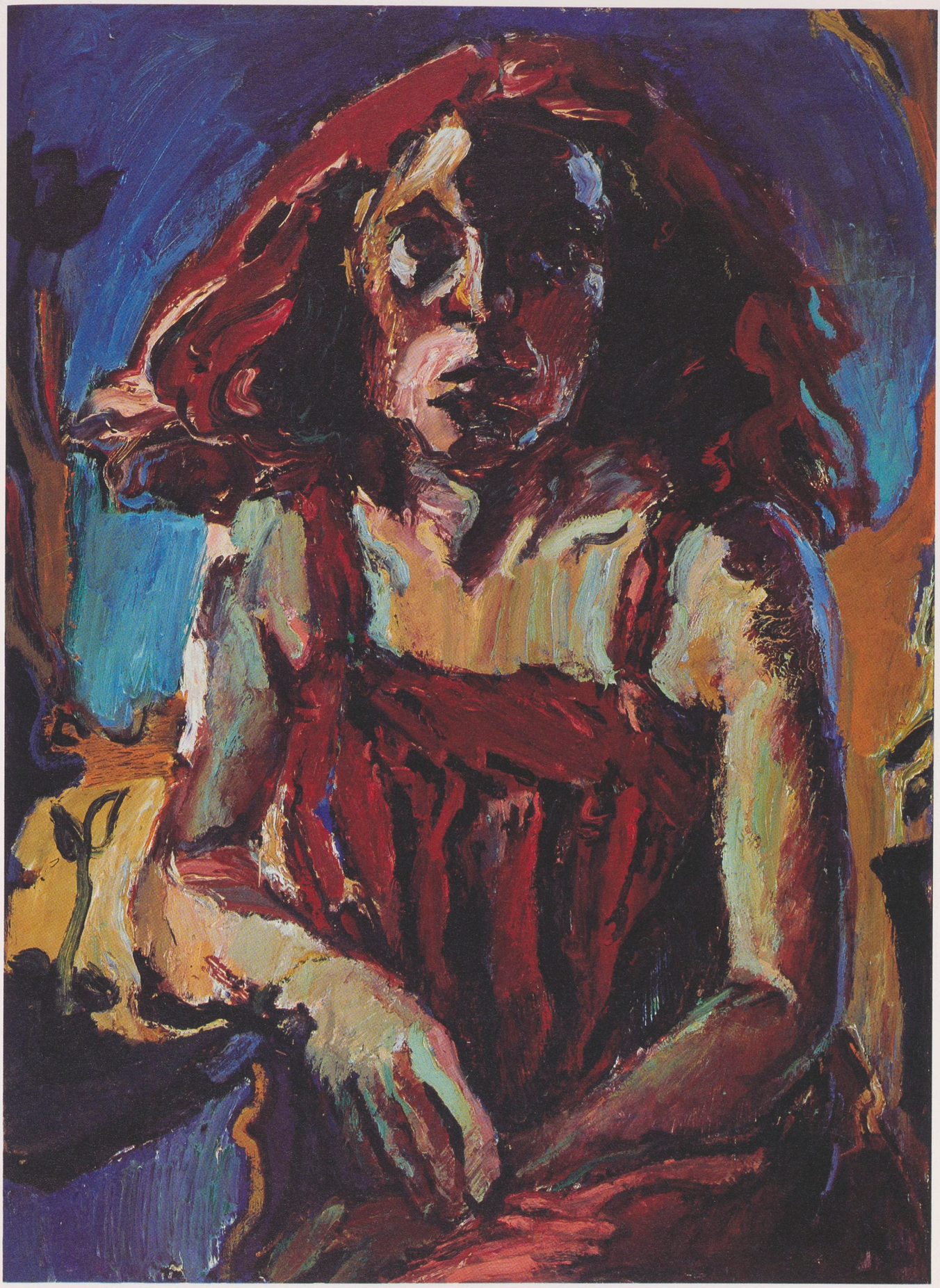
2 Alan Pearson, *Poems and Drawings*, Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington, 1978. First stanza from Pearson's poem *Morbid Green*

3 Neil Rowe, *Evening Post*, 7 April 1979

4 Alan Pearson, letter to Alexa Johnston, 30 November 1983

5 *Pearson: Portraits and Poetry*, Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1976

6 see note 4



43 Alan Pearson *Alison II* 1977

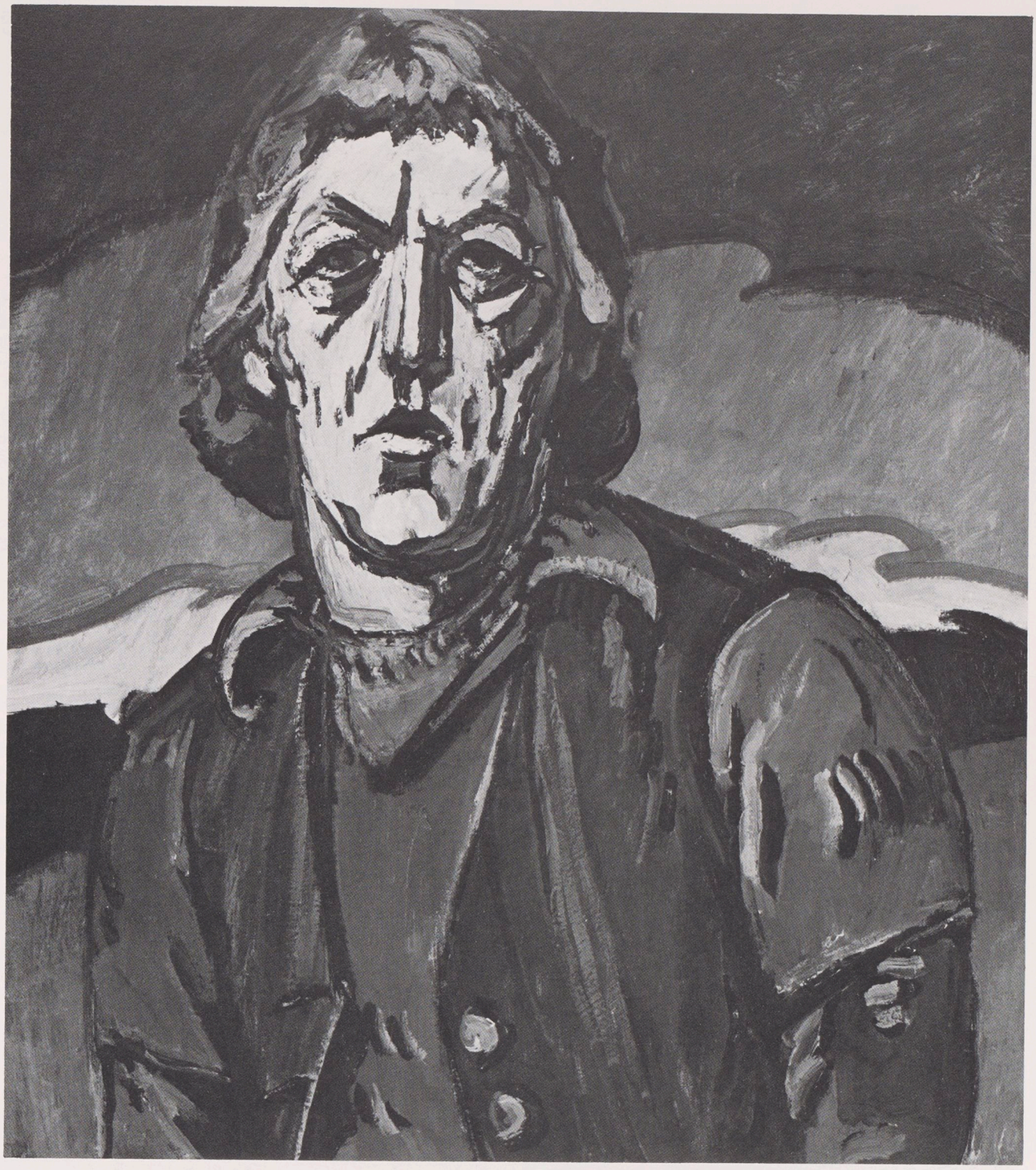
42 Alan Pearson *Portrait — Remuera Lady* 1975

42 *Portrait – Remuera Lady* 1975
oil on board 1218 x 914

inscribed
reverse Portrait Remuera Lady 1975
Alan Pearson

43 *Alison II* 1977
oil on board 682 x 498

inscribed
reverse Alison II
exhibited 1978 16 - 28 October Christchurch
Brooke Gifford Gallery
Alan Pearson: Paintings
references *Islands* Winter 1977 No. 20
"Eight Paintings by Alan Pearson"
pp169-176, illus. p171



44 Alan Pearson *Self-portrait as the Waikato Man* 1977

44 *Self-portrait as the Waikato Man* 1977
oil on board 668 x 597

inscribed reverse: Self Portrait as the Waikato Man
Signed A R Pearson 77

exhibited: 1977 Wellington
Elva Bett Gallery, *solo exhibition*

references: *Islands* Winter 1977 No. 20
"Eight Paintings by Alan Pearson"
pp169-176, illus. p169

collection: private collection, Christchurch

45 *Portrait of Tony Fomison* 1977
oil on board 665 x 600

exhibited: 1977 Auckland
Peter Webb Galleries
Alan Pearson: Recent Paintings
1981 March Dunedin
Hocken Library
Some Recent Acquisitions 1978-80

references: *Islands* Winter 1977 No. 20
"Eight Paintings by Alan Pearson"
pp169-176, illus. p170

collection: Hocken Library, University of Otago, Dunedin

45 Alan Pearson *Portrait of Tony Fomison* 1977

46 *Portrait of the Poet, Denys Trussell* 1978
oil on board 1200 x 940

exhibited 1978 April Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Auckland Artists

1979 March - April Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Recent Acquisitions

1980 May - June Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Portraits

1981 May - June Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Contemporary New Zealand Painting

1981 October - May 1982 Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Artichoke

collection Auckland City Art Gallery

47 *Portrait of Alison*
oil on canvas 690 x 690

48 *Self-portrait, Grey Day London* 1983
oil on board 889 x 838

PETER PERYER

Born Auckland, New Zealand, 1941.
Attended University of Auckland, graduating Master of Arts in Education, 1972.
Self-taught, began drawing and taking photographs in 1973.
First solo exhibition, Snaps Gallery, Auckland, 1976.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand grant, 1978 and 1982; travelled in Europe and USA.
Represented New Zealand at the Fourth Biennale of Sydney, 1982. Works reproduced in New Zealand and international photography journals; and are held in a number of major New Zealand public and private collections.
Lives at Devonport, Auckland.

Between 1977 and 1979 Peter Peryer's photographs were principally portraits: of himself, his wife and his friends. His work began to receive considerable critical acclaim at this time and the portraits were particularly highly praised. Yet, for the next five years he made no more, turning to other subjects. And so this group of works is particularly interesting, as it is an apparently isolated phenomenon.

They are works which make the viewer feel uneasy; Peryer has even had them described as evil. Yet they are not photographs of demented or deformed people, outcasts of society. We assume his subjects to be white, middle-class New Zealanders, yet their dress, their expressions, and the neutral backgrounds in the photographs do not allow precise analysis of time or place. Their mood and meaning are ambiguous, and this ambiguity is what contributes to the unease they convey. They are evidence of the force that photography can have, and of Peryer's ability with the medium.

Peter Peryer does not find photographs, he plans them, deciding how his subjects will stand or sit, and against what background. What he cannot control is their expressions, which often convey the ambivalent feelings a subject may have towards any photographer. Hostility is suggested in several of the portraits, and a sense of tension between photographer and subject. This tension is particularly evident in his portraits of women. All his works are the antithesis of the idea of smile-for-the-camera. He points out that although people may smile automatically for the photographer, they seldom smile for a painter. The earliest work shown here is of Christine Mathieson, followed by four portraits, taken over two years, of Peryer's wife, Erika. Peryer's portraits have been described as all being portraits of himself and his own state of mind, regardless of the subject of the photograph. Yet the reality is more complex. These women are not mere reflections of Peryer's personality, they are strongly individual. Erika Peryer changes with time, and Peter Peryer's photographs record the changes. There is a complex relationship between his intuitive planning of photographs and the effect of her personality on his vision.

The photograph, *Christine Mathieson* (cat. no. 50), shows a woman who appears bruised, unhappy and afflicted. It is a strongly black-and-white image. Her face is a white mask of tragedy with shadowed eyes and pained mouth. The photograph is strangely timeless; her hair and dress could date from the Second World War. She is standing against a concrete wall, her hands at her side, head tilted back, defensive and uncertain. Is she about to face a firing squad? There is a temptation with Peryer's photographs to create a narrative around the image. Several people have commented that his works are like stills from a movie, giving us clues about the story.[1] Yet apart from fanciful creations of plot around this work, there is a distinct sense that this woman is a victim; a victim perhaps of the photographer as well as of society. This has less to do with the reality of Christine Mathieson as a person than with Peter Peryer's envisaging of a resonant and memorable photograph.

Erika

The feelings of ambivalance between the sexes, the source of so much tension and anxiety today, are well reflected in Peryer's four photographs of his wife, Erika. In these works we can observe the changes in her, in dress, expression and pose, which seem to imply a growing confidence in herself, but also a self-questioning, stemming in part from an increasing awareness of feminist ideas. In the earliest work, *Erika* (cat. no. 51), she is dressed in an embroidered blouse, and wears beads, earrings, and a small veiled hat. Peryer says the work reminds him of an African woman going to church in her Sunday best.[2] But there is no joy in her expression. She is wary and defensive, and backed against a wall. Peryer has given the photograph a uniformly grainy texture, so that the figure and the background begin to merge. The tension in the image is heightened by the pull between the romantic quality created by the clothing and Erika Peryer's uneasy expression.

Edward Weston *Tina Modotti; with tear* 1924
gelatin silver print 221 x 168 mm
© 1981 Arizona Board of Regents
Centre for Creative Photography, Tucson

In *Woman in Evening Dress* (cat. no. 52), also a portrait of Erika Peryer, her facial expression is almost the same as in the earlier work, but the atmosphere in the photograph is quite different. She wears a dress with black lace bodice and sits in a cane chair, but she is not relaxed. Her hands

52 Peter Peryer *Woman in Evening Dress* 1979

grip the arms of the chair and she leans forward, her expression cool and penetrating. There is no demure hat, and her hair is pushed untidily back. Peryer sees a similarity between this work and a photograph of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda, taken in Geneva in September 1933 by Alfred Eisenstaedt. Eisenstaedt later commented on their encounter:

> "When I went up to him in the garden of the hotel, he looked at me with hateful eyes and waited for me to wither. But I didn't wither. If I have a camera in my hand, I don't know fear."[3]

In Peryer's photograph, again isolating the figure against a flat ground, he unerringly achieves the image he wants. The impression is of a cool and withering gaze. There is little sympathy between photographer and subject.

Erika 1979 (cat. no. 53) is the photograph in which Peryer comes closest to the image of a deranged or demented person. Erika Peryer seems to be lying down, her hand beside her head, yet the background is flat and dark, so her position is uncertain. For the first time she looks directly at the photographer, her face flat and emotionless, with a slightly drawn quality. Her clothing is a torn, spotted dressing gown, and her arm is distorted by the angle of the photograph so that it appears small and disjointed and makes her head seem too large. The fingers of her hand are curved inward, and in the blackness inside them one can imagine a stone; her arm may be drawn back ready to throw. The impression of dishevelled strength is increasing in the photographs as her dress becomes less neat. In another photograph taken in the same year, *Erika, Winter* (cat. no. 54), Peryer shows her outside, against a rough concrete wall, hair cut straight and drawn severely off her brow. She is wrapped in a dark coat, and the atmosphere is chilly. She looks older, more careworn and sad, but self-contained and isolated by choice, no longer hostile. The photograph is dramatically composed with face, necklace and hand creating the only light accents in an otherwise dark image. The work echoes the composition of Albrecht Dürer's 1500 *Self-portrait* in which he painted himself in a Christ-like pose, one hand holding his coat in a gesture which is almost a blessing. Peryer acknowledges the relevance of the Dürer portrait; he does not restrict his range of interest to photography.

Peter Peryer's portraits of Erika Peryer are carefully planned and constructed images, memorable and strong. Yet they are also a record of the changing quality of their feelings for each other and their feelings about themselves.

In his portrait, *Christopher Matthews* (cat. no. 55), Peryer has made a softer, less threatening image. The subject stands against a rough wall which is dark on one side of him and light on the other. Every stitch in his hand-knitted pullover is in sharp focus, his expression gentle, almost a smile. In fact this subject is neither aggressively male nor female. The two colours in the wall behind him reinforce the notion of a meeting and matching of opposites, a calm androgyny.

Self-portrait

Peter Peryer's *Self-portrait with Rooster* (cat. no. 49) is a complex work in which he makes use of a number of symbols as attributes of his feelings about himself, his past and his present state of mind.

Peryer was brought up in the country and he demonstrates his identification with that past in the choice of the traditional suit he wears. He holds close to him a rooster whose legs are tied; the string hangs down, showing that it is a captive. Many city people would be apprehensive about picking up a rooster or any animal. Peryer's expression is a mixture of anxiety and resolve. He says that he had been thinking about the photograph for several months before he made it; but an analysis of some of its possible meanings took place only once the image was made. Peryer was brought up as a Roman Catholic, and was devoutly committed to the Church. As a teenager he changed his name to Peter Chanel Peryer, after St. Peter Chanel, "first martyr of Oceania". Peryer later became angry about the feelings of guilt which he felt the Church had burdened him with, and to see his religious beliefs as damaging. In this photograph, the rooster he holds could be a symbol of the cock that crowed three times to mark Saint Peter's denial of Christ. On the mottled concrete wall beside his head is the faint image of a cross. This is a courageous self-portrait, one not achieved without pain.

Peter Peryer's work is memorable and compelling; a record of meetings between photographer and subject in which both contribute to the eventual image and, through it, involve the viewer in their encounter.

Notes

1 *Art New Zealand*, November-January 1977-1978, No. 8, Neil Rowe, p18

2 Peter Peryer, in conversation with Alexa Johnston, 3 November, 1983

3 *Eisenstaedt: Germany*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, 1980 p31

51 Peter Peryer *Erika* 1978

49 *Self-portrait with Rooster* 1977
black and white photograph 230 x 230

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer *Self-portrait* 1977
This print made in 1981
exhibited 1978 25 April - 13 May Auckland
Snaps Gallery
Two-person exhibition with Ann Noble
references *Art New Zealand* 1977-78 No. 8
"Peter Peryer; the photograph as
a portrait of the self"
pp25, 65-67 illus. p25
Listener 7 February 1981
"A Desire to Understand" Sheridan Keith
pp36-37 illus. p37
London Magazine July 1981
Vol. 21 No. 4
"Frontierland: the photographs of
Peter Peryer" Sheridan Keith
pp42-49, illus. p45
collection Auckland City Art Gallery

50 *Christine Mathieson* 1977
black and white photograph 235 x 237

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer
references *The Photo-Forum Supplement*
summer 77/78 "Peter Peryer"
pp9 -18, illus. p13
Art New Zealand 1977-78 No. 8
"Peter Peryer: the photograph
as a portrait of the self"
pp25, 65-67 illus. p65
London Magazine July 1981
Vol. 21 No. 4
"Frontierland: the photographs of
Peter Peryer" Sheridan Keith
pp42-49, illus. p49
collection The Cohn/Vernon collection, Auckland

51 *Erika* 1978
black and white photograph

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer
references *Listener* 7 February 1981
"A Desire to Understand" Sheridan Keith
pp36-37, illus. p37
collection private collection, Auckland

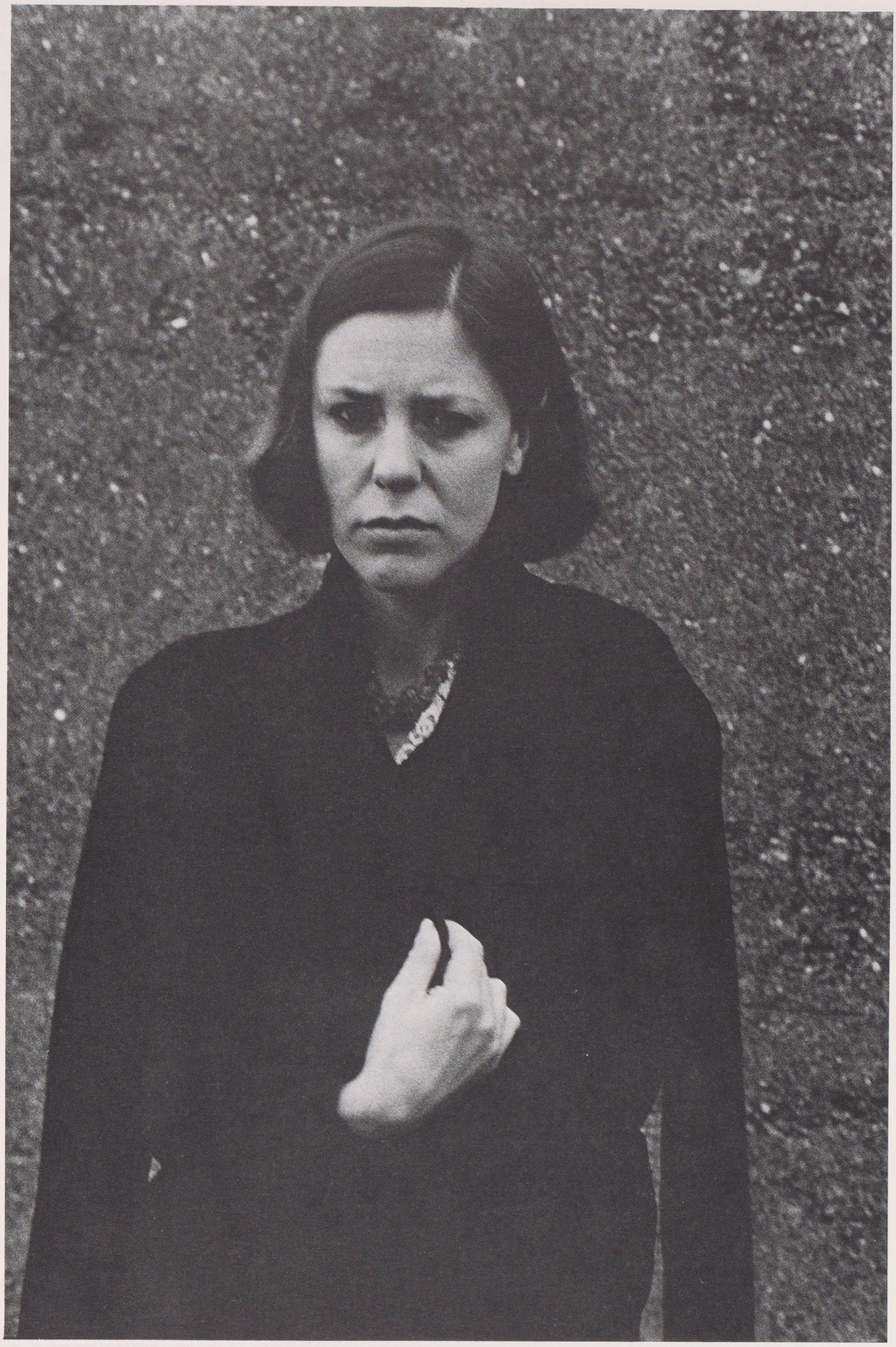
52 *Woman in Evening Dress* 1979
black and white photograph

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer
exhibited 1979 7-24 August Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Three New Zealand Photographers
(with Anne Noble and Laurence Aberhart)
1980 20 February - 16 March
New Plymouth
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 15 April - 4 May Hamilton
Waikato Art Museum
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 9 May - 6 June Masterton
Wairarapa Arts Centre
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 3-13 July Napier
Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 23 July - 23 August Wanganui
Sarjeant Gallery
Three New Zealand Photographers
1982 27 November - 23 December
Auckland
Space Gallery
Peter Peryer
Title *Erika, Summer 1979*

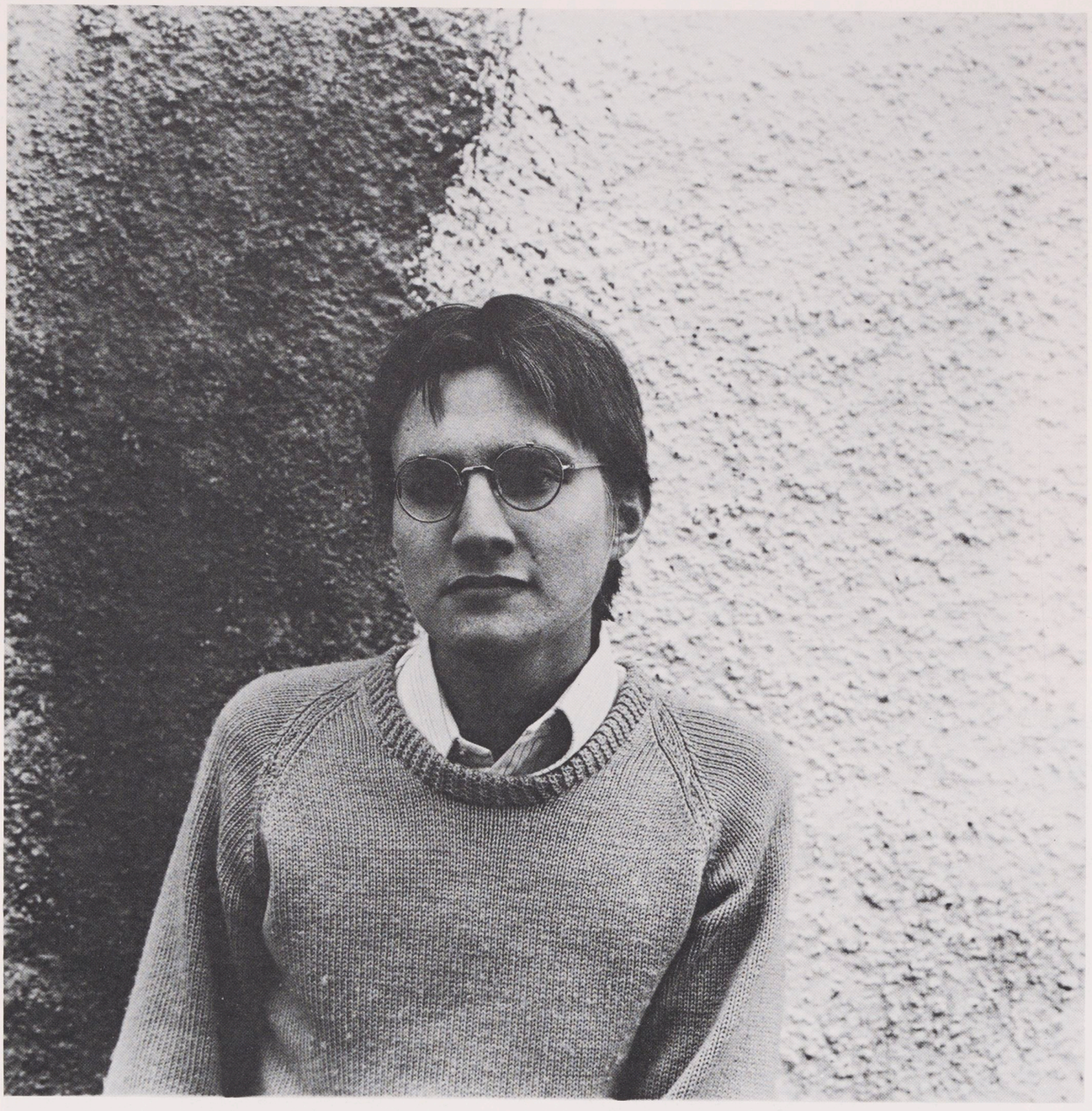
53 *Erika* 1979
black and white photograph 470 x 310

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer
collection John Nicol, Auckland

53 Peter Peryer *Erika* 1979



54 Peter Peryer *Erika, Winter* 1979



55 Peter Peryer *Christopher Matthews* 1979

54 *Erika, Winter 1979*
black and white photograph 440 x 295

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer
exhibited 1979 7 - 24 August Auckland
Auckland City Art Gallery
Three New Zealand Photographers
(with Ann Noble and Laurence Aberhart)
1980 20 February - 16 March
New Plymouth
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 15 April - 4 May Hamilton
Waikato Art Museum
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 9 May - 6 June Masterton
Wairarapa Arts Centre
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 3 - 13 July Napier
Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum
Three New Zealand Photographers
1980 23 July - 23 August Wanganui
Sarjeant Gallery
Three New Zealand Photographers
1982 27 November - 23 December
Auckland
Space Gallery
Peter Peryer

55 *Christopher Matthews* 1979
black and white photograph 393 x 390

inscribed
reverse Peter Peryer
collection private collection, Auckland

SYLVIA SIDDELL

Born Auckland, New Zealand, 1941.
Attended night classes at the Auckland Technical Institute, 1975-76.
First solo exhibition, Barry Lett Gallery, Auckland, 1977.
Awarded Arts Council of New Zealand grant, 1983. Has exhibited throughout New Zealand since 1977, and is represented in a number of major public and private collections.
She is married to artist Peter Siddell; they live at Blockhouse Bay, Auckland.

Sylvia Siddell sees her work as emerging from her general unease about the world, and her anxiety about the precarious nature of human existence. She talks of a lack of confidence in the future which she has felt from an early age; a feeling that tragedy can engulf her at any time. Her drawings are an attempt to allay the dragons, the spectres which arise from this insecurity. The awareness of death as an inexplicable, unavoidable end is the source of much of her work. Sylvia Siddell's mother raised hens and sold eggs. Siddell remembers as a child all the chickens around the house, and death as an ever present reality. "Any morning you could wake up to find a whole batch of day old chicks had died in the night, the lamp overheated and they just died."[1]

Sylvia Siddell's drawings are also a means of controlling the forces which make domesticity a disabling trap for many women. She is aware of the ancient idea that the maker of the image gains control of the object or person depicted. This realization is what lies behind the well documented reluctance of many tribal people to be photographed or painted. In Siddell's case, the images she makes lay open the oppressive to ridicule and laughter; satire is a long-standing means of undermining the power of tyrants.

The tyrants she draws are often household appliances which represent the pressure on women in our society to take the responsibility for the care of the home. Sylvia Siddell knows the tyrannical demands of an orderly house. Women have long been instilled with the idea that their virtue and worth depend on their tidiness, neatness, cleanliness and calm; their careful control of themselves and their environment. The exhortations to live up to this ideal are proclaimed by the advertising all around us. The blame for an untidy house, or for noisy, grubby children seems inevitably to fall on the female in the partnership. Advertisements depict women as servants by nature, gaining great pleasure from eternally cleaning up other people's messes. The house is kept shiny and bright by an ever-smiling "housewife"; but who ever married a house?

On those who ignore these standards, or who cannot live up to them, society places a heavy burden of guilt; this is intellectually absurd, but still emotionally damaging. And the struggle to keep up is bound to fail. The clean and tidy house will get dirty, and may dissolve into chaos at any moment. Turn your back and the dirt reappears on the windows. Sylvia Siddell draws a washing basket filled with dirty laundry, and calls it *Cornucopia*; it is never empty.

The impression of seething movement which Sylvia Siddell achieves in her drawings contributes to their unsettling qualities. Her early work was done when her two daughters were babies and wouldn't sleep. She spent hours at night pacing the house with them, and felt strongly that household objects remain still only when you look at them, that rooms are filled with activity until we walk in and the objects freeze into immobility again. In her drawings, taps become muscular, and contorted electrical leads and hoses are like knotted snakes or umbilical cords; machines and appliances are twisted and misshapen, buckled and bent. Siddell covers surfaces with pencil strokes which make the complicated, shimmering moiré patterns at which she excels. She contrasts the seductive beauty of pencil patterning with subjects which display an edge of grotesque humour. Siddell greatly admires Albrecht Dürer's drawings and engravings which show his dazzling control of line. His etching and woodcut media require a linear creation of image; shading is achieved with masses of line rather than areas of soft tone. Sylvia Siddell chooses to restrict herself to line and, using a soft pencil, she suggests a variety of surfaces from gleaming metal to feathers, from soft skin to reptilian scales.

Albrecht Dürer *Christ bearing the Cross* 1512 (detail)
engraving 117 x 74 mm
Auckland City Art Gallery

A Day in the life of Mrs S.

Sylvia Siddell's 1977 exhibition at the Barry Lett Galleries was called *A Day in the Life of Mrs S.*, and comprised a group of drawings which captured many of the undisciplined appliances which lurk around her house, demanding her attention. Although Siddell seldom draws directly from her subject (she finds it better to invent forms), her observation of every detail of her subjects is obvious. In *Washing Machine* (cat. no. 56) the agitator in the machine crouches like a phallic monster, and the knobs are labelled with words which allude to viciousness and disease: depravity, lust and lechery, crapulous and bestial, dissipate, violate and defile, even select-a-pestilence; plague, scurvy or gonorrhoea. The brand name of this nightmare machine is Sodom and Gomorrah. From the plughole crawls a lizard; this is the stuff of nightmares. It is, of course, the half-humorous antithesis of the clean, bright and shiny appliances which appear on our television screens

promising to remove all nasty dirt from our lives. In the same exhibition Siddell exhibited drawings of her vacuum cleaner and, in an interview she said, "Even a sewing machine looks like a crouching beast."[2]

Eater and eaten

In 1979 Siddell exhibited another group of works under the title *Cordon Noir* in which she explored the tasks relating to cooking and preparing of food. Siddell says she is fascinated by the relationships between eater and eaten. There is something absurd and macabre in the way we will tenderly grow a cabbage, fertilize it, shoo away the white butterflies, water it, and then, when it is big enough, bring it inside and chop it in pieces. We do the same with animals; the chickens of her childhood, once their laying days were over, were killed as boiling fowls. She remembers seeing bruises around wings which had been broken long before death. Old hens thrown on the scrap heap when their productive days were over. The drawing *Cuisine Minceur* (cat. no. 57) is a particularly grim and distressing comment on our use of animals. (Siddell is not a vegetarian.) When we are faced with the reality of a dead animal, fur, feathers, claws and all, few of us can avoid feelings of guilt. Eating meat is a bloody business. Siddell says she also wants to emphasize that the physical suffering of animals when they are killed is no different from our physical suffering; we simply have the added dimension of mental anguish. She remembers the self-satisfaction of a Dickens character who said, "The working class don't feel pain." The chicken/women carcases, lying headless in voracious electric frying pans, or trapped in enormous ovens, she see relating both to her childhood observations and to her present awareness of women's subservient position in society. These drawings document a struggle for survival which seems to end in the triumph of the maxim, "Might is right." Women and animals seldom win the battle.

Women's bodies also appear in mutilated form in the drawing, *Chocolate Box* (cat. no. 58), a satirical comment again on the world of advertising which serves up women's bodies as dainty morsels; "Dairy Milk Darlings" to be sampled, and put back if they don't have a soft enough centre. For the bodies in the box are not all smooth and sweet, they vary as human bodies do, not all struck from the same ideal mould. It is interesting to note that images like *Chocolate Box* which look with grim humour at the objectification of women are not an exaggeration. Objects like the bits of bodies in the chocolate box do exist. Ice cubes and beer mugs in the shape of breasts, the latter sometimes with a safety pin through the nipple, are grim evidence of fear and hatred of women, yet are relatively tame examples of male-produced pornography.

In 1980, Siddell's exhibition called "The Inheritors" included the drawing *Till Death us do part* (cat. no. 60) originally called *Hostility*, which shows two enormous insects locked in unending battle. Other drawings depicted enormous insects emerging from kitchen taps. These drawings did not sell well. Despite the beauty of the drawing and the opportunity that imaginary insects gave Siddell to indulge her love of patterning surfaces, the subject matter remains a barrier. These are the scary dragons of childhood, evil and repugnant; Siddell remembers her eldest sister reading her horrific children's stories, and telling her that the wrinkles in the sheets were caused by the snakes underneath.

Monday Morning (cat. no. 61) is a self-portrait made not long after Sylvia Siddell's fortieth birthday. It is an image that emerges from self-mockery rather than anger. It has elements of desperation as well as the humour which the title suggests. Her hand conceals her face from herself, apprehensive, yet engrossed in the analysis of appearance and of personal reality. The conglomeration of makeup bottles form a barrier between the artist and her reflected image. *Monday Morning,* along with several other self-portraits in this exhibition, confronts the anxiety we feel in facing ourselves; in looking behind the facade we present to others, and acknowledging that there are realities about ourselves which are not contained in the roles we assume in society. Sylvia Siddell's drawings exist within the western tradition of feminist art established over the past decades. Her work, though uncompromising and unsettling, is very much the product of an intelligent artist who views women's situation in the world today with a mixture of rage and humour.

Notes

1 Sylvia Siddell, conversation with Alexa Johnston, 11 November 1981

2 Sylvia Siddell, *Western Leader*, 30 August 1977

59 Sylvia Siddell *Poor Chook* 1979

56 Sylvia Siddell *Washing Machine* 1977

56 *Washing Machine* 1977
pencil 510 x 665 (image) 560 x 735 (paper)

inscribed
l.c. Sylvia Siddell 6.7.77
exhibited 1977 October Auckland
Blockhouse Bay Community Centre
1977 23 August - 2 September Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
One Day in the life of Mrs S.
1979-1982 Auckland
Blockhouse Bay Medical Centre
waiting room
1982 22 September - 10 October Napier
Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum
Annual Group Show – guest artist
collection Sam and Barbara Pillsbury

57 *Cuisine Minceur* 1979
pencil 395 x 295 (image)

inscribed
l.r. Sylvia Siddell 27.5.79
exhibited 1979 21 - 30 August Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
Cordon Noir
note The exhibition catalogue was misprinted with the title "Gordon Noir"
collection private collection, Auckland

58 *Chocolate Box* 1979
pencil 462 x 452 (image)

inscribed
l.r. Sylvia Siddell '79
exhibited 1979 20 - 31 August Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
Cordon Noir
Title in this exhibition
Chocolate Chuffs
collection private collection, Auckland

59 *Poor Chook* 1979
pencil 332 x 378 (image)

inscribed
l.l. Sylvia Siddell May '79
exhibited 1979 20 - 31 August Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
Cordon Noir
1980 23 June - 14 July Auckland
Outreach
Women in the Arts

1980 December Auckland
Denis Cohn Gallery
Christmas exhibition
collection private collection, Auckland

60 Sylvia Siddell *Till Death do us part* 1980

60 *Till Death do us part* 1980
pencil 440 x 455 (image) 513 x 505 (paper)

inscribed
l.r. Sylvia Siddell 20 June '80

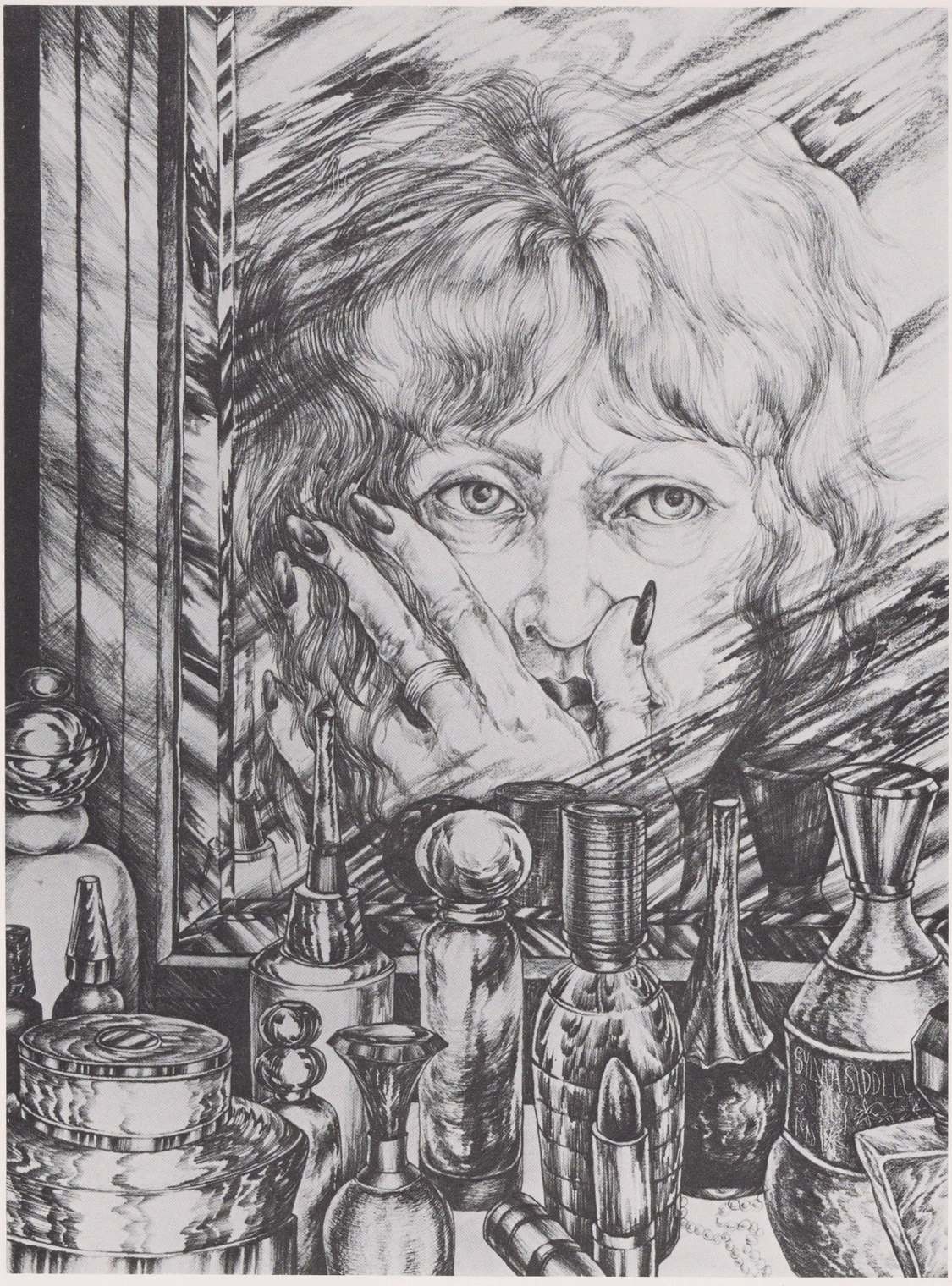
exhibited
1980 23 September - 3 October Auckland
Barry Lett Galleries
The Inheritors
Title in this exhibition *Hostility*
1980 October - November Hamilton
Waikato Society of Arts
1980 28 October - 6 December Wellington
The Women's Gallery
Woman and Violence
1981 21 June - 30 June Auckland
Auckland Society of Arts
Karekare Group Exhibition

61 *Monday Morning* 1982
pencil 470 x 348 (image)

inscribed
l.r. SYLVIA SIDDELL JULY 1981

exhibited
1982 2 - 13 August Auckland
Denis Cohn Gallery
Separate Rooms with Peter Siddell

collection
David Simcock and Jane Cornish



61 Sylvia Siddell *Monday Morning* 1982

62 *Fiery Furnace* 1982
pencil 549 x 457 (image)

inscribed
l.r. Sylvia Siddell 18 August 1982
exhibited 1982 22 September - 10 October Napier
Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum
Annual Group Show — guest artist
collection Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Napier

63 *Eyelevel Oven* 1983
pencil 730 x 580 (image) 845 x 755 (paper)

inscribed
l.r. Sylvia Siddell 1983
exhibited 1983 November Auckland
Denis Cohn Gallery
Intruders
collection Waikato Art Museum, Hamilton

MICHAEL SMITHER

Born New Plymouth, New Zealand, 1939.
Attended Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, 1959-61. Studied under John Weeks, on whose advice he left after only two years.
First solo exhibition Auckland, 1961.
Travelled to Australia, 1966.
Awarded H. C. Richards prize for painting, Queensland Art Gallery, 1969.
Exhibited at the Tokyo Biennale, 1969. Awarded Frances Hodgkins fellowship, University of Otago, 1970. Awarded ASPAC fellowship; spent time in Japan as guest of Japanese government, 1971.
Has exhibited throughout New Zealand and internationally since 1961, and is represented in most major public and private collections.
He lives in New Plymouth.

> "Smither makes it clear that the present works are both political and religious in their implications, and that the current climate in New Zealand of threat to limb and liberty has contributed to their content."[1]

Michael Smither is reported to have made these comments about a series of paintings he exhibited in 1978. The series was called *Pictures for the Revolution* and the seven paintings effectively summarised Smither's ideas about the causes and consequences of violence and aggression in the world. Children often dominate Smither's figure paintings and four of these works have as their subject the aggressive behaviour of children. Boys fight for possession of a toy gun, play war-games with father while Robert Muldoon's face glowers from the television; unwrap grandfather's presents, again containing toy guns. The latter work is called *Perpetuating the Kingdom* and the fighting boys are *St. Peter and St. Paul as Young Boys*. Although the guns are painted in bright plastic colours their appeal as make-believe weapons is unmistakable. In *Pictures for the Revolution* Smither questions the outcome of events and behaviour in our society, in both the domestic and political spheres. Take the toys from the boys, both old and young, seems to be the message.

In these works Smither indicates the extent to which we train our male children into belligerent attitudes and behaviour by encouraging them to play with toy weapons. Boys are told to "stick up" for themselves; to retaliate immediately if they are threatened by other children. The impact of such training on later adult behaviour should not be underestimated. The attitude that might is right and that life is a battle with others for prestige, power and money is commonplace in our society.

Against this environmental influence Smither places the aggression which seems at times to be innate in human beings, appearing in children at an early age. The central painting in the *Pictures for the Revolution* series is *Portrait of Joseph showing his teeth* (cat. no. 69). In this work the child's face dominates the picture, lips drawn back to reveal red gums and an array of second teeth bursting through. It has also been exhibited as *Joseph Snarling* and *Primeval Snarl*, titles which emphasize the hostility of the child's expression and prevent us from seeing the work merely as a study of a little boy displaying his new teeth. His eyes are milky and glazed, pupils contracted, brows drawn together; this is a snarling child.

The ideas behind *Pictures for the Revolution* have long been present in Smither's work. Michael Smither is well known as a Taranaki painter, painting the rocks and pools of Back Beach near New Plymouth; he has made the region his own through his distinctive hard-edged realist style. Many of these works seem to include an appeal for the preservation of the natural environment; an appeal particularly relevant now with the building of the synthetic petrol plant at Motunui, Taranaki, which could pollute large areas of the coast. His paintings of people are indicative of his concern with the family, with relationships, with religious beliefs and political ideas.

At home

In the paintings which centre on his family Smither paints children who are self-possessed, implacable and occasionally cunning. The children seem to display human frailty and susceptibility to temptation in microcosm, in the same way as family relationships are a microcosm of political and social relationships.

Big Occity (cat. no. 65) was Thomas Smither's word for electricity when he was a small child. Electricity fascinated him and the alternative title of the painting, *Thomas at the Lightswitch*, clearly indicates the forbidden nature of Thomas's action. The little boy reaches up, we can almost see him on tip-toe, his fingers stretched out to their limits, hovering over the magic switch. But his head is turned, eyes wide, mouth dropping open; he is caught in the act. The presence of an admonishing adult is implicit in the scene. The story is amusing but the child is nevertheless in danger, reaching for a forbidden pleasure which could have tragic consequences. All is not innocence here. Smither implies that the impulses of childhood persist into adult life; forbidden experiences exert the strongest fascination.

In *Blowing out Matches* (cat. no. 64) mother and children join together in a forbidden game, the mother perhaps attempting to reduce the appeal of the sudden flame by making it commonplace. There are numerous used matches scattered on the table, yet all three people are mesmerized by the magical flame which is at the centre of the painting and on which their attention is focused. Their eyes are enlarged and staring, mouths open: who will blow out the match? This is another dangerous and spellbinding pastime. Through the window are the snow-covered Otago hills, making the appeal of the bright flame even more obvious.

Smither uses adventurous compositions in these domestic paintings, placing the viewer at a child's eye level or, in *Blowing out Matches*, tipping up the dining table so that it fills the left side of the painting and displays the cup and saucer, spoon and plate, ashtray and matches which lie on it, forming a still-life counterpoint to the frozen moment on the other side of the picture.

The significant moment

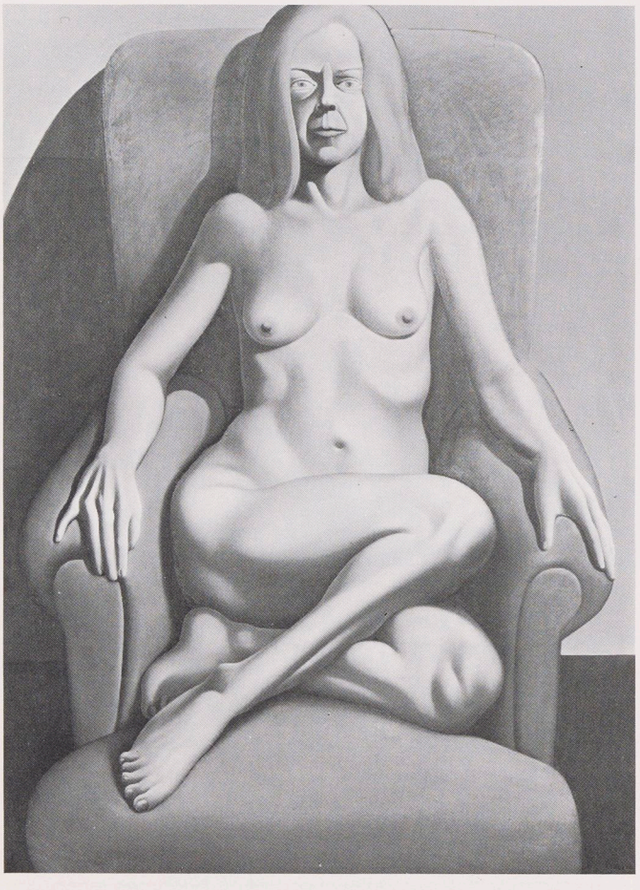
In an article in which he drew some parallels between Michael Smither's painting and the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Peter Cape made the following observations:

> "Gerard Manley Hopkins and Michael Smither have in common — in addition to their Catholicism — a close-worked, finely observed approach to nature in their poetry and painting, an approach which deliberately transcends the naturalistic and often becomes symbolic.
>
> "They have in common also the ability to catch and hold eternally the significant moment, the second when things

are at their most meaningful. In addition, they share a sense of stillness and quiet, even though it may be a stillness which comes, not from being in a state of rest, but from being in a state of equipoise among balanced tensions."[2]

This feeling for a significant moment, for a balance of tensions, is well illustrated by Smither's painting *The Family in the van* (cat. no. 66). It was painted when Smither and his family were living in Otago; Smither was the Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago in 1970. They travelled around in an old ambulance which served as home and studio. Elizabeth Smither and her two children look calmly out of the van, past the steering wheel, and the artist is outside, looking at them. Through the windows behind them is a landscape empty of other people, a flat plain bounded by a range of curving hills. Like many New Zealanders, they are travellers through the landscape "coated and cowled like pilgrims".[3]

Why does this moment seem so important? Merely by choosing to paint the picture Smither imparts significance to the scene. There is a balance of tension here; a hiatus of stillness in a noisy journey. These three people are a family joined closely together and yet not just a family unit. Despite their closeness they are individuals, separate from one another and from us, serious and self-contained, yet seeming to share some knowledge of which we know nothing. This is a mysterious and beautiful painting; Smither uses colour with great care: the sky is very blue, the hills golden ochre and the children's red hats and gloves stand out against the dark interior of the van. There is a suggestion that the balance of tension in these domestic works is between the artist and his subjects. Love for family and resentment of its demands are closely linked in many men's minds.

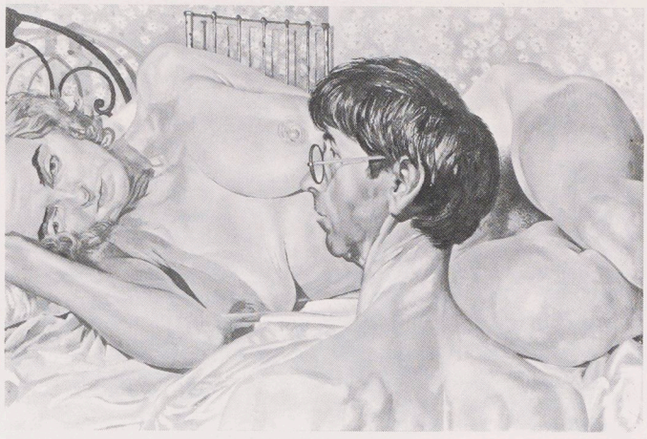


67 Michael Smither *Woman in a blue chair* 1972

Portraits

Smither has often painted portraits of individual members of his family. They are paintings dominated by stillness, strong colour and a tight concentration of forms. Smither seems to observe people too closely; he scrutinizes them in such detail that they freeze. The figures have solid, rounded forms; their skin is so plump and smooth it looks like plastic, yet collapses into clearly defined wrinkles and folds which indicate the facial planes. They seem to be waxworks, yet their eyes are unmistakably alive.

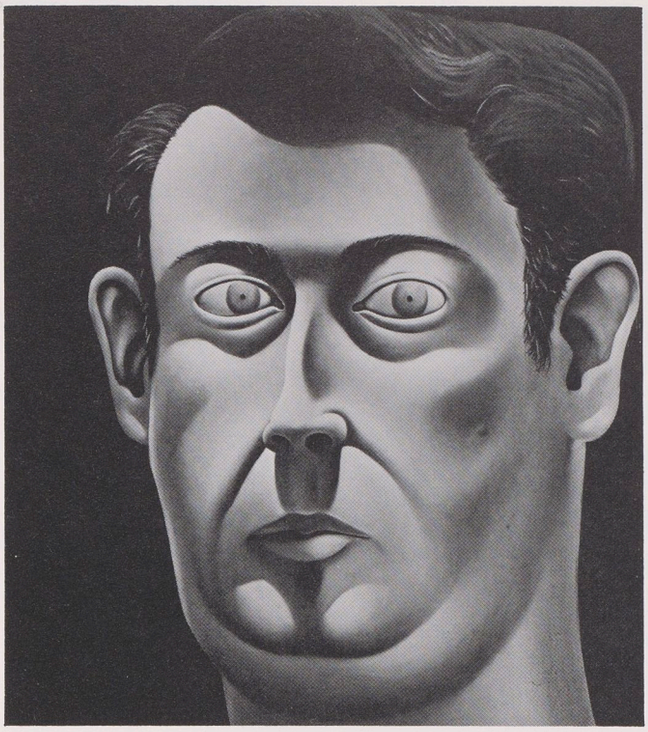
Smither painted a portrait of his wife, *Woman in a blue chair* (cat. no. 67), in which there is a palpable atmosphere of sexual tension and hostility. She sits upright, hands grasping the smoothly padded chair, shoulders tense and stiff, head erect, eyes narrowed and mouth grim. Her expression is strong and determined. Smither uses blue shadows on her flesh so that a deathly pallor overlays her skin. The painting conveys a disturbing mixture of intimacy and antagonism between painter and subject.



Stanley Spencer *Self-portrait with Patricia Preece* 1937
oil on canvas 610 x 912 mm
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Stanley Spencer, the English painter whose work Smither admires, made several portraits of his second wife, Patricia Preece. In these pictures Spencer also seems to observe his subject with obsessive closeness; painting himself looking at her in the foreground of one picture. Spencer's works were intended to be a celebration of ideal sexual love, though his own relationships with his wives were difficult. Stanley Spencer documented his changing appearance in a series of self-portraits throughout his life; Michael Smither has done the same. There is a cool detachment in Smither's self-portraits which is accentuated by the tiny pinpoint pupils in the large, milky-blue eyes.

Smither's *Portrait of my Mother* (cat. no. 68) is more benevolent and captures some of the uncertainty and loss of confidence which can come with old age. Her eyes do not meet ours; she looks downward, either introspective or fearful, her mouth drawn, face and neck tense. She is properly and precisely dressed in a pale grey suit, pearl earrings and helmet-like hat of smooth felt which contrasts with the deeply wrinkled skin of her face and neck. Here again is a tense and balanced moment. Is the woman about to look up, preparing herself to speak? Or is she communing with herself, lost in memory and reminiscence? In this large painting, Smither conveys the dilemmas and anxieties of old age.



Michael Smither *Self-portrait* 1972
oil on board 777 x 657 mm
private collection, Auckland

Politics and religion

Despite the coolness of his painting style, until recently Smither believed passionately in the importance and ability of art to open people's eyes, to bring them new ideas, to enlarge their awareness of the world. He has made both political and religious paintings which attempt to arouse in the viewer compassion for others. The final painting in his *Pictures for the Revolution* series is *Lord of the Feasts*. It shows an old man lying in the park, who has become St. Francis, a messenger of hope. The series also includes a less hopeful work, *Prisoners* (cat. no. 70), which was inspired by a newspaper photograph of four young men in Belfast, lined up against a wall, awaiting questioning after a riot. The ropes cut into their wrists and, as one of them turns to look out of the picture, a long trickle of blood travels down his cheek from his left eye. Smither said that when he saw the photograph he began to wonder if this was the way his own children would end.[4] Smither's determination to point out the steady movement of our society towards increasing violence and hostility is obvious in this work. Behind the four young Irishmen is a stone-scattered Taranaki beach with soft waves breaking and a tugboat chugging out to sea. But the cloud in the sky is ambiguous, natural or man-made.

A new direction

In recent years Michael Smither has moved away from figure painting of the kind exhibited here, disillusioned with the lack of effect his painting has on society. He has discarded his former religious convictions, while retaining his political stand, but it plays no part in his work. He has long been interested in music and the relationships between sound and colour. He now makes paintings in which he presents harmonic linear patterns, and refuses to try to influence people to open their eyes and see for themselves.

> "Seriously I think Art at times has done more harm than good in society. In general it has created coteries of elitists and stylists and snobs and propagandists. In this country of plenty, what should have been a delightful stroll through Paradise has often been, through my fault and others, a glimpse of Hell."[5]

Notes

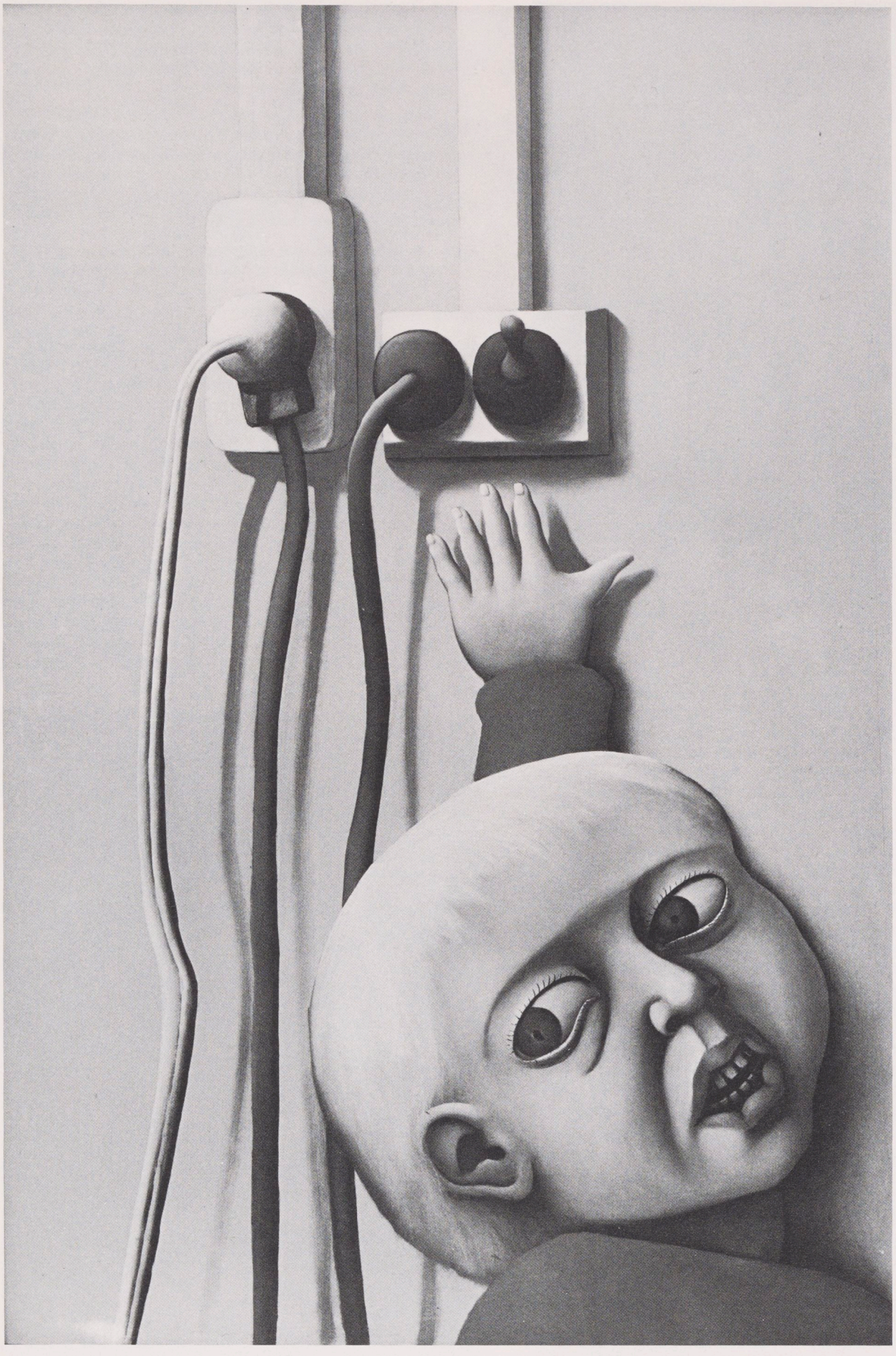
1 *Listener*, 10 February 1979, "Seven scenes of revolution," David Hill, pp30-31

2 *Landfall* 108, December 1973, "Michael Smither: Soft Sift and Steady Water," Peter Cape, pp339-347

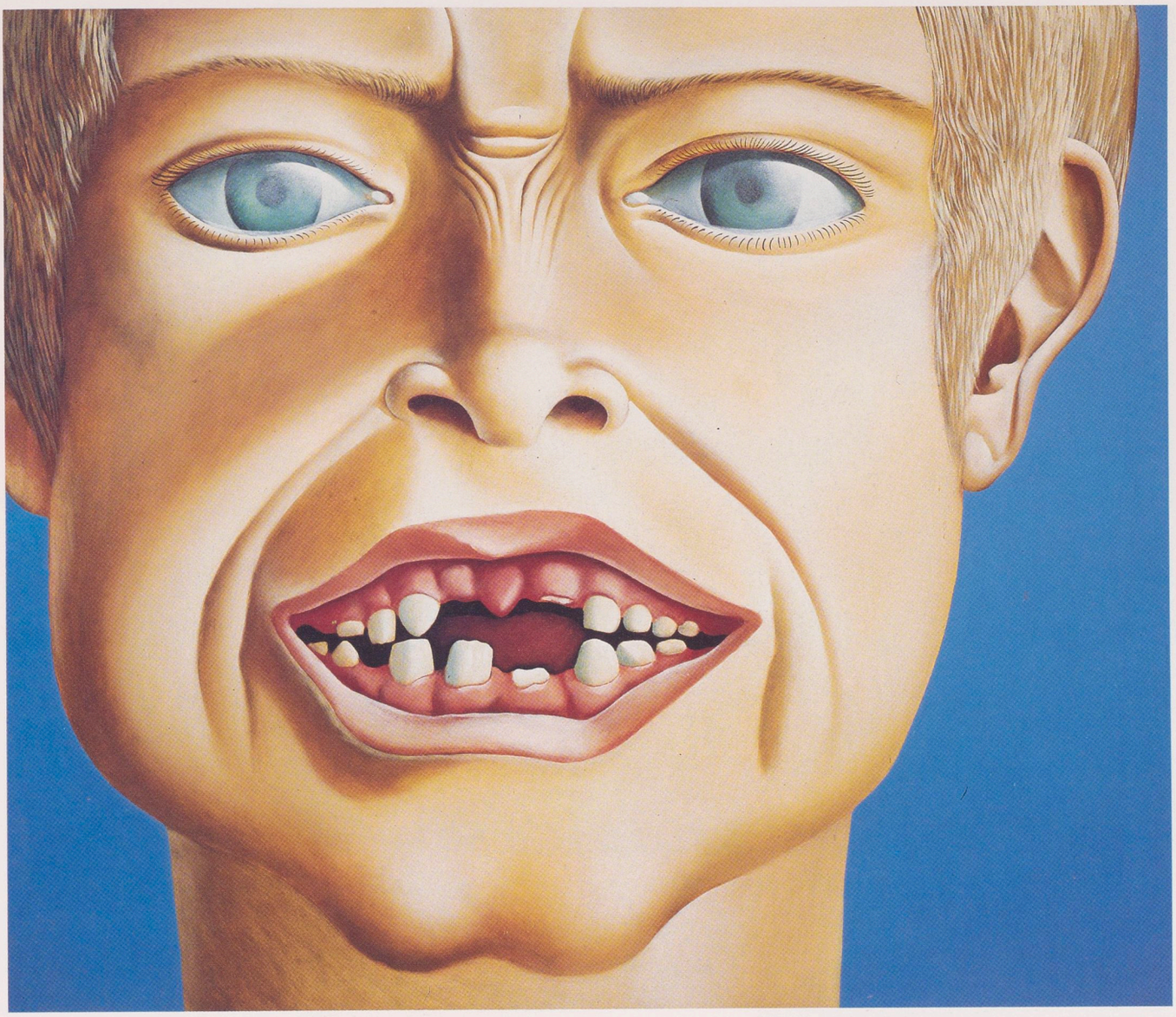
3 *Art International*, Vol XVII No 3, March 1973, "Young Contemporary New Zealand Realists," P. AE. Hutchings pp13-22

4 refer footnote 1

5 Michael Smither, "Michael's Manifesto," John Leech Gallery catalogue of exhibition, "Taranaki Panels," 10-18 March 1981



65 Michael Smither *Big Occity* 1970



69 Michael Smither *Portrait of Joseph showing his teeth* 1977

66 Michael Smither *The Family in the van* 1971

64 *Blowing out Matches* 1969
oil on board 1215 x 910

inscribed
centre
recto M.D. SMITHER 1969 (on matchbox)
verso Thomas, Sarah & Harry
Blowing out Matches
exhibited 1973 March Palmerston North
Manawatu Art Gallery
Domestic Paintings, solo exhibition
references *Landfall* 108 December 1973
"Michael Smither: Soft Sift and
Steady Water" Peter Cape pp339-347
illus. p344
collection H. Baynes, Wellington

65 *Big Occity* 1970
oil on board 910 x 610

inscribed
verso M D Smither 1970 Thomas caught
at the power switch
exhibited 1973 March Palmerston North
Manawatu Art Gallery
Domestic Paintings, solo exhibition
1978 8 - 28 February Rotorua
Rotorua City Art Gallery,
solo exhibition
Title in this exhibition:
"Thomas at the Lightswitch"
collection collection of Thomas Smither

66 *The Family in the van* 1971
oil on board 490 x 633

inscribed
l.l. M.D.S. 71
references *Art International* Vol. XVII
No. 3 March 1973
P. AE. Hutchings "Young Contemporary
New Zealand Realists"
pp13-22 illus. p15
collection private collection, Wellington

67 *Woman in a blue chair* 1972
oil on board 1225 x 895

inscribed
l.r. MDS 72
exhibited 1972 19 March - 9 April Wellington
Victoria University Library,
exhibition of five paintings by
Michael Smither
collection private collection, Wellington

70 Michael Smither *Prisoners* 1978

68 *Portrait of my Mother* 1972
oil on board 1218 x 938

inscribed
l.r. MDS 72
verso Basset 67 (small label u.r.)
exhibited 1972 22 February - 2 April
New Plymouth
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
solo exhibition
1975 15 July - 1 August Wellington
Peter McLeavey Gallery
Eight Portraits by M. D. Smither
collection Robert McDougall Art Gallery,
Christchurch

69 *Portrait of Joseph showing his teeth* 1977
oil on board 622 x 725

inscribed
verso PORTRAIT 1977
OF JOSEPH OIL
SHOWING M.D. SMITHER
HIS TEETH 19a MT VIEW PLACE
(SNARLING) NEW PLYMOUTH
882285 ph

exhibited 1978 11 - 22 November Wellington
Peter McLeavey Gallery
Paintings for the Revolution,
solo exhibition
Title *Joseph Snarling*
references *Listener*
10 February 1979
"Seven scenes of revolution" David Hill
pp30-31 illus. p30
collection private collection, Wellington

*70 *Prisoners* 1978
oil on board 1205 x 1565

inscribed
l.l. M D S 78
exhibited 1978 11 - 22 November Wellington
Peter McLeavey Gallery
Paintings for the Revolution,
solo exhibition
1979 9 - 20 July Auckland
Denis Cohn Gallery
Paintings for the Revolution
references *Listener*
10 February 1979
"Seven scenes of revolution" David Hill
pp30-31 illus. p30
collection private collection, Auckland