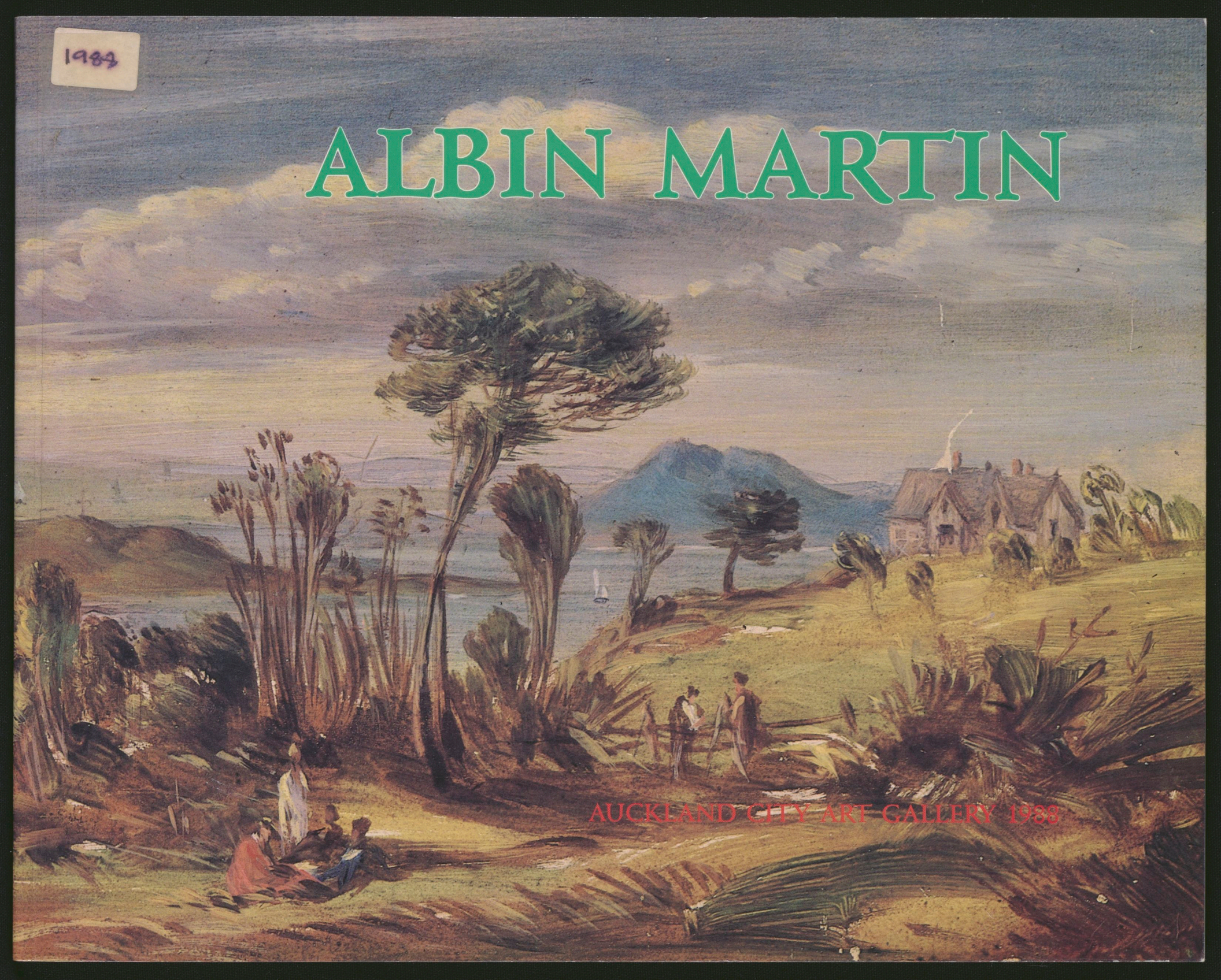


1988

ALBIN MARTIN

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY 1988





The banks of the Tamaki. Feb. 1854

My dear Mrs Bray

I am afraid that you have been long expecting to hear from either Fanny or myself - I hope however that your patience is not quite exhausted Fanny must speak for her self for my own part I must to tell the truth say that I have been rather shy about writing to you as I know that you preserve your letters and as I have not the pen of a ready writer I rather dread having any epistle of mine made a document of The children when they are told to write a letter complain that they have nothing to say, I feel very much inclined to make the same excuse, you must be tired of hearing about our having to do without news and from the letters which have been sent home you have learnt our every day mode of life Colonial politics I don't think either Mr Bray or yourself take very much interest in, the persons who are interested about these new worlds are 1st the Statesman who is able to get rid of some of his poor relations who tease him - for places 2^d the merchant who finds a market for his porceries, ales & Min Pickles 3^d the manufacturer & shopkeeper who sends us goods that they can not get rid of at home or that are out of fashion, The colonies have no part there is nothing in them to interest the imagination the future is a mere speculation about wealth and adding field to field, it must be centuries before poetry & art can find a home in Zealand it must be a long time before the descendants of drunken Irish soldiers & convicts can have a taste for the beautiful Perhaps we attach too much importance to the past! It cannot help thinking that there there was more poetic inspiration than there is in these radical times, thirty years ago the names of Australia & Zealand were merely seen at the end of a Geography book and a person going to those places was looked upon by his friends as if he was taking his departure for the next world, another era is now beginning Australia will with regard to communication be brought as near to Tavistock as Scotland was a century since, it is only a wonder that the movement was not made before, instead of complaining of an over population, emigration ought to have been attended to, as to over population there can be no such thing, in Australia & Zealand there is plenty of room for the whole of the dead & England both rich & poor provided

ALBIN MARTIN
Schedule of the exhibition

Auckland City Art Gallery	12 August-3 October 1988
Waikato Museum of Art and History	26 November-17 January 1989
National Library of New Zealand	27 January-11 March 1989
Dunedin Public Art Gallery	23 March-30 April 1989

Sponsored by Morrison Printing Inks and Machinery Limited, Auckland



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[49] *View of the artist's farm, East Tamaki*

ALBIN MARTIN

ROGER BLACKLEY

UNA PLATTS

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY 1988

Acknowledgements

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Roger Blackley

Curator, Historical New Zealand Art

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Foreword

Albin Martin died in August 1888, only months after the Auckland City Art Gallery, which he had done so much to promote, first opened to the public. This exhibition marks both these centenaries by bringing together Martin's surviving works. It therefore presents, for the first time, an opportunity to assess his significance in the history of art both in Auckland and in New Zealand.

Albin Martin was one of the four trustees appointed by James Tannock Mackelvie to supervise his massive bequest of art to Auckland in 1885. It must have given Martin immense pleasure to witness the return of the sizeable collection of his watercolours which Mackelvie had taken to London in 1871. With several works by C.D. Barraud and an inlaid secretaire by the master cabinetmaker Anton Seuffert, Martin's watercolours were the most significant artistic mementoes Mackelvie took home to England.

The co-ordination of the exhibition and publication has been meticulously undertaken by Roger Blackley and credit is due to him and all my other colleagues who assisted him. The Gallery is especially grateful to Una Platts for her sensitive biographical essay on the artist. Of the lenders who made the exhibition possible, Albin Martin's descendants and the Mackelvie Trust deserve our particular thanks.

Once again, the Gallery is beholden to Morrison Printing Inks and Machinery Ltd, Auckland, for their generous sponsorship. The especially low price of the catalogue during the exhibition is due to their support and encouragement from an early stage of the project.

Christopher Johnstone
Director

List of the



[1] John Linnell *Albin Martin* c.1834

Albin Martin 1813-1888

In 1813 Albin Martin was born at Stour Provost, a little village in Dorset, where his father the Rev. Harry Martin was pastor. He spent his boyhood in this village, typical of its time with thatched cottages, farm houses and ancient rectory. The Martins, an old Dorset family, claimed to be a branch of the family of Martin of Tours who came to England with "William the Norman". Notes referring to this are pencilled in and initialled in a copy of *Highways and Byways in Dorset* by Sir Frederick Treves, a book once owned by Albin Martin's wife Jemima and his daughter Fanny.

We learn as well from the notes that when Martin was sixteen the family moved a few miles to Silton, a village which according to Treves had a place in the Domesday Book, although by that time it was just two or three cottages, the Rectory and the Church with its "rook-haunted trees".

In a *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1833 there is reference to an epitaph on a monument in that churchyard, in memory of a Benjamin Suter who died 30 March, 1750. This monument had been erected by an Albinus Martin, his nephew and "grateful heir". Albinus was the eldest brother of Albin Martin's father. The three children next to Albinus had died when they were young and if, as it seems, Albinus died childless, Albin's father must have inherited the money and any land.

When he was a boy Albin Martin had an interesting education. He was a pupil of William Barnes, known in his time as "The Bard of Dorset", whose school was in Mere, close to Silton, and housed in an old Tudor chantry. Barnes was a most remarkable character. Though a self-educated man, he was said to have been able "to read Persian, Hindustani and Arabic . . . to play the flute, the violin and the piano: to be interested in geology and

archeology and be a competent engraver on wood and on copper; able to illustrate both his own works and those of his friends." He was a lover of Petrarch and wrote his own diary in Italian.

Later Albin was a pupil at the more orthodox Salisbury Grammar School. And on 29 March 1833 we know he was admitted as a pensioner to Jesus College, Cambridge, "matriculating in the Michaelmas Term". But he may not have been there long. Martin's father died in 1832 and Albin seems to have now become a moneyed young man in charge of his own future. He had always been attracted to art and in 1834 he set himself seriously in that direction, becoming a pupil of the artist John Linnell (1792-1882), who lived in Bayswater in London.

Linnell himself had been taught by that great teacher of the time John Varley (1778-1842) and his fellow pupils had included William Mulready (1786-1863), David Cox (1783-1859), A.V. Copley Fielding (1787-1855), William Henry Hunt (1790-1864) and William Turner of Oxford (1789-1862). These names are listed in Albin's obituary. He was to become a valued friend as well as pupil of Linnell and the suggestion is that during this period he himself became at least acquainted with these older artists.

We are told in the same obituary that Martin had known the artist William Blake – "Sweet Visionary Blake" – and had remained a friend until Blake's death. Yet surely this is a mistake; Blake died in 1827, when Martin was only fourteen. It was Linnell who had been Blake's valued friend. But there was certainly a fascinating link between Albin Martin and Blake.

Martin later brought out to New Zealand with him a series of 22 of Blake's drawings for the *Book of Job*. He showed two of

the drawings at the first exhibition of the Auckland Society of Arts in 1881, together with works by Linnell, an etching by Dürer, and of course his own work. The Job drawings remained with the Martin family until December 1928 when they created a stir at a sale at Sotheby's in London.

It was explained in the catalogue that until then only three sets had been known – two of them elaborately finished in colour, the third comparatively slight pencil sketches. Now the Martins' set, hitherto unknown, had been brought to light. These 22 drawings were smaller than the others. They were the size of Blake's engravings and "coloured with water-colour". There was a suggestion that some had been coloured by another hand. It was pointed out that Martin had been a pupil of Linnell and the set was accompanied by various letters from Linnell to Martin showing the close relationship of the two men.

When Martin was taking lessons from Linnell, Linnell was perhaps regarded as the leading British landscape painter. (The great J.M.W. Turner was out of favour.) Yet nowadays, though he certainly has his place as an English artist, he is known principally not for his paintings but for his relationship with Blake. The two artists had met in 1818. Blake, then aged 62, was going through hard times. Linnell was only 26 but he had early recognised Blake's particular genius; he befriended him and saw to it that he was able to follow his own vision instead of having to try to paint what the public wanted. Linnell somehow managed to buy Blake's work piece by piece and this gave the older artist something to live on. It could not have been easy.

One of Linnell's earlier pupils who had been lucky enough to become a friend of Blake was Samuel Palmer (1805-1881). In 1837 Palmer married Linnell's eldest daughter Hannah, or "Anny", and took her to Italy for a prolonged honeymoon, one that in the end lasted over two years. Palmer's great friend George Richmond, who had also known Blake and who was now making a name for himself as a successful portrait painter, had just taken his wife to Italy too. And Martin knew both Palmer and Richmond. He had made a loose arrangement to join the Palmers in Italy but

early in 1838 he paid a visit to his brother the Rev. Harry Martin in Devonshire. Albin was delighted with the countryside and dallied there for some time. He wrote to Linnell, "I am much obliged to you for the hints you have given me as to the study of nature." How far he had succeeded, Linnell would judge when Martin was back in town. "I cannot at all satisfy myself, but I sometimes see sketches done by others and I certainly think mine are more like nature than theirs."

It was probably at this time that he met Jemima Kempe, whom he was later to marry. She was living with her aunt Anna Eliza Bray, a prolific writer married to the Rev. Mr Bray, the pastor in Tavistock. Mrs Bray had formerly been married to the artist Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) and this would have given the household an added attraction in Martin's eyes. In the end Martin did not join the Palmers until the end of February 1839. Hannah had written earlier in the month, "I long to see Mr Martin as it will be like one of the family coming over. . ." And the Palmers, according to instructions, reserved rooms ahead of time for "Mr Martin". These were in Rome, in the same building as the Palmers.

Rome must have had a small-town atmosphere in that it was almost swamped with English artists, though Martin would have been loath to lend them all that honourable status. The Palmers had sent Martin their Rome address but if he ever received it, he later wrote, he forgot it. When he arrived he secured a small room and then he set off into the street. He had not been there five minutes before a friend hailed him from a window and directed him to the lodgings of Edward Lear (1812-1888), the English watercolourist and poet – a likely source of information. From Lear, Martin located the Palmers' whereabouts. They too were scathing about many of the English so-called artists: "these wonderful men who have advanced so far in art as to consider it a waste of time to look at the works of M. Angelo." An artist highly ranked in England they quoted as affirming that the antique was "all blasted rubbish".

Hannah had been busy making copies of old masters for her



[8] *Italian landscape*



[7] Bay of Naples

father – figures from the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel and in the Loggia in the Vatican. Distressed that “his daughter” was still in Italy, he nevertheless continued to give her such laborious tasks. Then Palmer had to leave off his own painting and come to his wife’s help, insisting on buying uncoloured prints to save her the effort of drawing everything herself. Hannah could colour them and he and even Albin Martin would lend a hand.

Hannah wrote that Mr Martin was “quite an acquisition”. Amongst other kindly gestures he had taken the modestly placed Palmers one night to the opera. (He had also bought a little drawing by Palmer for five pounds.) When Rome became too warm he would travel with them, “which will be very pleasant for us as he is such a pleasant person.”

At first Martin was only to accompany the Palmers on short trips but in the end went with them on all their travels. It was certainly a good thing from his point of view, for Hannah was able to act as nurse as well as friend. About every fortnight Albin fell prey to illness of increasing severity. Collapsing with nausea, pain and fever, he was kept in bed by the local doctor and treated with leeches.

In between attacks all three managed to travel gently northwards towards Florence. Sometimes Albin and Anny, as she was to him, rode on mules or donkeys. They stopped in Subiaco, then in Civitella, revisiting both places when Albin was feeling better. In mid July when they were in Civitella for the second time, Martin was free from his illness for a longer spell and worked as hard as the other two at painting the “exquisite” scenery. At that time there were twelve to fourteen artists staying there: one of them was Edward Lear. They were pleased to be able to find out from him what day of the week it was. Painting had bemused them.

Then they were in Papignia, in Terni, in Papignia again, and at last in Florence. But here Albin Martin’s condition deteriorated yet again. A well-known English doctor treated him, with a professional nurse; once more many leeches were applied. Martin wrote to Linnell to say that when he was sufficiently recovered

they would all come home; he hoped his lodgings in Bayswater were free.

After his return to England we do not hear of Martin for some time. Probably he painted in Devonshire and courted Jemima Kempe. On 30 November, 1841, Albin and Jemima were married. The bride’s father was A.J. Kempe, a noted antiquarian who was on the staff of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. Jemima recorded that she “behaved admirably” at the ceremony and that everything went off well. On 3 December the couple set off for Italy where, like the Palmers, they planned to have their honeymoon. Theirs too became an extended stay.

Initially in Paris for some days they made visits to the Louvre, where Martin acted as guide for his wife and saw to it that she was not overwhelmed by a great jumble of pictures. By 26 February 1842 they were in Naples, which was to be their base. Martin noted the fine scenery ‘with splendid foregrounds’; he had shown Jemima the sights in Paris, but once in Italy sat down each morning to a hard day’s painting and eschewed sightseeing for some time.

In mid 1842 Albin Martin received bad news from England. His solicitor, “a universally liked man”, had absconded with money from a trust fund for which Albin was a trustee. It included £1,000, a very large sum in those days, which he had theoretically invested for his sister, and also money from Albin’s dividends. A.J. Kempe had talked to his own lawyer about the case. He felt Albin was taking the whole thing too philosophically, “too passively”; and advised him to do something about it lest the parties who had lost the money sue him and the other trustee. What action Albin took we do not know. He did not return to England. Yet it was a reversal in money matters which eventually led to his coming to New Zealand.

Later in the year Jemima had their first child, a girl whom they named Mary Mergellina, after the village of Mergellina where they were living at the time.

In 1843 they were still based in Naples. They often visited Pozzuoli and Baia, where ancient ruins had been uncovered, and

in the winter paid long visits to Castellamare and La Cava. In May they were in Vico, between Castellamare and Sorrento, in La Cava again, and in Sorrento itself. They spoke of returning to England and settling for a short time in London. But in April 1844 (there are large gaps in the letters that have been kept) they are still in Italy and there is another baby on the way.

In July 1844 they are at last back in England; the baby had been born in London but they are now in Silton. Albin Martin is having to try to farm the land he had inherited in the Vale of Blackmore, Dorset, and is no longer the well-to-do young man. But he has not given up his art. On 9 October 1845 Kempe is writing that he is glad that Albin is still painting: he has but to paint a large picture – “large” is underlined – and gain a better place than in the present exhibition. He suspects Martin is to be a painter, not a farmer.

In February 1846, a letter clearly shows the alteration in the Martins' circumstances. Albin writes to Linnell thanking him for the offer of a pony and carriage. At present, he says, he has two horses and a little pony chaise to which one of the horses is harnessed when it is required. Mrs Martin uses the chaise only now and then, for Albin dislikes taking the horses from their work on the farm, “which although very little in extent, occupies quite enough of my time and thoughts.”

He hopes to send something to the exhibition this season but Linnell must not expect much. “Painting seems more difficult and I seem more stupid than ever.” As to the farm, the Corn Laws will not much affect him as he has only three acres of wheat from which he expects three sacks. Nonetheless the spirit of rivalry, which he never thought would overtake him, does now and he is trying to get his land into the best condition. He is lucky in getting a good dairy maid who makes “cheese equal to Stilton”.

There is a gap again in the correspondence until around August 1850 when, in a spate of short letters to Linnell, Martin makes a passing reference to his imminent departure from England. But before he does, he indicates that he means to help a farm labourer

who is being treated unfairly by a neighbouring farmer.

The labourer is John Bell, an “excellent” worker. Martin is trying to get him a job with Linnell, who is moving to Red Hill, Surrey, and wants someone who could start a good garden for him there. Martin suggests a starting wage of eight shillings a week and free rent. Bell has extra qualifications, he says: he has learnt to do odd jobs in the blacksmith line. And Mrs Bell might be useful doing the washing.

Then there is a hitch. Bell is with Linnell but has found the workmen there are paid more than eight shillings a week. Martin is surprised that Bell has brought this up, but points out that the local men might not suffer Bell to “rest in peace” if he worked for lower wages. At last by 10 November things are settled. Martin has given Mrs Bell twelve shillings and sixpence for travel expenses for the family when they join Bell. And this is the last we hear of these particular Bells, though many years later in New Zealand, Martin's kind deeds to another of the Bell family are generously repaid.

Now with six children, Albin and Jemima Martin set sail for New Zealand on the *Cashmere*, which arrived in Auckland on 19 October 1851. During the voyage Albin had been “attacked by rheumatic gout” and he was now so ill that he could not walk. Six days after the ship arrived, a boat took him to St George's Bay where a fellow passenger had found him a house to which he had to be carried. Then luck intervened in the form of a newspaper advertisement which told of the virtues of the Hot Springs at Waiwera, a little north of Auckland. Even though he disbelieved such advertised claims, his condition was so bad that he resolved to try those “healing waters”. He had to wait more than a week but then “Captain Daldy's coastal boat” took him to Waiwera. The claims were justified. After only ten days of treatment he was able to take part in a cricket match the day after his return to Auckland. (Years later he wrote of this to Robert Graham, who owned the Springs.)

Now that he was able to get about, Martin appreciated St George's Bay and its proximity to Auckland. “There are detached



[9] Bellini's "Transfiguration"



[20] *Auckland farmyard*

houses nearly all the way to town . . . roses and geraniums grow in the hedges," he observes, and "a large portion of the recent waste has already become a perfect picture of cultivation." He had only been in New Zealand two months when he wrote an account of his visit to the races on New Year's Day 1852, seeing it all with a painter's eye. Passing him on the way were "half a dozen carts with red wheels", and at the course "I was most interested in looking at the Maories [sic]; they wore blankets of every hue and colour and seated in their wild and picturesque groups they form subjects fit for Michael Angelo." He finishes: "I was able to get material for three little sketches."

Martin had come out to New Zealand to farm. He found that this part of the country had many advantages, though the one thing that was against farming was the high price of labour. He chose land about 25 miles out of Auckland then struck another drawback in the system. The government official had been very civil – the land had to be surveyed and he was to get it a month after that. Everything was proceeding nicely and Martin set about ordering a house to be built. But he had observed a smile on the faces of the settlers as he told them his good news and soon found out why: one fine morning the Lieutenant Governor left Auckland for a period of months and while he was absent nothing official could be done.

He was lucky to find some land nearer to Auckland, land that belonged to a Major Grey and that had already been processed. This was at East Tamaki, where Martin's homestead, Stour House, was built in 1852. The land in New Zealand was admirable, Martin thought, but the people of Auckland were not. He was appalled by the working man's "passion for spirits" and was to write: "Drunkenness is the prevailing vice of the colony – the upper classes as well as the lower give way to it."

He seems, however, to have settled down to life on the farm without complaint. Indeed, he writes lightly of it, telling how he had to walk to get into Auckland, but that before he went home he would go into Levy's shop, buy a book for sixpence or a shilling and read it on his return journey. If the book was

good the walk seemed quite a short one.

In September 1852, Martin wrote to Linnell: "As far as a beautiful country, climate and soil goes, we have made a most decided change for the better; the only thing we want is the society of our friends in England."

Views of distant hills and mountains were very like those in Titian's pictures, he thought. What appeared to be "a few stunted trees and coppice wood" led to the finest scenery he had ever beheld. A view presented itself which made the recollection of anything he had seen before sink into insignificance. "On my left was the sea with its beautiful islands, and before me lay a vast Forrest. As far as the eye could reach, I saw hill beyond hill, and mountain beyond mountain." This landscape he goes on to compare with Dürer's prints.

He had sent some little sketches to Linnell but hoped to do better than "these scratches of views". He was lucky to come to Auckland first for there was no settlement in New Zealand to compare with it.

It was probably early 1853 when he wrote that the farm land for which he gave £200 was now worth £300 or even £1,000. Labourers were receiving five and six shillings per day (a far cry from Mr Bell's eight shillings per week). "Whilst this is the case I shall not employ them if I can help it."

Later he writes, obviously in answer to an offer from Linnell, that he would like some prints from Turner's pictures. There were qualities in New Zealand scenery which reminded him of Turner. At home, through some prejudice, he had avoided Turner's paintings. Views of "woody landscapes" and a few sea views would be most useful. Any cheap prints would do. He added that he wished "Mr Palmer" could see the foregrounds that "we have here", mentioning especially the flax bushes and the tree ferns.

On 25 October 1853, Martin is writing to Linnell thanking him for both photographs and prints. He adds: "The way in which you speak of my sketches delights me very much." He is sending more "slight" oil sketches. "I cannot fancy that my

sketches can be worth money but if any of the . . . public will give me £50 I will send them a year's sketches – I cannot afford now to paint for nothing and with £50 I could hire a labourer who would do the work which I am obliged to do – I might then give most of my time to painting – my love for the art is greater than ever, in fact I cannot entirely give it up." He appends a note to say he is glad Bell is still with Linnell. He would be only too pleased to give £100 a year to Bell if he was in New Zealand, though someone else would then offer £150 and he would lose him.

Martin wrote to Linnell on 19 December 1853 about the 21 oil sketches that he was sending to him. They were very slight, "for his own amusement"; but "at the same time, if anyone likes to give money for them I shall be only too glad to receive it." (Some of the previous lot of drawings he sent in June really were sold.) After Linnell has had this present selection for a month they are to go to Jemima's brother, Edward Kempe. Linnell was to give his opinion as to what price should be asked.

The same month an aunt leaves Martin some money. It was, for the present, only £46 but it must have been a help. There were now eight children and one more was still to come.

His fellow settlers in the countryside now depressed Martin. They had only one ambition, he wrote: "to make money and add field to field". Still, in late 1852 they could not have been doing well. They were receiving advances from merchants and sacrificing good grass land for crops of potatoes which an uncommonly dry season was ruining. He was lucky, he felt, that he had not yet really begun farming, though he had put an acre into potatoes and still hoped to sell those that the family were not eating.

In what looks like an 1853 letter, we find that he has only then finished fencing his land. This was probably because he was "disinclined" to pay the ruling rate for labourers. It does seem as if Martin in New Zealand did not develop that spirit of rivalry with neighbouring farmers that he spoke of attaining in England. Certainly in the 1850s his farm did not do well. Mrs Gore

Browne, the wife of the Governor of 1855-1861, wrote to Martin in 1867, "I hope that farming is becoming a more paying concern that I fear it was to you at first." His obituary notes that Martin had farmed "with moderate success".

The Martins were certainly making friends in Auckland but there were still moments when Albin thought longingly of his friends in England. "Mr Richmond is now the first portrait painter in England," he wrote "and Mr Linnell the first landscape artist of the day." (When Martin had first told Richmond that he was going to New Zealand, Richmond retorted that he would rather sweep the streets.)

In 1856 Martin again inherited money, this time a much more satisfactory sum. There was a letter of credit for £300, and he could draw another £300 if he wished: that would leave about £80 credit in England. His banker, a relation, wrote that he trusted Albin would invest the money "to great advantage". The inheritance should have put any money worries to rest.

Albin Martin's outlook must have vastly improved when an old Cambridge friend George Arney, arrived. Arney arrived in 1858 to be Chief Justice of New Zealand and returned to England in 1875, but his letters show how close he became to the whole Martin family.

Martin's friend Samuel Palmer wrote him a very depressed letter in 1868 to apologise for not having answered Martin's last letter of 1866. Palmer had had a sad time. His twenty-year-old son had died, and earlier his little daughter. Belatedly, he wanted Martin to know of the pleasure he had felt at seeing his handwriting. He thanked him for photographs he had sent and for the "most interesting and very able sketches in oil."

It would be interesting to know which of the painters in Auckland in the 1860s were known by Martin. There is no mention of any in the letters we have but he should at least have met the Rev. John Kinder (1819-1903) who came out to New Zealand in 1854 to become Master of the newly established Church of England Grammar School. The two men were both interested in the talented half-Maori youth Arthur Gundry, a pupil



[47] *View from the Howick Ranges*



[48] Oahu

of the school whom Kinder took on a sketching tour in the Christmas holidays of 1857-1858. When the young man went to England to study art, he carried with him introductions from Martin to people who might be helpful.

Kinder was a keen photographer as well as a watercolourist. It might have been through his influence that Martin obtained a camera, though no photographs have come down to us. But in May 1862 a surprising reference in the *Southern Cross* mentions "water-color landscapes" Martin had painted from photographs "taken on the Tamaki and elsewhere in the district." Among photographs by Daniel Manders Beere in the Alexander Turnbull Library are seven which correspond exactly to watercolours by Martin also in the Turnbull collection. These are depictions of Waikato military camps and Auckland scenes in 1863 and 1864; the only real difference in Martin's copies are a few lively details: groups of people, or a boat in the river. And in the Auckland City Art Gallery collection there are two watercolours by Martin which correspond closely to photographs by Kinder of the Tapu Creek at the Thames goldfield.

In 1861 the painter J.B.C. Hoyte (1835-1913) arrived in Auckland. Both Kinder and Hoyte, who taught for a time at Kinder's school, had occupations that gave them time for sketching holidays, but Martin's subjects show that he rarely sketched far from home in East Tamaki. However in the January 1865 issue of the *London Illustrated News*, there were five newspaper engravings after black and white sketches of the Coromandel gold mining district by Martin.

In 1869 Hoyte and two other painters – Charles Palmer (fl.1869-1908) and John Symons (c.1832-1897) got together to start an art society. The three men signed a document proposing this society, added a list of other artists and obtained their signatures. Albin Martin's name and signature were sixth on the list. They held meetings during 1870, mostly with Hoyte in the chair, but Martin, fifteen miles out, did not attend. The society was to be called the Society of Artists, Auckland, and only working artists could belong. It was the first such art society in New Zealand

or Australia.

In March 1871 the members held their first exhibition. During the 1860s painters in the main centres had sometimes shown their work in local shops. Martin must have been amongst those who did this. The critic for the *New Zealand Herald* was familiar with his work and able to write: "Mr Martin's hand is easily recognised in a number of strikingly executed drawings, any of which will bear and repay close inspection." Some were only "trifles but gems in their way"; but one entitled "Maories [sic] preparing for a war dance" was in every respect "a *bijou* of a watercolour. . . It is Mr Martin's best picture in the gallery in our eyes."

Further exhibitions were held in 1873, 1875, 1877 and 1879. In most of the *Herald* reviews Martin and Hoyte are picked out for special praise. The situation was sometimes reminiscent of a race meeting. Now Mr Hoyte was in the lead, now Mr Martin, Mr Hoyte more often ahead of the field in watercolours, Mr Martin in the oils. Mr Hoyte always painted New Zealand subjects, Mr Martin sometimes showed oils of Italian scenes from his far-off Italian honeymoon.

Martin showed two watercolours in 1873, ten watercolours and six oils in 1875 (along with two Dürer prints), and seven oils in 1877. Most of these are of New Zealand scenes, although the 1875 oils are all Italian. He did not contribute to the 1879 exhibition, having sent his best work to the Sydney International Exhibition. By this time Hoyte was actually living in Sydney, and 1879 was the last show to be put on by the foundering Society of Artists.

In the 1870s artists still showed their work when they could in Auckland shop windows, often at the same time conducting an art union with the pictures as prizes. Certainly Martin was exhibiting in a shop in 1877. On 6 October there was an account in the *Weekly News* of four of his "highly finished works of art" on show at Mr Phillipps's shop where they were being framed. These were of views in the neighbourhood of Lake Takapuna and they were acclaimed for "the fidelity of the scene which they

depicted." Whether they were oils or watercolours was not specified.

On 28 May, 1879 his work was to be seen in the shop of Mr John Leech, the celebrated picture framer. According to the enthusiastic *Herald* critic, Martin was showing thirteen paintings, oils and watercolours. The principal painting had an extraordinary subject, though the critic showed no surprise. It was an oil of "a charge of dynamite" exploding in the Thames River at the Awatonga Falls, documenting J.C. Firth's removal of "snags" so that shipping could proceed as far as Matamata. Mr Martin, we hear, was "a colourist of rare excellence". This and his "masterly drawing" made his pictures "works that were in much request". The Falls picture was to go to the Sydney Exhibition and was in "a beautiful frame" made by Mr Leech.

During the Waikato war in the early 1860s, the countryside around East Tamaki had been unsettled. Martin had joined the Otahuhu Royal Cavalry, but luckily from the point of view of Jemima and the children he did not see active service. However, he may have begun to feel more involved with his fellow settlers and from 1861-1869 he was the Franklin Member of the Auckland Provincial Council. In the 1870s he showed in letters to the newspaper that he had not lost interest in the political scene. Julius Vogel had been in Auckland in October 1870, intending to stand for Franklin in the January 1871 election. A statement in a newspaper accused voters in that district of not signing a petition to ask Vogel to represent them. Martin wrote protesting that the voters had not been canvassed for their views: they would have supported Vogel. Then in November 1870 he wrote concerning a Protection League which had just been founded. James Williamson was president, Martin vice-president. Their aim was to discuss and promote local industry by a system of tariffs and bonuses, and work for candidates supporting protection.

In 1865 J.T. Mackelvie, a businessman, had come to Auckland from England and made a fortune in Thames gold mining shares. When he returned to England in 1871 he took with him four

of Albin Martin's paintings he had lately bought and a collection of his small watercolours that he had purchased in his earlier Auckland years. These he had bound into a handsome book, he wrote to Martin, so that he could more easily carry them about. He showed them to other artists "and they had been much liked". Mackelvie was in the way of meeting artists because he was at that time buying contemporary English paintings as part of a collection he was making of paintings, books, *objets d'art* – almost anything, one might say, that was collectable. All were destined eventually for Auckland, although some he was keeping for the time being, for his own pleasure.

Mackelvie had made the acquaintance of Martin after he had bought some of his work, and remained interested in the artist and his painting career. When Julius Vogel went to England in 1878 he took with him a bundle of Martin's paintings; told of them by Martin, Mackelvie went to see them but found that Vogel could not remember what arrangements he had made with Martin and was even unclear as to whose work it was. He talked with Mr Kennaway, Vogel's secretary, who said that he thought Martin hoped to find buyers for them. Kennaway himself could have sold some of them already, had a price been put upon them. It was arranged that Mackelvie would get in touch with Martin and get him to write to Kennaway; he would also arrange for friends to see them. In his letter he took the trouble to tell Martin how very much he liked one of the paintings and described it in some detail.

In 1880 a new art society was formed in Auckland. It was to be called the Auckland Society of Arts and the word 'Arts' was to include just about everything that could be squeezed under that heading. Martin was a member of the preliminary committee and when in October 1880 they passed a resolution concerning the destruction taking place in the Auckland Domain, he wrote a letter protesting this to the *New Zealand Herald*, expressing eloquently his dismay when he saw what was being done to a favourite spot of his – one that he had hoped soon to sketch. The lower branches of some beautiful oaks had been "hacked

off'. He also pleaded for more native trees to be planted. A week later he answered a man who defended the Domain Board's actions although his letter he feared would be useless – it was like talking of colours to a colour-blind man.

The first exhibition of the Auckland Society of Arts opened early in April 1881. Among the exhibits were some extraordinary objects shown by exhibitors taking advantage of the Society's definition of 'Arts'. They included: a harp in wax, a silver bracket, an antimacassar, cases of waxed flowers, foliage in electroplate and a case of stuffed birds.

Dr John Logan Campbell, the 'Father of Auckland' and a non-painter, was president of the Society and another non-painter was the secretary, but at least six out of the ten committee members were painters and Albin Martin was treasurer. Of importance to the artists, "nearly every person and family of influence and position were present during the day." At last people with money were being attracted to the exhibition and might be persuaded to buy paintings.

The artists' hopes were perhaps shown in the higher prices they were now asking for their most valued oils. The usual range for many years was from £3 to £8. Now some were in double figures, although Martin's highest price was a modest £10 (for *Maoris resting*). He contributed nine oils and three watercolours, and the *Herald* critic wrote of his "unfailing certainty of artistic touch", adding, rather cryptically, "whether we look on the picture as finished or unfinished".

In 1882, Martin and his family moved to Arthur Street, Ellerslie. We may guess that Albin's deteriorating health inspired the change. Nevertheless, he sent in six oils to the 1882 Society of Arts exhibition, and the *Evening Star* reviewer praised their "softness and transparency". The 1883 exhibition contained five oils and two works "in tempera". These and two of the oils were lent from the collection of Martin's friend G.B. Owen. In 1884 Martin showed a total of ten oil paintings, ranging in price from £3 to £8. The *Herald* commented "Albin Martin's landscapes are pleasing pictures, and make some appeal to the imagination,

which is more than can be said of the works of some of the artists who are exhibiting."

Martin was a strong churchman and served in the Anglican Synod for some years. When Christ Church was being built in Ellerslie in 1884 he wrote to Alfred Bell of Clayton and Bell, the best known stained or "painted" glass-makers in England, asking if Bell would donate the glass for a small window in the new church.

Alfred Bell had been a village boy in Silton, and must surely have been related to the John Bell whom Martin had helped. His father had been a woodsman on the estate of the Duke of Somerset and when Martin used to join shooting parties there, Alfred's mother would call him in to their cottage to see what Alfred had copied from illustrated papers. Martin became interested in the talented boy and would take him home and let him draw from casts. He lent him not only prints from the great masters to copy, but also original Blake drawings. When the boy was older, Martin wrote of him to Samuel Palmer and to Linnell. He was able to interest the London architect, afterwards Sir Gilbert Scott, in Alfred and Scott took him into his office.

In about 1857 Bell left Scott's office and no doubt with Scott's blessing, in partnership with a friend started the firm of Clayton and Bell. Martin had always kept in touch and now Bell was able to show his gratitude. He immediately wrote and asked for measurements of all the church windows. The finished glass for the thirteen windows arrived at the end of 1884 and the church was able to have its first service in 1885.

Martin continued to send pictures to each year's Society of Arts exhibition. In 1885 there were six oils, three of which were of Italian scenes. In 1886 all three oils by Martin were Italian: *At Amalfi, Naples, Castellamare, Naples* and the intriguingly titled *View in Italy: a Saint at her Devotions*. In 1887 he sent five watercolours – one of Dorsetshire, three of Naples, and one of East Tamaki.

Apparently for the last two or three years he had been confined to his house – "almost to his bed" – and it was known to his intimate friends that he was suffering from heart disease.

However, he managed to send six oils to the April 1888 exhibition, all of them local subjects. He was now vice-president of the Society.

Albin Martin died suddenly on 7 August of that year, while sitting talking with his wife. He was buried, his obituary tells us, in the "quiet little cemetery" at Panmure, but a service was first held for him in Christ Church, Ellerslie. The stained-glass windows in this church can be regarded as his memorial.

The obituary in the *New Zealand Herald* states: "In him art loses a devoted adherent and a judicious supporter, while the rising generation of artists will miss an intelligent and kindly critic." Four of oils were hanging, we are told, in the new Art Gallery, "all representing Italian subjects, the sunny skies and picturesque surroundings of daily life in Italy furnishing subjects which he loved to pourtray [sic]." These four paintings were Albin Martin's last gift to his adopted city.

Una Platts



[55] Josiah Martin *Albin Martin* c.1885

Auckland's Old Master

To Mr Martin might be assigned the position of father of art in this district, probably in the colony. An artist of the highest ability himself, he ever sought to promote and encourage its study and practice, and his loss will be deeply felt in art circles.¹

Notwithstanding the fulsome view expressed in the obituary, Martin has received scant attention over the century since his death. His involvement in Auckland's political life ensured him a place in the *Cyclopedia of New Zealand* (1902), and he is one of a select group of artists honoured by inclusion in Scholefield's *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1940).² For most of this century, the only publicly owned works by Albin Martin were the numerous and almost uniformly tiny watercolours in the Auckland collection, which also contained several small Italian oils. Not surprisingly, none was selected for the National Art Gallery's *Centennial Exhibition* of 1939-1940.

In 1966 the Auckland City Art Gallery acquired the painting then known as *The artist's farm at Tamaki* [51], and this accomplished "Old Master" treatment of the Auckland landscape became the inevitable illustration to brief accounts of Martin's career.³ Not until 1983 was the scope enlarged by Francis Pound's reproduction of three watercolours from the Mackelvie collection. These pages in *Frames on the Land* amount to the first serious discussion of Martin's style in the context of New Zealand art.

This relatively marginal status within twentieth-century art history is due largely to his failure within the scheme of nationalist criticism, which has seen early New Zealand landscape as a more or less successful confrontation with local

geographical and meteorological realities.⁴ Martin's is an awkward, virtually paradoxical position. No other landscape artist produced a more Italianate vision of New Zealand, yet at the same time provided titles proclaiming that these were in fact pictures of Otahuhu or East Tamaki. The fascination of Martin's work lies precisely in this grafting of a European pastoral vision, heavily dependent on earlier artists, on to the raw landscape of his new home.

Martin's pictorial education was a late form of the Grand Tour, that virtually obligatory journey to Italy for connoisseurs and artists who could afford the arduous travel necessary to inspect the great art of the past, and to soak in the carefree sunshine of the South. In 1839 with Samuel Palmer and his wife, Martin was exposed to the great collections of Rome and Florence.⁵ Two years later he returned to Italy on his own honeymoon and a letter written by Jemima Martin in Paris indicates Albin's prior acquaintance with the Louvre.⁶ In Naples during 1842 and 1843, Martin took great interest in the Roman excavations, buying antiquities and making his own copies of Roman paintings [10]. At the same time, he studied Renaissance art in the Naples gallery by the same time-honoured method of making copies [9].

Just as Samuel Palmer continued to produce Italianate pictures (and seized opportunities to chat to Italian organ-grinders), these early travels and art discoveries had an enduring impact on Albin Martin. Decades later, his contributions to Auckland exhibitions frequently numbered Italian landscapes, and in 1874 he was reduced to writing to the press to assert that (despite published statements to the contrary) he was himself the painter of the Italian views in the Mechanics' Institute exhibition.⁷ Yet Martin

probably enjoyed the “Old Master” mystique, apparent in such fond appreciations as “Our old friend, and of an old school, which reminds one of old picture shops whose great merit often lies undiscovered. . .”⁸

What certainly remained largely undiscovered by all but his friends was one of the most remarkable private collections in nineteenth-century New Zealand. A memoir by a relative of Jemima Martin refers to “A collection of some 250 drawings and prints by Albert Dürer and his contemporaries” and states that “some of these, including an original drawing by Altdorfer, a contemporary of Dürer’s, have been acquired by the British Museum.”⁹ Some of these works he lent to local exhibitions, such as the 1877 Trinity Sunday School Exhibition at Otahuhu, and the 1881 inaugural exhibition of the Society of Arts.¹⁰ To the latter he lent Dürer’s *Melancholia*, a Parmigianino etching, two of the Blake *Book of Job* watercolours, and several drawings by Linnell.¹¹ In 1882 he lent another Blake drawing, *The Ten Virgins*, meaning that the East Tamaki homestead housed an astonishing 23 original works by William Blake.¹²

Martin’s ownership of these works is evidence of how close his friendship with Linnell had been, and lies behind Peter Tomory’s assertion that Martin must have also once owned Fuseli’s *Satan’s first address to Eve* as well as Blake’s *Lot and his daughters*, both presented to Auckland in 1887 by Sir George Grey.¹³ While Martin probably did own the Blake drawing at one stage, there is no evidence that he was the mysterious transmitter to New Zealand of the superb collection of Fuseli drawings Tomory found in Dunedin, which appear to have once been owned by Blake.¹⁴ Martin only ever mentions Fuseli in passing (such as the anecdote about wearing a raincoat to view Constable’s work) and it is inconceivable that at least a sampling of these drawings – had he owned them – should not have been lent to one of Auckland’s early exhibitions.

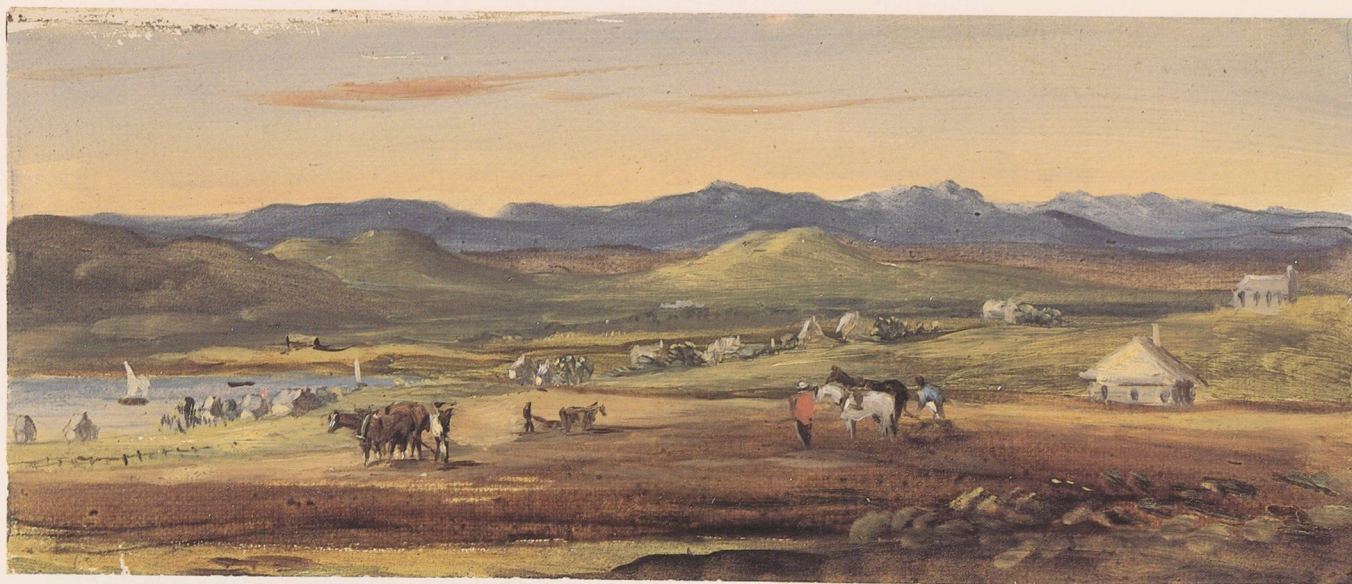
The “portfolios full of rough sketches” mentioned by Bullock-Webster in 1883¹⁵ would surely have contained a fair amount of his own lifetime’s work, including both the Italian and New

Zealand pictures well represented in many descendants’ collections. There were also works by English friends such as Linnell and Palmer, including etchings by the latter which show a reciprocal side to Martin’s despatching sketches to friends and family back home.¹⁶

The best evidence of Martin’s pictorial connoisseurship is to be found in his writings, which incorporate a far wider range of references to great European artists than do any other New Zealand writings of the period. At one extreme are artists of antique repute, cited in connection with the plaster casts presented to Auckland in 1878 by his friend Thomas Russell, and at the other are famous contemporaries such as Frith, Linnell, Mulready and Maclise. Renaissance favourites include Perugino, Raphael, Titian and Michelangelo, while from the seventeenth century he is drawn to Velasquez and Caravaggio, the “weird power of Rembrandt”; and of course Claude Lorrain. The name of William Blake, the “Michael Angelo of English art”, is cited again and again.

Prompted by Russell’s gift of the antique casts, John Logan Campbell established Auckland’s Free School of Art.¹⁷ At the first prizegiving in December 1879, Martin acted as judge, and in the address he prepared for the students he deliberately invoked the words of the first president of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, whom he regarded as the greatest of all English artists. This is in response to an unflattering comparison between Reynolds and the Pre-Raphaelites recently published by Alfred Sharpe, with whom Martin was currently undertaking the first of several anonymous tussles in the newspaper.¹⁸ Using the penname “E.X.”, Martin wrote:

To mention Sir J. Reynolds as inferior to the modern pre-Raphaelite school is much about the same as if a person were to keep in one portfolio the drawings of Michael Angelo and the drawings of children in a nursery. I admit that some people would understand and be more interested by the



[18] *View at Panmure*



[19] *Mount Wellington. View from the 50 acres which I have lately bought*

children's efforts than those of Michael Angelo. If I had to select three or four pictures by an English artist, to be placed in the same room with pictures by Titian, Velasquez, and Rubens, I should have to go to Reynolds.¹⁹

Under the cloak of advice to Auckland's art students, Martin's references to "mere topographical, or what the dealers call furniture pictures" and his quotation from Reynolds on accurate imitation as "the lowest style of art" are in fact barbed criticism both of Sharpe's watercolours and of this artist's call for "literal truth" in local landscape art. Here, on the other hand, is Sharpe's opinion of Martin and the "old school of painters".

Take, for instance, Mr Albyn Martin's pictures; many are apparently rough and unfinished, and, to the uneducated eye, are sometimes little better than daubs; but those who understand art will be able to appreciate the graceful contour of the lines, and the artistic grouping of the trees and figures, and also the tender contrasts of colour, in which he delights and excels; so much so, that the scenes he represents are often very unlike the reality. The old school of painters deemed it derogatory to Art to copy a scene with fidelity; they mistakenly said that a mere draughtsman could do that. . . . The result was that, not being hampered by realism, they produced very artistic pictures, but as actual representations of reality those pictures were nowhere.²⁰

Martin is at one extreme of Auckland's nineteenth-century art culture, holding a strongly established but essentially conservative position against which there are contending forces. In 1883, at the same time as Martin (calling himself "A Lover of Art") was continuing to infuriate Sharpe with his critiques of the exhibition, someone called "Cabbage Tree" wrote the following about

Martin's pictures:

I know it is almost a sacrilege to say a word against this artist's work, but still I must say it would be a fatal thing for New Zealand Art if the rising artists were led away by any desire to imitate it.²¹

Another hostile commentary on Martin's seven exhibited works concluded "If such be the results of a life study in art, may Auckland artists be saved from it."²²

Despite his powerful position within the art establishment (he was treasurer of the Society of Arts and on the committee deciding the design of the new library and art gallery), Martin was essentially out of step with current developments in local painting. In an 1884 letter in defence of the newly formed Art Students' Association, Alfred Sharpe argued for a local art which "does not conform to the art ideal of several hundred years ago":

Everything is progressive around us; and can it be supposed that in these days of progress art alone must go back to the old masters, and slavishly imitate them in reproducing the salient features of an entirely new country; or else get the cold shoulder from the antiquated Sir Oracles, who go entirely by by-gone standards of judgment? Perish the thought!²³

Both in theoretical and practical terms, Martin's work differs significantly from that of his New Zealand contemporaries. At a time when Hoyte, Sharpe and Watkins were creating ambitious exhibition watercolours which aggressively asserted their space, Martin worked on virtual scraps of paper. These little watercolours, which demand the familiarity of an album held in the lap, were for Martin much more than "mere topography". In an 1880 letter complaining about the destruction of native trees in the Domain, Martin explained that he had made a special

pilgrimage to a now-devastated spot “for the purpose of illustrating some lines from Tasso”.²⁴ In other words, he was searching nature for the embodiment of an ideal: the sacred grove.

Martin’s large oils are “history” paintings in the fullest sense. The pair of canvases commissioned by J.C. Firth to commemorate two great events in his life [42, 43] conform to the standard notion of history as embodied in the past actions of great men. How different is Alfred Sharpe’s conception of history in *Taupiri Village and Plain* 1876, a work contemporary with the Firth pictures, in which he focuses on the marks which road, railway and buildings are making on the Waikato landscape. This is the landscape realism which for Martin was anathema.

The body of surviving works by Albin Martin includes many unfortunate ruins: evidence of an experimental attitude towards mixtures of mediums. Not only was Martin’s a muddy palette at the best of times, but his 1877 letter “Our Coloured Earths” reveals that he was quite literally experimenting with mud. Many of the larger oil paintings mentioned by contemporary reviewers, including most of a dozen works reputedly owned by his friend G.B. Owen, have disappeared. Included among these lost pictures is the depiction of a dynamite explosion levelling a waterfall on the Thames River, intended for exhibition in 1879 at the Sydney International Exhibition.²⁵ We can only hope that since none of his paintings was ever signed, many unrecognised works are still in existence.

By assembling a representative body of paintings and drawings from a career which spans almost fifty years, the present exhibition allows us to make an assessment of Albin Martin’s art. Both for the pictures’ sake, and for his importance as critic and ideologue, recognition of Auckland’s “Old Master” is long overdue.

Roger Blackley



[22] *View in the Forest, New Zealand*

- 1 "Death of Mr. Albin Martin" *New Zealand Herald* 9 August 1888, p3.
- 2 Scholefield repeats the obituarist's assertion that the artist was a personal friend of William Blake.
- 3 Keith 1968, Brown and Keith 1969, Docking 1971, Muir 1973.
- 4 See Francis Pound "The Real & the Unreal in New Zealand Painting" *Art New Zealand* 25, pp42-47.
- 5 See Edward Malins *Samuel Palmer's Italian Honeymoon* (London, 1968).
- 6 "Albin knowing the pictures beforehand did not allow me to look at all the first time." Jemima Martin to her father A.J. Kempe, 7 December 1841 (Auckland Institute and Museum).
- 7 "Mr. Albin Martin's Pictures in the Mechanics' Institute Exhibition" *Daily Southern Cross* 5 January 1874, p5.
- 8 "Auckland Artists' Society Exhibition" *New Zealand Herald* 24 November 1877, p5.
- 9 John Arrow Kempe *Reminiscences of an Old Civil Servant* (London, 1928) p9, 10.
- 10 For the Otago exhibition, see *New Zealand Herald* 8 March 1877, p2.
- 11 Including the Linnell portrait in the present exhibition [1].
- 12 Martin's set of *Job* watercolours was sold by his daughters at Sotheby's in December 1928, and eventually passed into Paul Mellon's collection, while the *Wise and Foolish Virgins* is now in the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Laurence Binyon and Geoffrey Keynes accepted *The Book of Job* as largely autograph works by Blake, but recent scholarship has tended to regard them as copies by John Linnell (Butlin 1981, p409).
- 13 "Note on the Auckland drawings by Fuseli" *The Poetical Circle* (Florence, 1979), p11.
- 14 See a 1927 newsclipping from *The Sun*, "America Interested in Blake Paintings" bound with *Loan Exhibition. Illustrations to the Book of Job* [Auckland Society of Arts, 1927] and a set of black and white photographs of the Blake watercolours (Auckland Public Library). "Handwriting on the mount of the picture [*Lot and his daughters*] is identical with manuscript notes made in Mr. Martin's copy of Gilchrist's 'Life of Blake'."
- 15 See checklist of the exhibition, [56].
- 16 Among Palmer's works owned by descendants is *The Sleeping Shepherd*, an etching of 1857.
- 17 See R.C.J. Stone *The Father and his Gift* (Auckland, 1987), pp148-149.
- 18 Sharpe made his comparison in "Art Criticism" *New Zealand Herald* 29 November 1879, p5. This was a reply to E.X.'s first letter published two days earlier.
- 19 "Sketching from Nature" *New Zealand Herald* 16 December 1879, p6.
- 20 "Hints for Landscape Students in Water Colour" *Auckland Weekly News* 11 November 1882, p3.
- 21 "The Society of Arts Exhibition" *Auckland Evening Star* 19 April 1883, p4.
- 22 "Artists and their Critics" by A Thirty Years Visitor to the Academy Exhibition *Auckland Evening Star* 26 April 1883, p4.
- 23 "The Auckland Art Students' Association" by A Well-wisher to Art [Alfred Sharpe] *Auckland Evening Star* 7 March 1884, p3.
- 24 "The Destruction of the Domain" *New Zealand Herald* 21 October 1880, p6.
- 25 For a description of this painting, which showed a 200-pound charge of dynamite throwing up "a gigantic turret of crystal to the height of 470 feet", see *New Zealand Herald* 28 May 1879, p5. Although we are told "It is Mr. Martin's intention to forward this fine picture to the Sydney Exhibition", Martin is not listed as an exhibitor in the *Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition 1879* (Sydney, 1881).



[17] East Tamaki, drawing from an undated letter

Selected Writings

The publication of artists' texts is an urgent task, especially in New Zealand where monographs on individual artists are relatively rare. In these excerpts from his writings on the fine arts, Albin Martin fluently outlines his aesthetic ideology.

In the interests of readability short titles have been provided, together with a few full stops in the 1854 manuscript. Typographical hiccups in the newspaper pieces have been silently corrected, but otherwise the texts are exactly as they were first published. For full details of the sources, refer to the bibliography.

Roger Blackley

1852

First visit to the Auckland races

January 1st was the beginning of the Auckland races; they last three days; I went on the first day : these public amusements are the best places to see the inhabitants of the country : the weather was brilliant and beautiful : the course is about four miles from Auckland, and there passed me on the road, half-a-dozen blue carts with red wheels, two vehicles – something between a French diligence and an omnibus – a Whitechapel cart, in which was seated Mr. or Captain Beckham, our police magistrate; these equipages, together with a few horsemen, made up the scene on the road. On the course, which is very finely situated, I was mostly interested in looking at the Maories; they wear blankets of every hue and colour, and seated in their wild and picturesque groups they formed subjects fit for Michael Angelo. I saw natives with giant-like and finely moulded limbs sitting in attitudes that reminded me how true Michael Angelo was to nature. The races were, I believe, considered good; I was engaged in sketching, so that I did not pay much attention to the horses : I was able to get materials for three little sketches.

Journal of an Emigrant 1852, pp29-30

1854

The colonies have no past

The colonies have no past. There is nothing in them to interest the imagination. The future is a mere speculation about wealth and adding field to field. It must be centuries before Poetry and Art can find a home in N Zealand. It must be a long time before the descendants of drunken Irish soldiers & convicts can have a taste for the beautiful. Perhaps we attach too much importance to the past, but I cannot help thinking that then there was more poetic inspiration than there is in these radical times. Thirty years ago the names of Australia & N Zealand were merely seen at the fag end of a Geography book and a person going to those places was looked upon by his friends as if he was taking his departure for the next world. Another era is now beginning. Australia will with regard to communication be brought near to Tavistock as Scotland was a century hence.

...

N Zealand is not a place to regret coming to and I have not yet arrived at Mr Richmonds¹ opinion about emigration. When I told him I was coming here he said "I think you are wrong, I should do anything else, I would take a crossing rather", that is sweep the streets. Mr R is now I suppose the first portrait painter & Mr Linnell² the first landscape painter of the day. I must own that I cannot get over my regret at not being able to live amongst the world of Art, but it is not my fault that I am not possessed of either talents or money enough to do so.

...

I hope you have seen all the sketches which I have sent home. The last lot were directed to Mr Linnell, they were in oil. Some time ago I received a very kind letter from Mr L, he spoke very well of my former sketches. An artist like Mr

Linnell can see the good points in a sketch and does not trouble himself about little defects, whilst the amateur, if he can find out that a line is not straight or that some part of the picture is too brown or too blue, thinks he shows his acuteness by condemning the thing altogether. With the help of the illustrations I have managed to fill up my space.

Albin Martin to Mrs Bray, February 1854 [16]

1 George Richmond 1809-1896

2 John Linnell 1792-1882

1875

An art gallery will lessen drunkenness

If the vice of drunkenness is to be lessened, it must be done by giving the people more entertainments and amusements, exhibitions of pictures, museums, concerts, theatres, reading-rooms, &c. I see that the English clergy have at last discovered that they have made a mistake in having for so many years been preaching against the theatres. They should have endeavoured to make these places respectable, as they are in Germany and other continental towns. People will have amusements and excitements, and if they cannot have these things in one way they will have them in another. Something will have to be put in the place of drinking. It is proved by statistics that the New Zealand people drink about three times as much as those in Great Britain, and the people of the United Kingdom are supposed to be the most drunken nation on the face of the earth. It is quite time that measures should be taken to wean the colonists from their drunken habits. The Government should set apart, whilst they have it in their power, a piece of ground for the purpose of erecting on it buildings for art

purposes. I trust that the Auckland artists will not let the Government rest until they procure a grant of land for the above desirable object.

Daily Southern Cross 22 November 1875

1877

A nation's art reflects its life and spirit

It has been said "that in the art of a nation is contained the reflection of its life and spirit." New Zealand hopes to become a nation; we can scarcely apply the above remark to this country just at present, but it is quite time that those who take a real interest in this colony should do something towards the encouragement of the fine arts.

...

In England, all the large towns are giving great encouragement to the arts. Those matters are not left to a few struggling amateur artists to take up or leave alone as it suits them, but they are taken in hand by the rich tradesmen and merchants, and schools of art are established, and assisted by those who have both the means and the inclination. Here we have many who have the means, but the inclination is wanting. It would be a desirable thing if some of our orators and statesmen were to imitate the example of that greatest of English orators and statesmen, Mr. Gladstone, and deliver an occasional lecture at the Museum on the subject of the Fine Arts. There is no reason that because persons come out to these colonies to follow sheep-farming, or to enter on mercantile pursuits, all of the refinements of life are to be neglected.

New Zealand Herald 20 April 1877

Our coloured earths

It is everyone's duty to call attention to the undeveloped resources and products of the country in which he lives. Carrying out precept with practice, I would call attention to the various coloured earths which abound in New Zealand. The sciences of geology, botany, and the various other branches of natural history, have received a good deal of attention from our *savans*, not one of whom, that I am aware of, has ever taken any notice of the very excellent specimens of ochres, both red and yellow, which are to be found here. There is also a crumbly type of stone which makes a fine transparent brown, equal to asphaltum. There is no reason why the different coloured pigments which are known to exist in New Zealand, should not be displayed in the Auckland Museum, so that the resources of the country may be seen by visitors and strangers. It would, I conceive, not be difficult to gain information from the natives where they procure their pigments; I believe they make use of blue, green, red, and yellow. I have, by way of experiment, painted a slight sketch with colours picked up and prepared in a rough way by myself; blue is the only foreign colour used in the sketch. I believe that these pigments are quite equal to any we get from England. I have written this in the hope that by calling attention to the subject some persons may be induced to send to our Auckland Museum specimens of different coloured earths and minerals; blue and green would be the greatest acquisitions.

New Zealand Herald 23 June 1877

The importance of drawing

The art of drawing undoubtedly stands next to the art of writing in point of usefulness, for as writing is the means of conveying ideas, so is the latter the medium of conveying details of form, and it frequently happens that drawing is by far the better mode of expressing both; thus, to use a few simple illustrations, how well does the surveyor's plan explain the form of the block of land, the mine, or the coast. Without it the architect could hardly explain his building, or the shipwright his vessel, and a written description of either to all but the initiated would be scarcely intelligible.

...

But art properly so-called begins where the mechanical part ends, and calls up the most vigorous efforts of the most intelligent minds. It has been held in veneration by all civilised nations, as much by the ancients as the moderns, or even more. It portrays not only form, circumstances, passions, and natural phenomena, but even the very ideas of mankind, making them a visible reality.

New Zealand Herald 23 June 1877

1878

What is Art? How is an Art Gallery to be formed in a colonial city?

What is Art? "Let us take care of the beautiful," Goethe used to say, "for the useful can take care of itself." And Art is the cultivation of the beautiful. As another master of thought has expressed it: – "When we speak of high art, we mean art used to instruct and ennoble men; to teach

them great ideas, whether historical, religious, or romantic; to awaken their piety, their pride, their justice, and their valour. . . . Whatever can be painted or sculptured of strength or sweetness, of grace or terror, of piety or power – that belongs to high art." The effect of habitually seeing fine art is to elevate, harmonise, refine – it tends to the graces both of mind and body. The first sight of "the old masters," to a person of any natural taste is like a revelation – he sees something wholly unexpected. Beside that, how small and insipid seems modern art? Sir Joshua Reynolds has said: – "The effect of the capital works of Michael Angelo is that the observer feels his whole frame enlarged." Some sense of the beautiful is possessed by most people, whether it be dormant or active; and to awaken, develop and instruct this faculty is surely a valuable branch of public education? In every civilised country it is now a law that all shall be taught to read. But the pencil and the chisel cultivate the mind besides the pen, and it is well that there should be popular access to pictures and statuary as well as to books. It is the tendency of all the arts to beautify and to ennoble human thought and action, and this is true of painting and sculpture and architecture as well as of poetry and music.

How is an Art Gallery to be formed in a colonial city? Even the wealthiest and most advanced colony cannot attempt to create such a thing as it exists in Europe. The paintings of the old masters, the statues and friezes of the great Greek sculptors, are but rarely to be had for either love or money. The cognoscenti in whose possession they are know their value too well, and prize them too highly to part with them often or easily. But though we cannot have the great originals, it is possible to have *fac-simile* of some of them. Of *some* of them – that is, of the sculpture, not of the paintings, for a cast from a piece of sculpture may reproduce the beauties of the original, which a copy of a painting cannot do – and this because mechanical contrivance is available in the one case, and is not at all



[40] *In the Domain, Auckland*



[44] *Near Mercer, Waikato*

available in the other. The successful copy of a great painting is as impossible a thing as the successful translation of a great poem. Imitation is but an inferior faculty. It may, indeed, reproduce the body, but not the soul; that subtle something which made the glory of the original is beyond its reach. And if an artist of real genius were to condescend to copy a painting, as he has been sometimes seen to translate a poem, the result of this performance would be not to place the original before you, but another one belonging to himself. In the Melbourne Gallery of Art the practice has existed of obtaining from Europe copies of well-known or celebrated pictures. Such things can have no use in educating the public eye or evoking a local art school. Two or three "Old Masters," when they could be had, and if the funds would allow, and even a limited number of good modern pictures – and they have a few of these already, – would be a collection, however small, that would soon make itself felt; and it might really cost little more than a long list of indifferent originals or copies, which can only cover the walls, but inspire nothing.

...

It is all the more a certainty that the old masters cannot be reproduced in *fac-simile* like the Greek sculptors, for the grandeur of the old painters' genius seems to have more completely passed away. Canova and Thorwaldsen have in recent times made a nearer approach to the majesty of the antique chisel than any moderns have to the great bygone painters. It would seem as if art can no more have a Raphael or a Murillo; a Guido or Velasquez will never again emulate Titian's colouring or the weird power of Rembrandt – he who wrought sublimity by light and shade alone. Those were masters among the masters, but what modern can dispute the palm with even those of lesser rank? What brush has rivalled the ships and the play of wind and wave in Vandervelde's coast scenes, Cuypp's cows and meadows,

the forest glades and falling waters of Ruysdael, Weuerman's brigand and battle scenes, or those festive gatherings of Watteau, which, by-the-by, seem to have suggested the pleasant revival now so much in fashion, of "lawn parties." Those works of the magnates of painting are scattered over Europe. They are amongst the treasures of Rome and Florence; they fill the Louvre and the galleries of the German Courts; they are in Trafalgar Square; they are in the hands of private connoisseurs; but to us they are inaccessible, unless we cross the world to behold them, for they cannot be re-produced as an epic or a history is re-printed.

New Zealand Herald 7 December 1878

1879

Blake's eccentricity

Blake was very eccentric in his opinions. He used to say that the Torso was the only original piece of sculpture in existence. His opinion was that all the fine statues were copies from originals sculptured by the Asiatic patriarchs. Blake, who was almost, if not quite, starved to death, is now considered to be the Michael Angelo of English art, and his pictures scarcely to be had for money.

New Zealand Herald 6 January 1879

Artists are not necessarily the best judges of pictures

Artists assume that none can judge of pictures and statues but themselves. They exclaim against anyone writing about



[30] Daniel Manders Beere *Kaukapakapa, near Auckland* 1863

Art who has not served his apprenticeship to the craft. The truth is, very few artists are to be trusted in their judgment on these matters. The way in which they are consumed and devoured by envy prevents them from forming a just opinion of living artists, and with one or two exceptions, I have found better judges of old pictures amongst collectors of prints, picture-dealers, and amateurs, or *virtuosos*, than amongst even the best artists. It is not everyone who is capable of duly judging works of art of the highest class. It requires a man capable of estimating the noble, or touching, or terrible, or sublime subjects which they present, but there is no sort of necessity that we should be able to put them on the canvas ourselves.

New Zealand Herald 11 January 1879

A school of design, climate, and state patronage

Let us here observe that the influence of a School of Design in cultivating the public taste is not confined to the artist. It also practically effects the artizan. When we come to be more of a manufacturing community we will realise this fact. Since the last Industrial Exhibition in London, Schools of Design have been introduced in England for this very purpose. The Society of Arts had the principal share in a movement which was called for by the great superiority, as regards tastefulness of pattern and delicacy of finish, in all sorts of French and Belgian goods; and which circumstance is due to the system of popular art instruction, which is so wisely provided in many of the Continental countries. Like all sorts of education, that in art bears fruit in a variety of ways.

Dunedin has possessed for a longer time than Auckland a School of Design, and, as the idea is more familiar to the

public there, the Dunedin school is as yet more familiar to the public there, the Dunedin school is as yet more largely attended. This must not continue to be. Auckland is bound to go ahead of the other city. Though they are in the same colony, there are many degrees of latitude between them, and the climatic conditions are very dissimilar. Auckland has vastly the advantage, and climate counts for a great deal in this matter.

...
What was it that enabled the arts to flourish [in the Netherlands], in spite of in many districts a very different climate? The patronage of the State. Wherever the arts have flourished, the State has been the chief patron. It is most important to note that fact. The Free Corporations of Ghent, Bruges, Antwerp fostered the arts just as Athens and the Greek Republics had done, as the Mediaeval Republics of Italy, and afterwards the Italian princes, did. The care, the encouragement of the State has an influence even still more potent than climate in the development of the arts.

New Zealand Herald 2 August 1879

Mere imitators of nature

The painter must be no mere imitator, even of nature, for with all his efforts, how far, far short must he fall of the utterly inimitable original. Attempts to give an exact imitation of natural sounds in music, or natural forms in painting, must be alike abortive. The most finished portrait of external form is, if it go no deeper, all but worthless, the shape of a leaf, the sub-division of the branch, the asperities of the bark, may be all there, as far as paint and pencil can convey them, but nature is not with them; the material

body, lifeless, soulless, may be present, but the spirit which animated it is away, and he who has no higher conception of art, must fail, miserably fail, in touching one deep feeling within us, in awakening one sympathy of the heart for his cold paint and canvas. With regard to young students, with the exception of a few great geniuses, most persons must expect to go through a long course of labour in learning the grammar of art, and when they have learnt that, it will be seen whether they have any genius or imagination, or whether they are to be merely topographical painters.

...

I know what sketching and studying from nature ought to be, for I at one time was constantly in the habit of seeing the studies of Hunt,¹ Collins,² Linnell, Mulready,³ and others; I am well acquainted with Turner's⁴ early drawings, and also with those of Girtin,⁵ who used to draw in the fields with Turner, when they were glad to get 5s a piece for their studies. Girtin died young. I think he was a more powerful artist than Turner. Turner, except when quite young, never slavishly copied nature.

New Zealand Herald 6 December 1879

1 William Henry Hunt, 1790-1864

2 William Collins, 1787-1847

3 William Mulready, 1786-1863

4 J.M.W. Turner, 1755-1851

5 Thomas Girtin, 1775-1802

To the students of the Free School of Art

[The clever student] will imitate the landscape-painter, who if he wishes to paint something better than mere topographical, or what the dealers call furniture pictures,

selects the beauties and leaves out the deformities of nature. The poet has an advantage over the prose writer, who is obliged to confine himself to facts. Homer and Shakespeare were the best poets, because they were creative and suggestive, and at the same time the most natural writers that the world has ever seen. We gain a better idea of English history from the plays of Shakespeare than from the most accurate statement of facts written in prose. In painting, the mere imitator may be compared to a prose writer who contents himself with nothing but simple facts, and only aims at the truthful in whatever shape, however ugly, he may find it.

...

Accurate imitation is not the end of art although some persons can see nothing beyond. Thus, in my opinion, accurate imitation is only the commencement of art. Sir Joshua Reynolds says, "that the lowest style of art, that is mere imitation, will be the most popular, as it comes within the compass of ignorance, and the vulgar will always be pleased with what is natural, in the confined and misunderstood sense of the word, while in the inferior parts of the art the learned and the unlearned are nearly on a level." Study the works of the great masters, continually study nature attentively, but always with those masters in your company, "Consider them as models which you [are] to imitate, and at the same time as rivals with whom you are to contend."

...

With outdoor landscape, exact imitation cannot possibly be done. Hence becomes necessary the study of light and shade, or, in other words, arrangement of the light and dark parts of the picture as well as that of the colour, and how they may best produce the intended effect on the mind of the spectator, whether it be that of height or depth, gloomy



[29] *Kawkapapa*

grandeur or brilliant light; whether the light shall die away by imperceptible degrees, or be diffused through the picture in greater breadth, when to make a dark mass upon a light ground, or a light mass on a dark one. Now, with all this, the head, rather than the hand, has most to do. In fact, a grand picture may be executed with a careless hand, just as a clever letter may be badly written, whilst the most beautiful hand will not make up for a stupid one, and he who can feel and use his materials is not a mere topographical delineator, but a true painter, and will not cease to be one as long as he has eyes and hands to work with.

...

The province of Auckland ought to produce artists, that is, if climate and a scenery have anything to do with it, for in this respect it is second only to Greece. We have in our scenery the peculiar charm of an intimate association of land and sea, of shores adorned with vegetation, or picturesquely girt about by rocks gleaming in the light of aerial tints, and of an ocean beautiful in the play of the ever-changing brightness of its deep-toned, moving waves. To have artists we must have a public who appreciate art. If, as the old critic asserts, the poet would have remained mute and inglorious had he not found an applauding audience – with greater reason may it be said that the painter and the sculptor would have left their glorious ideals to perish in cold abstraction without any attempt at their realisation, had they not the hope that their work would be rightly estimated. Art lives, moves, and has its being in appreciation. Our object should be to produce delighters of the public, but it is also necessary to produce a public susceptible of delight. The arts of painting and sculpture embrace within their sphere the most manifold relationships in the ideal world – that is, the spiritual, the most various phenomena in the world of reality; and for those who know how to drink worthily at their source they are an

overflowing fountain of instruction, of moral education, of the purest and noblest pleasures of which human nature is capable.

New Zealand Herald 13 December 1879

1880

Cautious criticism

Seek not to detect deficiencies and imperfections in works of art of the highest class until you have previously learned to see the beauties, and are able to recognise and discover them. Most persons wish to act the critic before they have begun to be scholars. It is with them as with schoolboys, all of whom have wit enough to find out their master's weak point. As it is easier to assume a negative than affirmative position, so imperfections are more easily observed and found out than perfections, and it requires less effort and trouble to criticise than to improve one's self.

Auckland Evening Star 22 June 1880

1881

Permanence and the preparation of colours

In a lecture given lately by Mr. Holman Hunt,¹ he laments that artists know so little about the quality of the colours they use. It was not so in the old days, when artists prepared their own colours. Michael Angelo is said to have prepared his own colours when painting the Sistine Chapel. The Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the people of Pompeii and Herculaneum had for colours – first, the natural earths,

the ochres; secondly, the colours made from stones; and, in addition, chemical combinations which by modern analyses have been proved to be products, indicating no little skill in their makers – all evidence going to prove that the materials were sold in their unmanipulated state, and that the painters themselves prepared them for use. Cennini, who wrote in or about the fourteenth century, says: – “To become an artist, a youth should devote himself for the first seven years of his career to the mechanical part of his pursuit!” The most precarious colours of the present day, such as bright greens and yellows, are to be seen in the works of Van Eyck, and in some of the early Italians, just as fresh as when first painted. This is not the case with the pictures of Wilkie,² Turner, or even with those painted by artists now living. Turner’s pictures are frightfully altered, owing to his being so fond of chromes.

...

From my own observation I have come to the conclusion that neither artists nor colourmen care about their materials lasting. All the former care about is the sale of their pictures, and the latter are only anxious to sell their colours. I was once, just previous to the Exhibition, looking at the pictures of an artist, famous for using bright colours, and I expressed a doubt as to their durability. The artist said: “I don’t trouble myself about that; the colours will last till the pictures are sold.”

New Zealand Herald 23 April 1881

1 William Holman Hunt, 1827-1910

2 David Wilkie, 1785-1841



[2] *Great tree in landscape*



[53] *New Zealand Landscape*

Mechanical drawing is a rudimentary acquirement

I beg to call the attention of the Education Board to the great want there is in the town of Auckland of a mechanical drawing teacher. Mechanical drawing is the art of representing an object so accurately that a skilled workman shall be able to make the object without any further verbal or written instructions from the designer. The object represented may be machines, implements, buildings, utensils, or ornaments. The drawings may be linear, shaded, and coloured or plain. They must be drawn to scale, but various geometrical methods may be employed. The name of mechanical drawing is given to one and all of these representations, the object of which is to enable the thing drawn to be made by a workman. Artistic drawing aims at representing agreeably something already in existence, or which might exist; mechanical drawing aims at representing the object, not for the sake of representation, but in order to facilitate the production of the thing represented. This kind of drawing is very important to our artisans. Very few workmen or men of any class can hope to acquire such excellence in artistic drawing that their productions will give profit to themselves or pleasure to others, but a great number of workmen must acquire some knowledge of the drawings of those things which they produce, and there is not one skilled workman or workwoman who would not be the better qualified by a knowledge of mechanical drawing to do his work with ease to himself and benefit to the public. Mechanical drawing is a rudimentary acquirement of the nature of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and therefore should be taught in our schools.

New Zealand Herald 21 November 1881

1882

Guido Reni's St Sebastian in the museum

I went a few days ago to view the pictures lately given by Mr. Mackelvie to the Auckland people, and which are now placed in the museum. The Auckland people are fortunate in having such munificent gifts presented to them, but they are unfortunate in having no building adapted to hang pictures in. The colour of the walls of the museum being white renders it quite impossible for anyone to look at these old pictures with any satisfaction. I say nothing about the badness of the light. Under these circumstances and in their present state it would be unfair to enter into a minute criticism of these pictures. The St. Sebastian, a very fine picture, is, I should say, painted by Guido, and on a very dark grey ground. The landscape has become too dark; the colour on the left arm has either been rubbed off or has disappeared into the grey ground. Whether the landscape could be restored by cleaning I cannot say. The figure is more solidly painted and is in a better state of preservation. In this picture Guido has imitated the style of Caravaggio, which was to force the lights by keeping the background and other objects very dark. To see a fine picture like the St. Sebastian as it ought to be seen – in the first place it should be carefully cleaned and varnished, placed in a regilded or a new frame, and then being in a properly lighted building, against a dark red or a sage green wall.

...
It is to be hoped that the Auckland public will very soon have a proper building for pictures and works of art. If a liberal spirit is shown in this respect, I have no doubt it will be rewarded by numerous gifts and fine works of art.

New Zealand Herald 27 November 1882

1883

The elevation of public taste

This mental faculty, like other faculties, requires to be educated. Then opens to a man new enjoyments and confers the perception and taste which beautifies his work, whatever that particular work may be. A sense of what is beautiful does not belong exclusively to the artist, any more than religion is the exclusive property of the clergyman, or the care of health to the physician. The artist is in his walk only the skilled minister. Neither is the exercise of the art faculty confined to the production of the painting or the statue. It adorns whatever it touches. In manufacture it has proved of immense importance. In England, with this special object there has been established a whole network of schools of design. At the Hyde Park Exhibition in 1851 it was clearly perceived that English fabrics, while possessing strength and durability, were as a rule inferior in pattern and delicacy of finish to those of many Continental nations. This would never do for the greatest manufacturing country. It was determined to introduce the system of art education, which gave the Continentals such an advantage.

New Zealand Herald 4 April 1883

Give us something more than mere topographical views

Our artists have to consider whether the public are not tired of seeing so many views of Rangitoto and the Auckland harbour, the Boiling Springs, Waitakerei Falls, Milford Sound, and other topographical views. Greater variety is wanted. The public would like to see a few portraits and pictures with figures, such as the one of the Museum – the

schoolchildren and their mistress.¹ This is not high art, but people understand and like it. Our landscape pictures should give us something more than mere topographical views; there should be movement and life in their pictures, beautiful arrangements of lines, and effects of light and shade.

Auckland Evening Star 18 April 1883

- 1 By John Morgan (1823-1886), from the first group of Mackelvie's pictures which arrived in 1882.



[35] *Bay of Islands*



[42] *The Death of William Thompson, the King-maker*

Checklist of the Exhibition

All works are executed on paper, unless otherwise specified.
Measurements are in millimetres, height before width.

- 1 John LINNELL (1792-1882)

Albin Martin c.1834
watercolour and bodycolour, 292 x 217
Private collection

Linnell depicts the financially independent young gentleman who had recently become his pupil. Almost fifty years later, Martin lent this drawing to the 1881 inaugural exhibition of the Auckland Society of Arts.

- 2 *Great tree in landscape*
pen and sepia wash, 230 x 185
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Throughout his career, Martin produced a great number of these "Old Master" drawings. Writing to Mackelvie after inspecting the books he had sent in 1883, Martin said, "The Claudes ought to be very useful to our Auckland artists. They are perfect imitations, I have seen the originals." (Albin Martin to J.T. Mackelvie, 11 February 1884: Auckland Public Library)

- 3 *Landscape with cattle and figures*
sepia wash, 223 x 325
Auckland City Art Gallery

Martin called these his "bistres", and many of them were made in East Tamaki for local "black and white" exhibitions. At least several were executed on photographic paper. Hence the art-historical quandary: impossibly exotic drawings which are actually New Zealand works of art.

4 *Landscape with entwined trees*
pencil and opaque white, 258 x 174
Auckland City Art Gallery,
presented by the Estate of Kathleen Hickson, 1984

5 *Fortress, Naples*
oil on canvas, 203 x 303
Private collection

Martin first visited Italy in 1839 when he travelled to Rome to join Samuel Palmer and Hannah Linnell, who were honeymooning there. When Albin married Jemima Kempe in 1841, they in turn left for a two-year honeymoon in the Bay of Naples. Their first daughter was born at Mergellina in November 1842.

6 *Coastline, Naples*
oil on cardboard, 248 x 514
Private collection

"The ruins along the coast are just like what we see in the old pictures. The greatest merit of this scenery is that it is not shut up as painters call it. You have splendid fore grounds with islands and mountains 5 or 10 miles off and also the sea with its various shades." (Albin Martin to R.[?] Mitford, 26 February 1842: Linnell Trust)

7 *Bay of Naples*
oil on paper, 250 x 345
Auckland City Art Gallery,
presented by the artist, 1887

This painting is executed on thin paper, and is almost certainly one of the original Neapolitan sketches from which Martin worked up later pictures.

8 *Italian landscape*
oil on cardboard, 305 x 378
Auckland City Art Gallery

Many of the surviving Italian pictures by Martin were executed in New Zealand, and titles such as *Morning at Naples* and *Italian Landscape, with Figures* appear in exhibitions throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

9 *Bellini's "Transfiguration"*
oil on paper, 315 x 280
Auckland City Art Gallery,
presented by the artist, 1887

This is a copy of the central portion of Giovanni Bellini's celebrated *Transfiguration* in the Pinacoteca del Museo Nazionale, Naples. "I have nearly finished a small copy of a picture in the gallery, [and] if this weather lasts I think of copying some of the pictures found at Pompei. They are not very well done, but it would be interesting to have recollections of them." (Albin Martin to Mrs Bray, 18 November 1842: Private collection)

10 *Telephus, suckled by a doe*
bodycolour, 260 x 200
Auckland City Art Gallery,
presented by Miss Nella Hickson, 1944

Martin wrote the following explanation on the back of the mount: "Telephus, suckled by a doe and led by a Genius, he is recognised by his father Hercules, through the intercession of the Goddess of Arcadia who is sitting on the left. The whole scene is acted in the sanctuary of Pan, the tutelary Deity of Arcadia whose figure is visible over the head of the Goddess. The figures are a little larger than life. The whole group is charming, simple and natural. Wall painting of a round apartment dug up in Herculaneum."



[51] *Maoris returning from fishing: Evening view at East Tamaki*



[52] *The Garden at East Tamaki*

- 11 *Moonlight and firelight*
pen and sepia wash with opaque white, 152 x 195
Auckland City Art Gallery

This is a reversed version of Rembrandt's painting *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt* in the National Gallery of Ireland.

- 12 *Knight on horseback*
watercolour and bodycolour, 114 x 173
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection

- 13 *Corpo della Cava, 17 July 1842*
letter from Jemima Martin to her aunt, Mrs Bray,
with watercolour illustration by Albin Martin
Private collection

Jemima writes: "Albin has made you a sketch from a picture he has in hand. . . I wish you could enjoy it [the scenery] with us, but you must wait to see Albin's descriptions to form an idea of what it is like."

- 14 *Mergellina, Napoli, 9 February 1843*
letter from Jemima to Mrs Bray,
with watercolour illustration by Albin Martin
Auckland Institute and Museum

"He has kindly promised to make me in the space I have left a drawing of the Street of Tombs at Puzzioli of which he has made a very nice sketch. . . I have not yet accomplished a visit to either Baia or Puzzioli, although they constantly tantalise me by going and bringing home sketches and antiques."

- 15 *Journal of an Emigrant from Dorsetshire to New Zealand*
privately published in London, 1852
Auckland Public Library

This is Jemima's copy of her husband's shipboard diary, published for family consumption. Bound between pages 18 and 19 of this copy is a watercolour sketch of the Tasmanian coast inscribed in Jemima's handwriting and probably her own work.

- 16 *The banks of the Tamaki, February 1854*
illustrated letter from Albin Martin to Mrs Bray
Auckland Institute and Museum

Parts of this letter appear in the Selected Writings and the whole is reproduced as the end papers.

- 17 Undated fragment of a letter by Jemima Martin,
illustrated by Albin Martin
Auckland Institute and Museum

- 18 *View at Panmure*
oil on canvas, 85 x 201
Rex Nan Kivell collection,
National Library of Australia, Canberra

This is page eight of an album titled *Sketches by Albyn Martin of the country round his own residence in the neighbourhood of Auckland New Zealand sent home during 1854 and 1855*. An inscription on the reverse of this page states "In the year '53 the field in the fore ground was planted in potatoes; the produce was 10 tons to the acre", followed by a sum multiplying 50 acres by 10 tons, and finally by £6 per ton, arriving at £3000. This must be Albin fantasising a future in potatoes.

- 19 *Mount Wellington. View from the 50 acres which I have lately bought*
oil on canvas, 98 x 195
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Martin farmed in East Tamaki from 1852 until his retirement to Ellerslie thirty years later. In these early days, whenever he visited Auckland he invested sixpence or a shilling "in literature to beguile the time, for it is a long walk home. . . . As I am always in haste I occasionally buy a book that is of no value. At other times I get hold of something which makes the walk seem quite a short one." (Albin Martin to Mrs Bray, February 1854: Auckland Institute and Museum)

- 20 *Auckland farmyard*
oil on canvas, 110 x 223
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Purchased by the Turnbull Library from a Kempe family descendant in England, these oil sketches must be one of the lots Martin mentions sending home in 1852 and 1853.

- 21 *Otara Creek, East Tamaki*
oil on canvas, 164 x 98
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

"I hope after a time I shall be able to send you something better than these scratches of views which I have enclosed. They are better than nothing and may serve to give you some idea of the country around us." (Albin Martin to John Linnell, September 1852: Linnell Trust)

- 22 *View in the Forest, New Zealand*
oil on canvas, 210 x 160
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

"I wish Mr P. [Samuel Palmer] could see the foregrounds we have here, the flax plants, the tree flax, the tree ferns, the wonderful creepers as big as a ships cable hanging to the tops of trees of immense height. There are numbers of plants and trees of the most extraordinary luxuriance and beauty, the names of which are magnificent." (Albin Martin to John Linnell, 25 October 1853: Linnell Trust)

- 23 *Auckland, looking over the harbour to the North Shore*
oil on canvas, 143 x 330
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

The building on the extreme right is Auckland's first hospital.

- 24 *View from the Otahuhu road looking towards Onehunga*
oil on canvas, 130 x 262
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

"I should like some prints from Turners Pictures [as] there are qualities in the N.Z. scenery which remind me of Turner. I have not tried to see through a Turner medium. At home from some prejudice or other I rather avoided his pictures. Woody landscape and a few sea views would be the most useful, any cheap prints will do." (Albin Martin to John Linnell, 25 October 1853: Linnell Trust)

- 25 *View from the hills*
watercolour, 142 x 105
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

"As far as the eye could reach, I saw hill beyond hill, and mountain beyond mountain covered with wood, and trees of such size and grandeur as to render them fit to be the mast of some great admiral. In a walk of about half a mile I saw numbers of scenes such as Albert Dürer has given us in that most beautiful of all his prints: the Holy Family crossing a bridge." (Albin Martin to John Linnell, September 1852: Linnell Trust)

- 26 *Rangitoto from East Tamaki*
watercolour, 170 x 253
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Unlike the preceding watercolour, which is contemporary with the oil sketches, this work must be from the 1860s. In style it relates to the following three works [27, 28, 29] which are close copies of photographs by D.M. Beere, who began working here in 1863.

- 27 *Auckland, view from near the Cemetery*
watercolour, 125 x 222
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

These copies after Beere are not Martin's first use of photography as a source for his paintings. In 1862 a newspaper reported, "We have seen several beautiful water-color landscapes in Mr. Chapman's, Queen-street, painted from photographs taken on the Tamaki and elsewhere in the district. They are the work of Mr. Albyn Martin, M.P. C. [Member of the Provincial Council], and reflect the highest credit on his artistic skill." (*Daily Southern Cross* 29 May 1862, p3)

- 28 *Kawau*
watercolour, 118 x 220
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Altogether, the Turnbull collection contains seven watercolours copied from Beere photographs. This image-scavenging was perhaps an outcome of Martin's frequent periods of ill-health, when he would have been confined to the house.

- 29 *Kawkapapa*
watercolour, 117 x 192
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington

Working from Beere's 1863 photograph, Martin shows the construction at Kaukapakapa of the schooner *Lotus*. The ship was wrecked at nearby Kaipara Heads in August 1864.

- 30 Daniel Manders BEERE (1833-1909)
Kaukapakapa, near Auckland 1863
photograph, 108 x 178
Auckland City Art Gallery; purchased 1986

D.M. Beere worked as a surveyor for the Auckland Provincial Government from 1864 to 1867. Martin was then serving as the Franklin member on the Provincial Council, and may have known Beere personally.

- 31 John KINDER (1819-1903)

Tapu Creek c.1869
 photograph, 205 x 284
 Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1983

This is one of a pair of photographs depicting Tapu Creek, which the Rev. Kinder exhibited at the 1871 exhibition of the Auckland Society of Artists. The *Herald* reviewer praised them as "two very successful specimens of a beautiful art", and reported that "copies could be had from the artist at 10s each". (*New Zealand Herald* 8 March 1871, p2)

- 32 *Tapu Creek, Thames Goldfield*
 pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 195 x 250
 Auckland City Art Gallery,
 Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

This paper carries the watermark *Whatman 1868*. The group of watercolours collected by James Tannock Mackelvie can reasonably be dated to the years of his residence in Auckland: 1865-1871.

- 33 *Tapu Creek, Thames*
 watercolour and bodycolour, 154 x 219
 Auckland City Art Gallery,
 Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

This work is closely based on the other photograph of Tapu Creek which Kinder exhibited in 1871. Mackelvie's fortune was significantly based on mining investments in Tapu Creek.

- 34 *Whangarei*
 watercolour and bodycolour, 203 x 160
 Auckland City Art Gallery,
 Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

"Your water-colour sketches which I brought home with me I had put into a handsome album and exhibited them at a conversatione [sic] at the Arts Club in Hanover Square where they were much admired & now when I want to give my friends who seek information about the Scenery of New Zealand a treat I lay before them your album and their invariable remark is what lovely scenery you must have there." (J.T. Mackelvie to Albin Martin, 25 July 1877: Auckland Public Library)

- 35 *Bay of Islands*
 tempera on canvas, 515 x 715
 Private collection

Martin exhibited a watercolour titled *Paihia* to the first exhibition of the Auckland Society of Artists in 1871. Five years later, in April 1876, one of the five works he sent to the New South Wales Academy of Art exhibition was called *In the Bay of Islands, Auckland*.

- 36 *Bay of Islands*
 watercolour and bodycolour, 153 x 282
 Auckland City Art Gallery,
 Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

Apart from this evidence of travel in Northland, and several Waikato scenes, the world of Martin's pictures is restricted to Auckland and more particularly the hills and plains near his East Tamaki home.

- 37 *St Georges Bay*
watercolour and bodycolour, 109 x 168
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885
- 38 *Landing Place, Lake Pupuke, Takapuna*
watercolour and bodycolour, 113 x 169
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885
- 39 *Parnell Bridge in the Domain*
pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 158 x 116
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

On the back of the picture under the title, Martin has written "done away with by the Railway". This work has more than a casual resemblance to Kinder's photographs of the Parnell entrance to the Domain.

- 40 *In the Domain, Auckland*
watercolour and bodycolour, 222 x 213
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

"I do not know whether you recollect two water colors of yours, a view in the Domain, and a view of the Great South Road looking Waikatowards, which were in the possession of Scales of the "Southern Cross". These I bought at his sale & they are before me as I write." (J.T. Mackelvie to Albin Martin, 20 June 1878: Auckland Public Library)

- 41 *Bivouac of troops: evening*
oil on canvas, 260 x 310
Private collection (on exhibition in Auckland only)

There are several works by Martin which incorporate apparent references to the Waikato War of 1863-1864, and they may well be retrospective "history" pictures. In the year of his death he exhibited an oil titled *View at Tamaki, General Cameron's Camp in the middle distance*, depicting a scene of 25 years earlier.

- 42 *The Death of William Thompson, the King-maker*
exhibited 1876, Auckland Institute and Museum
oil on canvas on board, 612 x 765
Auckland City Art Gallery,
presented by Mr H.C. Firth, 1974

At Christmas 1866, Josiah Clifton Firth (1826-1897) received a message from his friend Wiremu Tamihana, who was dying. Firth hastened to Matamata, where Tamihana was surrounded by his Ngati Haua kinsfolk. In the account of this event which he supplied to the newspaper when the painting was exhibited in 1876, Firth relates that Tamihana had commanded his (lately rebellious) people "to obey the law, and to be kind to the pakeha". Most importantly, in view of Firth's enormous leasehold property at Matamata, the dying Tamihana was supposed to have said "Remain here after I am gone - *ake ake* (for ever)." (*Daily Southern Cross* 7 June 1876, p3)

- 43 *The Meeting of J.C. Firth with the rebel Te Kooti*
exhibited 1876, Auckland Institute and Museum
oil on canvas, 512 x 765
Mona Gordon bequest,
Waikato Museum of Art and History

While on his Matamata estate in January 1870, Firth heard that the arch-rebel Te Kooti Rikirangi was in the mountains opposite. Firth's "friendly natives" fled to the Waikato settlements, while his sons were sent to Cambridge. The next day, Firth met Te Kooti at Tamihana's monument, accompanied by two chiefs and an interpreter. Te Kooti told him "he was weary of fighting, and that if Government would let him alone he would fight no more", but that he would never surrender.

"The artist has faithfully depicted the interview, and the beautiful landscape amidst which it took place. The chief personages, the armed band, Thompson's monument, the distant woods of Matamata and the grand mountain chain, with the magnificent waterfall of Wairiri, and the noble peak of the Te Aroha mountain in the distance, are well placed on the canvas, and, when finished, promise to complete a picture interesting for its historic facts and scenic beauty." (*Daily Southern Cross* 8 June 1876, p3)

- 44 *Near Mercer, Waikato*
watercolour and bodycolour, 113 x 192
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

In 1859 Martin was one of a number of land and stock holders who petitioned the Colonial Secretary to open up the "waste lands" of the Waikato for use as agricultural and grazing land: "This immense plain of excellent land held by a few natives, who made no use whatever of the greater portion, yet unwilling to sell an acre". (*Parliamentary Papers* July 1860, p136; the letter to which Martin was a co-signatory is dated 24 May 1859)

- 45 *On the Waikato between Mercer and Rangiriri*
watercolour and bodycolour, 83 x 162
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

These watercolours date from after the Waikato War, which had opened this territory to European farming.

- 46 *Mount Wellington*
watercolour and bodycolour, 130 x 231
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

Throughout his career there are reports of Martin working on pictures to send back home. Describing some that are on display in the shop window, the *Herald* in 1877 reported: "He has painted them for the purpose of showing to the people at home, as it is called, what sort of scenery the people of the province of Auckland are living amongst, and that if they are desirous of seeking fresh woods and pastures new, they cannot do better than come to this province, where they will find thousands of beautiful spots to settle in, and where there is a climate unsurpassed by any climate in the world." (*New Zealand Herald* 31 March 1877, p2)

- 47 *View from the Howick Ranges*
watercolour and bodycolour, 125 x 230
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

"If an English artist wishes to get views like Titian, Claude, and the very early Italian masters, he could not do better than come to the province of Auckland." (*New Zealand Herald* 31 March 1877, p2)

- 48 *Otahuhu*
watercolour, 139 x 190
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

This is the first blocking out of a sketch Martin has rejected, and the inscription in the sky is actually the title of a more developed version on the other side of the paper. All the Mackelvie watercolours carry these pencilled topographical titles written on the reverse.

- 49 *View of the artist's farm, East Tamaki*
oil on cardboard, 205 x 305
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1986

A sensitive outdoor sketch from Martin's later years.

- 50 *Farm, East Tamaki*
oil on paper, laid on board, 250 x 455
Private collection

- 51 *Maoris returning from fishing: Evening view at East Tamaki*
exhibited 1882, Auckland Society of Arts
oil on canvas, 610 x 815
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1966
previously titled *The artist's farm at Tamaki*

"Mr Martin's largest canvas is No. 28, "Evening View at East Tamaki", in which a number of Maoris are returning from fishing. These figures give life and animation to a very quiet scene. The contrast between the dark foliage in the foreground, and the bright twilight of the sky, against which stand out sharply several tall-stemmed trees, is remarkably effective. We may perhaps be allowed to question, however, whether they are New Zealand trees." (*Auckland Evening Star* 20 April 1882, p2)

- 52 *The Garden at East Tamaki*
oil on cardboard, 220 x 320
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection

- 53 *New Zealand Landscape*
watercolour and bodycolour, 270 x 370
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection, 1885

The reviewer who queried the New Zealandness of the trees in *Maoris returning* would probably have similar difficulty with this picture. Martin's generic title could indicate that this is a composite or invented scene.

- 54 Cornelius VARLEY (1781-1873)

Landscape with bridge and women washing clothes
watercolour, 208 x 312
Auckland City Art Gallery,
Mackelvie Trust Collection

This is by the younger brother of John Varley, who was John Linnell's teacher. A comparison of this work with *New Zealand Landscape* shows how faithfully Martin preserved the style he acquired in the 1830s and 1840s: John Varley's classicising compositions fused with a fondness for bodycolour and the more gestural paint handling of John Linnell and Samuel Palmer.

- 55 Josiah MARTIN (1843-1916)

Albin Martin c.1885
photograph, 118 x 95 (oval)
Private collection

56 Harold BULLOCK-WEBSTER (1856-1942)

Diary volume VIII (27 February 1883)
ink and watercolour on paper,
Waikato Museum of Art and History

Harry Bullock-Webster was a young Englishman commissioned by Thomas Russell to sail to New Zealand and carefully inspect each of Russell's rural estates. He naturally visited Russell's friend Albin Martin, when he made this characteristic sketch of the interior of the Ellerslie house. "Such a charming old gentleman, pretty little house, full of pictures of all sorts and descriptions by well-known artists. A great treat to me looking over portfolios full of rough sketches of great man. Tho' looking at good drawings makes me dreadfully disgusted with my own wretched attempts."



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Manuscripts by Albin Martin survive in the library of the Auckland Institute and Museum, the Auckland Public Library, the Linnell Trust archive, and in the hands of a number of his descendants. Typescripts and some photocopies are in the research library at Auckland City Art Gallery, as are copies of all known writings Martin published in Auckland newspapers. Many of these appeared over pennames, or as anonymous editorials, and have only recently been identified as the voice of Albin Martin.

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- A.M. "Farming in New Zealand" *New Zealand Herald* 22 May 1875, (supplement) pp1, 2
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- A.M. "Mechanical Drawing" *New Zealand Herald* 21 November 1881, p5
- A.M. "Mr. Maclise's Picture, 'The Spirit of Justice'" *New Zealand Herald* 21 November 1881, p3
- A.M. [more on "The Spirit of Justice"] *New Zealand Herald* 23 November 1881, p4
- "Mr. Mackechnie's Lecture" *New Zealand Herald* 17 November 1882, p3
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strongholds for them, in the last fight a hostile chief, I do not mention
 what his name was, drove a tribe from the hills no 1 & 2, having got them
 there he surrounded the hill and sent word to them not to make themselves uneasy



he would send them plenty to eat, he adopted the plan of our country
 Squares in England, the Times newspaper calls them "hire their own mutton wags"
 who keep a little flock of sheep for their own table and sell them as they want
 them, we live in rather more peaceful times, the village of Panmure
 is under hill no 1 & our neighbour Mr Hyack is the owner of hill no 2. He has a fine
 being of cows which live on the hill and at the foot of it he has splendid goats,
 wheat & potato fields, the natives are gone no one knows where.

You are by this time beginning
 to find fault with me for not
 telling you a word about
 semina & the children

I am glad to say that at
 present we are all well.

Miss Goldsough & master Walter are

in Ancehland with Mrs & El

Baby grows very fat & is



great interest in the Semina finger does
 to be interesting

seen. Willie is a fine little boy full of life a true Harry. The
 baby is as good looking as any Cupid he has a very decided character of his own
 has a good deal of Harry's determination she is clever and I think will
 artist of the family, Albinus is a handsome boy very gentle in his disposition
 than I ought to have played watter before above he is a nice looking quick
 child, both Tanny & Mergie are really good girls & of great use to their
 mamma. we have had a very hot summer the children have been in
 the river at high water bathing very often it has been great fun for them
 I think it keeps them in health. From about the middle of October there
 has been no rain such a dry summer I said was never known in England
 it has affected the prospects of the colony greatly, the farmers who were
 all to make their fortunes this season will hardly get any return for
 their labour. however I do not think this little chick will do any harm
 in the end, speculation was going on to fast the farmers were ~~some~~ advances on
 their crops in prospect from the merchant, before ~~the~~ the seed was put in
 or the ground was turned up fine grass land has been sacrificed to potatoes
 which turned out a failure for want of rain. They have been attacked by an insect
 which has caused them to be almost as bad as the potato blight in England. Our neighbour
 Capt Smith ploughed up 20 acres of grass the first potatoes he planted were all rotted by the
 next nothing daunted he plants more seed for which he had to give 10 tons in Ancehland
 day after day against wind and tide we used to see him go down the river to Panmure
 to fetch them he had to pay 4s a day to his men all this time the
 reward for all this expense is that the crop is
 scarcely worth taking out of the ground. I was
 fortunate in doing nothing to farming this year I must
 not complain of any potatoes I planted on an acre at the
 end of the winter those that we do not consume will I have no doubt be worth 20 or 30. The land
 which gave Lopez's men worth 800 or 1000. labourers are now receiving 5s for day whilst this

