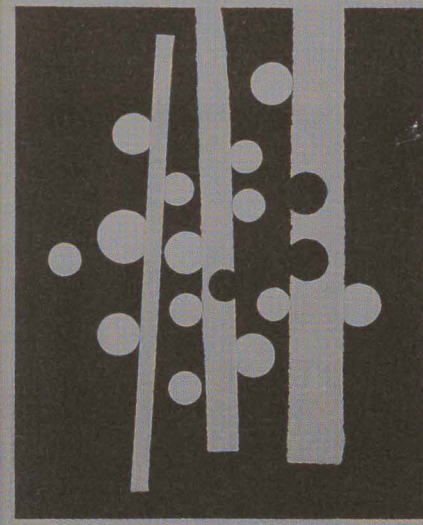




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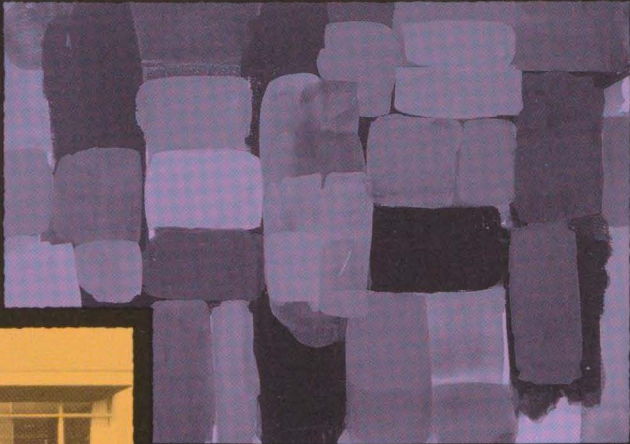
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**GLOSSARY OF
A BODGIE...**

MARLO (after Brando): A mug fair, show-off, especially on a bike.

RAT: A young girl for whom the bodgie group holds an irrepressible fascination, but who is not accepted by them. A scatter-brained girl.







Critics applaud cinema's new double feature.



When you're hot you're hot, when you're not you're not. That's the way it is in the movie business. And that's how it used to be when you went to see a movie at the Penthouse in Wellington.

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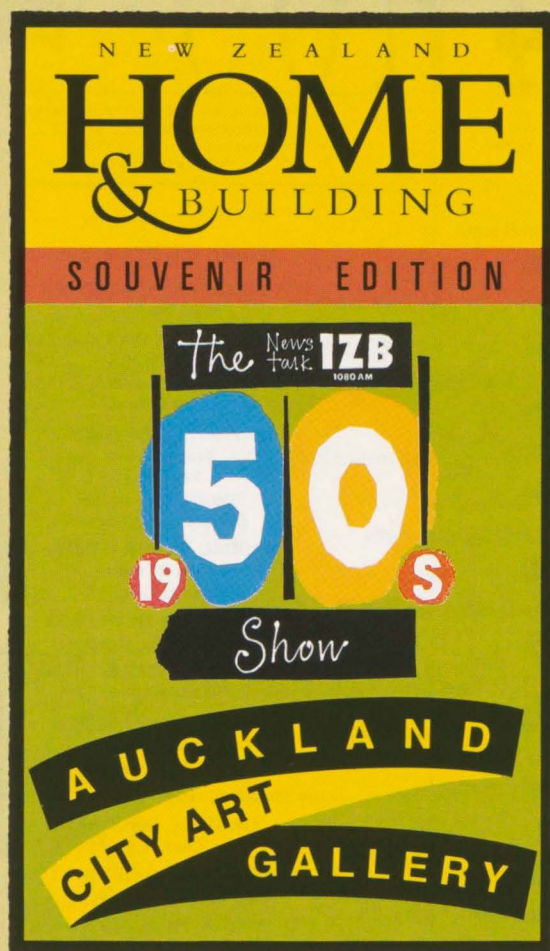
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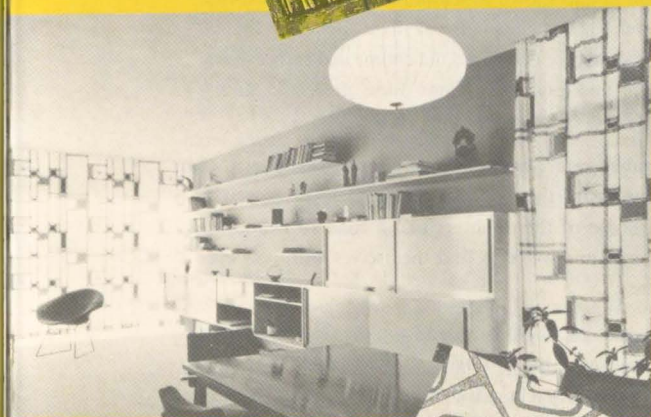
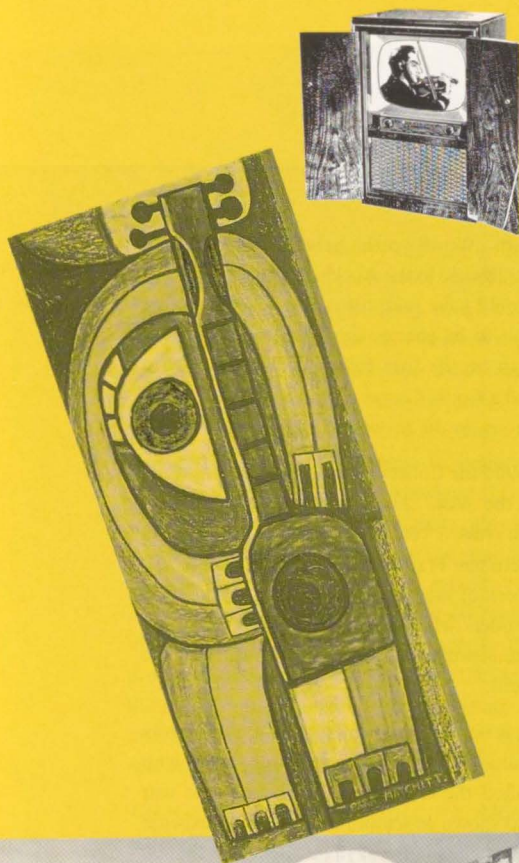
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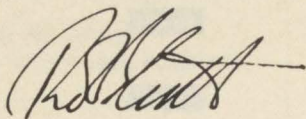
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FOREWORD

The unbridled enthusiasm with which the Auckland City Art Gallery has embraced The 1950s Show has been exciting. The role they graciously acknowledged to have been played by *Home & Building* in the crucial decade of development for New Zealand ensured a positive response from our publishing team. It is difficult for me to be objective in considering where the magazine fitted into the broader picture of that time; I was born into the magazine and the creed that went with it. It has always been, and still is, a way of life.

I witnessed my father's dedication to bringing the forces of design, architecture and the arts to a New Zealand community still suffering from post-war shortages of both materials and a trained workforce. We lived in a country emerging from the after-shock of two decades of depression and conflict; a group of islands still truly 'an outpost of empire'. I recall, as a juvenile witness, the incessant talk of houses and gardens, Jim Turkington and the annual Arts Ball, late copy from our esteemed music critic Ray Wilson, the whimsical cartoons of family friend John Holmwood. To this can be added the latest design information from London, discussions with our friends at the New Zealand Institute of Architects, and the first stimulating design shops that emerged on the Auckland scene . . .

This is the backdrop against which *Home & Building* has been able to grow to heights which would have amazed the most clairvoyant in the 1950s. While the brashness of the 1980s might have undervalued the 1950s, the 1990s have in prospect a change in values which may well see more in common with that earlier decade. Today the magazine is still doing the job plotted by its founder, Victor Beckett. Its increased sophistication reflects the changed marketplace which the magazine itself has helped to encourage. *New Zealand Home & Building* remains the standard bearer for the design professions, creating that forum where the professionals and their customers meet.



Robin Beckett
Publisher

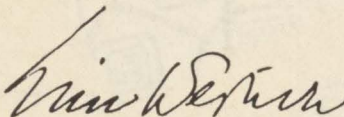
Like William Wordsworth greeting the French Revolution in 1789, we in the Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s could have said: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young (comparatively) was very heaven.' For to be the first full-time Director with a Committee and a Council eager to make up for lost time and the resources to do so was indeed heaven.

So we could build the Collections and in doing so, while not ignoring the past, show that we were half-way through a great creative century. A start was to recognise that lonely forerunner Frances Hodgkins, and then follow up with the work of international artists alongside that of New Zealanders who no longer believed that their country was condemned to live for ever in the suburbs of the art world.

But the circuit is not complete unless there are spectators as well as creators, so we set out to attract those who had never visited the Gallery. A full scale yacht was brought in and shown as sculpture at the small expense of some pieces of glass in the skylight. Believing that *all* the arts should be celebrated, lunchtime and early evening concerts and poetry readings were presented and a tapestry workshop established in the attic.

The public came, and if people did not like what they saw and heard this added to the excitement especially where some of the doubters had a road to Damascus experience and woke to find themselves with new eyes and ears.

Forty years later both Auckland and the Gallery are very different places, but by staging this great exhibition those responsible show a creative desire to examine their roots before setting out into a new century strengthened by what they find there.

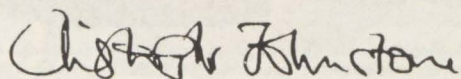


Eric Westbrook
Director, 1952-1955

The *1950s Show* is history brought up to date. At a distance of 30 to 40 years, this publication and the exhibition which it complements, reveal that during the 1950s in Auckland, the visual arts seethed with dynamism and innovation. The exhibition looks back better to understand the present; indeed I think that today's massive reorientation of New Zealand society is not unlike the underlying change the country began to experience in the 1950s. The Auckland City Art Gallery and its team of staff and consultants, ably led by Alexa Johnston, the Gallery's Principal Curator, has sought to recapture the spirit of the period through the collaborative approach that was itself the hallmark of much that was great and memorable in the era. This project is designed to communicate the atmosphere of the period and to applaud the pioneering work of the artists, designers and architects who received little acknowledgement at the time.

The Gallery's own role during the decade was not insignificant and it is a special pleasure to share the preliminaries of this publication with the Gallery's first professional director, Eric Westbrook, who was in a unique position both to stimulate and to observe at first hand much of what we celebrate here. The Gallery's revival as an institution and as a focus for a wide range of visual arts and design arts was consolidated by Peter Tomory.

I would like to acknowledge our partnership with Associated Group Media, publisher of *Home & Building* — itself an indispensable record of the 1950s — which has enabled the production of this lively, low-cost magazine destined for the widest possible readership. I would like particularly to thank Newstalk 1ZB, principal sponsor of the exhibition and the Visual Arts Programme of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand for its assistance. As always we acknowledge the ongoing support of the Art Gallery Enterprise Board.



Christopher Johnstone
Director

Acknowledgements

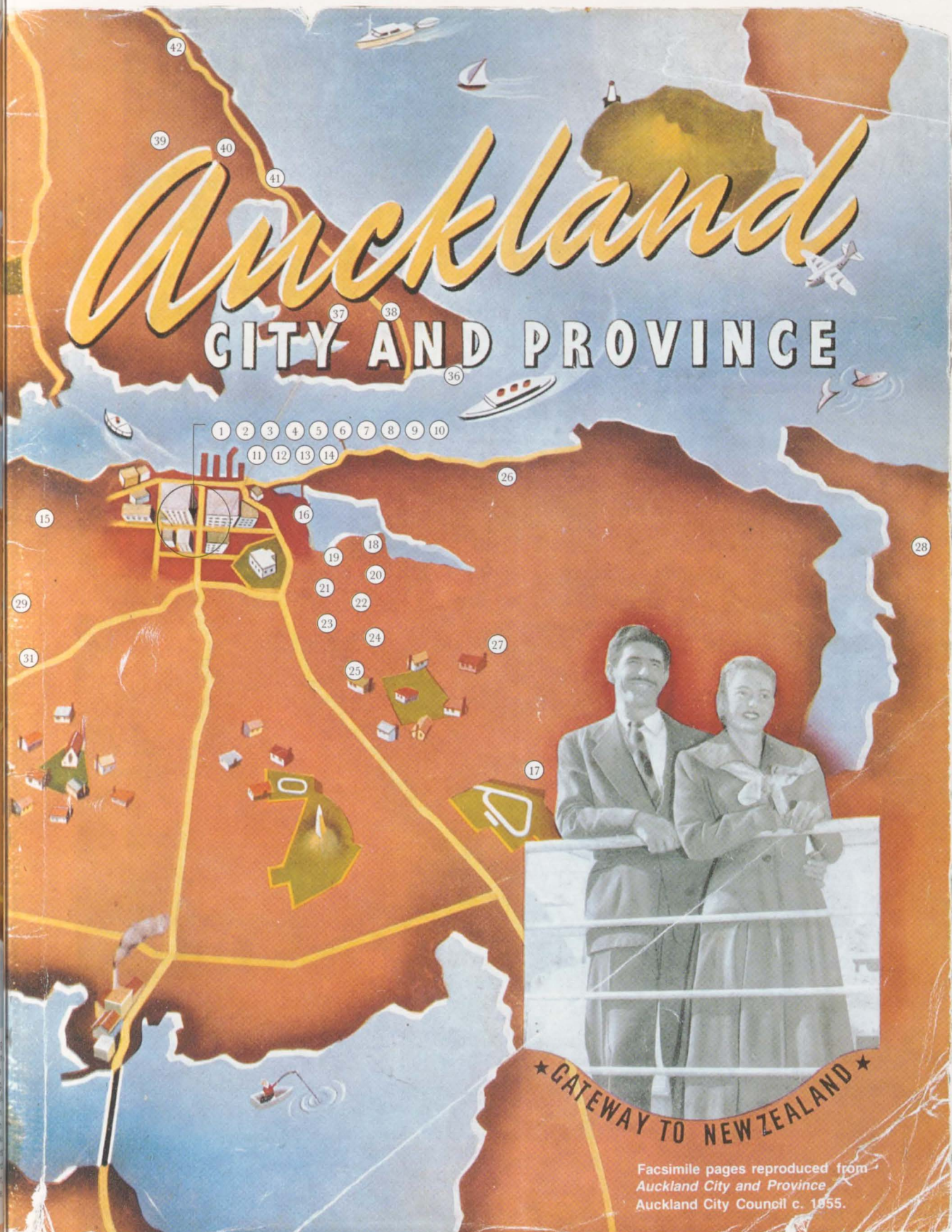
Auckland City Art Gallery thanks all those who have generously supported this exhibition by lending works, photographs and documentation for display.

Auckland Institute and Museum, Auckland City Libraries, Bank of New Zealand, The Bath House Rotorua's Art and History Museum, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Fletcher Challenge, Hawkes Bay Cultural Trust Museum, Napier, Hocken Library, Dunedin, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, Otago Early Settlers Museum, Waikato Museum of Art and History/Te Whare Taonga o Waikato. All artists, architects and private collectors who have lent works. We are greatly indebted to all those who have given permission for their work to be reproduced in this catalogue.

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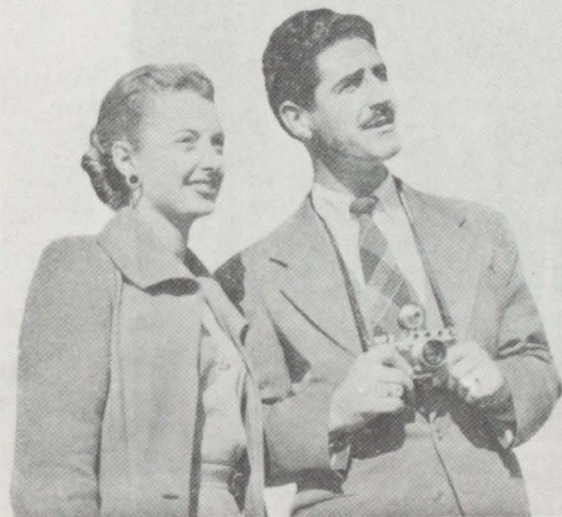
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INTRODUCTION TO AUCKLAND

ONE o'clock, Friday, 18th September, 1840 . . . Auckland was established as a British Settlement. Visitors to these shores at that time would have seen fern and tree-clad hills and gullies, rugged and almost impenetrable as they had been for generations; untouched, unmarked by the hand of man.

What a contrast to-day! In a century of vigorous development, Auckland has become the largest city in New Zealand with a population in excess of 300,000. Where once were silent hills and valleys, to-day there stand tall spires and towers of stately churches; institutes of culture and of learning; business houses, modern apartments and fine homes of the people; broad Domains, Parklands and many areas for every sport and recreation.

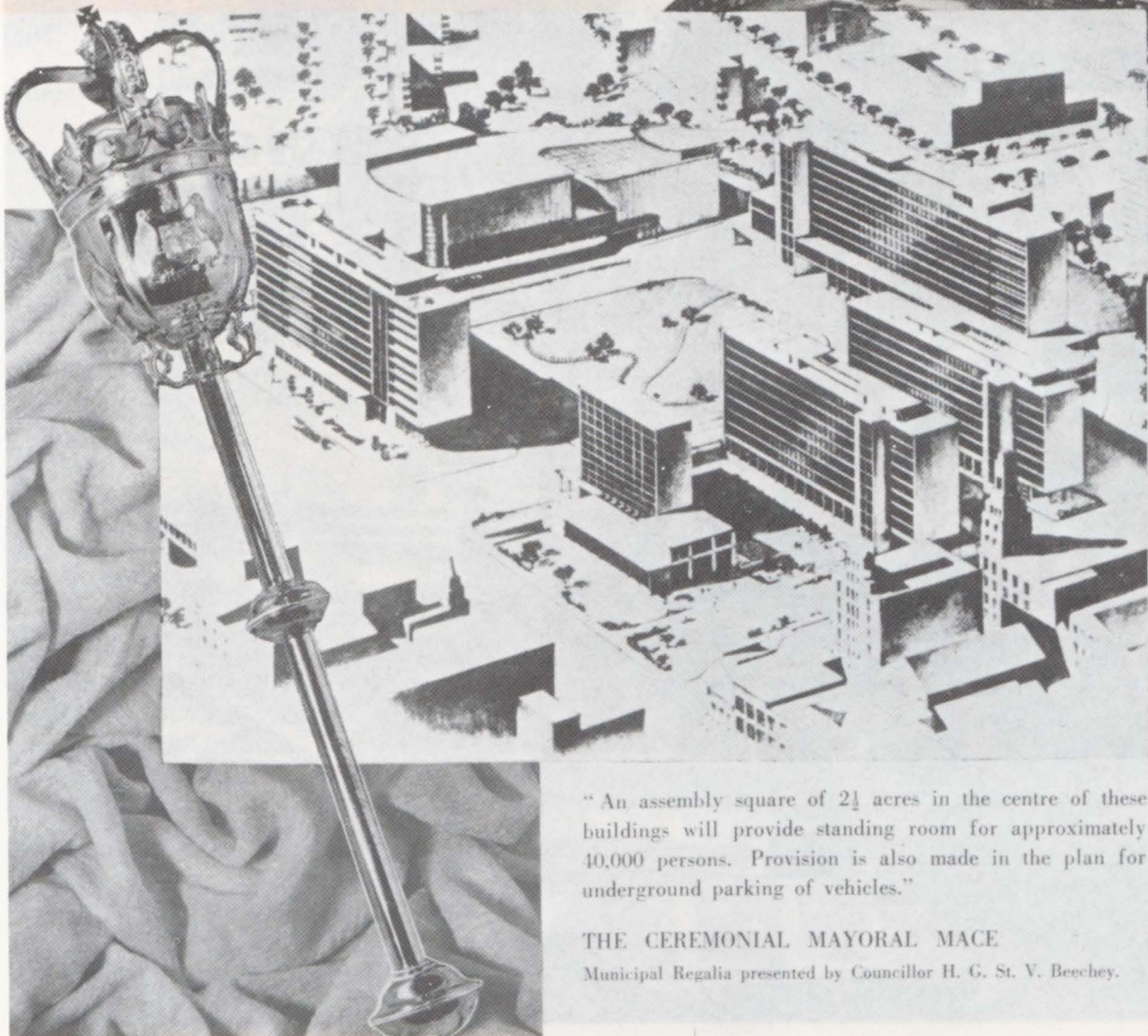
A city endowed with much natural beauty of terrain, whose material growth throughout the century is directly attributable to the richness and productivity of farmlands and mineral resources within the area of Auckland Province.



● Come with us . . . to explore this city.

CIVIC CENTRE

"THE Auckland City Council is engaged in the preparation of a plan for a Civic Centre in which Government and local authorities' offices will be located in a total area of 16½ acres extending from the Civic Theatre site to the present Town Hall. Within this area is envisaged Government buildings, quarters for all local bodies, and a City Council administration block, including a City Hall, Reception Hall and Theatre."



"An assembly square of 2½ acres in the centre of these buildings will provide standing room for approximately 40,000 persons. Provision is also made in the plan for underground parking of vehicles."

THE CEREMONIAL MAYORAL MACE

Municipal Regalia presented by Councillor H. G. St. V. Beechey.



"Auckland is established as an International Terminal. Visitors like ourselves are catered for should we desire the shortest journey cross harbour to the bays or to the veriest extremities of the Province."

BRITISH EMPIRE GAMES 1950

EDEN PARK AUCKLAND



Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s

Eric Westbrook by Clifton Firth.



Thirty six year old Englishman Eric Westbrook was appointed in 1952 as Auckland City Art Gallery's first full-time director. A dynamic, energetic individual, Westbrook was determined to make the Gallery a real cultural focus in the community.

Almost immediately he began overseeing radical internal alterations to bring 'a modern spirit' to the Gallery. A mezzanine floor and sculpture court were built in the Mackelvie Gallery, as well as a wing of administrative offices. Westbrook initiated purchases of contemporary New Zealand sculpture and painting. He also announced a programme of continuous exhibitions. Persuasive and popular, he stimulated wide public interest in the Gallery, encouraging its use for concerts, poetry readings, lectures and evening art classes. To the regret of the city, he resigned his post in 1955 to become director of the National Gallery, Melbourne.

The Mackelvie Gallery, including the new sculpture court, before and after.

In March 1956 Peter Tomory, Midlands Art Director of the British Arts Council, succeeded Eric Westbrook as director of the Auckland City Art Gallery. Cast as the 'consolidator' of Westbrook's sweeping changes, Peter Tomory described his task as 'establishing a high professional status not only for the gallery itself, but also for the staff.' Exhibitions, for instance, were to be well-researched with accompanying catalogues. As well as extending the lecture and concert programmes, he concentrated on building up the standard of the permanent col-

*Mezzanine gallery.
Offices are on
ground floor at back.*



lection including the purchase of a number of fine bronzes; but Peter Tomory's directorship is probably most generally remembered for his association with the Henry Moore exhibition, which created in New Zealand an unprecedented public reaction to art. He further defended modernism in 1958 when the Auckland City Art Gallery's British Abstraction show was refused by the National Gallery, telling a large audience at the Auckland opening that 'the movement towards abstract art was too big to be merely ridiculed or ignored.' Peter Tomory left the Gallery in 1965 to take up a university appointment.



Peter Tomory (left) and Colin McCahon, the gallery keeper, sort entries for the Pictures for Schools exhibition in 1957.

Object and Image

In Spring 1954, *Object and Image*, an exhibition curated by Colin McCahon, opened at the Auckland City Art Gallery. With its abstract and near abstract work by Auckland painters Louise Henderson, John Weeks, Milan Mrkusich, Colin McCahon, Kase Jackson and Ross Fraser, this exhibition demonstrated a clear sign of a new coherence in the response of artists to the influence of cubism. *Object and Image's* insistence on abstraction was evidence that a resolute modernism had penetrated New Zealand art.



Statue anatomy startles Doctor and Mayor

The exhibition of Henry Moore sculptures at the Auckland Art Gallery looks like stirring up the biggest art rumpus in the city for years.

The Mayor, Mr J. H. Luxford, is not at all pleased with the exhibition. 'I saw the display at lunchtime today and when I came out I said I had never seen the art gallery so desecrated by such a nauseating sight.'

'Some evil influence in the world is trying to demoralise us,' said a woman who did not seem to know what Moore was up to and doubted whether anybody else did.

A member of the Auckland Society of Arts, Dr J. A. Watson, condemned everything in sight. 'I wouldn't like to operate on her,' he said, pointing at the Reclining Figure. 'I wouldn't know where her organs were.'

Mr Moore had his critics but he also had a number of supporters. 'It's not what you see, it's what you feel,' said Mr J. Nepia, a young man who came into the gallery smoking a pipe and trailing a small black and white terrier on a lead. 'Moore is the kind of man who tries to evoke emotion from his stone; he considers stone a living substance,' said Mr Nepia. He admitted that Moore took a lot of understanding and suggested it might help to come to the gallery blindfolded. — *Auckland Star*, 19 September 1956.



A lunchtime crowd grapples with Henry Moore. Between 10 am and 1pm on 19 September, there were more than 1000 visitors to the exhibition. During the 20 days it was open, a record 36,000 people attended.

Architects plan Freyberg Place Redemption

Next week the New Zealand Institute of Architects is holding in Auckland its 'first annual convention'. The public events include four exhibitions; and of these, the one to be given in the Wertheim Room will be known as 'Freyberg Place Rediscovered.'

It is high time Auckland began trying to be a city rather than an overgrown small town. Queen Street is a write-off (it is ugly, it will never be restful, it is a bus terminal with no seats); but there is some pleasure in those 'urban canyons' just to the east of it. In the agreeable precincts of High Street, Chancery Street and O'Connell Street, people actually stop in the street and talk to one another. But that point of rest is at present a parking lot!

So, some of the architects who have undertaken to mount an exhibition during the congress have chosen to show what could be done with Freyberg Place. They conceive it as

an 'outdoor room' with a definite 'floor', and with mural and sculptural decoration. Like an Italian piazza, it would have no fussy footpaths but would be a place you can cross in whatever direction you happen to be going. It would have some green things growing, and seats, and a kiosk.

Towering above the space on its north side is an enormous blank concrete wall. For this, the artist Michael Nicholson has gone to the trouble of thinking out a huge mural decoration, covered by an aluminium grid and illuminated at night. Also pressed into collaboration is the sculptor Molly Macalister. Mr Nicholson's cartoon for the mural and Miss Macalister's maquette for a massive sculptural figure will be part of the exhibit.

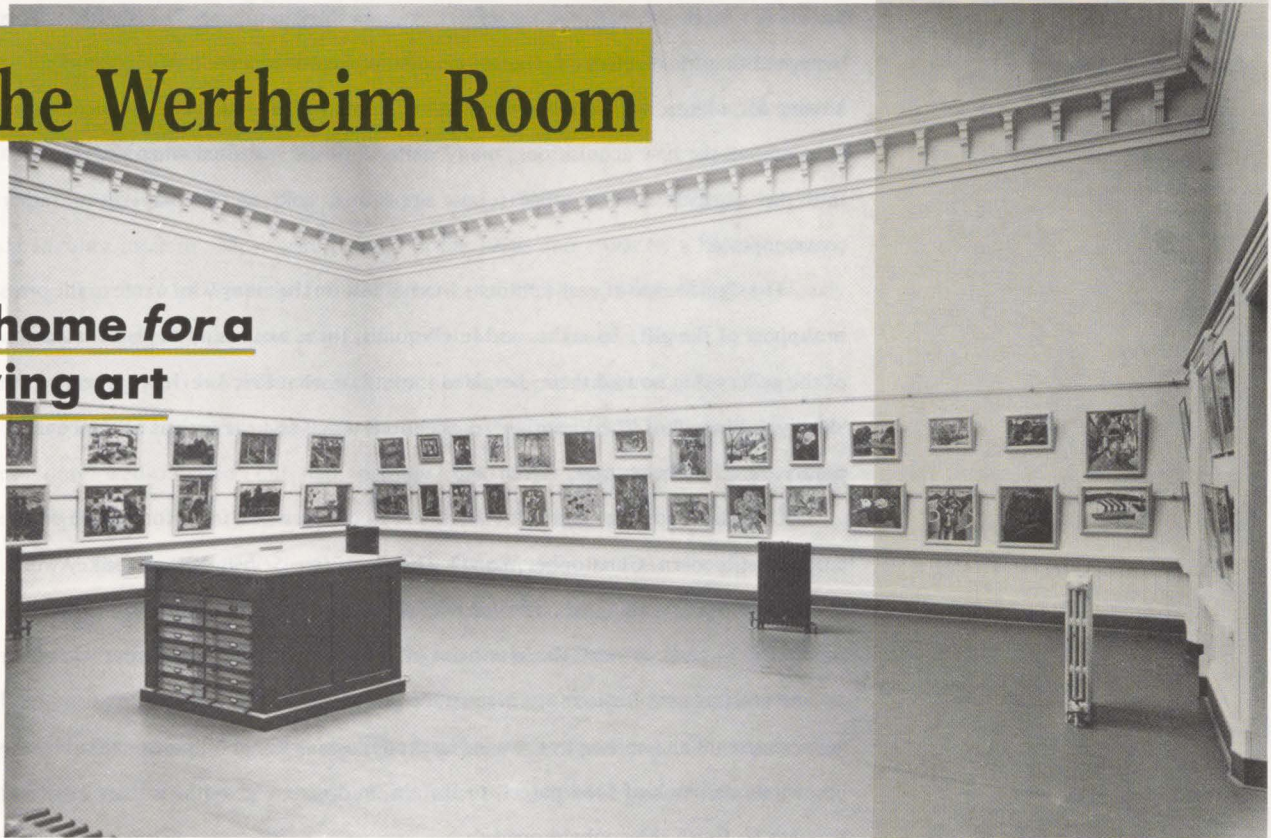
And the exhibit itself will be presented in a form that will make it an architectural experience to visit. It will be mounted in a tubular steel cage, to be erected in the Wertheim Room. The whole thing will be thoroughly provocative. If it provokes both thought and action, its instigators will have achieved their main object. — *Auckland Star*, 28 February 1957.



The exhibition Freyberg Place Rediscovered at the Auckland City Art Gallery, February 1957. 'In a world in which the old town patterns are cracking open like chestnuts before a hot fire, it is felt that only a broad and popular appreciation of townscape can ensure that the integrity of generations is not thrown away in an afternoon's search for a carpark site.' — Artists' statement.

The Wertheim Room

A home for a living art



When Auckland's Mayor, J.A.C. Allum opened the new Wertheim Room at the Auckland City Gallery on 2 December 1948, he was acknowledging the beneficence of Lucy Carrington Wertheim, British collector, patron and gallery owner, who had presented 154 works by modern British artists to the people of Auckland. The Mayor was also there to inaugurate the re-vamped gallery in which a selection of the paintings and watercolours were hung. But in opening this exhibition, the Mayor found himself inadvertently ushering in the 'modern' at the Auckland City Art Gallery.

Freely admitting his surprise and consternation at the pictures which confronted him, Mr Allum unintentionally posed the Wertheim Room as a provocative foil to both the 'photographic realism' of Goldie's and Lindauer's Maori portraits in the Grey Gallery and to the fusty academicism of the Victorian works from the Mackelvie Collection. This was a moment that was to be taken up by commentators, cultural 'progressives' and the general public.

Gallery staff had expended much effort to present the new acquisitions in keeping with Mrs Wertheim's specific requests. Many of the paintings were cleaned and reframed in a standardised painted moulding, while works on paper were uniformly matted and framed. The walls of the gallery were painted off-white and the works tightly hung in two rows on unobtrusive picture rails. Brightly lit, the airy Wertheim Room

Christina Barton

View of the Wertheim Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery, December 1948. Previously the Council Chambers, the Wertheim Room was adjacent to the Grey Gallery. It was subsequently incorporated into the Gallery's foyer.

THE 1950s SHOW

presented a fresh alternative to the gallery's usual exhibition space. The *Auckland Star* remarked that 'this collection has transformed at least one section of the gallery into a home for a living art'; and the *New Zealand Herald* wrote that 'after a quarter of an hour among the new acquisitions, many visitors will be surprised when they leave to find the contents of the other rooms appearing staid and perhaps even rather commonplace.'

The significance of such contrasts was not lost on the many who wrote to the press in support of the gift. To artists and intellectuals, these works and their revitalisation of the gallery that housed them, heralded the end of what Eric Lee-Johnson called the 'deadly dull[ness]' of 'the Victorian's conception of art' and the arrival of the contemporary, in all its brightness, vigour and vitality.

Over the following months the Wertheim Room became a focus for a fierce debate around the modern. Christopher Wood's *The Sloop Inn, St Ives*, one of the key works in the collection, was singled out for ridicule because of its self-consciously naive figuration. At its most extreme the Wertheim pictures' lack of finish, together with their anti-naturalistic use of colour was blamed, by one correspondent, on 'communism, total wars, shortages and consequent fatigue lassitudes' which could only be rectified by the immediate despatch of food parcels to Britain, in order to 'give [the artists] sufficient strength to finish their jobs properly'.

Christopher Wood, *The Sloop Inn, St Ives*, 1926.



This kind of response only confirmed Lucy Wertheim's suspicion, voiced in a letter to A.R.D. Fairburn that New Zealand was 'as backward in the appreciation of Modern Art as the provincial public in England was twenty five years ago or more so!', and under-

THE WERTHEIM ROOM

pins her decision to send examples of modern art to a place she would never visit. Through her friendship with Frances Hodgkins and her contact with Fairburn, she was eager to support a struggling local art community which was desperately seeking first-hand knowledge of contemporary developments.

But even in New Zealand in 1948 the works themselves could hardly be considered 'ultra modern'. Most were painted in the 1920s and 1930s by a host of young, emerging artists Mrs Wertheim fostered in her London gallery, which she affectionately called a 'nursery' for the 'masters of tomorrow'. Many of the works had, in fact, spent the preceding years in various loan exhibitions touring a variety of galleries, schools, theatre lobbies and even restaurants. By the time they reached New Zealand they were not only 'well-travelled' but had, perhaps, also been superseded by more recent developments.

An informed audience in Auckland quickly perceived the collection's limitations, and only a handful of works were ever singled out for unequivocal approbation. Key works by Frances Hodgkins, Christopher Wood, Phelan Gibb, R.O. Dunlop and Alfred Wallis were approvingly acknowledged. By 1952, with the arrival of the Gallery's first professional director, Eric Westbrook, the Wertheim Room had already outlived its usefulness. Pressure for space and desire for a faster turnover of temporary shows saw the display dismantled.

Yet the Wertheim room had set a precedent. It was the first venue where modern international art could be seen and discussed in Auckland. As such, it anticipates the radical advances the Gallery made in the 1950s to re-focus its programme towards the contemporary. The debates that raged, in the short time the collection was on display, map out the positions held, at the decade's outset, across the spectrum of Auckland's audience for art, and set the tone for the ongoing discussions about art and the modern that were a feature of the 1950s.

Humphrey Spender, Design for a tapestry, 1947.



Lucy Carrington Wertheim in 1938.

Born in 1883, Lucy Carrington Wertheim was the daughter of a cloth merchant from Manchester. Proud to the last of her Lancashire roots, Mrs Wertheim was a forthright North Country woman of comfortable means whose patronage of the visual arts made a considerable impression on the contemporary art scene in England, especially in the 1930s. The Wertheim Gallery she ran in London between 1930 and 1939 provided a showcase for a wide range of young artists, many of whom belonged to her Twenties Group which she initiated in 1930. Generous to a fault, Lucy Wertheim would often give money, clothes and food, as well as more conventional support to her struggling artists. Her major gift of oil paintings, watercolours and drawings to the Auckland City Art Gallery (in 1948 and 1950) is further testament to her generosity. She died in Brighton in 1971.

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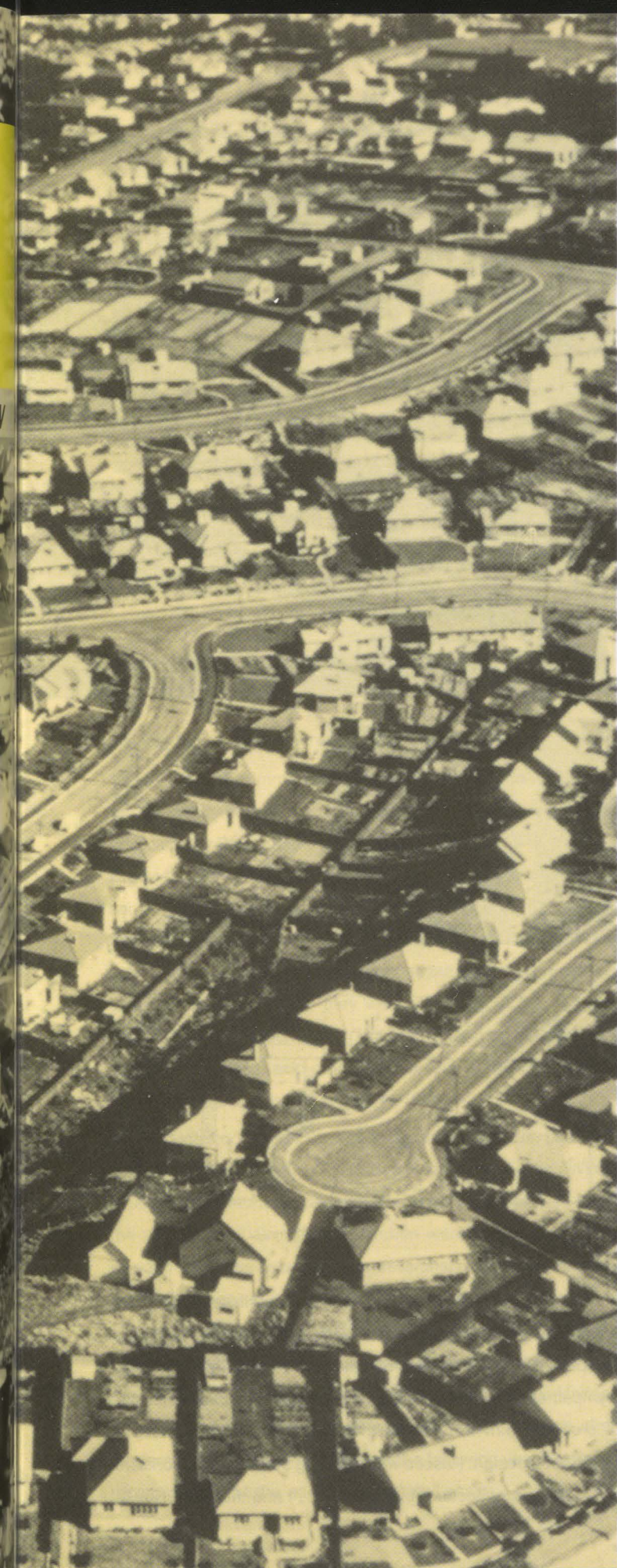
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MODERNISM in *New Zealand* **ARCHITECTURE**

Peter Shaw



It was in the decade 1950 to 1960 that New Zealand's long maintained isolation from the Modern Movement in architecture was finally overcome.

There had been many reasons for the delay: World War II and military service had prevented young would-be practitioners from fulfilling their modern aspirations though many of them had been greatly encouraged by their first encounter with European architecture while on active service. With few exceptions the architects of the previous decade seemed more intent upon maintaining their professional status by reflecting the established taste for English-style housing than in grappling with the new. They designed houses with long corridors leading to rooms with clearly designated functions. Windows were invariably small, multi-paned and symmetrically placed; roofs steeply pitched, not because that was either necessary or useful anywhere in New Zealand but because it was traditional. The exteriors of these often expertly planned houses for wealthy, conservative clients were dressed in the borrowed Arts and Crafts, mock-Tudor or Neo-Georgian robes which reflected the architects' training. The entrenched conservatism which had long dominated the profession was prolonged.

Encouraged by the state from 1937 many of these architects designed little English cottages for those at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. The State House as originally envisaged by enlightened Labour politicians was intended to be something much less uniform than it quickly turned out to be. In the immediate post war years State Advances brochures made the plans of the English cottage-derived State House available to builders who foisted them upon clients with modest means and thus ensured that its tyranny was prolonged by the brick-and-tile house.

State Housing block, Waikari, Dunedin. '... peaky, restless-looking little suburban bungalows' Paul Pascoe called them.

Among the forward-looking architects was Ernst Plischke, an Austrian modernist who arrived in New Zealand in 1939 and who attempted to introduce modern notions into the design and planning of the New Zealand State House. The story of his disappointment in the Department of Housing Construction is well known. Another was Henry Kulka, a refugee whose impeccable modernist pedigree derived from a long and close association with the great Adolf Loos in Vienna. Both Plischke and Kulka had to adapt their high European modernism to the local conditions of their adopted country; both suffered frustration in the process. Their considerable achievements here still await adequate reassessment. During the early 1940s they were largely ignored by a conservative and even xenophobic New Zealand profession though Plischke achieved recognition as a teacher at the Architectural Centre, Wellington and as the result of his influential book *Design and Living* published in 1947.

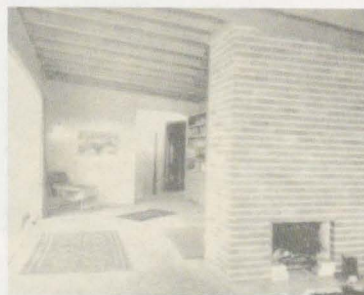
There had been advocates for change earlier than this. Christchurch-born Paul Pascoe, a talented, London-trained modernist, had been building wooden houses which at a glance today show the architect's familiarity with the principles of classic modernism as they had been propagated 20 years earlier by the Swiss architect Le Corbusier, by Frank Lloyd Wright in America and by the founders of the Bauhaus in Germany, Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer. Pascoe was not alone in New Zealand as the English journal *The Architectural Review* illustrated in 1942 when it reproduced photographs of houses by Aucklanders Vernon Brown and his partner Robin Simpson and by the Wellington architect Cedric Firth, later to be Plischke's partner.

It was Pascoe who in 1940 had advocated that New Zealand architects should embrace modernist principles in order to develop an architecture which might be 'expressive of national character' by using available building materials and having regard to local climatic conditions and the need for earthquake-proof construction. In 1947, when he took up the subject again, writing in the new literary and artistic periodical *Landfall*, Pascoe knew that such a small group of architects was already at work in New Zealand. His article, "The Modern House", clearly spelled out a programme for New Zealand architects.

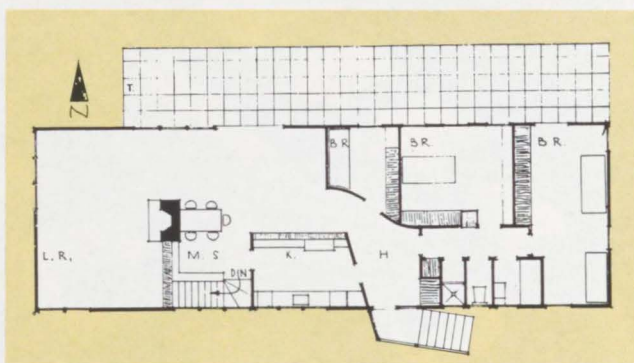
It advocated a free plan rather than the dull, stereotyped plans of the past; it favoured large windows to bring garden colour and sunlight inside; wide eave overhangs were to provide the necessary shade. The Modern House was to be emancipated



House for Dr Edna Birkenshaw by Vernon Brown (1945). Among its Remuera neighbours this house looked disconcertingly bach-like. Its plan was innovative in its openness.



Plan of Birkenshaw House by Vernon Brown.



from the doctrines of historical styles and reflect instead the social conditions of the day. Above all, complete simplicity, economy of space usage, truthful use of materials, a lightweight structure, sympathetic understanding of the occupant's requirements and a creative spirit were to be the formula for a good modern architect's design. Pascoe was scathing both about historicism ('... sheer architectural plagiarism ...') and the State House

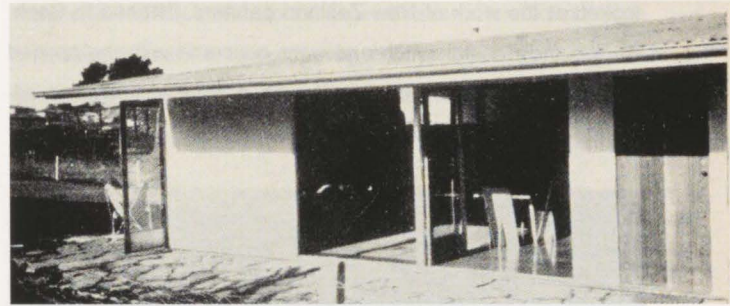
('... there is no distinction in endless rows of peaky and restless-looking suburban bungalows).



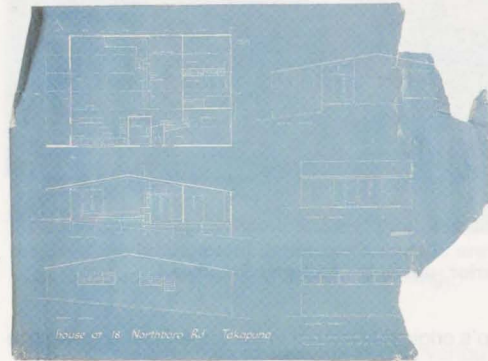
Fleming House, Christchurch by Paul Pascoe (1946).

It was in the immediate post war years at the Auckland University School of Architecture that the kind of programme advocated by Pascoe was first realised. Here, from 1947, Vernon Brown taught a group of students some of whom were returned servicemen eager to make up for lost time and to move New Zealand architecture along. Many of their fellow students were school-leavers six or so years younger but no less committed to a modernist line once they were swept up in the current created by their teacher Vernon Brown and kept moving by fellow student Bill Wilson, acknowledged intellectual driving force of the Architectural Group founded in 1946.

Those students who met at 24 Brentwood Avenue, Mt Eden on 3 April, 1946 — Bill Wilson, Marilyn Hart, Allan Wild, Bruce Rotherham, Bill Toomath and Barbara Parker — to sign the Architectural Group's constitution were not interested in working within the established professional order. Their radical ideals were backed up by close acquaintance with the writings of Le Corbusier, Gropius and Wright. They were avid readers of those architectural periodicals which illustrated and discussed the types of modern house being built at the time in the United States and in Australia. They already knew intimately the modernist texts which Paul Pascoe the following year helpfully recommended at the end of his *Landfall* essay.



First House, Northboro' Road, Belmont by Group Construction Co (1950).

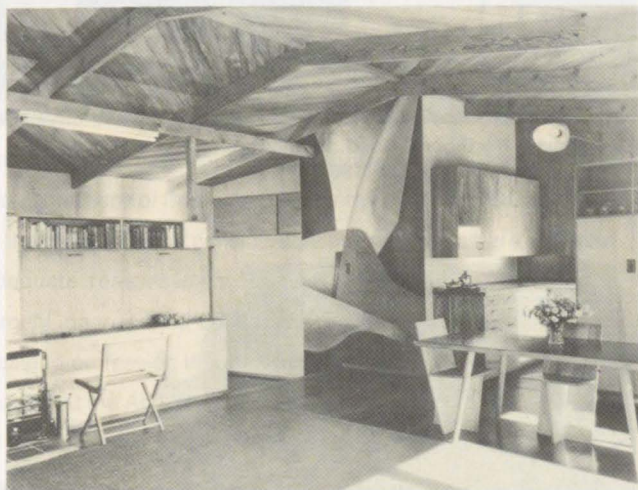


First House — plan.

They and their fellow students were a constant irritant to their teachers, even in 1947, the third year of study for most them, openly rebelling against the appointment of the deeply conservative Professor Light to a second chair of architecture in favour of Ernst Plischke who had also applied. By 1950 when most of them had graduated it was time to put their principles into practice. These had already been articulated in a Manifesto largely written by Bill Wilson which in tone and content reflected the idealistic conviction, at times even the sentence structure, of Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*. Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra and Mies van der Rohe all wrote letters in praise of the Group Manifesto.

Behind the energy which went into the construction of the first Group House at Belmont on Auckland's North Shore lay a commitment not to the creation of a new 'style' (a despised word) but rather to the revitalising of architectural design in New Zealand. Like Gropius, whose intention was to unite art, industry and daily life using architecture as the intermediary, the Group architects according to their Manifesto believed that 'the spirit of modern architecture must permeate the whole of life of him who practices its skills'. Bill Wilson's wide ranging intelligence and abilities as a teacher ensured that they discussed art and

looked at the work of New Zealand painters, listened to Bach, Bartok and Shostakovitch and were concerned with the applied arts as well as architecture. It was a Bauhaus-inspired all-inclusiveness towards which they aspired.



First House interior, mural by Anthony Treadwell.

The Group's originality lay not in the superficial appearance of any building but in the quality of the spaces which were formed by a building in which people could both express and realise themselves. Thus Bill Wilson's notion of what he called the Real House.

All activities occur in space. All life is movement in space. Beneath our lives there is a discoverable pattern of coming and going, of moving in this space, of moving in space. This pattern of movement becomes the plan of the house — it is the plan of the lives of the people. The architect does not invent plans — he discovers them.

Space is one, indivisible. You can't divide it up into little parcels. When you try, space is lost. Volumes result. If you plan volumes (boxes) you are reduced to making plans work. Having planned a series of boxes in which activities are to occur, you have to join them together in such a way that the people can get from one to another. You are forcing people into packages, however well designed they may be.

The builders of the First House in 1950 were socialists and economics theorists who considered that New Zealand's housing construction methods were 50 years out of date and extremely wasteful. Rationalisation was their watchword. If it was possible to combine a number of structural functions they did: insulation was both thermal and acoustic; large windows not only let in more light, they required less installation labour; plywood interior walls were cheap, strong and required no finishing. Their structural joinery, sometimes awkward to the conventional eye,

not only held the large expanses of glass in place but supported the wall as well. The interior ceiling was of diagonal sarking to give structural strength as well as lining. The exterior roof was tin, not heavy tiles. The exposed rafters were very widely spaced and the whole structure supported on a much smaller number of studs and other supports than had ever been the case in a conventional New Zealand house. They worked on a modular system to standard factory sheet sizes; the ideology of efficiency was applied not only to structure but materials as well. It was hardly necessary for the *Architects' Journal* for 22 March, 1951 to comment of the First House that the 'clear, functional lines of the design are in marked contrast to the appearance of most New Zealand State housing'.

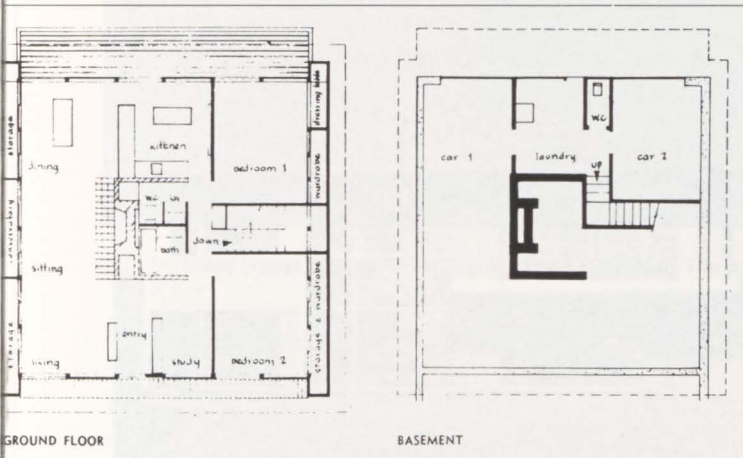
Although the speculative First House was a shock to those who bothered to look, it was soon occupied by the Pollo family whose children have happy memories of living there. There were some problems: the house was set so low to the ground that water was unable to drain away and floor boards rotted. The large open planned sitting/dining area was found to be so dark because of the roof overhang that it was necessary to have artificial light even on bright summer days. Later owners found it necessary to lop off a part of the verandah overhang. Despite these drawbacks the First was immediately followed by a Second House next door and then gradually by others as young clients in retreat from the omnipresent brick-and-tile understood what the Group was trying to achieve.

But, as Francis Pound in his essay has asked of cubist modernism, could the Group's architectural modernism of the early 1950s be acclimatised? In the minds of some (but not all) of its members their architectural agenda was certainly nationalistic but was the New Zealand public ready for such adventure? Bruce Rotherham's extraordinarily novel studio-house at Devonport was regarded with extreme distaste and as likely to devalue house prices in the neighbourhood. Mrs Catley, owner of another North Shore house Bill Wilson designed in 1953, actually lost friends when she and her husband moved into Quebec Road. Many of the Group's clients were forward thinking people whose lives, like those of their architects, were creative in emphasis — the weavers Ilse von Randow and Zena Abbott; potter Len Castle; violinist Felix Millar; teachers Maisie Smith and Des Mann. Perhaps the Group's first houses were too severely rationalised to be appealing to all but a few; their later houses simply looked too 'unusual' to be desirable to a public whose basic

urges lay in the direction of conformity. The real answer to the question of acclimatisation lies up and down our streets in 1992.

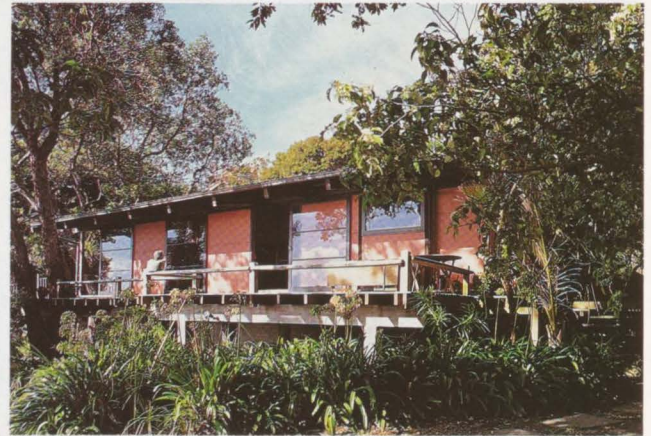


W C Rotherham House, Glendowie by Bruce Rotherham (1952-53). This unorthodox square plan has a hollow masonry block core which passes through the centre of the house to the roof where it forms a vent providing lighting for the bathroom.



The Group Construction Co had broken up by 1953 and three of its members, James Hackshaw, Ivan Juriss and Bill Wilson continued as Group Architects until 1958. They produced many fine houses as a practice while at the same time refining their own personal styles and interests until separation was inevitable. In Wellington Bill Toomath, Anthony Treadwell, also a painter and the First House's muralist, Allan Wild and Charles Fearnley gave further architectural refinement to the Group ideals. So too did John Scott, at first associated with Group Architects in Auckland then later in Haumoana, Hawkes Bay. David and Lillian Chrystall and the Englishman Peter Middleton

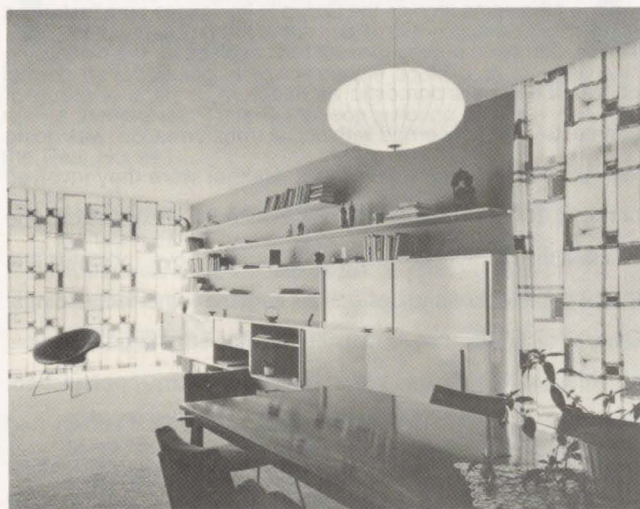
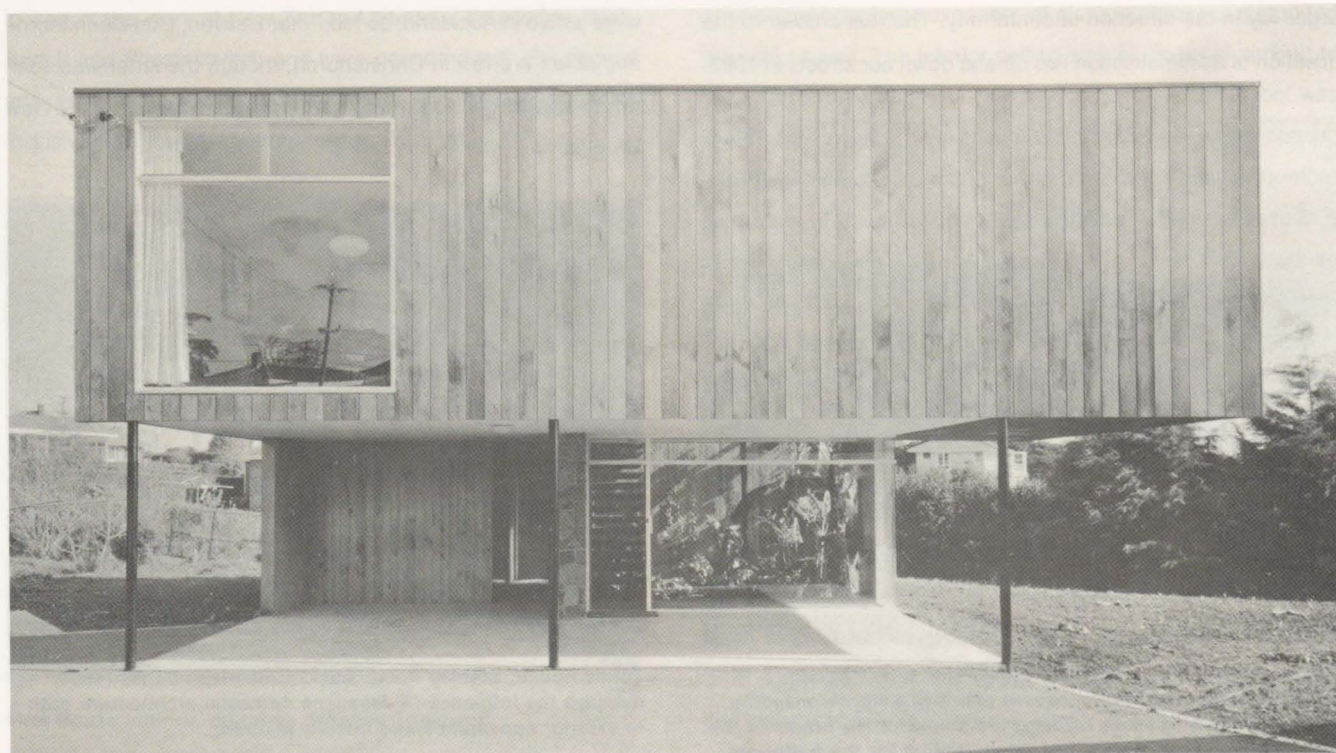
were active in Auckland; so too Peter Beaven, Don Donnithorne and Miles Warren in Christchurch, though the latter was soon on his way to London where he fell under the spell of the New Brutalism.



Juriss House, Stanley Point, Auckland by Ivan Juriss (1954) displays the influence of Japanese domestic architecture both in exterior appearance and interior planning.

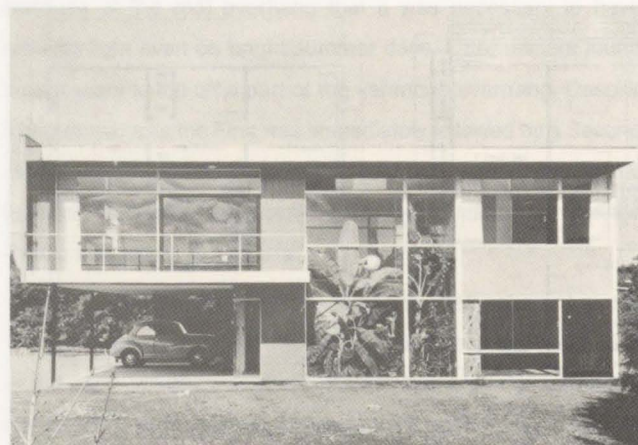
At the same time as the Group in its various manifestations had been putting forward radical plans for the revitalising of New Zealand's domestic architecture, a parallel group of architects, less concerned with social transformation, was doing very exciting and innovative work. Neither were they involved primarily in seeking an indigenous architectural expression. The fact that they regarded the Group as 'timber boys' indicates that they were interested in designing altogether smarter buildings. Despite such superficial similarities as the use of large expanses of glass and a fondness for post and beam construction, Auckland practices like Rigby.Mullan and Mark Brown and Fairhead sought a wholly different, wealthier clientele which would permit them to indulge such interests as the pursuit of elegance and sophistication in the domestic environment.

The Group had found its intellectual sources in the writings of the classic modernists and in such books as Harada's *The Lesson of Japanese Architecture* which offered aesthetic support for their own pared back simplicity of approach to both space and external appearance. Rigby.Mullan (significantly the architects for Kerridge Odeon's nationwide transformation of cinemas after 1953) and Mark Brown and Fairhead had trained with the Group members at the Auckland School but their interests were more with Oscar Niemeyer's Brasilia and Neutra's Californian pavilion-houses.



The sparse interior is furnished with Bertoia chairs imported from New York and fabrics from Germany.

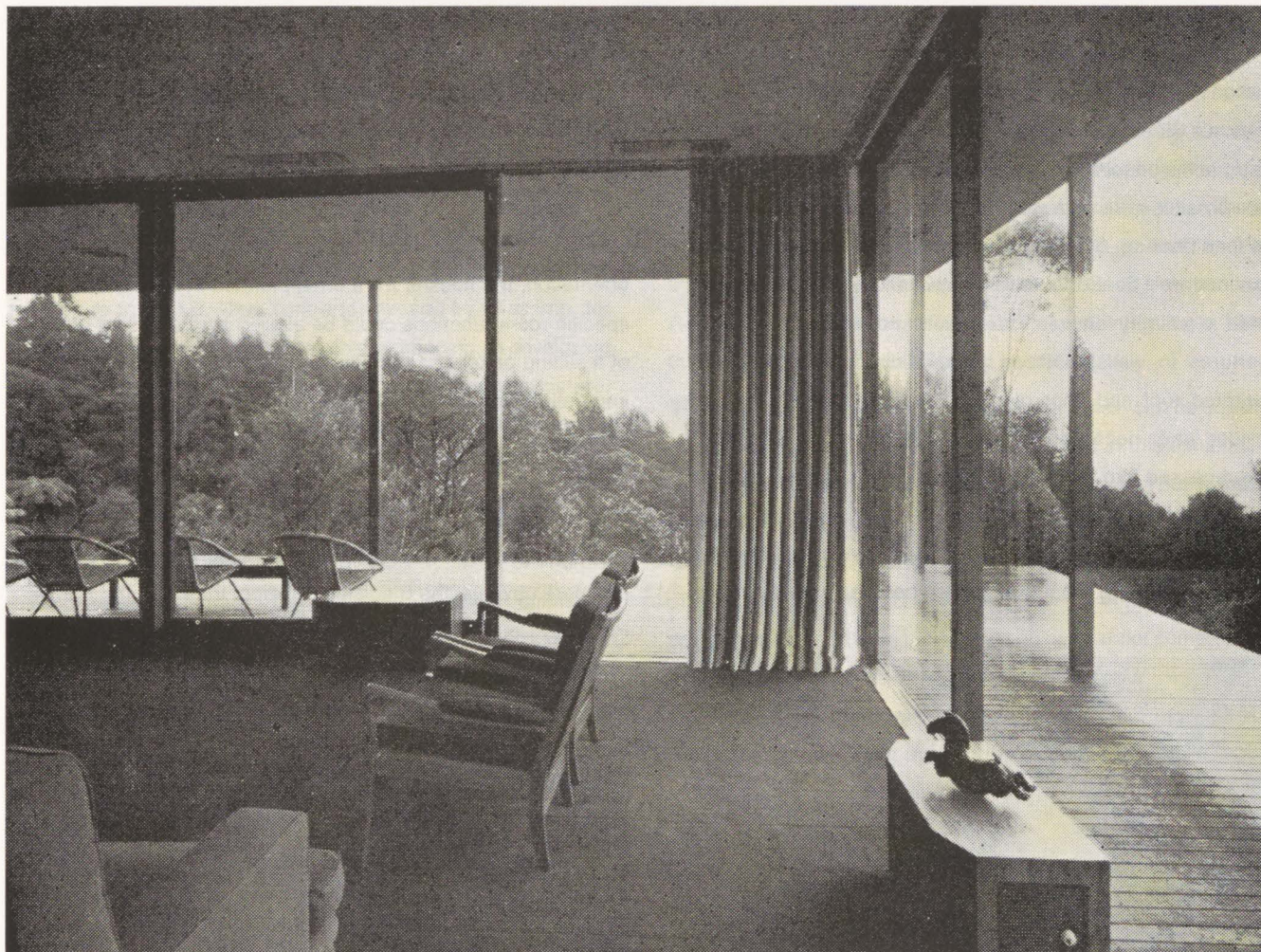
So too were those of Prague-born and trained Vladimir Cacala, a member of Brenner Associates with Milan Mrkusich and Stephen Jelich, whose Auckland houses were usually barely supported boxes closed on one side and very open on the other, cantilevered out over a basement. On the open side large sliding doors provided entry to glass-balustraded balconies from which seaviews were visible. Vertical cedar weatherboards



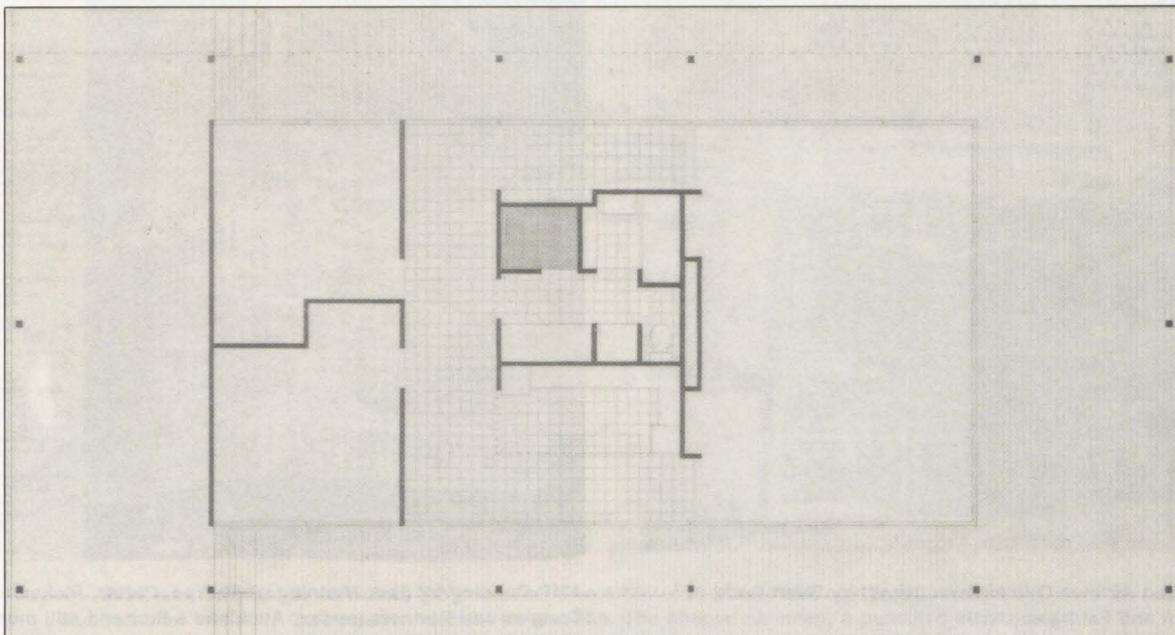
TOP: Blumenthal House, St Heliers, Auckland called 'Mondrian' by Vladimir Cacala (1957). The colour heightened abstract geometry of the house's north elevation was illustrated in the international periodicals *Domus* and *Art and Architecture* in 1960.

ABOVE: The typically modernist floating mass is as solid as a rock because of the cantilever principle employed.

were invariably painted, an unthinkable practice to any Group architect. Because of their extensive use of glass and metal these houses had a consciously elegant lightness and thinness which was also appropriate to the city's climate. Cacala's 1957 Blumenthal House, named significantly 'Mondrian', was the prototype for many later ones.



Greer House, Swanson by Rigby.Mullan (1959-60). The steel frame bears the load thus permitting entire walls of glass.
BELOW: Plan of Greer House.



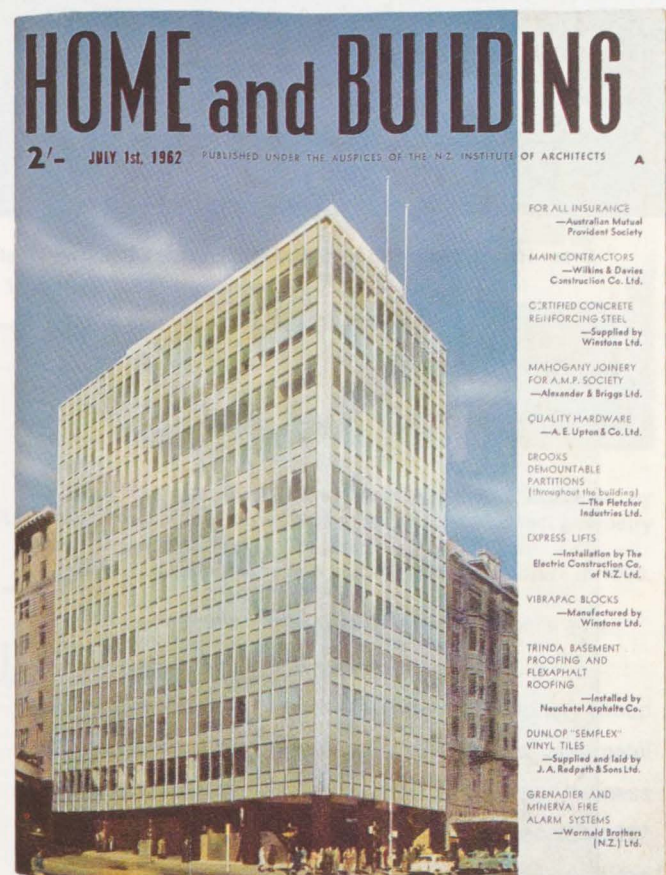
Rigby.Mullan's Greer House at Swanson, a member of that modernist lineage which follows Mies's Barcelona Pavilion (1932) and Farnsworth House (1945-50) and Philip Johnson's Glass House at New Canaan, Connecticut (1949), is a classic of the period. The Greer House's extreme simplicity was made possible by using a steel frame so that none of its partitions was load bearing. Services were economically and compactly contained in a central core ventilated and lit from a butterfly roofed clerestory above. There were no windows as such (apertures in walls), instead large sliding panels of glass separated roof and floor planes. A sense of enclosure was provided when necessary by heavy drapes the tracks of which were recessed into the ceiling. At night the surrounding bush was floodlit by fascia lights giving a dramatic effect as well as keeping moths and insects outside. Shoji screens of fibreglass separated the living room from the kitchen and main entrance.

Mark Brown and Fairhead's houses sometimes sat on thin columnar supports so that they appeared in Titirangi bush locations to hover amid the foliage. Wood surfaces were finished to a high sheen, ornamental pools and interior rock gardens or walls frequently made an appearance. Sometimes they displayed those extended beams called 'spiderlegs' or 'outriggers' in Neutra's manner. Strongly horizontal in orientation, the houses were often planned in such a way that specific room functions could be altered by the pulling across of a sliding panel or a curtain. Negative detailing, a modernist imperative, was essential to both the Group's and these belated International Style New Zealand houses.

Today these now 40 year old houses have to be sought out for inspection. The finest public buildings of the 1950s are more obvious: the Bledisloe Building, the AMP, the Parnell Pool, City Council Administration Building and St Helens Hospital in Auckland; the Wanganui War Memorial Hall; Massey and Shell Houses and Bowen State Building in Wellington; Dunedin's State



Pan American Airlines Office (demolished) by Brian Dodd of Mark Brown and Fairhead (1960).



AMP Building by Jack Manning of Thorpe, Cutter, Pickmere, Douglas and Partners (1958-62). Auckland's first and still most impressive curtain-walled office block.

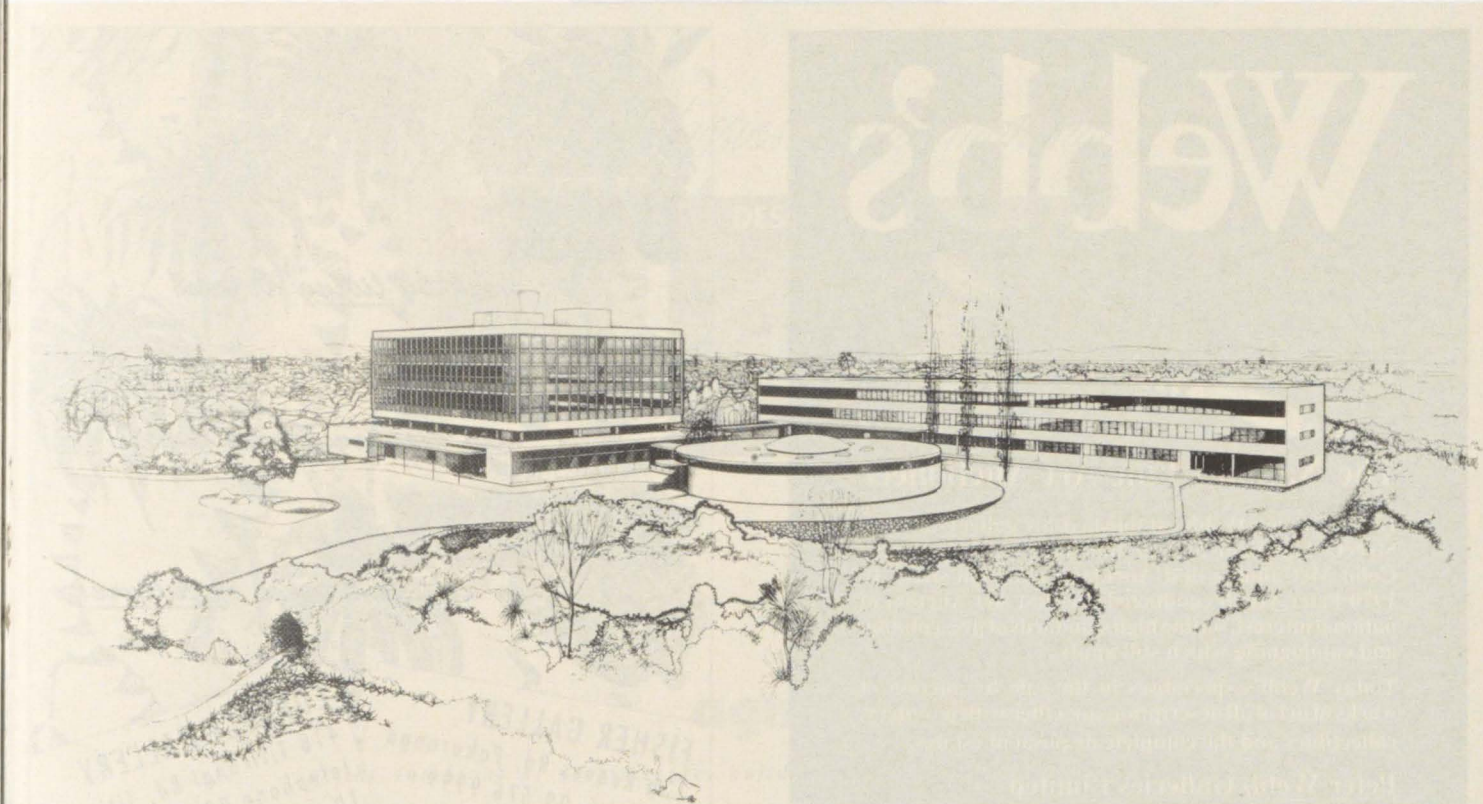
Insurance. Even the Group's tiny premises for Klipper Ties is still clearly visible on Hobson Street. Rigby.Mullan's 246 Queen Street and Mark Brown and Fairhead's TEAL Building have both been recently remodelled.

The survivors share many elements characteristic of the period. The single most immediately noticeable feature remains the curtain wall, pioneered by Gropius at Dessau and brought to fruition in New York and Chicago by Mies van der Rohe. Such a thing was made possible by hanging an enveloping glass skin from a cantilevered concrete or steel frame structure. Today it has all too often become a cliché (particularly with the use of mirror glass) but in the early 1950s in New Zealand it was innovative both in appearance and construction method.

The AMP building designed by Jack Manning of Thorpe, Cutter, Pickmere, Douglas and Partners displayed Auckland's first curtain wall. The framework of its glass expanse is shinely exposed and the whole building floats on black granite-clad square columns to dematerialise and hide the structure. The modernist antecedents of these are Le Corbusier's famous piloti.

The AMP on its Victoria/Queen Street corner, both in its lightness and employment of a planar aesthetic still forms a clearly visible contrast to the city's older commercial buildings which appear bulky in comparison. Even the much derided City Council Administration Building, monolithic and dominating though it appeared to contemporaries, still engages attention with its repeated geometries (actually sun controlling devices) and its light exterior textures. The Corbusianisms of Geoff Newman and Gordon Smith's St Helens Hospital are no less intriguing in 1992 than they were perhaps alarming in 1959.

That is, strangely enough, something which can be equally truthfully said of most of the buildings in this exhibition. Houses designed by the Group are still in advance of public taste; Rigby.Mullan's Greer House still seems astonishingly modern. One may confidently enumerate the now clearly observable stylistic patterns which characterise aspects of New Zealand's architecture in the 1950s but in doing so one cannot compromise those qualities of sheer creative daring and hard thinking about social purpose, economics and efficiency which make these buildings so interesting and worthy of exhibition today.



St Helens Hospital by Newman, Smith (1959-60). The architects' presentation perspective drawing illustrates an intensely Corbusian modernist conception. The shaped chimney, a pencilled afterthought, was a direct reference to Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation apartment block at Marseilles.

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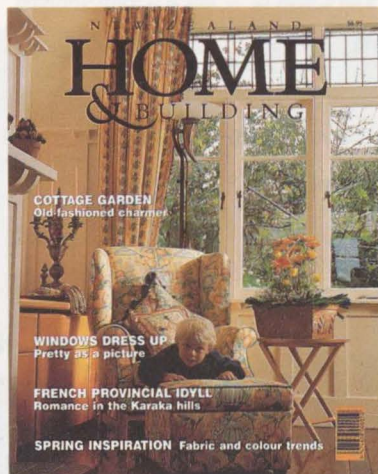
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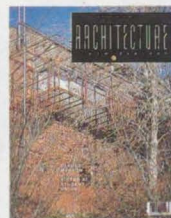
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THE 1950s SHOW

EMERGING *Francis Pound* abstraction



EMERGING ABSTRACTION

**Open air exhibition outside
Wellington Public Library
December 1956.
Don Peebles in foreground.**

**A bright new vision of
reality: Ultra modernism comes
to New Zealand art**

Modern art, to New Zealand painters of the 1930s and 1940s, and for many long after, meant not the cubist Picasso, and not the abstractions of a Malevich or a Mondrian, but a kind of post impressionism, and especially one based on the 19th century French painter Cézanne. Cézanne, one might say, is the de facto father of 'modern' New Zealand painting since it is full — to steal a nice contemporary term — of Cézannettes. For the New Zealand modernist of the 1930s and 1940s, it seemed that modern art in Europe had ended about 1906. New Zealand had been spared the 'excesses' and 'extremes' of the 'ultra-modern', while gratefully ingesting the 'modern'. If our remoteness made for delay, to defer was happily to differ. But in the 1950s all this was to change . . .

Cubism, so we are told, first came to Colin McCahon as a child, when he chanced upon some cubist paintings reproduced in the Illustrated London News.

Colin McCahon Kauri trees 1954.

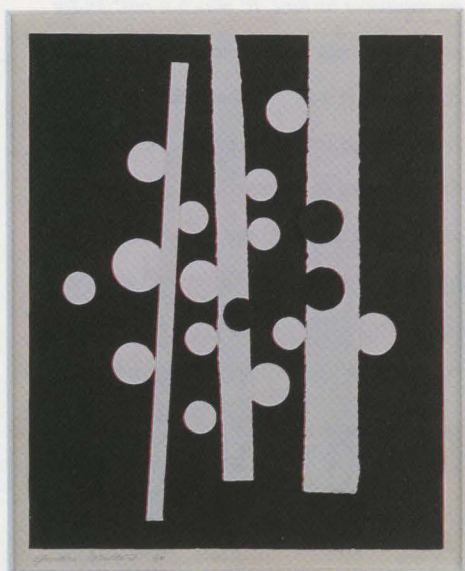
Some time I don't quite know when, out for a Sunday visit with the family, I discovered Cubism. This world was one I felt I already knew and was at home in. And so I was, as by this time the Cubists' discoveries had become part of our environment. Lampshades, curtains, linoleums, decorations in cast plaster; both the interiors and exteriors of homes and commercial buildings were influenced inevitably by this new magic. But to see it all as it was in the beginning, that was a revelation. I at once became a Cubist, a staunch supporter and sympathiser, one who could read the Cubists in their own language, and not only in the watered down translations provided by architects, designers and advertising agencies. I was amazed when others could not share this bright new vision of reality. I began to investigate Cubism too enthusiastically joining the band of translators myself.

Here, in this characteristic McCahonian origin myth, cubism's coming is made an explosive instant, in which a past and a present, of tedious predictability, is instantly consumed, in a 'bright new vision of reality'. It is a telling myth too in its pointing to the fact that ultra modernity, while acceptable on a mass cultural level, was not yet acceptable to high culture in New Zealand. And it perfectly typifies New Zealand painting's usual condition, in that its origin is a reproduction.

The Kauri Series is an excellent example of McCahon's brand of cubism. Here cubism is applied to the characteristic forms of a native New Zealand tree. The faceting of forms, the oval compositions, the fade-off towards the edges, and the monochromatic palette, all



derive from Picasso's and Braque's classical cubist works of 1908-10. This series is perhaps the closest McCahon comes to classic high cubism — though, typically, it is applied not to persons, intimate objects, newspapers, and such studio props as the guitar, but to a specifically native and natural item, which is made a vegetable icon of place. If the cubists proper had quickly abandoned landscape, to concentrate on painting the figure and still life — the signs of Culture not Nature — McCahon, on the contrary, continued to turn what he had learned of cubism to that standard New Zealand Nationalist subject, the local landscape.



Gordon Walters *Papier collé* 1960.

McCahon's cubism echoes that invented by Picasso and Braque between 1908 and 1910. But the circle and bar motif is a stock 1950s symbolic form. Gordon Walters, for instance, and Milan Mrkusich, and John Pine Snadden too, make play with the circle and line. Fifties viewers felt themselves as a consciousness perched between

two infinities, the one infinitely small, the other infinitely vast, and both traced with orbiting spheres — the atomic and the interplanetary. The sphere was the motif of a delectable panic, charged with the current excitements and terrors of science.

It is typical of the scientific utopianism of the 1950s, that in a proselytising essay on Louise Henderson in *Home & Building*, McCahon should use the prestige of science to defend the incomprehensibilities of the new in art. Her works might seem strange at first, he admits, but we should look at them 'as the scientist looks at the minute world in a drop of water, prepared to accept the new aspects of reality, rather than turn away from discovery, fearful that past theories may now be invalid.' It is typical, too, that the spheres of McCahon's *Moss* are actually based on microscopic photography, much as Wilfrid Stanley Wallis's *Abstract Composition* is derived from x-ray plates.

McCahon was hardly alone in New Zealand in investigating cubism. It was only the convenience and colour of his cubist origin myth and the habits of New Zealand historiography, which made us begin here with him. He had studied in 1951 for a few weeks with Mary Cockburn Mercer, an Australian who had learned cubism in Paris under André Lhote; but John Weeks had studied in Paris at Lhote's Academy as early as 1929. Despite his irreparable inconsistencies in cubist matters Weeks is the precursor. Nor were Weeks and McCahon the only New Zealand artists who found in cubism the ultra modern par excellence. Gabrielle Hope, Louise Henderson, Kase Jackson, Alison Duff, Keith Patterson, Paratene Matchitt and Freda Simmonds were also infected by this 'foreign' manner. The question was now commonly posed in paint: might the cubist muse be acclimatised? Might it be nationalised? And might the



Colin McCahon *Moss* 1956.

EMERGING ABSTRACTION

New Zealand so constituted be enabled, then, to partake of the modern world?

Like McCahon's *Kauri*, the cubist interpenetrations of Freda Simmonds' *Rimu* (1958) suggest a vegetable emblem of place. More significant, since it represents a fuller body of work, are the larger and more radically flattened planes of Louise Henderson's *Eastern City* series of 1957 and 1958, which have their source in a later historical moment of French cubism, the so-called synthetic phase — and an additional source in the abstractions of the French painter Auguste Herbin, to whom Gordon Walters had earlier had recourse. If Simmonds had got her cubism fourth hand as it were, from McCahon, Henderson had been taught in Paris in 1952 by a cubist painter proper — even if a minor one who was by then rather academic in style — Jean Metzinger. Nor should we forget the Picassoesque post cubism of Paratene Matchitt's *Guitar Player* (1959).



Louise Henderson *Eastern City (Amman, Jordan)* 1958.



Colin McCahon *French Bay Aug/Sep* 1956.



**Paratene Matchitt
Guitar Player
1959.**

Looking at cubism in New Zealand leads inevitably to Milan Mrkusich, the post cubist space of whose *City lights* (1955), with its advancing and receding squares of colour, is followed closely in style by such later McCahon paintings as *French Bay* (August/September 1956), and *Flounder Fishing Night, French Bay* (1957). Mrkusich had skipped the early cubist phase traced over by McCahon, and had gone direct to a post-cubist manner, inspiring McCahon to follow him. In works of the mid 1950s like the *French Bay* series McCahon's landscape comes close to pure abstraction. If we did not know the title we would hardly call these assemblages of rectangles and squares *French Bay*. At this level of abstraction, it seems that only by means of a title's inscription can the requisite signature of place be made to appear.

In the 1950s Mrkusich had already begun that consistent, coherent exploration of abstraction which was to occupy his whole oeuvre. The abutment of little rectangles seen in his mid 1950s painting is an adumbration in miniature of the abutments in later series such as Elements (1991). Cubism is a key example of the coming of the ultra modern to New Zealand, but there were a number of New Zealanders who realised, as early as the 1950s, that in Europe and America painters had not only come to terms with cubism — they had gone beyond.



Gordon Walters *Untitled* 1952.

Mrkusich had realised this. Walters is the other major instance. In many of his 1950s works, Walters makes the effects of seemingly overlapped transparencies the basis of an ungraspable and paradoxical pictorial structure. Here already is the reciprocal contamination of figure by ground, and fertile uncertainty as to which is which that

we know best in his classic Koru series of the 1960s and 1970s. Already there is the predilection for combinations and contrasts of the curvilinear and rectilinear, for the play of repetition and difference, of symmetry and asymmetry, characteristic of Walters. Here too is that refusal of any too perfer-vid agitation of paint: the denial of the brushmark, that stock sign of expressivity.

Mention of the brushmark reminds us that American abstract expressionism had arrived, even if in rather intermittent and often uncertainly translated form, in 1950s New Zealand. The brushmark, at least since Van Gogh, had served as an intensifier, standing in for that passion which purports to have caused it. Now the brushmark alone, even without any figurative representation, might be taken as the spontaneous utterance of a powerfully moved soul. And it alone might serve as pictorial structure. Don Peebles' Wellington series (1958-1960) is an excellent instance, as is Jean Horsley's Painting (1959).

The most consistent, and long-lasting response to the Americans, however, is Mrkusich's, whose Painting 60-1 (1960) was submitted for the same painting prize which McCahon's similarity titled Painting won.

The mosaic-like stroke of such works as City lights has given way to a flurry of fusing longer strokes, announcing the possibilities of an all-over field of paint. Ultimately, this will lead to the characteristic Mrkusichian surface — a mottled or stippled sky-like field, a surface of incomparable subtlety, at once flat and deep, smooth and inflected, materially real and entirely imaginary, whose purpose is to carry the beholder to the furthest reaches of the Sublime.

Architecture, painting, and the killing of literature

New Zealand's Nationalist landscape painting was largely supported by the literary intelligentsia, who shared its hopes and beliefs. Abstract painting, however, tends consistently to connect with architecture rather than with the literary. Take Mrkusich for instance. His first solo show — that crucial inaugurating moment in the construction of any artistic individuality — was at the School of Architecture, University of Auckland, 1949. Some of his earliest sightings of abstract art were in a book on the Bauhaus — the German modernist school where art, architecture and design were regarded as one — and in the magazine Arts

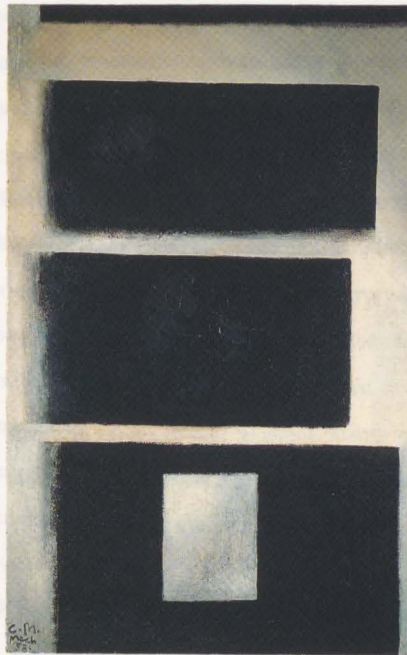


Jean Horsley *Painting* 1960.

and Architecture. He undertook a number of major architectural commissions for murals, mosaics and stained glass: works which include the largest abstracts ever made in this country. He was the architect of his own house and studio in 1950, and of several other modernist houses besides. He was one of the founders of the modernist architectural design firm, Brenner Associates in 1949. Some of his most important collectors and supporters in the 1950s were architects or architectural suppliers. And it was the architect and architectural historian, I.V. Porsolt, who wrote one of the first considerable accounts of Mrkusich's painting.

Nor was Mrkusich alone among abstractionists in having his first exhibiting site provided by architects. Don Peebles' first solo show was at the Architectural Centre Gallery, Wellington, in 1954 — a gallery which persistently supported abstraction (accepting for instance, the exhibition 'British Abstract Painting', toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1958, but refused by the National Art Gallery as far too radically modern). Again, in 1958, Peebles showed his abstract Wellington Series at the Architectural Centre, in company with the abstractions of Melvin Day. If the kind of audience which inaugurated Nationalist landscape painting was very largely, or most noisily, an audience of poets and prose writers, if that art was the co-creation — and even the creature — of literary intellectuals, for abstract art the inaugurating audience was largely architectural.

The celebration of the flat plane, the exaltation of rectangularity, the radical reductionism, the emphatic materiality of



Colin McCahon Painting 1958.

abstract painting, is in so complete a harmony with the flat, unadorned planes of the modernist space, that we might go so far as to call the new painting the deductive reflection of the new architectural surround. Of course one can say it is the painting which leads to the architecture, rather than the other way round. But whichever way you look at it, the new painting and the new architecture share so much as to seem hardly extricable one from the other.

Nor is this only the case with artists who had social and professional relations with architects. Architectural connections can be made even with the painting of Gordon Walters, who supported himself by typographical rather than architectural designing. There are similarities between the transparent overlay effects in 1950s Walters abstracts and the transparent overlays of contemporaneous student design exercises at the Auckland School of Architecture,

and at the Wellington Technical College School of Architecture. (It is not that the one has influenced the other — it is that they share the same European modernist sources.)

The architecture/abstraction relation announces itself in the art criticism, too. Not only are 1950s art critical texts riddled with architectural figures of speech, the architecture/painting relation is sometimes there spelled out as a theme. In "Auckland Painting in 1960", an essay published in *Landfall*, I.V. Porsolt reads McCahon's *Painting* (1958) as an allegory of the possibility of painting's emancipation from literature. Having noted 'the mainly literary affiliations of New Zealand art up to now', Porsolt proffers the radical abstraction of *Painting* and its refusal to tell any other story than that of painting itself, as a sign that painting is now about to abandon literature — or even to kill it — in order to gain some autonomous life of its own. *Painting*, so Porsolt says, is 'a strange rata vine' entwined about literature, which 'may one day become a tree'. As his New Zealand readers well knew, the rata vine is a parasite that becomes a tree by killing its host.

In another *Landfall* essay, 'Painting in Auckland, 1959' Porsolt begins by saying that Louise Henderson and Michael Nicholson 'represent the urbane extreme in Auckland painting'. We need to register here the residual sense of urban in the word 'urbane', whose opposite is rustic or rough. And if we are fully to appreciate Porsolt's wit, we need to know too that Nationalist art and literary ideology endlessly celebrates the rustic, while reviling the city. Abstract

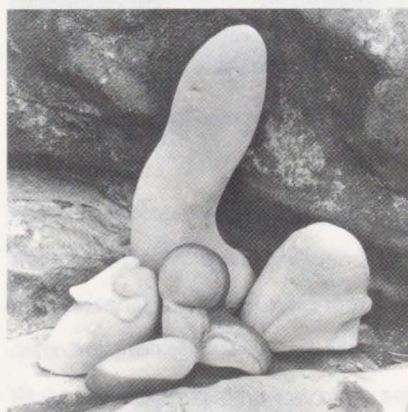
paintings, on the other hand, tend happily to speak of cities rather than of landscapes. As Mrkusich was to say to a Woman's Weekly interviewer: 'You want landscapes? Take a drive to the country.'

Porsolt goes on to remark of Henderson and Nicholson: 'The impact of their paintings comes entirely from compositional architectural values' and ends his essay with a prophecy: 'This architectural quality in painting will become more and more important also in another sense, in the sense of the much discussed reintegration of painting with what was its mother art in older countries, namely architecture. There are signs however faint, that painters are getting ready for it.' Porsolt mentions that there are actual murals by painters like Michael Nicholson, and 'frieze-like' sequences by Keith Patterson and McCahon. He notes too that there are 'many important works which are painted on a scale which can only be called architectural'. In a nice concluding phrase, he claims these as 'frustrated murals'.

Again the claim might be reversed. Modernist architecture might be called a frustrated abstract painting, a painting which has endured a Fall from the heavens of the ideal into the compromised world of material space. But let us ignore the competing claims to priority which modernist architecture and modernist painting make. It is better to regard them as smilingly similar, as splendidly complementary peers.

Organicism

A certain organicism was popular as a symbolic form in the 1950s, in 'high' culture as well as in 'low'. This organicism stretches on a continuum, from a voluptuously organic abstraction to the most literal depiction of natural organic shapes. Driftwood, seashells, sea stones, bones, and burnt-out tree trunks were especially favoured, both as artistic subjects, and as things in themselves — such shapes seemed, without further adjustment, already to be art.



Theo Schoon Untitled (stones) c 1950.

In the 1940s and 1950s, burnt-out trees were commonly proffered in paintings, photographs and prints, as an objet trouvé of national identity. Gordon Walters, Eric Lee-Johnson, Russell Clarke, Rita Angus, John Holmwood, E. Mervyn Taylor, Louise Henderson, John Weeks and many others, all produced their versions of the skeletal tree.

Such work might seem to mark only the artist's delight in sinuosity. Yet burnt-out trees were marketed and consumed as melancholy emblems of New Zealandness, because they were so commonly present in New Zealand's actual paddocks, as well as

in the paddocks of paint. They were, as painter Eric Lee-Johnson put it, 'mute skeletons of the New Zealand forest', and 'familiar ghosts'. Transmuted into art, they might become signs of mourning in the war of Civilisation against Nature.



E Mervyn Taylor Silence 1950.



Eric Lee-Johnson Root forms c 1945.

Walters' Waikanae is a fine instance of this pleasurable sorrow over ruin and death. Here is a country akin to the catastrophic New Zealand of the essayist M.H. Holcroft's imagining: 'like a glow on the verge of a darkness as profound as the shadow which fills those regions of space barely reached by the vibrations of the nebulae'.

In Eric Lee-Johnson's depictions of driftwood and seawrack lies the common anxiety of New Zealand high culture that 'These songs will not stand/the wind and the sand will smother'. In fact, it seems Lee-Johnson saw little else worth painting but ruin and decay. Also, in a counterweaving of this pleasure in ruination, such objects provide an answer to the stock Pakeha feeling that there is here no history. Seaside detritus may be read as a pathetic emblem of the fragility of New Zealand high culture. Or, to appropriate Holcroft's words again, it may be felt as one of those generalised 'parables of human fragility to be found everywhere in our background'. It may answer to the widespread Pakeha anxiety that New Zealand is only temporarily settled, that its brief human habitation will pass.

In verse, quite as much as in the visual arts, seaspawn and seawrack are posed as a sign of the mutable. It seems that almost every New Zealand painter and poet, walking the beach with Allen Curnow, 'Discerns in quicksand his own footprint/Brimming and fading, vanishing'. As Curnow writes, when 'Worm carves wave polishes original shapes', the mind 'Goes back to the beginning, the whole terror/Of time and patience'.

The source for much of this picturesque decay are the English painters Paul Nash, John Piper and Graham Sutherland. And most of this seawrack recalls, as if it had been washed up on New Zealand's shores, the driftwood and dunes of the American photographer Edward Weston, much reproduced in the 1930s and 1940s, the organic 'found-objects' of Paul Nash's

photographs, and the forms of driftwood, stone and bone favoured by the English sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, who influenced too the sculpture of Molly Macalister, Arnold Wilson, Jim Allen and Alison Duff. Generally, it is a kind of mild, coastally imported, and relatively easily assimilable, version of the surreal. For Walters' Waikanae, however, the source is such painters as Yves Tanguy – the European surrealism upon which those English painters depend, and of which their work is the rather polite and provincial translation. Walters, as ever, goes to the radical root.



Alison Duff Bird 1956.

Related to the common delight in organic found-objects is the use by such as John Weeks, Kase Jackson and Dennis Turner of the surrealist techniques of frottage, decalcomania, and the palimpsests

achieved by sanding to reveal layers of paint beneath. In these techniques, the found-object is provoked as well as discovered by the artist, and achieved by a perversely erotic sort of rubbing, which makes images outside the artist's conscious control.

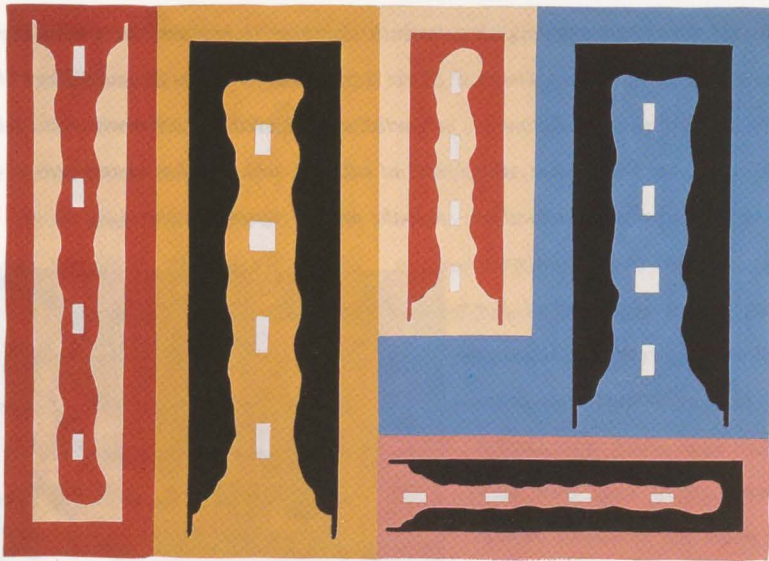


John Weeks Fantasy 2 c 1950.



Dennis K. Turner Untitled undated.

The most formally sophisticated and the most abstract treatment of the 1950s theme of organicism is that of Gordon Walters, in those works where he plays the bioplasmic against the geometric. Here the Nature/Cul-



Gordon Walters Composition 1954-1955.

ture, Mind/Body, Male/Female, Rationality/Irrationality, Consciousness/Unconsciousness, Order/Chance dualities, those which constitute the basis of Western thought, are at once repeated and disturbed, as they echo and re-echo into the most verbally untouchable reaches of meaning.

Homage to the Maori

Here is an historic event which we may take as highly symbolic. In the 1950s, under the direction of educationalist Gordon Tovey, a number of young Maori art and craft teachers and advisors were sent out into New Zealand schools to offer an experience of Maori culture to students, both Maori and Pakeha. These teachers and advisors included Arnold Wilson, Ralph Hotere, Paratene Matchitt and Cliff Whiting. They were the missionaries of what was then a radically novel idea: that Maori culture had something of value to offer every New Zealander. The hope was, that by combining elements of Maori culture with the most

avant-garde educational ideas of the West, a new kind of New Zealand might be invented and a new kind of New Zealander.

It was not biculturalism as we understand it today, but the product of different historical circumstances, which made it the most radical hope and belief of its time. It stood in clear opposition to the stock Pakeha policy of the 'assimilation' of the Maori into the Pakeha world, which meant, in effect, that Maori culture would be dissolved into invisibility in the dominant monoculture. Rather, the radically opposing belief of this 'interactionism' was that if the two cultures in New Zealand, Pakeha and Maori, the one presently privileged, the other rendered all but silent, might be brought equally together, a new National culture might be born.

The idea was, as Cliff Whiting has said, 'the sharing of cultures'. Nor was this an idea simply imposed on the Maori by the Pakeha educationalist, Tovey, as a representative of the most advanced Pakeha

opinion. It was authorised, as Whiting reports, by the leaders of Maori tribes throughout New Zealand, in response to Tovey's initiatives. Such prominent Maori personages as the carver Pine Taiapa 'were very supportive and gave that authorisation to the use of Maori arts and crafts in schools for all children'.

The same policy was carried into adult education. As Arnold Wilson was to say, 'the object was to evolve slowly a New Zealand seen as one whole through New Zealand works of art'. It was in the context of such ideas and events that the works in this section, works by both Maori and Pakeha artists, were made.

Though obviously the politics of the situation will be somewhat differently inflected according to whether the artist is Pakeha or Maori, what we see in the 1950s works of both Maori artists like Paratene Matchitt and Arnold Wilson, and Pakeha artists like Gordon Walters and Dennis Turner, is precisely the same conjunction: the bringing together of traditional Maori forms, motifs and colours with the forms of the modernist West.

Matchitt, for instance, in 1959, brings Picasso, and occasionally a more radical European abstraction, to bear upon the Maori three-finger motif, that same motif referred to in Wilson's Ringatu (1958), much as Walters had in his New Zealand Landscape (1947) brought the European modernists Miró and Klee to bear upon the pictographs of Maori rock art. The 'blank centre' figures of rock art are referred to by artists as diverse in their response as Arnold Wilson, Gordon Walters, Theo

EMERGING ABSTRACTION

Schoon, A. R. D. Fairburn, Dennis Turner and E. Mervyn Taylor. Again, the cubists' use of the African mask is reflected by artists like Wilson and Molly Macalister.



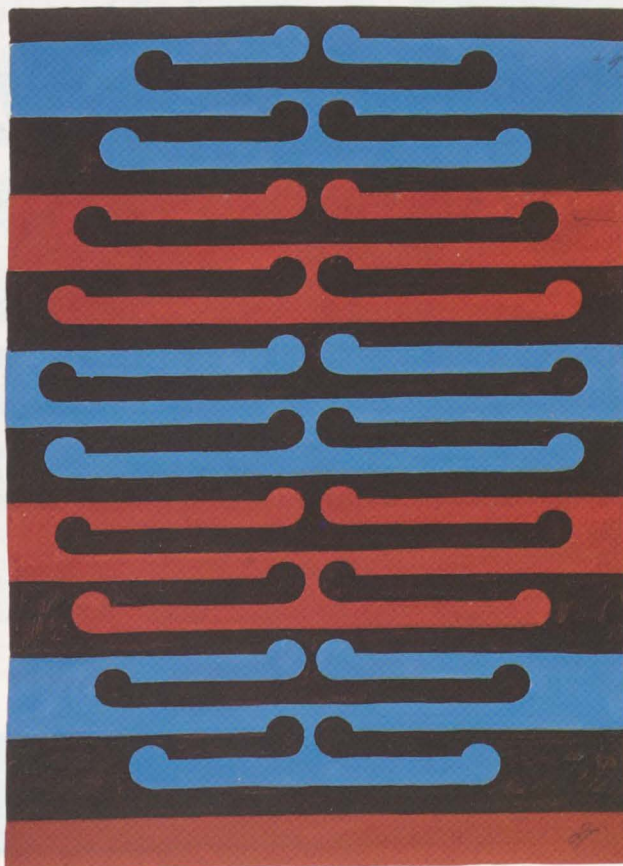
Arnold Manaaki Wilson *Ringatu* 1958.



Molly Macalister *Mask* 1948-1950.



E Mervyn Taylor *Composition* 1959.



**Gordon Walters
Study for Koru
series (undated).**

All this is in accord with what Sydney Moko Mead, a prominent Maori elder, and a professor of Maori at Victoria University, was later to say, when praising Walters for 'feeding' Maori imagery 'into the national culture': 'Art can be the best mediator between Maori and Pakeha. It's better than the politicians or more talking.' Maori inflected works like Walters' or Wilson's are a visual act of symbolic mediation between two cultures and a utopian lesson in race relations. What we see here is a subtle process of bicultural interaction, not one of simple opposition or plunder.

Walters' Koru paintings can be read, as Tony Green has, as an allegory of race relations, as an ever shifting interchange in which neither dark nor light gains superiority as 'dominant figure' over 'submissive ground'. Neither cancels the other, where

unassimilated difference is always preserved. Such artworks might function for a bicultural New Zealand as a utopian exemplar.

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Milan MRKUSICH

Pioneer Modernist

ALEXA M JOHNSTON

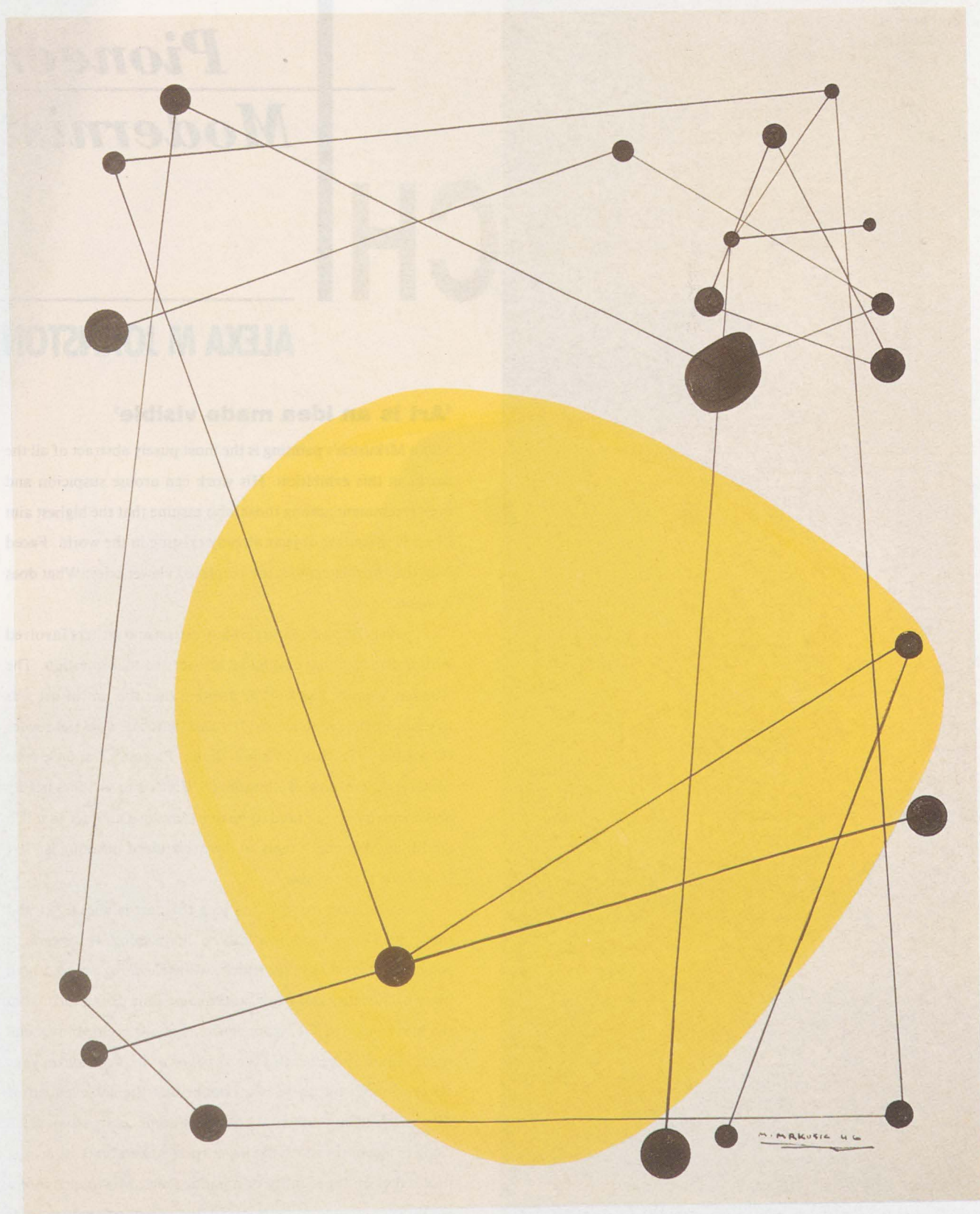
Portrait of
Milan Mrkusich c 1949.

'Art is an idea made visible'

Milan Mrkusich's painting is the most purely abstract of all the works in this exhibition. His work can arouse suspicion and even resentment among those who assume that the highest aim of art is to imitate objects already existing in the world. Faced with the abstract canvas, the perplexed viewer cries: What does it *mean*?

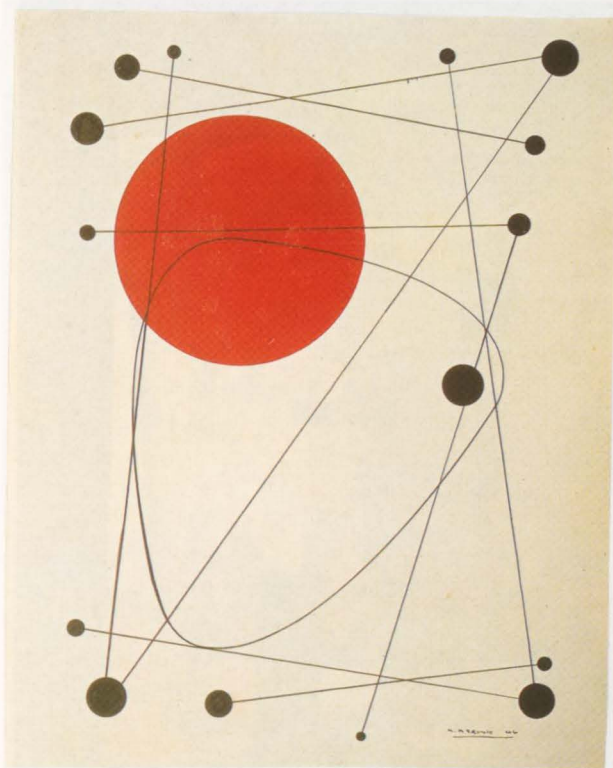
Over the past century, many artists and writers involved with abstraction have supplied answers to that question. The Russian Wassily Kandinsky, denying that the job of art was to replicate the physical world, stated that: 'Art does not render the visible — it renders visible.' Pablo Picasso's response was: 'What is the meaning of a birdsong?' Which is to say, that beauty and creativity do not need to be representative in order to touch us. Milan Mrkusich's reply to the question of meaning is: 'Art is an idea made visible.'

At its most extreme the idea that 'art is about Art and that is all we need to know' can be diminishing. It suggests to some an effete sensibility which, while elevating art to a high place of morality and truth, at the same time distances it from the hurly-burly of life, from concerns about political or social organisation. Whether this is a virtue or a vice depends on your point of view; but there is no doubt that the achievement of Mrkusich's abstract painting over a lifetime as an artist, practising in a country which has never rushed to embrace its artists, itself takes on the identity of a political act. Mrkusich's career would become one of determined and often isolated commitment, relying little on positive response, let alone acclaim. To devote your life to enriching your culture is a courageous act of engagement.

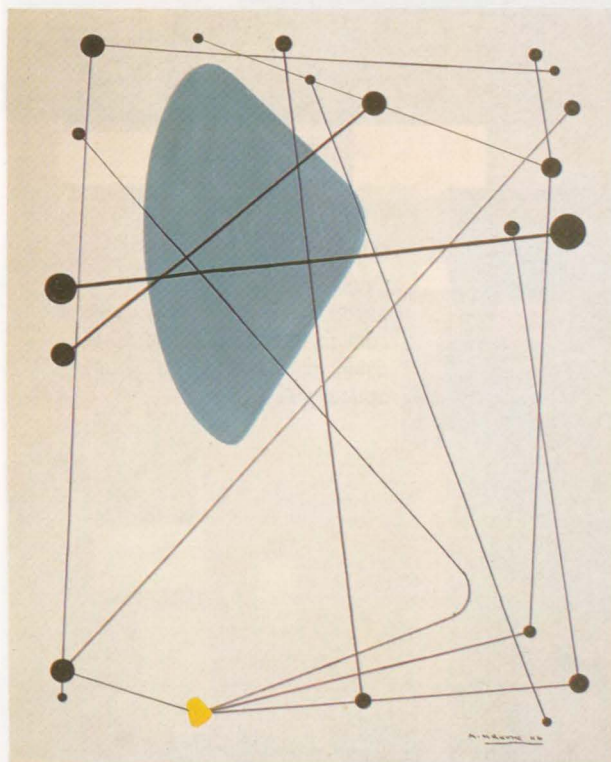


Constellation with yellow 1946

In this perfectly balanced arrangement of primary colour and free floating lines Mrkusich uses molecular structures which relate to the mobiles by Alexander Calder he had seen in reproduction.



Constellation with red 1946



Constellation with blue and yellow 1946

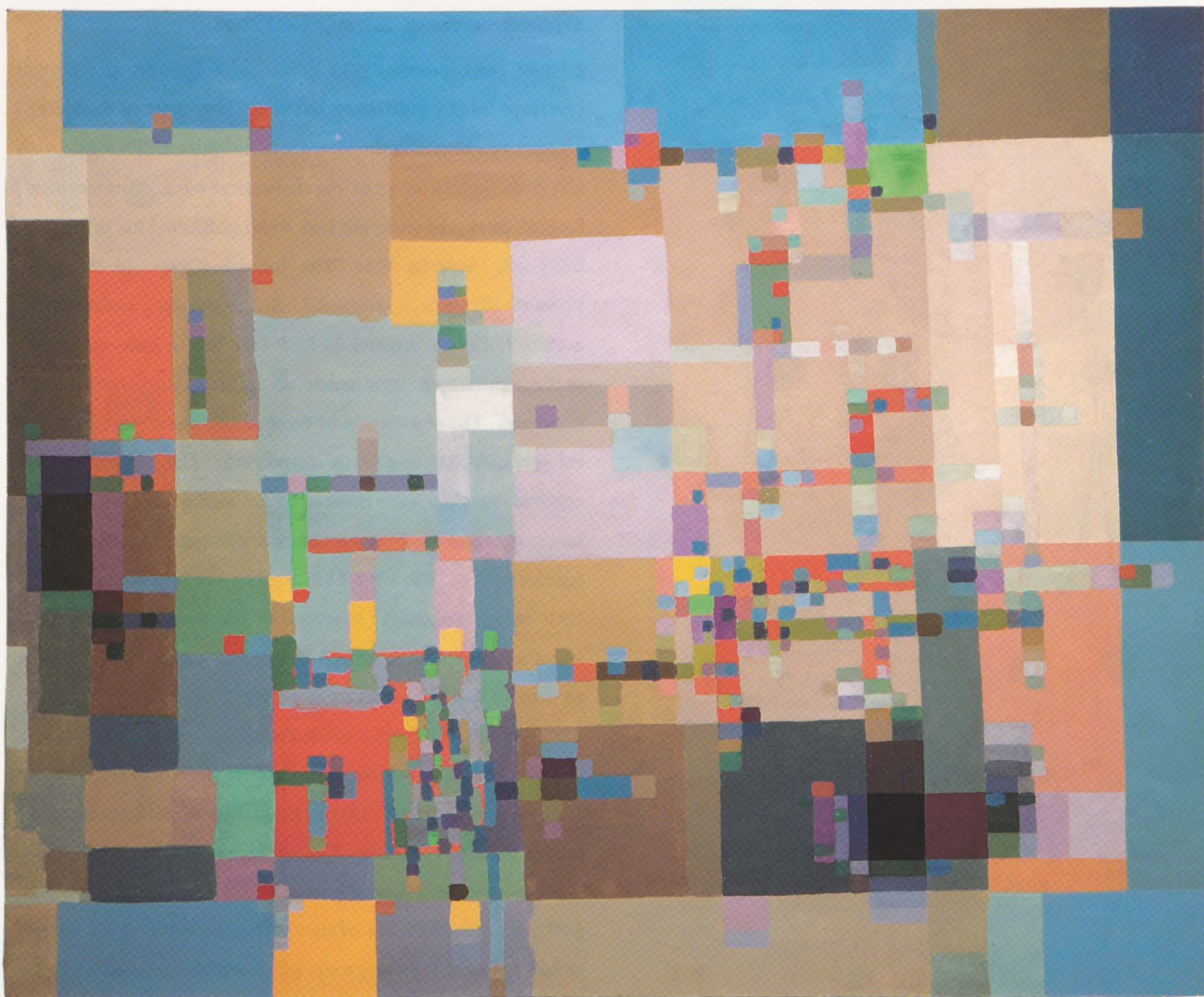
Discovering abstraction

Despite their proximity to continental Europe, the British remained largely indifferent to the achievements of early 20th-century art, scorning modern art as childish, ridiculous. In an effort to explain some of the theoretical basis of modernism, English poet and critic Herbert Read published his influential book *Art Now* in 1933. The following year, in the same proselytising spirit, a group of 11 British painters, sculptors and architects calling themselves *Unit One* held a joint exhibition in London which later made an inflammatory tour of the provinces. The association of these artists owed more to political necessity than to stylistic connections. They shared the perception that they were isolated in an insular backwater where landscapes and still-lives were regarded as representative of contemporary art. The *Unit One* artists were bound together by their need to escape the strictures of the past, to publicly state the case for a new approach to art and architecture in order to disturb the complacency infecting their pragmatic land.

In New Zealand a similarly airless culture motivated a group of artists to exhibit collectively at the Auckland City Art Gallery in June 1950. Among those contributing to *Contemporary Artists: exhibition 1* were Vernon Brown, Len Castle, Clifton Firth, Eric Lee-Johnson, Molly Macalister and Milan Mrkusich. On the front of the catalogue, author M K Joseph stated the case for the group of 13 which included not only painters, sculptors and architects as the British *Unit One* had but also potters, photographers and printmakers:

This is not another art-gang. It is not, in the ordinary sense a "group" or "school". It is an association of younger artists, whose work emphasises content and honest work rather than technical facility. All of it is, in various ways, experimental . . . For art is a language, and a various one. We cannot ask that it be agreed with, but we do insist that it should be heard.

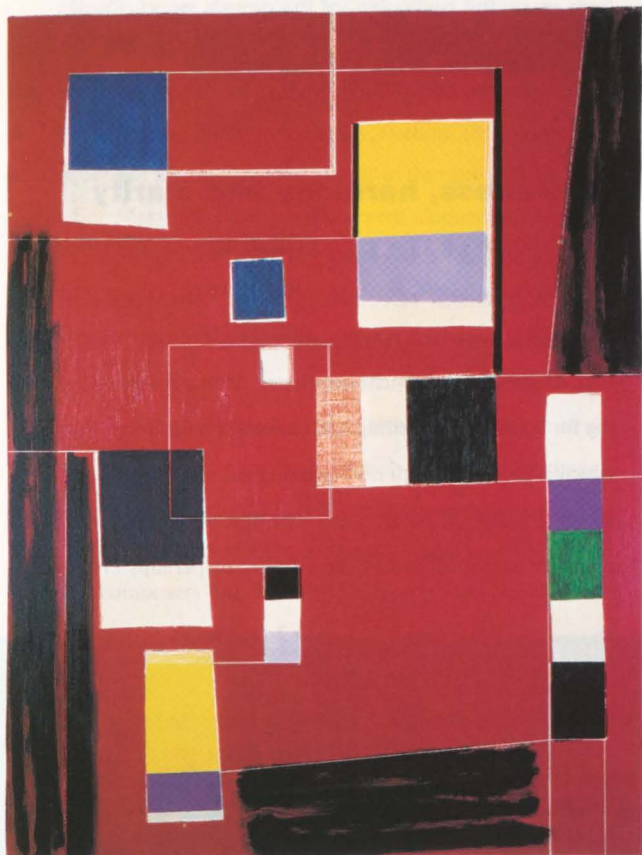
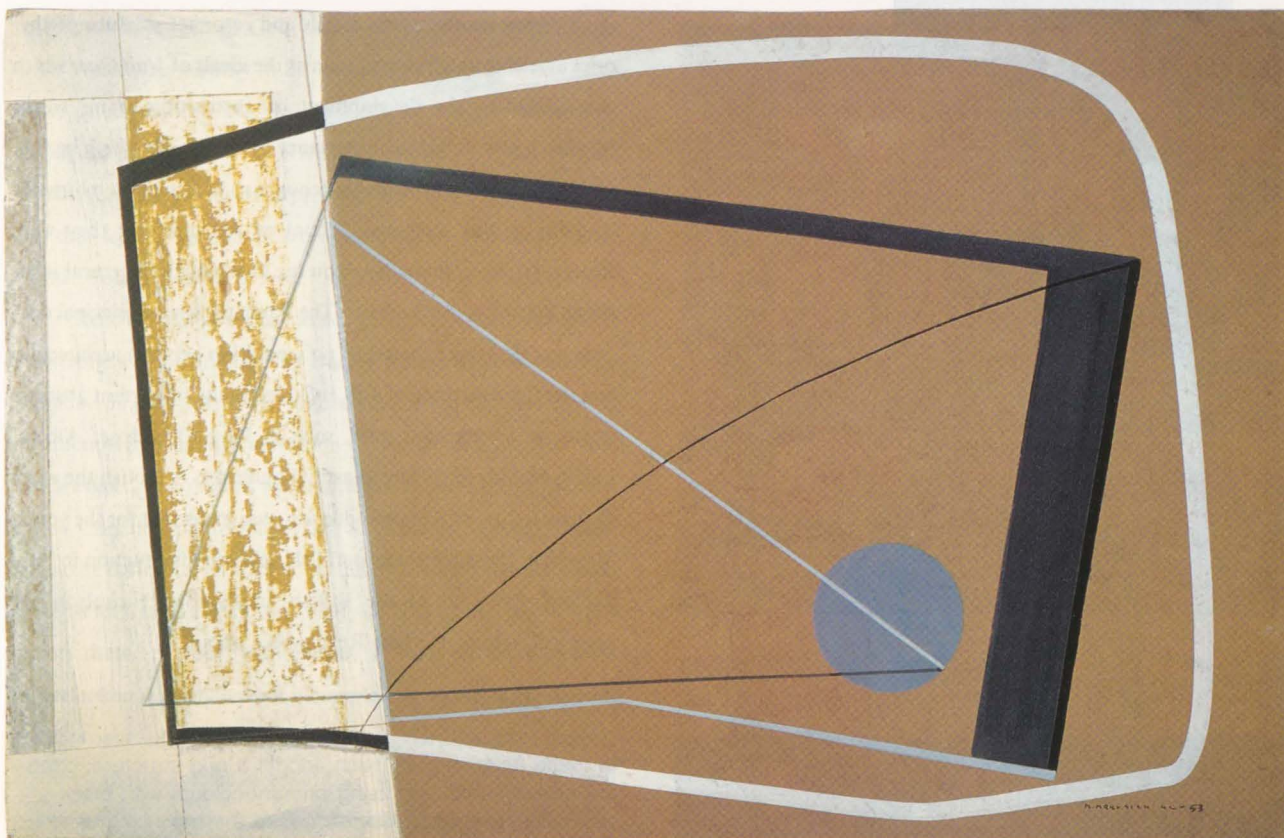
Mrkusich was the most resolutely abstract painter among the *Contemporary Artists* group. He had begun experimenting with abstraction in 1946 at the age of 21, after becoming dissatisfied with his commercial art apprenticeship. Looking back now he finds it hard to isolate precise reasons for his interest in abstract art. Although John Weeks at the Elam School of Art had brought back from Europe an awareness of cubism and post impressionism, there were no older artists committed to abstraction in New Zealand, and no exhibitions of abstract art came here until the mid 1950s.



City lights 1955

Originally titled *Study in the advancing and receding qualities of colours*, this gridwork of pure colour oscillates with a dynamic optical pulse.

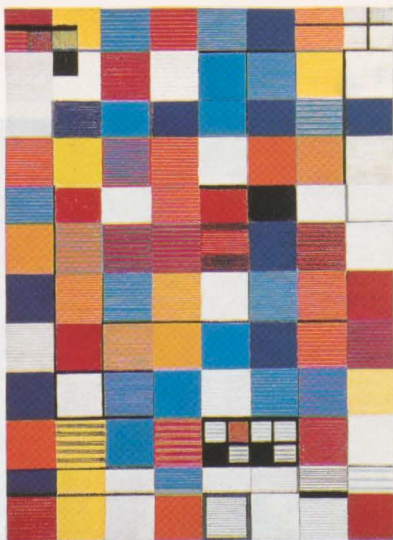
Landscape 1955



Yellow with blue circle 1946-1953

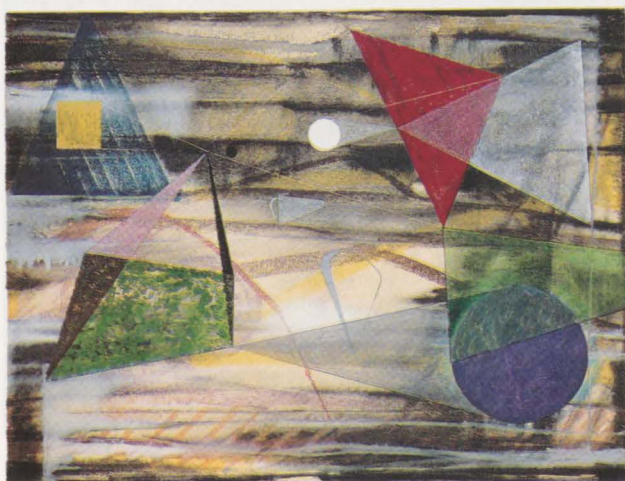
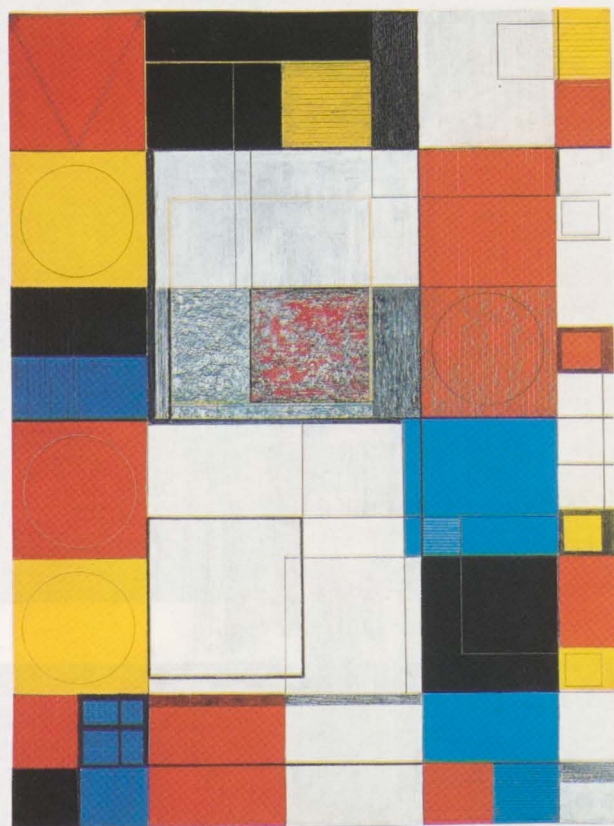
Painting on red ground 1955

Again, an optical vibration in which patches of colour and asymmetrical line shimmer against intense red. There is no sense of recession in this painting. Instead, foreful rectangles of colour advance towards the viewer.



Painting F48
1948

Painting C48
1948



However there was a rich and resonant mixture of theories available to Mrkusich, such as the ideals of *Unit One*, which contributed to the development of abstraction in his work. Mrkusich also notes the importance of two books which he first saw in 1946 or 1947, probably brought to his attention by friends studying at the Auckland School of Architecture; they were Read's *Art Now*, and a book on the German architectural institution known as the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus, whose principal doctrine was that there should be no separation between architecture and the fine and applied arts, included many important abstract artists on its teaching staff, such as Paul Klee, Josef Albers, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Wassily Kandinsky. Although the work of these artists, seen in reproduction, was important for the young Mrkusich, there are closer parallels between his situation in New Zealand and that of the British artists (Ben Nicholson for instance), whom Herbert Read wrote about.

In these paintings Mrkusich adopts a grid structure, open to endless variations, using primary colours with black and white. Piet Mondrian described the balancing of vertical and horizontal components in abstraction as an approach to a 'pure' reality, which is usually concealed from us by the particulars of the natural world. Circles and crosses within the grid are universal symbols signifying an underlying order and equilibrium.

Wholeness, harmony and clarity

Ben Nicholson's work of the period, comprising coolly balanced paintings and reliefs, favoured the geometric: circles and lines occupy a space which is both ambiguous and expansive. In the *Unit One* catalogue, Nicholson wrote: 'What we are all searching for is the understanding and realisation of infinity — an idea which is complete, with no beginning and no end and therefore giving to all things for all time.' The potential of abstract painting to be an expression of the infinite, or perhaps even a con-

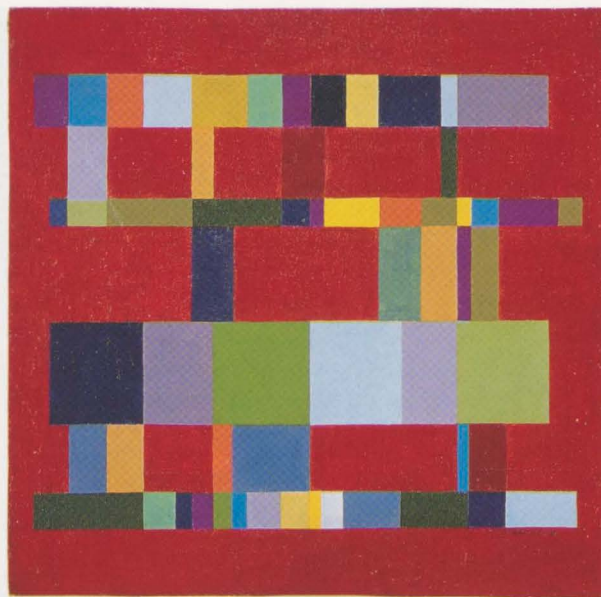
Painting No 8 1950

Mrkusich was impressed by the work of British surrealist John Tunnard and temporarily set aside the grid structure. Using a free and open method of composition he allows the elements of this painting to float in an illusory space.

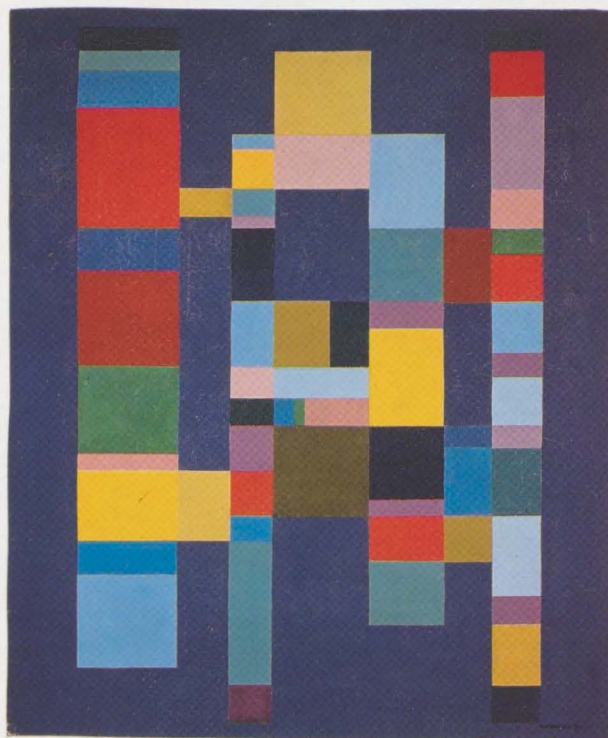
templative approach to God, had been pioneered by Bauhaus artist Wassily Kandinsky in his book *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* published in 1914. Making a careful analysis of the psychological and emotional effects of colour, Kandinsky saw abstraction as a means of expressing the inner life of the artist and thus freeing the painter from associations with the material world. Colour and form were the tools of this progression.

Read's thesis also emphasised form. He demonstrated the inevitability of abstraction by tracing historical approaches to a theory of pure form. He argued that Plato had anticipated abstraction by seeking a definition of beauty separate from any actual object. Plato's ideas were amplified by Aristotle, then taken up by Christian philosophers like St Thomas Aquinas, whose still acute definition of beauty, written in the 13th century, could serve as an apt description of many of Mrkusich's works: 'For beauty there are three requirements. First, a certain wholeness or perfection, for whatever is incomplete is, so far, ugly; second, a due proportion or harmony; and third, clarity, so that brightly coloured things are called beautiful.' Wholeness, harmony and colour are signature qualities in Mrkusich's paintings of the 1950s, as is a fiercely disciplined approach to structure within each work.

In advocating abstraction, both Read and Kandinsky drew parallels between painting and music. Read had noted: 'Painting, which may be defined as the disposition of colours on a plane surface, appeals to our senses directly, without the intervention of images or of logical concepts, exactly in the same way as music does.' For Mrkusich these parallels were eloquently drawn by Peter Yates who wrote on music in the American journal *Arts and Architecture* which Mrkusich read in the Architecture School library in the 1940s. Here is Yates talking about the development of musical forms outside the requirements of the church liturgy: 'If the art is to be more than momentarily delightful, the structure of secular music had to be created so that boundless imagination might be constrained by a common necessity of form.' Yates also wrote about modern composers whose music Mrkusich enjoyed, composers like Mahler, Stravinsky and Schoenberg. (Mrkusich's first purchase of a recording was Mahler's *Song of the Earth*). An atonal approach, in which all notes have equal value, signalled another parallel to abstract painting in which all colours have equal weight. Boundless imagination, an awareness of structure and the ability to repeat forms without loss of freshness, all these were vital for the abstract painter.

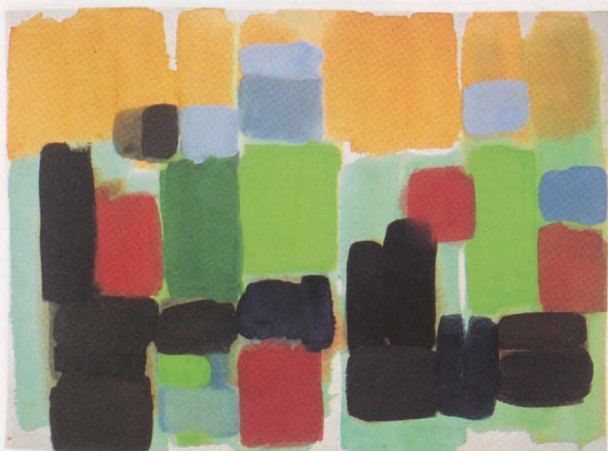


Composition on red 1954



Festival painting 1954

The grid returns, holding patches of colour against a neutral grey space in this work painted for the Auckland Festival exhibition and shown also in *Object and Image* at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1954.



No 1



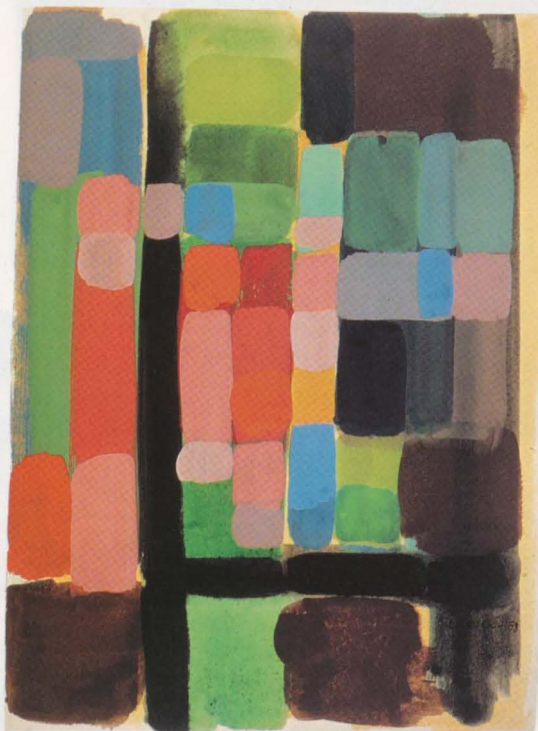
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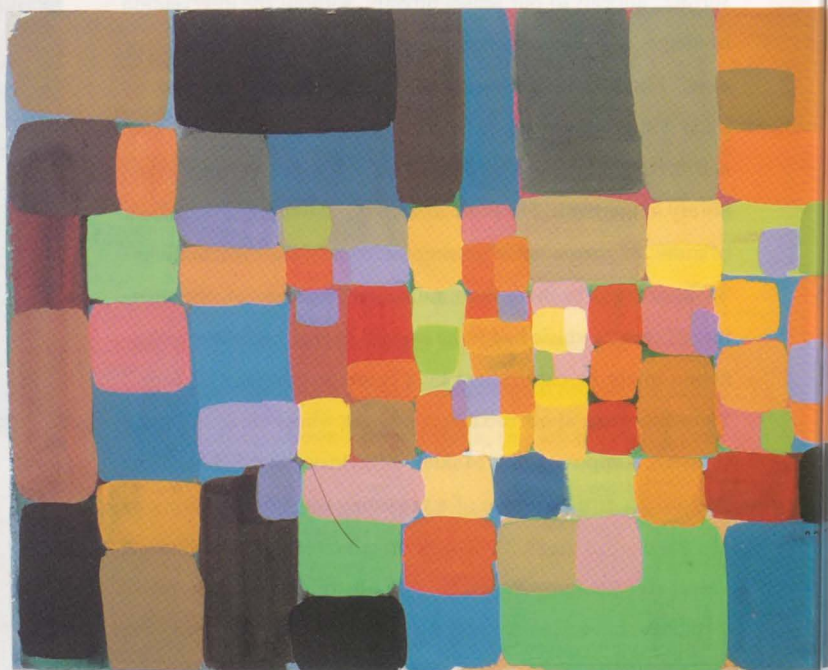
No 2

Composition Nos 1-5 1958

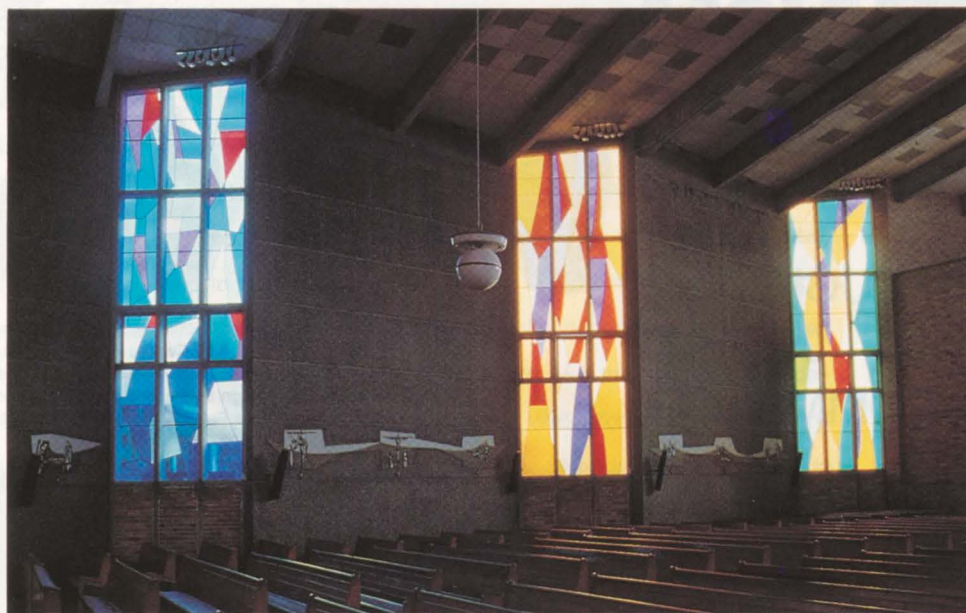
A series of radiant gouaches prefiguring the church mosaics and stained glass windows which Mrkusich later designed. It was in 1958 that Mrkusich decided to paint full-time.



No 3

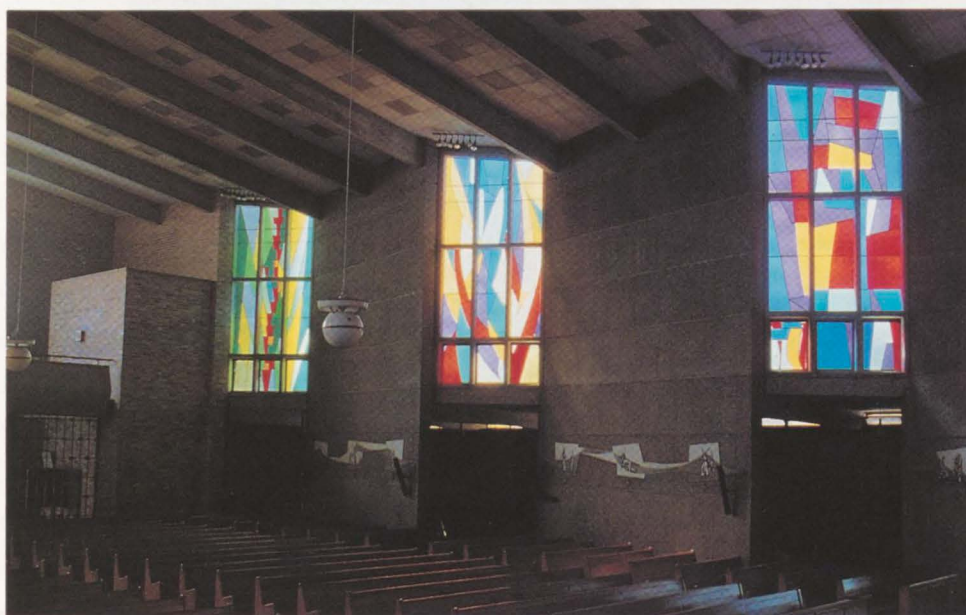


No 5



Stained Glass Windows at St Joseph's Catholic Church, Great North Road, Grey Lynn 1958-60

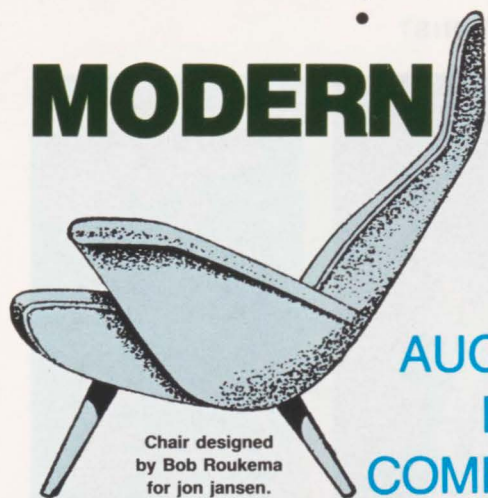
The largest abstract works in New Zealand at the time. The windows have symbolic associations with, from left, water, fire, prayer; baptism, growth, sorrow (the crown of thorns). The lower left pane of the latter window broke several years ago and was replaced by the church. This window also originally bore black painted triangles but these have since peeled away. Mrkusich also designed the mosaic Stations of the Cross for this church.



Determined to remain open to ideas, Mrkusich has always been a voracious reader of books and magazines. During the 1950s these were the only art-sources available to him; it wasn't until 1981 that he travelled out of New Zealand. In some respects the works of the late 1940s and 1950s are the most clearly influenced of Mrkusich's long career. Yet although their sources are often apparent, (Mrkusich admired work by Ben Nicholson, Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich), his paintings are never provincial or blandly derivative; the concern with colour, structure and beauty which informs his work today is already

evident. His paintings are generative: Mrkusich's manner of working is to develop an idea from each painting to the next until the series suggests an accretion of achievement. A vibration occurs between the paintings' structural discipline and the sensuous presence of colour. Moreover these paintings are refreshingly unnarcissistic. They are not trapped in introversion; instead they project intellect and intuition into the world. Looking at Mrkusich's paintings, what strikes you is not an opacity of meaning but rather the translucence of beauty; a confidence and a pleasure in the necessity of art.

MODERN ISM



Chair designed
by Bob Roukema
for Jon Jansen.

and the

AUCKLAND
DESIGN
COMMUNITY

Douglas
Lloyd-Jenkins



Vases by, from left, Peter Stichbury, Patricia Perrin,
Len Castle, Patricia Perrin.

The Ca d'Oro coffee lounge in downtown Auckland opened
in 1957. The interior design by Peter Smeele featured
Garth Chester's furniture and Frank Carpay's wire mural.



In 1952 interior designer John Crichton penned an article titled "Introducing Tropical Interiors For New Zealand Living" in which he advised his readers that 'the host should not stand with his back to the guests when mixing cocktails . . .' That suggestion must have seemed foreign to a society more accustomed to the six o'clock swill than to polite cocktail chatter. Yet over the previous five years New Zealanders, although apparently trapped in post-war conformity, had increasingly been offered an alternative to the rough and ready made, in the form of modern design.

In the aftermath of the Second World War the global design community believed that humanity had one last chance to try again; that by following the guidelines of modernism artists could indeed design a better world. Locally, Wellington architect D.E. Barry-Martin spelt out the requirements of modernism in his *Modern Decorating and Furnishing* (1947): ' . . . to be really modern in the true meaning of the word, a piece of furniture must be sincere, functional, attractive, well-made, well-produced and labour saving. Attractive appearance is achieved after the functional problems have been solved.'

The Architect As Designer

While Barry-Martin refers specifically to furniture, in *Design and Living* (1947) Viennese expatriate Ernst Plischke presented the same principles as a guide to all modern activity. Plischke had arrived at the beginning of a wave of European migration to New Zealand that reached its crest in the 1950s. Those from Holland and Eastern Europe included a considerable number of designers and architects as well as other professional people prepared to sponsor modern design. Plischke designed and produced furniture as an integral part of his architectural oeuvre, retailing through The Gallery of Helen Hitchings in Wellington.

Furniture had increasingly been recognised by architects as a suitable forum of expression for their formal concerns, an approach widely adopted by New Zealand architects who qualified after the late 1930s. In Auckland R.G.S. Beatson produced some of the earliest modern furniture and encouraged an appreciation of modernism through his editorship of *Home & Building*. Vernon Brown, an active promoter of modern design, created a dining setting for the Dickie House (1950) which achieved limited production.

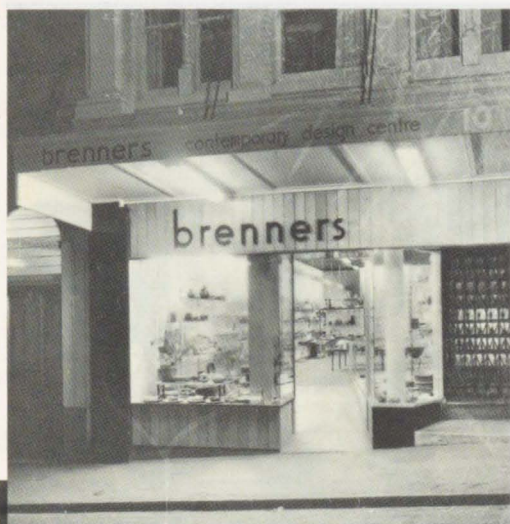
Reflecting the architectural interests of the period, furniture was often inspired by emerging Scandinavian designers. R.S. Barnaby's *Dining chair* (1951) looks on first approach to be a copy of Jens Risom's *Side chair* (1946) which had been widely illustrated. Heeding the call for a vernacular modernism, the Barnaby chair rejects plastic webbing and birch in favour of suede and waxed rimu. It also demonstrates modern New Zealand chair design to this date in its upright refusal to bow to the horizontal emphasis that swept post-war furniture. Des Mullen's *Side chair* (1952), while more



The new patio lifestyle promoted by John Crichton.

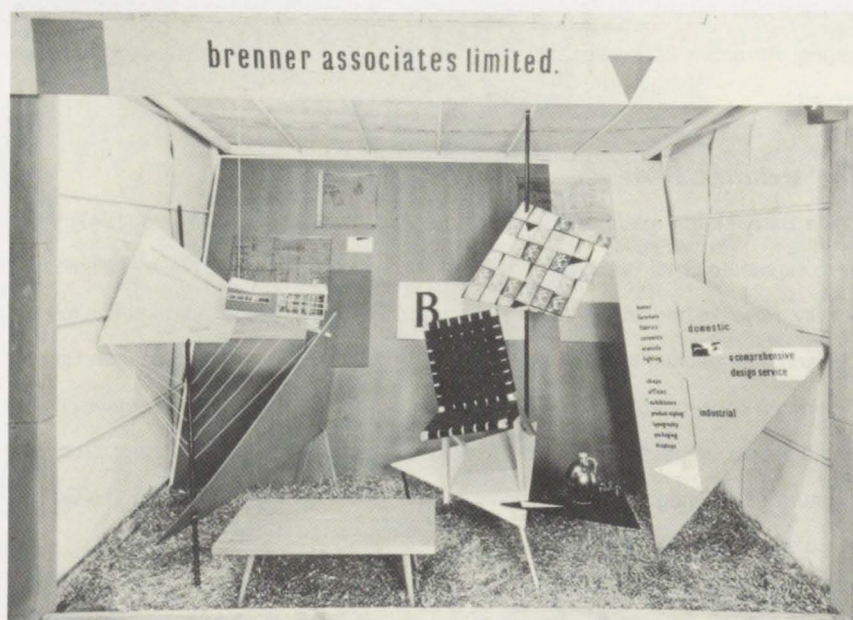


Des Mullen *Side chair* 1952.



Exterior, Brenners contemporary design centre.

Brenner Associates exhibition stand at the Easter Show 1950.



Interior, Brenners.



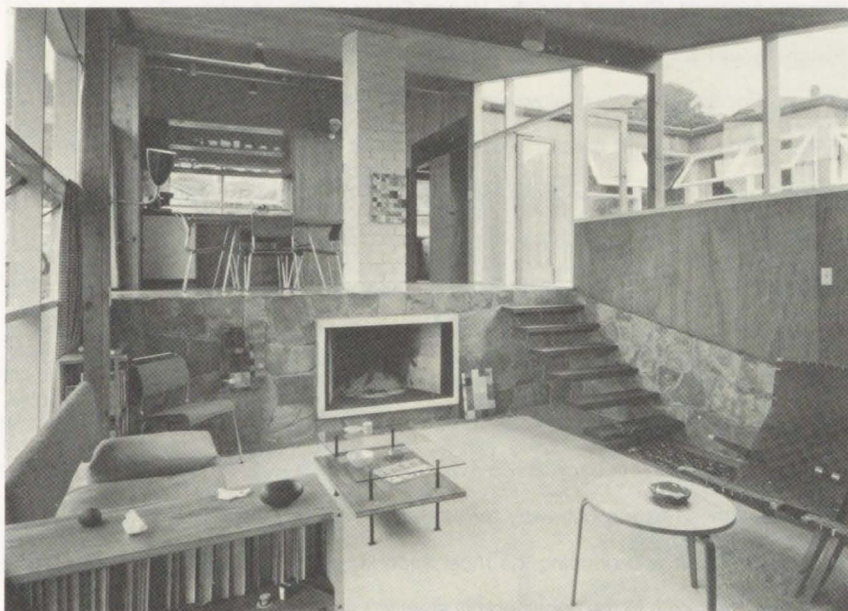
experimental structurally, retains the same vertical emphasis, an emphasis which seems to have stemmed from the lack of any consistent development in New Zealand furniture design between the Victorian and modernist thinking.

Brenner Associates

At first both modern furniture and interiors belonged to the domain of architects as reflected in the writings of I.V. Porsolt and A.K. Curtis in *Home & Building* and Gra-Dawson in *Design Review*. But by the end of the 1940s this had begun to change with the introduction of professional designers. The first of these was Brenner Associates formed in 1949. Brenner was a thinly disguised architectural partnership comprising architects Stephen Jelichich, Desmond Mullen and Vladimir Cacala, assisted by the talents of designers Milan Mrkusich and John Butterworth.

The partners offered interior, exhibition, lighting and furniture design as well as the expected architectural services. They were most visible through the activities of their shop which promoted a wide range of domestic and imported pieces of good modern design. Brenner's ability to create and furnish entire environments is best illustrated in the house that Mrkusich built for himself in 1950. It remains one of the most fully resolved installations of the period.

The most arresting of Mrkusich's furniture designs is the *Lesnie table* (1952) which reveals the designer's interest in the work of British surrealist John Tunnard. This quirky piece of furniture is considerably more experimental than the *Newcombe cabinet* (1956) which retains a fragment of Mrkusich's original mural. However it is the European inspired sophistication of the cabinet, coupled with the furniture of Cacala that best represents Brenner's output.



Interior Mrkusich House.

John Crichton *Java* chair 1956.



The Professional Designer

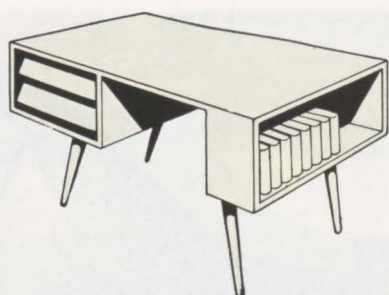
John Crichton joined the Auckland design community in 1951. Working out of his shop in Kitchener Street, he was one of the first designers to apply a Pacific-rim based thinking to the New Zealand situation, drawing on influences in Asia and America to create his own brand of design. Insisting that New Zealanders should open their houses to the garden, Crichton promoted the new patio lifestyle. Then he brought the garden inside, popularising the use of indoor plants. He vanquished the one room, one light rule, manufacturing wall lights and table lamps to his own designs. One of Crichton's most successful pieces of furniture design is the graceful *Java chair* (1955). The woven cane bucket seat suspended from a spare black rod frame suggests a casual attitude to seating, in direct contrast to the 'upholstered bulldozers' that had previously dominated lounge furniture.

Dutch designer Peter Smeele remains best known as the designer and builder of some fine furniture in the 1960s which explores arts and craft philosophies. During the 1950s Smeele was responsible for a number of engaging interiors as a designer and shop fitter, particularly the interiors of that 1950s phenomenon, the coffee lounge. His work includes Avondale's El Paso, Titirangi's Coffee House and most notably Ca d'Oro in the city, where he collaborated with Garth Chester (furniture) and Frank Carpay (wire mural).

Neither Brenner nor Crichton attempted mass production of their furniture although pieces were always capable of being mass produced, this being a major principle of modernism. The task of bringing modern furniture to the people fell to the entrepreneurial A. Lincoln Laidlaw who in 1951 opened the first jon jansen shop in Auckland's Queen's Arcade. Initially the shop emphasised imported furniture from Scan-



Half-scale model of a sample desk designed by Peter Smeele.



Desk designed by Bob Roukema for jon jansen.



Interior design schemes by John Crichton.

dinavia, Australia, England and the United States, although where the work of local designers was promoted, they were labelled by their country of origin (Roukema of Holland, Cacala from Czechoslovakia) in order to maintain an imported European identity. Bob Roukema and partner Hans Kohl joined jon jansen in 1952, Roukema as designer and Kohl as manager of the new flagship store in Symonds Street.

During his time with jon jansen, Roukema designed an assured range of furniture, borrowing from the language of contemporary Italian and American furniture, but the highpoint of his association with the company came with his *Playhouse Cinema chair* (1958). This chair refines the concerns of Crichton's earlier *Java chair*. The bucket seat, here a complete steel shell, features a hallmark of 1950s chair design: the large circular hole in the lower back. While available in a number of variations the most successful are those with a cut-away arm detail.

The honour of producing the most enduring piece of modern furniture did not fall to jon jansen but to the considerably smaller Laloli Bros Ltd. Their high chair went into production in 1939 and by 1951, with some developments, was selected alongside the work of R.S. Barnaby and Vernon Brown to illustrate the best in modern design. The chair succinctly fulfilled modernist criteria, being functional well-made and labour saving. Only the decals would offend a good modernist. In fact the chair is perhaps too well-designed since the company's major competitor is its own second-hand product. However a faith in modern design has served Laloli Bros well. It is the only furniture design company from the 1950s still active in the 1990s.



jon jansen display at the Easter Show.



The Laloli Bros factory
in 1947.

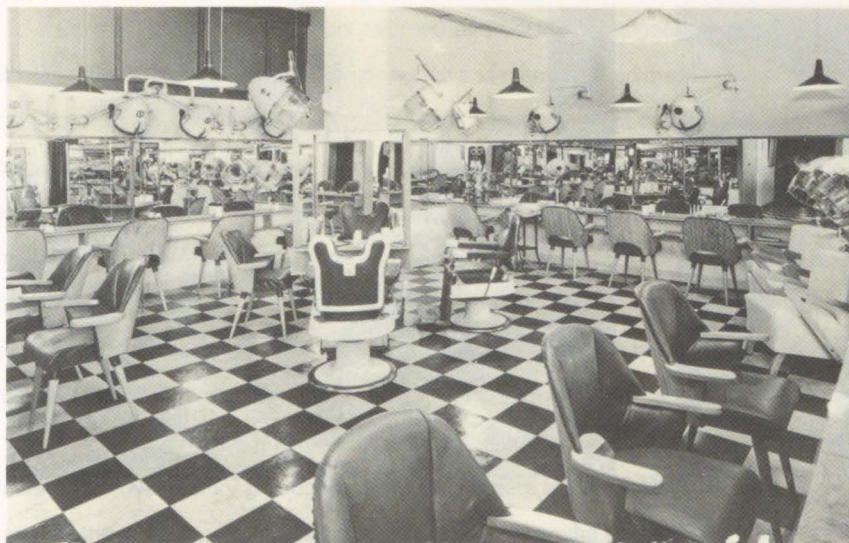
Garth Chester
Barber's Chair,
Kay's French Beauty Salon 1953.



Garth Chester's Modernism

On the periphery of Auckland's small design community an intensely original designer practised a distinctive modernism. Garth Chester had in 1944 formed a chair from a single sheet of plywood. Known as the *Curvesse* (1944), this chair remains the most significant piece of furniture produced in New Zealand. Like many international designers of the time Chester was fascinated by the possibilities of bent plywood, producing the *Nicholson Chapel chairs* (1947), the *Pascoe House chair* (1948), the *Wing chair* (1952) and the *Side chair* (1953). Unlike other New Zealand designers Chester put considerable emphasis on the potential of automated production. He designed his *Whyte chair* (1951) to be manufactured on an automated press which could produce a chair every four minutes, 600 in a working week. But this plan was unrealised.

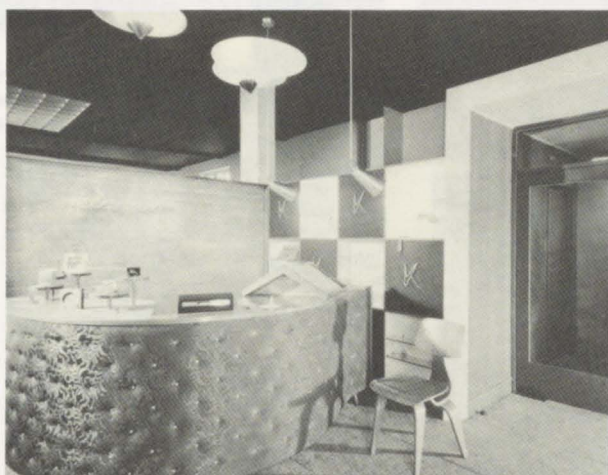
Winter's Salon.
Furniture by Garth Chester



THE 1950s SHOW

Garth Chester's furniture for
Kay's French Beauty Salon.

In 1953 Chester's plywood work reached its zenith with the furnishing of the Liberty Theatre in Christchurch and Kay's French Beauty Salon in Auckland. Shortly after completing these commissions Chester lost his factory in a fire which destroyed all his moulds and presses. At the age of 38 he started again, this time exploring a more directly Eamesian aesthetic combining plywood seat and back shells with steel rod frames. From this period emerge the *Bikini chair and table* (1956), the *Kay's Salon chair* (1956) and the *Winter's Salon furniture* (1957). Chester's furniture only ever had a limited appeal to the public and by 1960 the designer had all but retired from furniture design.



Reception area.



Magazine rack.

Modernism At Crown Lynn

New Zealand's largest commercial pottery was often the target of modernist critics who attacked 'pretty rosebud china' and moulded knick knacks. Elam student David Jenkin, who became head of the Crown Lynn design department in 1948, recalls production throughout the 1950s as consisting of copied English utility pieces and refrigerator jugs for the local and Australian markets. Jenkin's assessment of his own work in this period is harsh. His utility items are often accomplished examples of modern ceramics: witness the entry of his Railway Cup and Mixing Bowls into popular iconography.

The first external designer associated with the company was prominent art administrator A.J.C. Fisher. The milk jug he designed was enthusiastically praised by critic Peter Middleton who thought it the best work of New Zealand industrial design he had seen. 'The whole effect is one of robustness, appropriately enough in a rugger playing country, but only rarely encountered in our shops . . .' Middleton's analysis is somewhat misguided. The jug is an example of British ceramic design of the 1920s, although in fairness to Fisher it could have been an unexecuted project developed during his time at the Royal College of Art. Still, it was a very dated design when it went into production in the late 1940s.

Throughout the 1950s Crown Lynn would draw on the pool of talent on the factory floor for special projects. One employee who achieved his own range of ware this way was Czech potter Mirek Smisek. While working in the clay preparation department Smisek was encouraged to produce a range of brown sgraffito decorated pots titled Bohemia Ware. Although the collaboration was brief, the abstract decoration of Bohemia Ware found favour with the public. This introduction to modern art ceramics was sufficient to encourage Tom Clark to employ Dutch designer Frank Carpay who had written from Holland looking for work.

Carpay was one of the most talented and versatile designers active in New Zealand. Between 1953 and 1956 he designed and manufactured the Handwerk range for Crown Lynn. Handwerk still remains the highpoint of local commercial ceramic production. The designer was asked to produce a number of one-off pieces to be exhibited around the country through art societies and prestige department stores. The more popular pieces would then go into production using a team of painters. But despite critical praise and his winning the Esmonde Cohen Prize for Applied Art, Carpay's work was resolutely rejected by the public. After making hundreds of patterns the designer parted company with commercial ceramics.

Carpay's work falls into three phases. The earliest pieces are those decorated under glaze over factory produced blanks. Then there are those designed and decorated by the artist, usually indicated with an H painted on the underside; and finally, a



Frank Carpay demonstrating his work at the 1953 Easter Show.



Frank Carpay ceramics 1953.





Frank Carpay's desk at Crown Lynn in 1953.



Len Castle.



Blockprinted
fabric
by May
Smith
c 1950.

series of hand-potted works closer in appearance to studio ceramics, exhibiting a more muted approach to decoration. Those rare examples of Handwerk that survive are all that remains of Crown Lynn's dream of producing world quality modernist ceramics.

Modernism And The Handmade

While the pursuit of modernism largely rejected any reference to the past, considerable attention was paid to the advancement of traditional crafts which were seen as an antidote to the sins of unchecked mass production. Only two areas of craft activity were adequately represented in this period: studio ceramics and textile design. Although the studio pottery movement was by 1940 securely established in New Zealand, surprisingly few connections exist between potters like O. Jones, E. Lissaman and E. Matheson and the modernist potters. Credit for the burgeoning interest in pottery after the war belongs internationally to Bernard Leach and locally to R.N. Field. Leach's influence was particularly inescapable after the publication in 1940 of his *A Potter's Book*.

Field, who possessed the first copy of that book in New Zealand, had in the mid 1940s begun to teach night classes in pottery at Avondale College. These classes soon became a mecca for such future luminaries as Len Castle, Patricia Perrin and Peter Stichbury. The work of Castle and Stichbury strongly echoed the teachings of Leach, particularly in the classically inspired salt-glaze pieces of the late 1940s and early 1950s. While Castle was eventually considered to be New Zealand's primary ceramic artist, it is Stichbury who has remained loyal to the modernist credo.

Perrin was less committed to Leach's St Ives aesthetic. She avoided the monumental while employing striking colour combinations on smaller scale pieces. Her larger work adopted forms closer to contemporary Scandinavian ceramics. During the latter 1950s when Perrin came under pressure to abandon her colouristic approach even the use of muted colouring did not threaten the individuality of her work, which became increasingly textural and concerned with purity of form.

Auckland potters remained close-knit. Early lessons learnt swapping clay recipes and glaze formulas led to the formation of several local societies which promoted the artists and their crafts.

Fabric painting was introduced in the mid 1940s by painter May Smith, who had been trained in the craft in Britain. The poet A.R.D. Fairburn learnt from her and some of his sophisticated textiles were used to furnish Government House in Auckland. Block-printed fabrics were eagerly taken up by the women of the Rutland Group, including Ruth Coyle, Blanche Wormald and Louise Tilsley. In response to the call for New Zealand imagery, the printers adopted as their own recently rediscovered Maori rock drawings which were reinterpreted repeatedly throughout the decade. (These same images were also used by potters.)

The arrival in Auckland in 1952 of German weaver Ilse von Randow led to a revival of interest in spinning and weaving. Based in a tower room in the Auckland City Art Gallery, von Randow wove lengths of fine cloth and detailed wall hangings. She is notable for her collaboration with other artists such as Jan Michels (*Fertility* 1955) and Colin McCahon (*Kauri* 1955) and some superb hangings in her own right (*Waireki* 1958). A pair of monumental curtains, executed as part of the modernisation of the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1957, are her best known work.

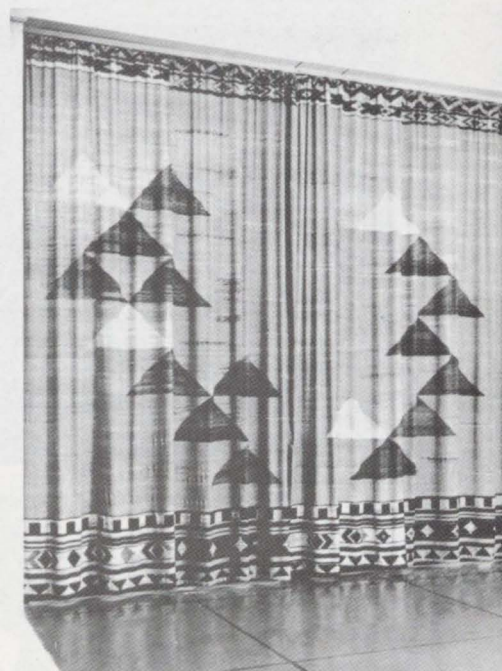
Zena Abbott, who was one of von Randow's pupils, would later become the country's premier fibre artist. Although not a technique favoured by her teacher, Abbott's early preference for using unspun wools became a hallmark of her work. Her first pieces were two floor-rugs made for her Group Architects' designed house in Blockhouse Bay. They could not have been more at home.

Promoting The Modern

Although modern design was all but unanimously embraced by the design community, the conversion of the general public was less than automatic. Like any revolution in thought, modernism required the skills of enlightened converts to spread the gospel. Prominent British designer Milner Gray visited Auckland on a whistle-stop tour of the country. His speeches were reproduced in daily newspapers as were his comments on the state of local design. Gray's visit prompted the formation of the Design Guild in 1949. Although short-lived, the Guild did organise an exhibition celebrating the best of local design.

After 1952 the Auckland City Art Gallery took on an important role in the promotion of modern design. Newly appointed director Eric Westbrook shocked staid art patrons by installing a fully rigged yacht in the gallery as a focal point of a yacht design exhibition. Westbrook also instituted a collection of New Zealand studio pottery. During the modernisation of the Gallery under director Peter Tomory, work by Pat Perrin and Ilse von Randow was prominently featured but by the end of the decade the applied arts began to lose ground. Controversy surrounding the Gallery's off-hand display of the Fourth Annual New Zealand Potter's Exhibition in 1960 led to an estrangement from the design community.

A growing number of retail stores declared themselves for modernism. While these stores offered opportunities for local designers, the promotion of their work was boosted by the opening in 1959 of the New Vision Gallery. Kase and Tina Hoss' role in the establishment of craft as a serious force in New Zealand cannot be underestimated. As the 1950s progressed the larger department stores, particularly Milne & Choyce, responded to the demand for modern design. But as modernism became more saleable it moved further from its philosophical roots, becoming debased with populist imagery until eventually renamed 'contemporary style'.



Auckland City Art Gallery curtains woven by Ilse von Randow in 1957.



Ruth Coyle wearing handprinted dress.

R

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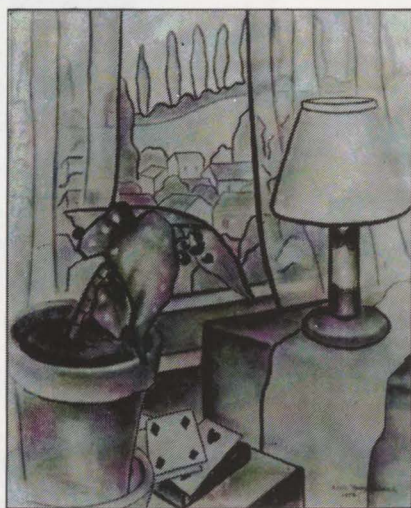
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26489



Adele Younghusband "Interior with Still Life 1952"
Watercolours and charcoal, 35cm x 43cm

Other 1950's artists represented include: Denis Knight Turner, Keith Patterson, Kase Jackson, Louise Henderson, John and Charles Tole, Helen Brown, Colin McCahon, etc, etc.



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Bloomsbury Galleries

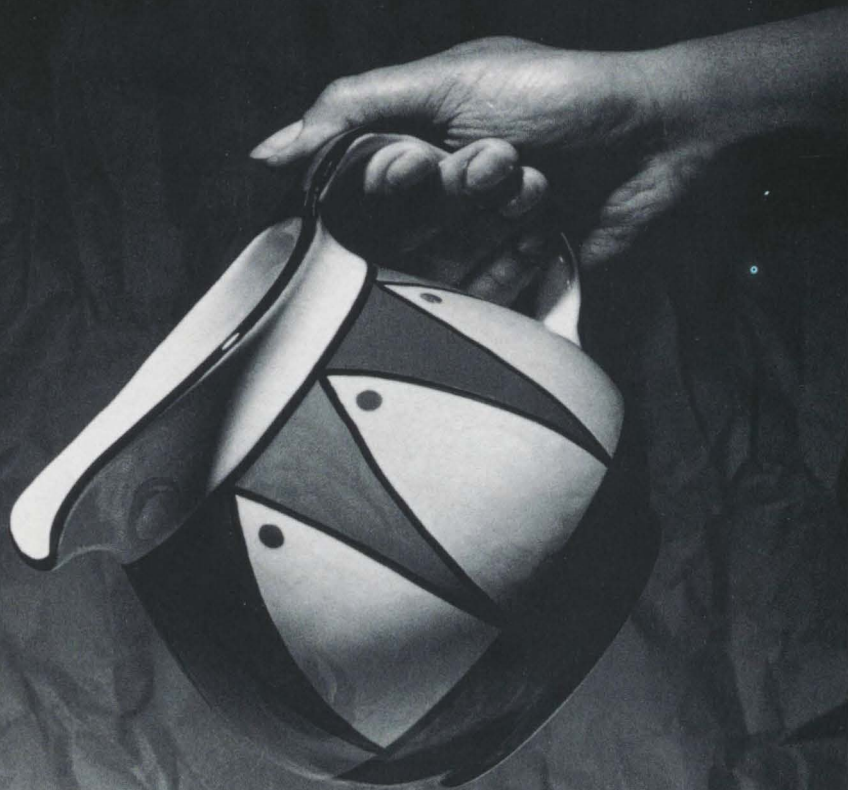
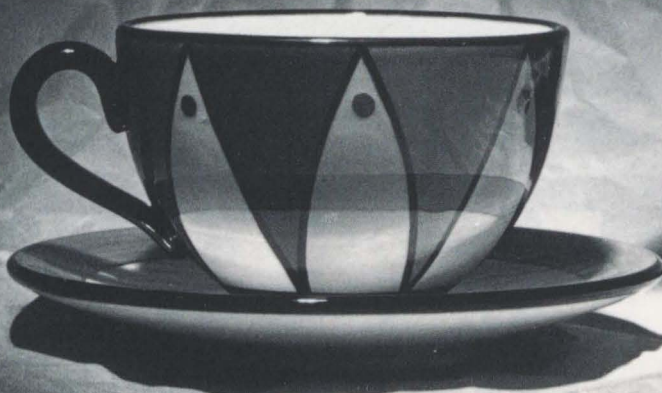
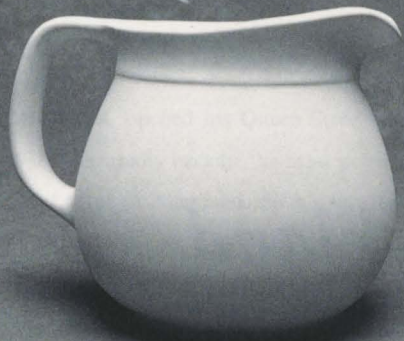
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Designed in the '50's by AJC Fisher for Crown Lynn. Produced in the '90's by Catherine Anselmi. Decorated by Susan Firth. Available at Crimes of Adornment



Crimes of Adornment 19 O'Connell Street 358 1492

THE 1950s SHOW

Fixed in TIME

*Auckland
photographers*

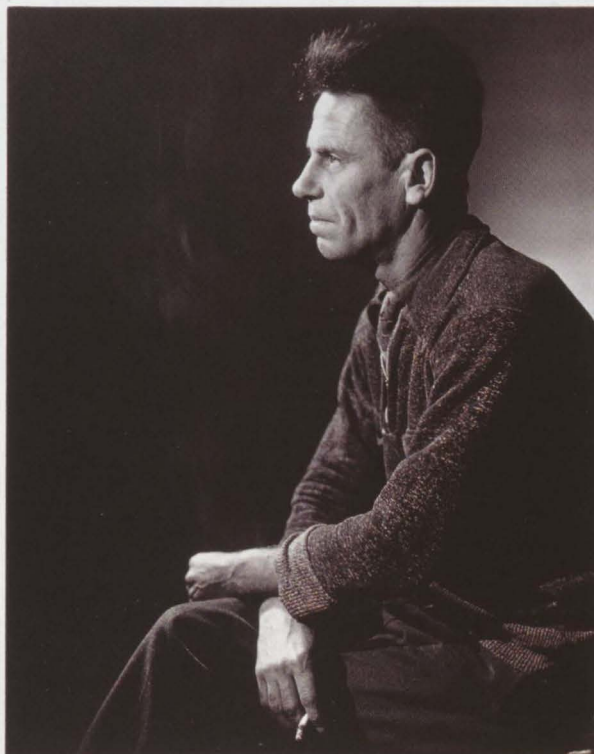
Ron Brownson



Clifton Firth Studio interior c. 1950.

FIXED IN TIME: AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHERS

CLIFTON FIRTH opened his Queen Street photographic studio in 1938. He rapidly became the most popular and imaginative portrait artist in Auckland. Firth's signature style was his 40 year long focus on his clients' faces, using a photographic technique that still remains radical in New Zealand. His method was simple and stark: he posed his sitters under intense lighting from differently angled light sources of variable luminance. Signs of ageing, skin irregularities, facial asymmetries or even a tacit expectation of flattery did not prevent him from always employing light and dark as staged drama. Much like the manner of Hollywood black and white stills photographers, Firth wanted to produce a memorable image from an artificial theatrical setup. The more familiar his clients were with this trademark style, the better the collaboration and performance of sitter and photographer.



R.A.K. Mason c. 1952.



Sono Osato April 1950.

Anne McKeever c. 1950.



SPARROW INDUSTRIAL PICTURES:

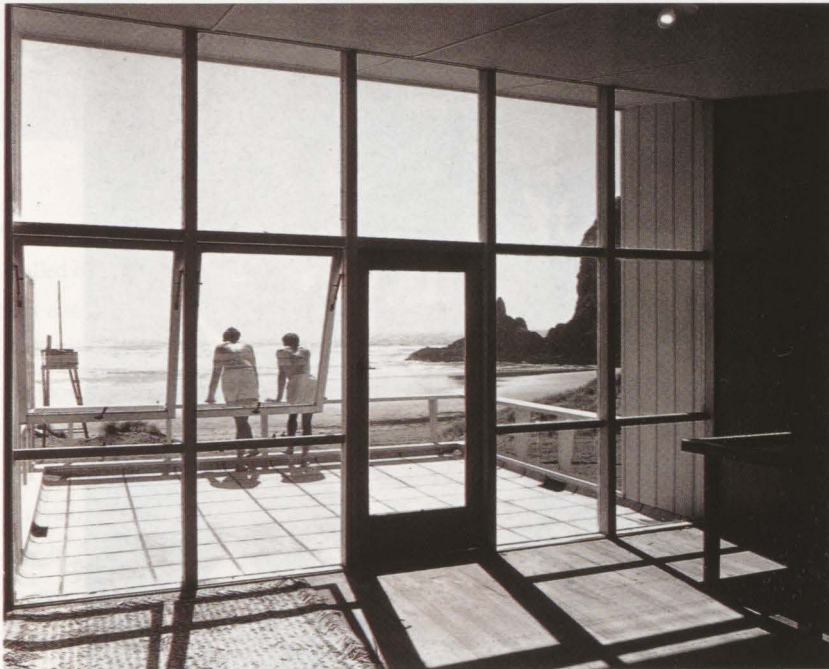
Bill Sparrow created a new science of photography that united image-making with image-selling. His company, Sparrow Industrial Pictures, produced most of its work for advertising agencies and employed many of the best commercial photographers such as Guy Douglas Kelsey, Geoffrey Harcourt, Barry McKay and Michael Willison to name only a few. This emphasis on the commercial photograph resulted from a post-1945 change in print publishing. Clients from industry no longer wanted drawn and graphically modified photo-illustrations of their products. They wanted the photograph itself to show the product no matter what it was.

Sparrow described himself as both photographer and artist to industry. He was also an effective salesman of and for photography. He understood advertising sales campaigns, as well as the writing and illustrating of copy. Rarely would he be instructed in how clients wanted a photograph taken. It was Bill Sparrow who would explain how the subject should be photographed and for what purposes such images would best be suited.

Many of Sparrow Industrial Pictures' clients wanted photographs that reflected changes to commerce, employment, domestic life and leisure. Sparrow responded with images that had a fresh objectivity, a uniform light and clarity that permitted the photograph to sell itself because it could be read for information.



Piha surf club 1952.



Interior Piha clubhouse 1952.

Holeproof summer swimwear, Parnell Pool 1956.

THE 1950s SHOW



The Leilua family 1952.



The Yelash boys 1953.

The Chan family 1953.





The Rowell / Salt wedding 1952.

BELWOOD STUDIOS: With a photographic partnership that totalled over 119 years' work together and the exposure of more than one million negatives, Amy Harper and Dickie Steer are central to Auckland's camera history. Belwood Studios, the last and most famous of the various studios these sisters shared, was throughout the 1950s a publicly favoured, family-oriented portrait studio. Belwood was a unique business because it operated in a traditional almost 19th century manner. Rarely did a client walk in from the street other than for a passport photograph. An appointment was arranged. To go to Belwood Studios was an occasion. One looked one's best and expected to be seen at one's best.

Weddings and family gatherings were Amy Harper's speciality. She developed the genre of the conversation piece (inti-

mate group portraiture) into her recognised style. Working on a large scale — 10 by 8 and 8 by 6 inch negatives were common — she would take an exposure, seldom more than one, of a particular pose and grouping. Most of Harper's work was done before and after the moment of exposure. The arrangement of men, women and children always reinforced their close relationships. While preferring uniform lighting, the completed negative was extensively modified so as to emphasise shifts between focus, facial expressions and body postures. The success of Belwood Studios was widely acknowledged and their client base was the widest possible. While Christopher Bede's studio was an opposition business, it did not produce images that had tradition written visually within each photograph.

AUCKLAND STAR: The 1950s was an era when the printed black and white photograph changed what was understood to be news. Important magazines such as the *Weekly News* and *New Zealand Pictorial* shifted New Zealanders' attitudes to society by frequently using visuals instead of words to convey a story. Photojournalists favoured work and leisure topics in their location work because people almost always wanted to be part of a news photograph. Photographs of good local news were always preferable to images which reflected a negative or even a provocative aspect of the community.

Auckland Star photographers such as Fred Freeman, Tong

Wong and Tom Hutchins had to make images that had substantial human interest. These photographs had to be 'eyestoppers' as well as being informative. Celebrity visitors to New Zealand may have had familiar names but their faces were not always recognised. Although these photojournalists were the most widely published photographers of the time, they had to work within defined editorial constraints. Yet many remarkable photographs were made. In many ways the *Auckland Star*, like the *New Zealand Herald*, used photography to show how a community collaborates with its news media to visualise a history of the present.



Waiting for the Queen, Princes Street 1953.



Fly your own helicopter at George Courts 1955.



Auckland harbour bridge under construction 1958.



On the terraces of Eden Park, All Blacks vs the Springboks 1956.



Lilo surfing at Taipa Beach 1959.



Shrine at Puhoi 1957.



Winifred Atwell 1959.

ERIC LEE-JOHNSON has been taking photographs for 70 years and has exposed thousands of films. Yet his achievement as an artist with a camera is unrecognised. He was certainly the first artist in New Zealand to convey the dramatic potential of the night sky with photographs. His 1950s portraits use a progressive and candid technique that looks more like the early 1990s auto-focus way of seeing. Both deliberate pre-visioning and spontaneity are the keys to Lee-Johnson's photographs. He plans to use his camera and then he photographs 'within' what he has chosen to record. His exposures are always accurate; he is always just where he needs to be in order to get an image.

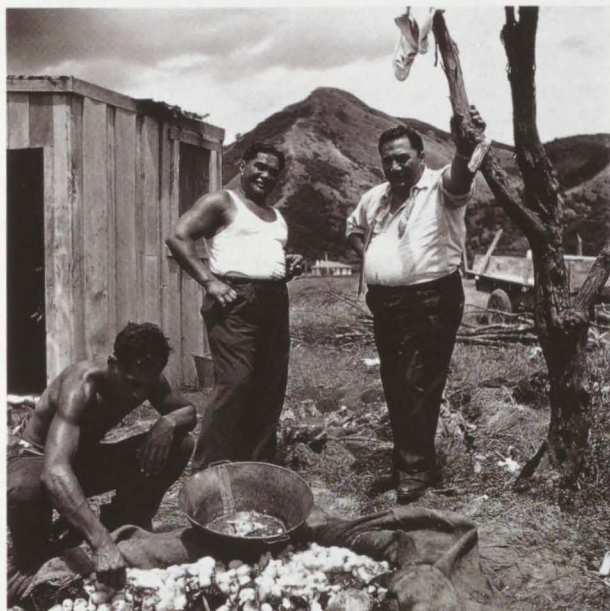
Lee-Johnson wrote in 1958, '... photography is far more difficult than painting, where uncompromising elimination of the

irrelevant and perfection of composition and colour is always possible and, according to his abilities, nicely within the artist's control. For the photographer-artist the struggle for perfection on these counts is a thousand times more frustrating than it is ever is for the painter-artist — and so sparsely is the photo craftsman rewarded with the formal perfection and simplicity desired, or with a complete realisation of his original conception that artists of painterly talent and intention are not content to work exclusively within the pictorial limitations of so intractable a medium.' Despite his harsh assessment of his photographic work, Lee-Johnson is undoubtedly one of New Zealand's major painters and photographers.

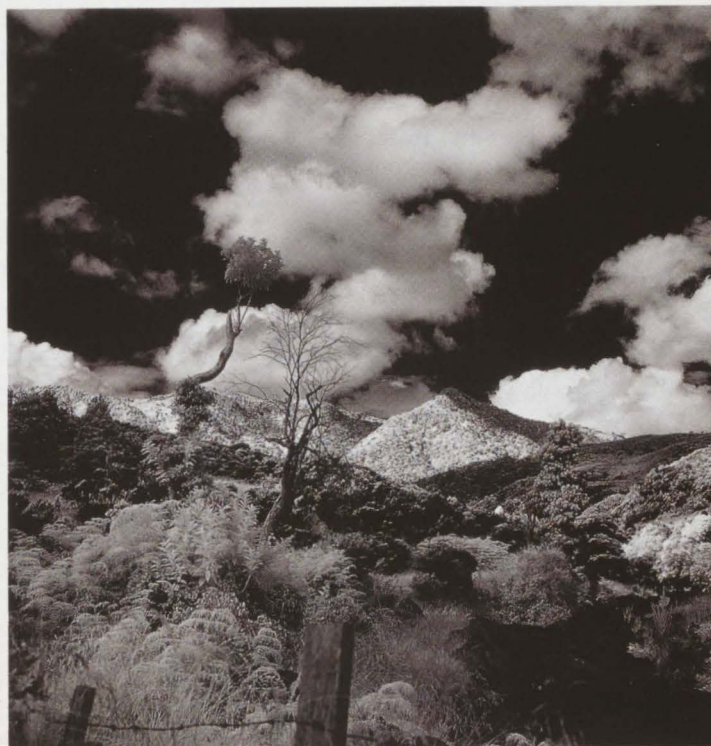


Infra-red self portrait 1958.

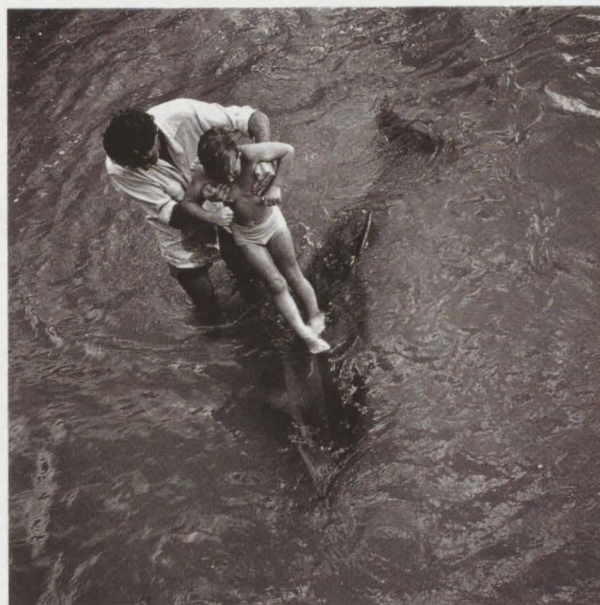
FIXED IN TIME: AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHERS



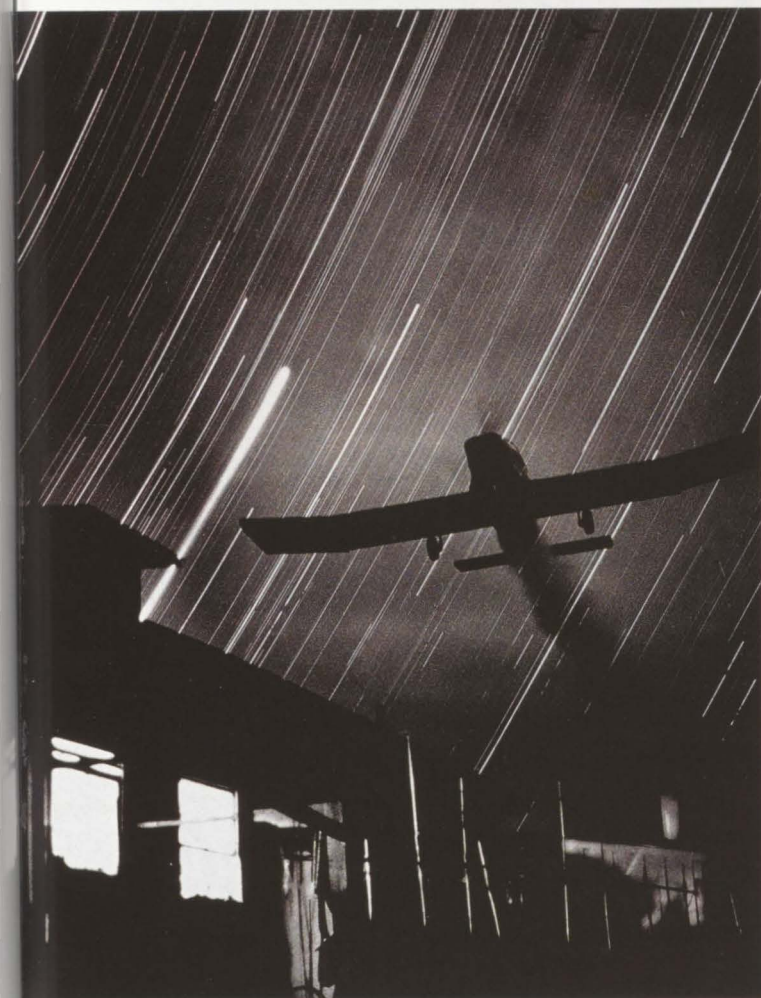
Hui, Whiria Marae, Pakanae 1956.



Infra-red landscape, Waimamaku 1958.



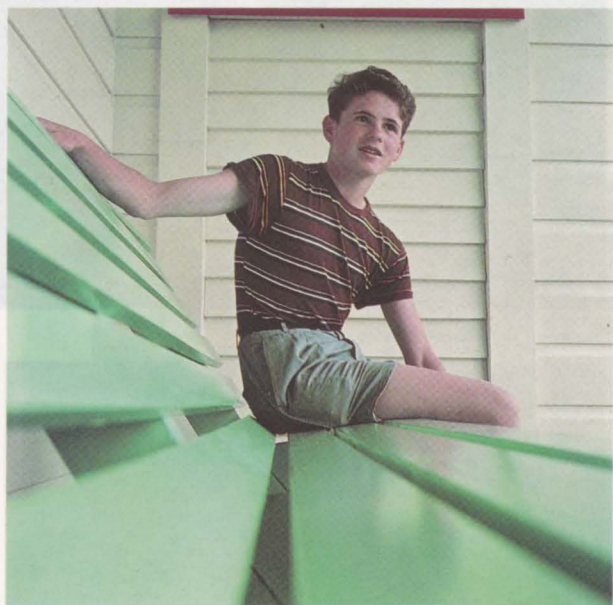
Opo at Opononi 1956.



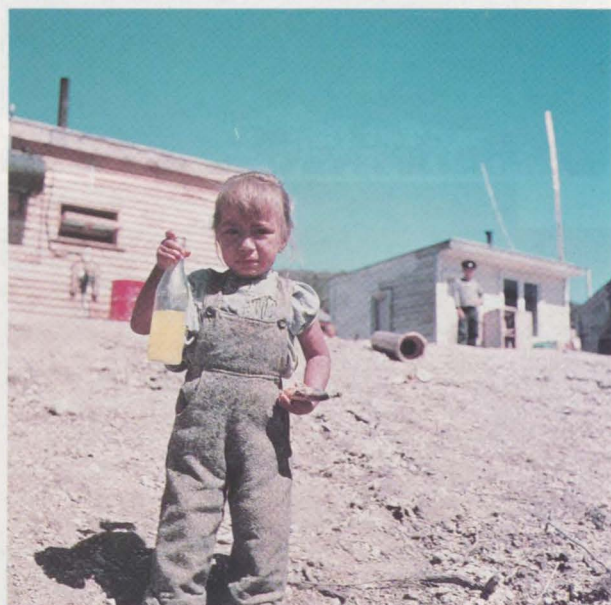
Sputnik 1 and star trails, Waimamaku 1957.

FRANK HOFMANN believed in 'realistic' photography. He did not 'doctor' his prints and negatives unlike his mentor Clifton Firth. Instead he adapted what he had learnt about lighting while working in Firth's studio, into a more naturalist approach. 'You must know what is happening to a person's expression' he said in an interview in 1985. 'Light gives you the basis for seeing . . . There are photographs and there are images, and in my best work I try and produce with photography something honest about the world.' Hofmann was always a 'natural'. Photography seemed to be his vocation from the moment he made a holiday trip to

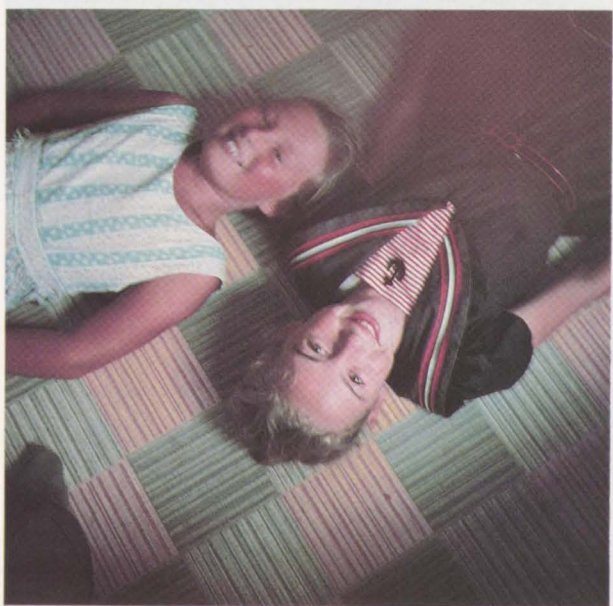
Venice from his Prague home at the age of 13 in 1929. He happily mixed photography as a business with photography as an art. There were the simplest of rules to his practice. 'I always use a tripod inside and handhold any cameras when outside.' Holidays with his family, in times away from Auckland, were special. Frank Hofmann made some of his most personal images during such periods. They are never arty and always feel as if they are absolutely candid. In 1957 when he started to use colour film, the techniques that he had learnt through black and white exercises gave him a lively freedom.



Mike Hofmann, Opononi 1957.



At Pohokura I 1958.



Jenny Lee-Johnson, Sally Patmore, Waimamaku 1957.



At Pohokura II 1958.

Double portrait c. 1957.



JOHN O'SHEA

Interviewed by

DEBORAH
LAWLER-DORMER



John O'Shea,
Broken Barrier was the
only feature film
made in the 1950s.
Why was that?

Pacific Films, which John O'Shea joined in 1950, is New Zealand's most enduring independent film company. Between 1950 and 1952 O'Shea and Roger Mirams produced and directed *Broken Barrier*, the only feature film made in New Zealand between 1940 and 1964. It premiered on 10 July, 1952 in Wellington. The story begins on a Mahia Peninsula farm where Tom Sullivan, a Pakeha journalist, is working as a labourer while researching a series of articles about Maori there. He falls in love with a young Maori woman called Rawi, and the complications of their liaison reveal the racism endemic in New Zealand social attitudes of the time.

No-one particularly wanted to try. It was hard because there was no tradition of making feature films. We had got used to the National Film Unit and the sort of quasi-reality of its Weekly Reviews. We were able to make *Broken Barrier* because Roger Mirams, a cameraman who had worked at the Film Unit had set up a distinct Pacific Film Unit. Twentieth Century Fox had supplied him with a camera to do newsreel items for Movie-tone News. They paid a little bit of his income and he was able to make documentary films of his own choosing for commercial firms. We got another camera brought in from the Western Desert, supposedly after being found on a dead German, which we were able to buy cheaply, and so we set out to make a feature film. Roger had made a number of films and was a very good cameraman and a good constructor of sequences. He wanted to make a documentary film about Maoris, but I didn't want to do that because I had got sick of documentaries, and ones about Maoris. It was a time when the country wanted them to become assimilated — part of white New Zealand. The Prime Minister's favourite phrase was: 'New Zealanders, Pakeha and Maori alike.' *Broken Barrier* was really about: 'Hey, we're not all alike, we're really quite different people, we should rejoice in that. We can live happily with other cultures, but it takes an effort.'

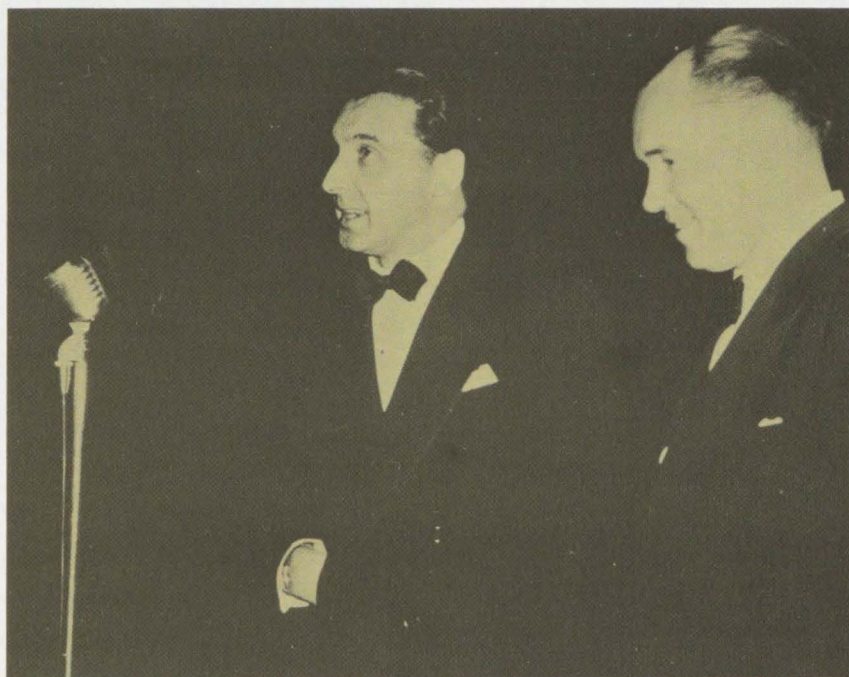
What was the atmosphere like at the world premiere of *Broken Barrier* at the Regent in Wellington? Going to the movies in the 1950s was a different experience then wasn't it?

John O'Shea (far right) and Roger Mirams at the Broken Barrier premiere.

How did the audience react?

JOHN O'SHEA

Quite different. We don't have that degree of showmanship and bravura and the circus atmosphere that prevailed in those days. Because movies were basically part of the hoop-la side of existence. They were not considered anything really serious or important - you had to tread very carefully so as not to be intellectual or academic about both the subjects and the way you constructed stories. Very simple characterisations, very obvious stereotypes, because people wouldn't accept anything else. Looking at *Broken Barrier* today, it still has an emotional strength and emotional quality but it is very banal. In fact one friend of mine calls it 'a bible of banality'. Which it is. It treats race relations in the simplest way possible. The premiere had marching girls, bands and the Governor-General and all one's relatives came from the country. We wore dinner jackets and the ladies all wore evening gowns. It was very grand in a funny sort of way. I think there was a Maori concert party and the Regent foyer was jam-packed with people. The searchlights were going and cars driving up.



They enjoyed it. Which surprised them because they didn't expect to. People didn't know Maori at all, generally speaking. They lived a life apart. Farmers in the country were a bit like Southern plantation owners - you know - the darkies would come round at Christmas time and sing a few hymns, and come onto the verandah and have a piece of cake and drink squash. And mostly Maori had this kind of courtesy. There was a great phrase used by Trotsky or Lenin or someone like that who said: 'A revolution is always silent and polite.'

**Was the ending of
Broken Barrier
considered contentious?**

***Broken Barrier* was
screened at the 1988 Film
Festival.**

**Had the audience's
response changed?**

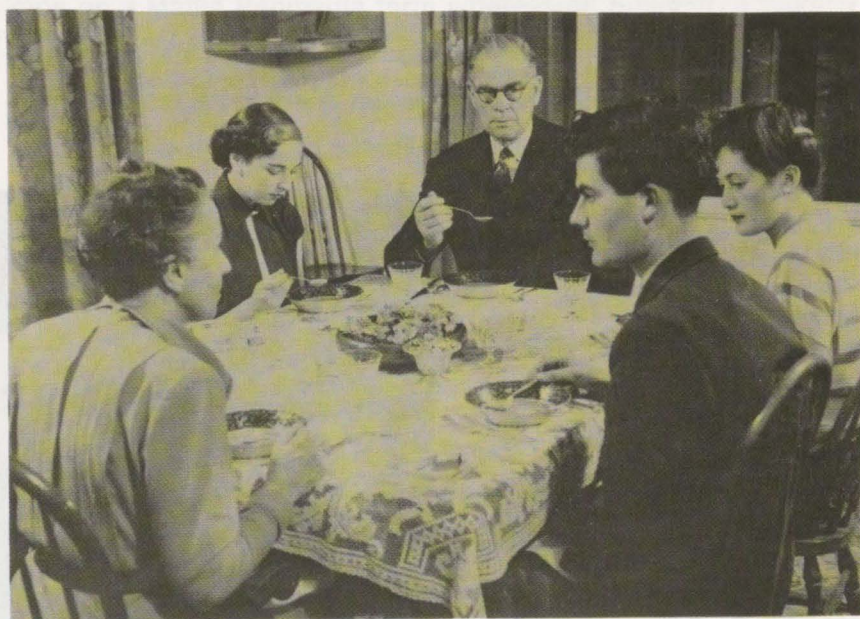
*Kay Ngarimu and Terence Bayler,
far right, as Rawi and Tom.*

**In the 1960s you wrote
on the difference
between ethnographic
and sociological films.
Did you see *Broken
Barrier* as being one or
other of those?**

THE 1950s SHOW

Instead of Maori being assimilated into European culture in the film they actually return to the Maori family. But we didn't labour the point at all. We just ended the film with the United Nations slogan that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or sex. You know — one of those sweet, sweet little capsules of United Nations wisdom.

They had come to admire it as a classic. It reminds them of a comfortable time. The Maori were not that uncomfortable — that really happened after the urban drift, when their way of life was really broken up. Though they were always unhappy about the desecration of their culture and the actual attack on their language.

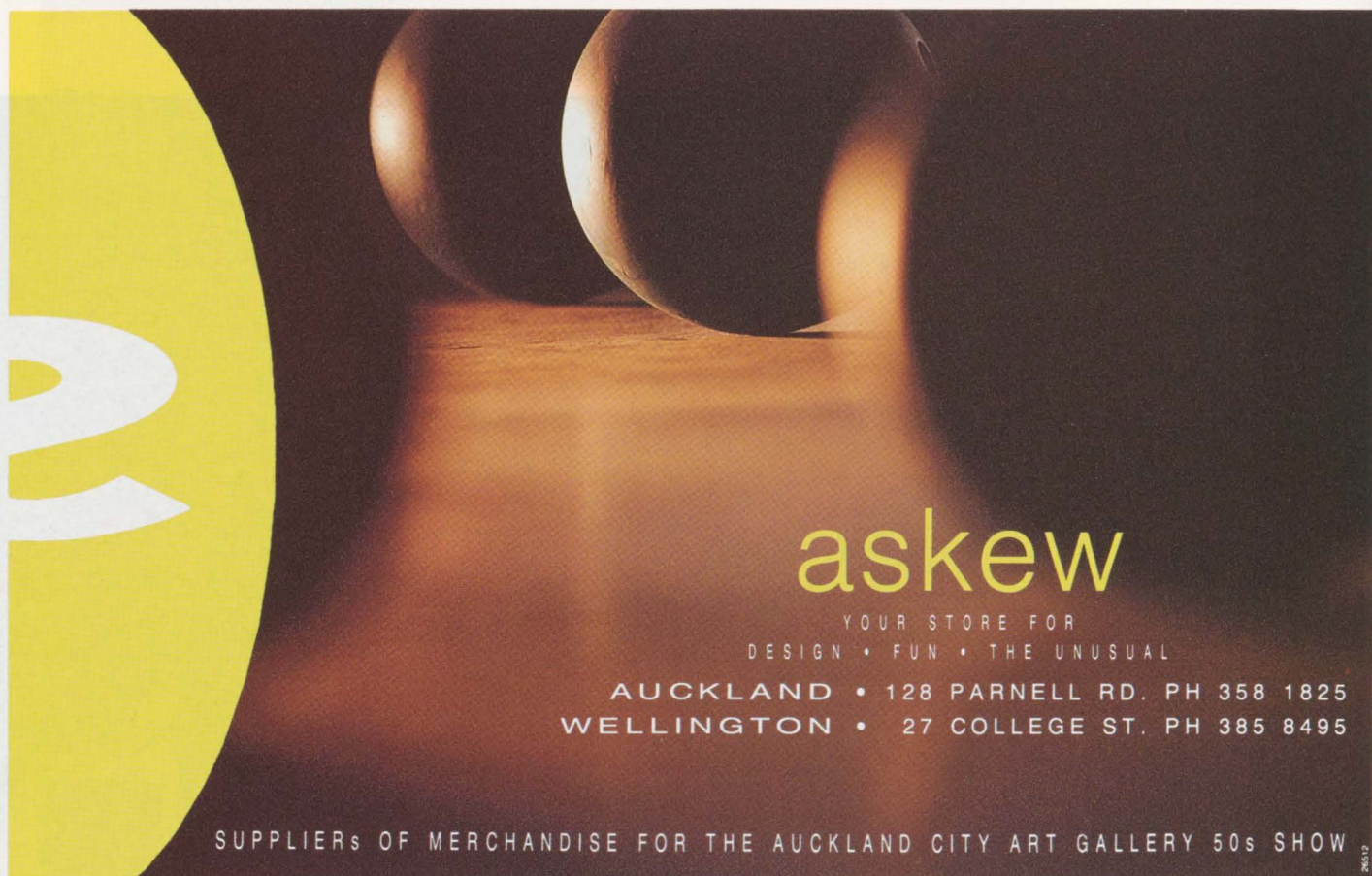


It was vaguely sociological. And it was very vaguely ethnographic except that it did point out the differences in the two cultures and the exploitation of one by the other. I wished to express something of their plight and also their hopes and aspirations. Ethnographic films were usually academic. *Broken Barrier* was more romantic sociology. People like Jean Rouch were immensely influential as far as I was concerned. I spent some time with him some years ago after he made some realistic documentaries — *cinema verite* — about Africans, and a feature film called *I An African* which mixes fiction with reality. He made ethnographic films that expressed the contours of a different culture. Similarly I had made *Broken Barrier* to try and find a way of expressing the other culture in New Zealand. The thing about film is that it gets to more people than anything else. The compression of time and space is of tremendous sophistication. The disposition of the human soul is the only thing worth looking for. Not that I'm so religious but that's what I think is important. And to eliminate the gulfs caused by race, gender, geography.



In the 1950s Pacific Films produced newsreels and many documentaries which were released as cinema shorts.

Here John O'Shea is directing New Frontiers: the Kawerau Story.


 The background of the 'askew' advertisement features a large, bright yellow circle on the left side. To its right, two dark, polished spheres are positioned on a wooden surface, with their reflections visible below them. The overall lighting is warm and focused on the spheres.

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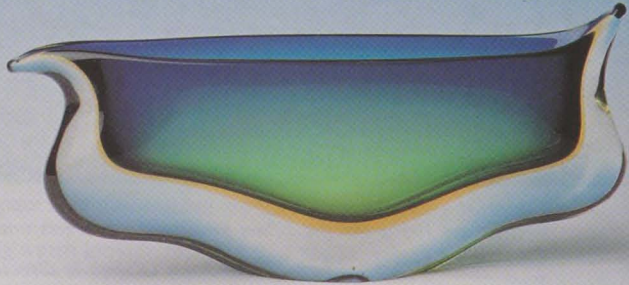
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Essential Reading



By 1950 there was a much increased flow into New Zealand of catalogues, books and magazines on the subject of art. The Museum of Modern Art in New York, for instance, provide catalogue publications on contemporary American and European artists in America. These, along with magazines like *Art News*, reflected the very latest in modernist culture from New York. They were avidly read in the Auckland City Art Gallery Research Library.



Home & Building

in the 1950s

The first issue of *Building Today*. The magazine was subsequently titled *Home & Building*.

PETER SHAW



Home & Building was founded in 1936 as the result of an approach by Mr Victor Beckett to the Secretary of the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. Mr Beckett was convinced that educative publicity was essential to the future progress of the severely depressed architectural profession. He suggested the founding of a magazine which would draw attention to the services architects could offer the community.

A persuasive gentleman, Mr Beckett advocated a nationally distributed quarterly designed to cover a wide range of subjects, addressed to the layman. The contents of the magazine would include:

articles on modern design and construction of all types of buildings treated especially from the 'popular' and 'news' angle; articles or paragraphs on every aspect of the building — lighting, decoration, heating, ventilation, the kitchen, bathroom, the garden, furnishing etc. Special illustrated articles on noteworthy buildings; architecture overseas; finance, by-laws and regulations for the layman; architecture in relation to insurance, cost of maintenance, repairs or renovations . . . architecture as an art affecting our daily lives and health . . .

The magazine (which for the first two years of its life was called *Building Today*) was a success. In 1947 the Christchurch

architect Paul Pascoe commented in his pioneering *Landfall* article "The Modern House" that 'the Auckland Home and Building is one of the few journals in which the New Zealand architect can illustrate his work for local circulation.' The work of those pioneer New Zealand modernist architects, Pascoe himself, his partner Humphrey Hall, Cedric Firth and Vernon Brown, had appeared earlier in *Home & Building* and was to continue to do so throughout the 1950s. The magazine's editorial policy of drawing attention to modern design and construction was to ensure it a steadily increasing readership.

But not all those concerned with architecture were as supportive as Paul Pascoe. In 1948 a typically polemical article called "The Small House" was published in *Kiwi*, the magazine of the Students' Association of Auckland University College. This was written by Bill Wilson at a time when he and his fellow students at the Auckland School of Architecture were forging a programme of action which had already led in 1946 to the formation of the Architectural Group and in the 1950s to the creation of a type of domestic architecture intended to revolutionise people's lives in New Zealand.

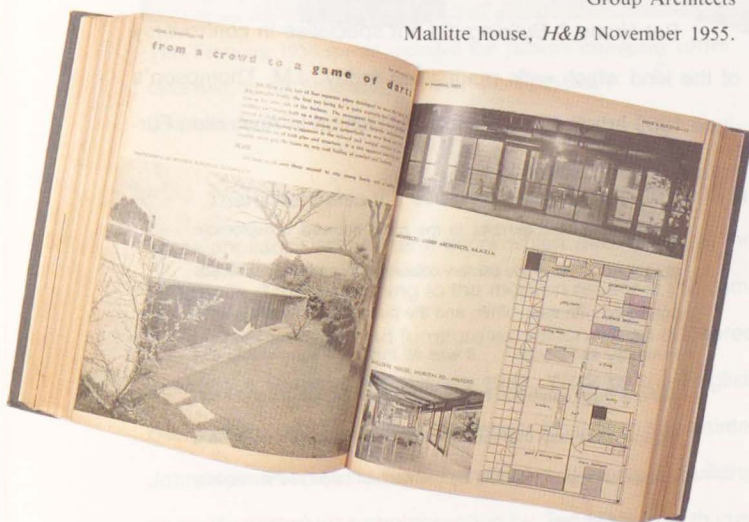
To Wilson at the time, *Home & Building* would have represented all that was acceptable to the established profession. To have a house illustrated in its pages was to have a kind

of seal of approval conferred on one's work. The members of the Group wished to disassociate themselves from such things altogether. With his tongue very much in his cheek, Bill Wilson wrote a prescription for success in the architectural profession:

1. Find out what the client wants.
2. Give it to him.
3. Sprinkle delicately with 'good taste'.
4. Submit to Home and Building.

Group Architects

Mallitte house, *H&B* November 1955.



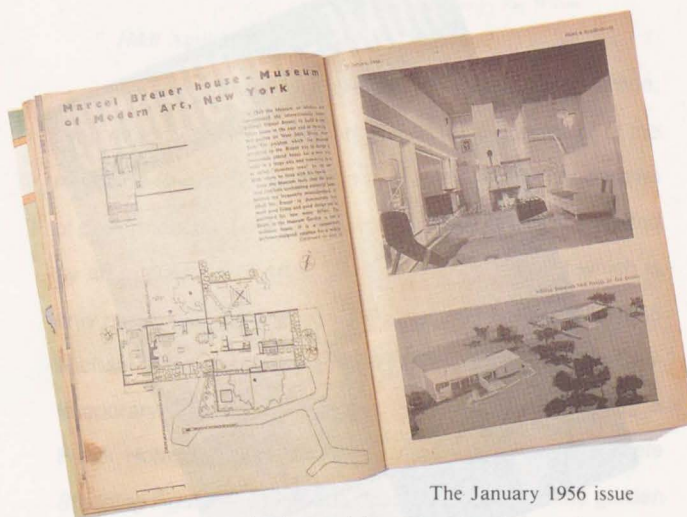
Nevertheless, in the succeeding years Bill Wilson, along with partners Ivan Juriss and James Hackshaw, submitted a great many of their houses for description and illustration in the pages of *Home & Building*. Today the magazine forms an indispensable archive of the best architectural work of the decade. Architects frequently wrote their own copy in support of usually excellent black and white illustrations. Photographers such as Frank Hofmann, Sparrow Industrial Pictures, Barry McKay and Ted Mahieu made invaluable visual records, many of them held in public collections and still available today.

In fact, *Home & Building* is often the only remaining record of all too many of the period's most important buildings. Researching New Zealand's architectural history can be a particularly disheartening experience for the reason that architects still tend to throw old plans away. In a country where buildings are demolished without proper inquiry into their historic significance, it is essential that practice records are

kept. It is, for instance, a tragedy that no drawings remain to record the important work done during the 1950s by the prolific Auckland firm of Rigby.Mullan. The pages of *Home & Building* are now the only reference to buildings such as the original Odeon cinema or 246 Queen Street and to their many (now frequently altered) houses. Both Alan Rigby and Tony Mullan died before proper research could be done into the partnership; those who inherited it failed to respect the important documents entrusted to them.



The Odeon by Rigby. Mullan,
H&B April 1958.

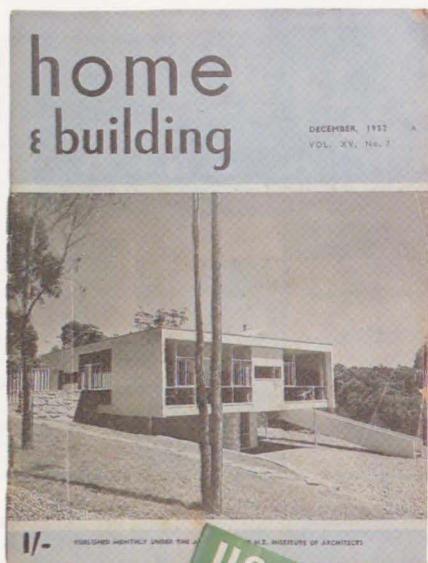


The January 1956 issue
contained an article on the Marcel Breuer house.

The magazine also performed a valuable function in devoting space to work by notable overseas architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe. January 1956 saw an article on Marcel Breuer's middle income family home

THE 1950s SHOW

commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art. The June 1957 issue carried a long piece on the work of Viennese born Australian architect Harry Seidler whose Rose Seidler house had already made the magazine's cover in December 1952. Auckland architects Alan Fairhead and Peter Mark Brown were two of the many admirers of Seidler's mainstream modernist work which had a considerable influence on architects here during the 1950s.



Harry Seidler's
Rose Seidler
house, *H&B*
December 1952.



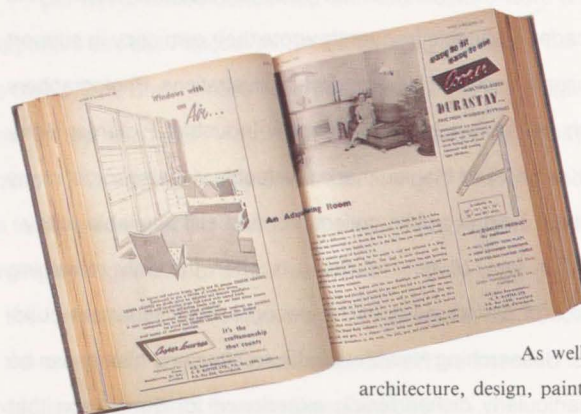
The refurbished
Esplanade Garden Bar,
Devonport. *H&B* January 1956.

As *Home & Building's* founder had envisaged, the magazine continued to cover subject matter concerned with modern living. By the mid 1950s editorials ranged far and wide in their concerns. A foresighted editorial in December 1959 warned against man's intrusion into New Zealand's natural heritage, citing the recent lowering of Waikaremoana, and encouraging resistance (ultimately futile as it turned out) to the planned destruction of the Aratiatia Rapids by Waikato River hydro-electric development.

But *Home & Building* did not specialise in controversy of the kind which sells magazines today. J.M. Thompson's June 1959 article "Hall of Horrors: Design in Australian Furniture", is an exception:

The decor of the exhibits in the main showed a deplorable absence of taste, crude primary colours in carpets and bedsteads competed with each other, and the pictures on the walls were invariably saccharine . . . It was all the more sorrowful to see in these huge exhibition halls so many thousands of people giving such poor work their full attention, and obviously being guided in their choice of furniture by the corrupt taste of the majority of manufacturers.

Of interest too was the series of articles contributed by architect, critic and teacher Imi Porsolt. He demonstrated the knack, all too rare at the time, of being able to address a serious subject with wit, as his classic "... and so to bed" of October-November 1950 shows.

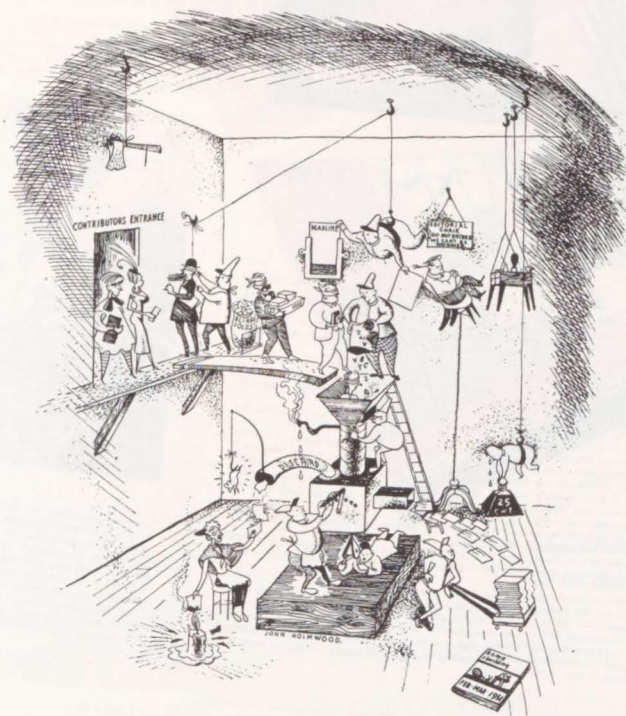


As well as architecture, design, painting and sculpture *Home & Building* contained articles about such topics as keeping tropical fish, making a telephone chatter chair or fitting a television set unobtrusively into the home. Typical of this was an article called "An Adaptable Living Room", August 1957.



This February 1958 spread included jon jansen's mahogany coffee table and, in the photograph below, Bob Roukema's 'Playhouse' chair.

There were also the usual articles advising on clothing, home appliance and general decor which were aimed at the housewife. More appealing to the modern reader is the commentary on an Auckland furniture exhibition which appeared in *Home & Building* of February 1958. Work by the English designer Howard Keith, New Zealander jon jansen and painter John Holmwood (a frequent contributor to *Home & Building* as an illustrator) was photographed by Ted Mahieu with customary sparsely modern elegance.



'Catching up on Our Publication Schedule' H&B Feb-March 1951.



On the Record

The first of a series by Ray Wilson

H&B April 1957.

Ceramics and painting received handsome coverage; even music was not neglected. Ray Wilson, conductor of the Auckland Choral Society, contributed regular record reviews of performances. Looking back, the 1950s was characterised by an integration of artistic and architectural effort which is only now in the 1990s again being approached. In July 1955 Michael Nicholson reviewed Auckland City Art Gallery's Contemporary New Zealand Sculpture exhibition illustrating a Frank Hofmann photograph of Molly Macalister's *Concrete Standing Figure* — which was destined to stand in the garden of Bill Wilson's Tremewan House at Te Atatu. Charles Bond-Smith, another frequent contributor, commented on a joint exhibition of work by potter Len Castle and weaver Ilse von Randow, both of whom also lived in houses designed by Group Architects.

Reviewed by
Charles Bond-Smith

Pottery and Weaving — one could hardly imagine a better pair for an exhibition. The contrasts and coincidences of the two crafts have on immediate excitement. The rhythmic and spatial forms of pottery find their perfect complementary in the more two-dimensional, pictorial quality of weaving. Again, the interplay of texture in the horizontal and vertical planes of threads contrasts well with the more heaped textures of clay and glaze, also, the solidity and strength of the pot heightens the appreciation of the soft, yielding quality of the yarn.

Then again, each craft serves to relate the other to its environment for which both are designed — for surely a gallery is an unnatural setting for these things. In this respect



perhaps, a few, well selected pieces of contemporary furniture would help too.

It might be argued that a gallery should seek to present craft work in a more objective way — to exhibit each piece on its merits. This surely must be the unimposed view. As painting and sculpture ceased to become a necessary part of our homes and public life we banished them to museums. Here especially, the waverer and the paster are seeking to reunite their arts with everyday life. I think that is the fundamental clash between these two approaches: lies the reason for the failure of this present exhibition — as an exhibition.

With all the natural assets in its favour, and despite the excellence of much of the work, there was no real unity between the exhibits.

WOMEN & BUILDING-48



by John Cailler

AN EXHIBITION OF 'RECENT OILS' BY COLIN McCAGHON SHOWN
AT THE PETER WEBB GALLERY, DECEMBER, 1957

It is an inexorable law. New works of art can be created only by an artist's working at the great of his powers, by his continually progressing, exploring and discovering new territories of experience. He is like a mountaineer who has acquired new skills while making his ascent, but who can neither rest nor retreat. He is tested, immediately, he must attempt heretofore unattempted hazards and a higher peak. He learns as he goes. Many may follow him, benefiting from his technique and using his routes — until their own new generation begins.

The history of Western painting is the history of innumerable such mountains, such artists, such peaks. Many may follow him, but reaching the summit is the privilege of a few. The history of Western painting is the history of innumerable such mountains, such artists, such peaks. Many may follow him, but reaching the summit is the privilege of a few.

When, on an unclimbed cliff, the mountaineer achieves a manoeuvre previously unobtainable, his spectators will realise that a technique has been invented in front of their eyes. Besides, they may see him descend down lower peaks or foothills, or with the crowd far below in the valleys or the plains. Gales, storms, heat and cold strike more furiously.

The climber, too, is more exposed to prevailing conditions. Gales, storms, snow or ice, the imminence of avalanche or crevasse.

His art is a mouthpiece for the needs of the people. He is as an instrument. He is as a mouthpiece for the needs of the people. He is as an instrument. He is as a mouthpiece for the needs of the people.

To understand the art means to feel the pulse of some of those things.

with increasing penetration, the properties not only of paint and picture, but of the artist's creative activity has expressed itself in many visual media, in different genres and disciplines; among them: in stage design, jewellery-making, and exhibition-display; in landscape, portraiture, and symbolic painting; in drawings, lithographs, watercolours and oils. Essentially, his work is affirmative: of Life; of Faith; of the triumph of Man over his Hell; of Light over Dark.

[illegible]

In Christchurch from 1949 to 1955, he explored. Probably the most important influence of this time was the light which fell on the city, and the contemporary progressive American school. Colin McCahon came to Auckland in 1954. The impact of the light which fell on the city was the most important influence of this time. He has painted continually in New Zealand since then. He has painted continually in New Zealand since then. He has painted continually in New Zealand since then.

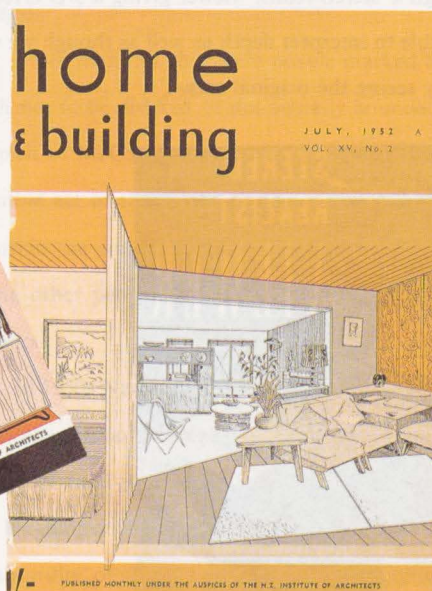
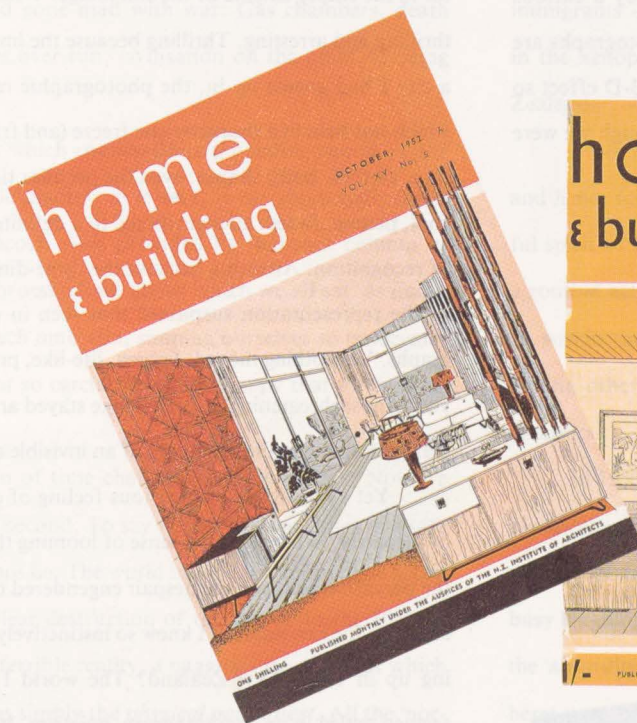
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Everyman may suggest that the technicians here have imparted us
• relentless demand for exactitude at description. Or he may com-
scientific researches disclose that nature is filled with "repined" uncer-
lightnings, of colour, turmoil, song — which our "confused" sense
posed of recording these perceptions. But the life of the whole race will
of living . . . the continuity of life passes on to others." (J. Z. Young,
invention to the rules that one man's invention. Certainly
The 'Recent Old' are more than one man's invention. Certainly
all their meanings. But it will emerge. And it is the lead itself
of a thousand year's strength and growth pulsing into the pre-

Such artistic people were clearly more forward-thinking than the 'ordinary New Zealander' beloved of electioneering politicians, who still preferred to live in a brick and tile house hardly different from the state house of the late 1930s. It should not be forgotten that the 1950s was by and large a period of deep social conformity. Those who enjoyed living in a modern architect-designed house invariably found that their statement against architectural conformity brought a certain amount of approbrium from neighbours.

Similarly, the work of our own modern furniture designers was largely ignored, most people being content to furnish their homes with shabby reproductions of traditional English furniture. It is well known that the work of painters like McCahon and Mrkusich was dismissed by all but the most open minded New Zealanders; their 'public' was actually a very small band of supporters.

During the 1950s *Home & Building* gave a public profile to the modern. In its uncontroversial way it helped to soften intolerance and re-route conformist attitudes simply by writing about and illustrating the attempts of New Zealand architects, designers, painters, applied artists and photographers to widen our horizons. Like the periodical *Landfall* and the Wellington based *Design Review*, *Home & Building* aimed to show a largely narrow minded public that there was something distinctively New Zealand and modern rather than derivative and conservative about contemporary arts and architecture in this country. That had been the intention of its founder in 1935. It was the magazine's success in realising those intentions during the 1950s which makes it a historical repository of such great significance today.



John Crichton's illustrations
of his decorating schemes.

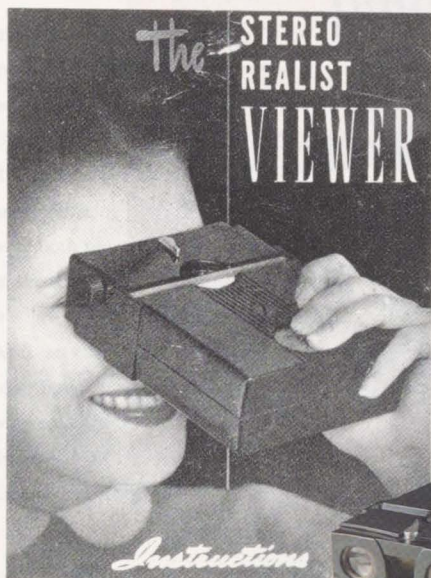
THAT *DEFINITE* CHILL

The fifties revisited

PETER WELLS



I was looking at a series of three-dimensional 1950s photographs which belong to the artist Ruth Coyle. I knew only that she was a member of the Rutland group, had lived, and continues to live in Auckland. The photographs were taken by a curious camera originating in the United States. The photographs are viewed through a 'stereo-realist' viewer giving a 3-D effect so that 'we are able to interpret depth as well as though we were again actually seeing the original scene.'



The Stereo-Realist Viewer.



When I held the viewer up, the initial feeling was one of isolation. The Stereo Realist Viewer effectively deprives you of your surroundings as you, your eyes, become the sole spectator in the empty cinema of the still image. What I saw was both thrilling and arresting. Thrilling because the images represented a city I had grown up in, the photographic representation of which was held in a characteristic freeze (and frieze) — architecture, clothes, body-shapes, even the peculiar tint of the colour, cool, precise, faded: all contributed to a definite Proustian thrill of recognition. Arresting because the three-dimensional nature of the representation surpassed that seen in ordinary photographs. Yet nothing moved. Frozen, life-like, projecting towards you almost threateningly, each image stayed arrested in its own period, floating in the cool ether of an invisible embalming fluid.

Yet I was aware of a curious feeling of disappointment, of disparity. Where was the sense of looming threat, where was the pervasive ugliness, the despair engendered by the social narrowness, the raw ugliness I knew so instinctively as a child growing up in 1950s New Zealand? The world I was looking at seemed sealed in its own rather coy quietism. It looked prosperous, tidy, clean. The only vague ripple of unease comes in its similarity to Hitchcock's fifties' films: that is, the pervasive sunniness, the oppressive 'normality' comes to seem its own threat. Yet you must know Hitchcock to read this in. Otherwise, it is simply a rather charming, postcard-like image of city. Where

is the characteristic fifties angst, I asked myself? Or had I got it all wrong?

My own subjective feelings about the 1950s are that it was a peculiarly repulsive period, one for which I have no sentimental attachment. Constriction is the single strongest feeling I have retained from the 1950s. Janet Frame's *Owls Do Cry* is the signal work of the period. A work of genius by a writer whose brain was going to be cut up: leucotomy, the characteristic 1950s method of dealing with deviance; that is, by 'scientific' intervention. And when the 'deviant' behaviour is removed, what is left? A weird sense of space, of distortion, of 'something which is not there'.

Just as Hitchcock manifests the abnormality of the period in the super-normality of his films, so the 1950s' weird and psychotic sense of spiritual space and absences — *of what is not there* — expresses a worldwide need to delete what was so recently and hideously *there*, that is — a consciousness of a world which had gone mad with war. Gas chambers, death camps, countries over-run, civilisation on the point of being destroyed.

The event which overshadows the entire period — the dark and neurotic shadow, as it were, in the abnormally sunlit images of Hitchcock — is provided by that vast column of smoke, the mushroom cloud under which we all sat, as under a malevolent beach umbrella, sunning ourselves so innocently yet as it turns out so carcinogenically, happy that we lived 'at peace'.

Our notion of time changed with Hiroshima. Now we could all die in a second. To say we lived in the fifties in a safe world is a ludicrous lie. The world today is far more blasé about the ultimate nuclear destruction of the world. In the 1950s it was a new, raw, terrible reality, a nagging insecurity for which the Cold War was simply the *physical palimpsest*. All the 'normal' sunny images of delight which seem so redolent of the 1950s need to be read against this gnawing anxiety. This explains something for me which was almost palpable when I was growing up: the sense of a pending explosion, of a stilled and stilted world anxiously resisting yet awaiting change.

This social change came in the 1960s. The post-war baby boom provided the energy for the ignition. In the 1950s however, this energy was seen as a form of deviance in itself. The concept of 'normality' had the force of a powerful yet psychotic and paranoid ideology. It is worth bearing in mind that nearly every artist in this 1950s exhibition would have been viewed by the vast majority of New Zealanders as abnormal. What is being heralded here as archetypal was in fact then seen as deviance.

When I look at the evidence of the 1950s show, which illustrates a vibrant and intelligent artistic community active in the very city I grew up in, I have to ask myself how was it I was so unaware of these people, their activity? I knew it dimly, aware perhaps that they existed on the periphery of vision, their presence obscured by the complacency of the almost naively materialist society of which I was such an eager member. The very fact that so many of artists in the 1950s show were immigrants — *foreigners* — marked them out as lesser beings in the xenophobic world which was, of course, still is New Zealand.

More than this they were people marked by difference, and hence to be disliked, if not actually hounded. The vengeful spirit of McCarthyism existed in New Zealand and it was a routine act of this world to demonise anyone who did not fit within the concepts of received normalcy — this meant, among other people, foreigners, homosexuals, communists, Catholics.

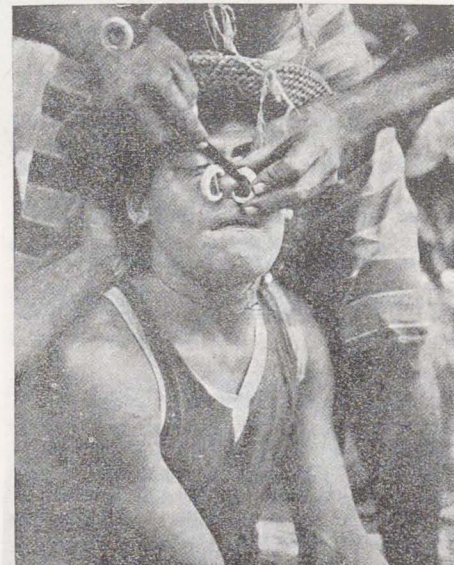
In 1950s New Zealand popular culture, artists were simply another deviant form. That they could have influenced our society for the better was a laughable thought. We were too busy laughing at the jokes in the *Saturday Evening Post* about the 'absurdity' of abstract art, the pretensions of wine-drinking, beret-wearing 'bohemians'. Artists — designers — were simply irrelevant. Their *reality* was negated by the fact that they catered for rich people. This marked artists out as different from ordinary, that is, real people. They lacked some essential authenticity — the authenticity of popular culture you might say: they were unredeemed by popular acceptance.

The artists in this show, so many of whom were enterprising, brave, purposeful people, have to be seen against a backdrop of chauvinist, aggressive popular culture which viewed the arts with intense unease. The work of these artists and designers was really kept to a small group of enlightened bourgeoisie, and the artists existed as an informal network, isolated within popular culture, enjoying proper coffee, eating good unprocessed food, visiting each other's well-designed houses, eating off each other's 'beautifully made plates', keeping alive, like priests in an age of barbarism, the spirit of enlightenment which one day would change the world. The survival of these forms as classics of good design shows that to some extent, and often latterly, they were correct.

These designers have to be seen as pioneers. The Eurocentric *explosion* of modernism had finally rippled to its furthest geographic boundary and made an indent. The hostility with which this modernism was met, the muted and limited acceptance, only makes the work of these explorers seem more valuable. But during the 1950s very few New Zealanders would have considered them and their work to be integral expressions of an energetic emerging cultural identity. These artists finally, should be celebrated as important contributors to the heterogeneous forms of New Zealand culture: to be redeemed finally by popular acceptance.



... now fashionable



... with infinite pains



Book made by Peter Wells for Jude Henderson on her birthday.

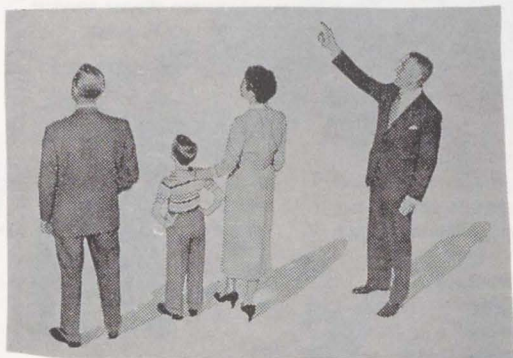
We were born in a repulsive period ...



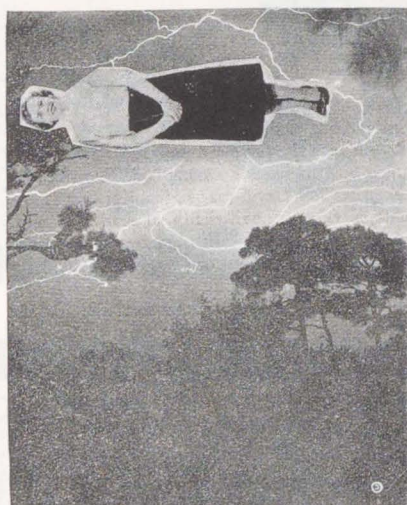
many blunders

THAT DEFINITE CHILL:THE FIFTIES REVISITED

we managed to trapeze across the void



What strangers we would be



knowing at least



to the child we were.



I realized suddenly that all
vegetation had vanished—

what we do *not* want.

World War 2 rationing is lifted; prosperity characterises the decade as meat and wool prices rise. At the end of April there are 33,881 employment vacancies in New Zealand.



There are 638 picture theatres in Auckland; the first television images are displayed at the Institute of Electronics.

British Empire Games held at Eden Park in Auckland. New Zealand wins 10 gold medals.

New Zealand is the world's biggest per capita consumer of tea.

T.E.A.L (Tasman Empire Airways Ltd) begins a flying boat service between Auckland and Sydney.



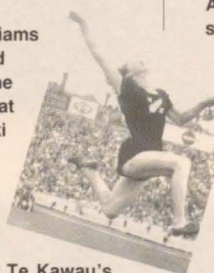
Sir Apirana Ngata (Ngati Porou) dies. Ngata had been instrumental in a revival of traditional Maori arts. The marae was restored as a focus for tribal identity.

Elizabeth II proclaimed Queen.



New Zealand's population exceeds 2 million.

Yvette Williams wins a gold medal in the long jump at the Helsinki Olympics.



The last of Te Kawau's descendants at Orakei are evicted from their ancestral land at Okahu, their houses torched as part of a continuing programme of relocation.



Princess Te Puea Herangi dies.

Auckland's Southern Motorway construction begins.

Pan Am flies a Strato-clipper service to Los Angeles.



Horse troughs still exist in central Auckland streets.

Magazine, newspaper and petrol sales are permitted on Sundays.

Dennis Turner arrested for working on the Sabbath. He was painting a mural in a Karangahape Rd motorcycle shop.

It's in the Bag radio show takes to the road for the first time.



Queen Elizabeth II tours New Zealand.



1950

1952

1954

1951



T.E.A.L flies the 'Coral Route' to the Pacific Islands.

All ports idle in waterside dispute. National state of emergency in force from February to July. Lockout lasts 151 days; troops work wharves.



The first T.A.B branches open in Dannevirke and Feilding.



The Maori Women's Welfare League is established, with Whina Cooper as its first president, as a response to the social problems caused by increasing urbanisation.



Prime Minister Holland and National are returned to power after an early election.

Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing conquer Mount Everest.



Parking meters are introduced in Auckland.

T.E.A.L reluctantly displays Colin McCahon's commissioned painting International Air Race. Later, the work is destroyed and turned into a crate.



An episode of the American radio serial Superman is withdrawn because one of the characters is ordered to damage pictures 'of non-white people'.

1953

After its broadcast seven Maori portraits in the Lindauer Gallery of the ACAG are pierced through the eyes.



Tangiwai disaster. 151 killed when Wellington to Auckland Express plunges into the river on Christmas Eve.

Opo the dolphin appears at Opononi in the Hokianga and becomes a folk hero.

Crowds flock to the Parade of Homes exhibition.



'Milkbar Cowboys' cause a pedestrian jam in Auckland.



LINE



The first Australian Holdens arrive in New Zealand.



DSIR research to determine effects of atomic test fall-out.

Last tram runs in Auckland (to Onehunga).



All Blacks 11; Springboks 5. 'I'm buggered' proclaims Peter Jones on national radio as Eden Park's largest ever crowd of 66,000 celebrates victory.

New Zealand's first ever cricket test victory is against the West Indies at Eden Park.

Thirty six thousand Aucklanders see an exhibition of drawings and sculpture by Henry Moore at the Auckland City Art Gallery — a world record for a Moore show.



Murray Halberg runs New Zealand's first sub 4 minute mile.

P.A.Y.E taxation introduced.

The price of dairy products collapses. Restrictions are imposed on the importation of works of art as part of efforts to stabilise the economy.

Arnold Nordmeyer delivers the 'Black Budget'.



Night trotting begins at Alexandra Park.



First successful use of a heart-lung machine at Greenlane Hospital.

1956

1958

1955

'Haircut craze drives barbers frantic.'

GLOSSARY OF A BODGIE...

MARLO (after Brando): A mag lair, show-off, especially on a bike.

BAT: A young girl for whom the bodge group holds an irresistible fascination, but who is not accepted by them. A scatter-brained girl.

SICKLE (corruption of cycle): Motor-bike.

GIG: Lair.

GOOSE: Lair.

TO GIG: To try to show off.

TO DIG: To understand.

SPIC: An Italian or Maltese would-be bodge. (From the film 'The Garment Jungle'.)

LETTUCE: Money.

PRIEST: A policeman.

New Zealand's first multi-storey carpark is completed.

Construction begins on the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

New Zealand's first supermarket opens.



The last person hanged in New Zealand.

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL banking service

The Managers and other officers of the Bank of New Zealand in 260 Branches and Agencies will be pleased to help and advise you in all financial matters.

BNZ offers 3½% for 2 year term deposit.

BANK OF NEW ZEALAND
LAYING OUR FOUNDATION SINCE 1861

New Zealand is the world's biggest consumer of milk.



Labour wins General Election and Walter Nash becomes Prime Minister.

1957

1959



Experimental television transmissions broadcast in Auckland.



Auckland Harbour Bridge opens.

Whaling continues in the Hauraki Gulf (45 humpbacks caught in 36 days).

No Maoris to be included in All Black team to South Africa.



'New Zealand women too heavy for stilettos. Wooden heels splintered. Plastic with steel reinforcing made to English specifications proved too brittle.' NZ Herald.

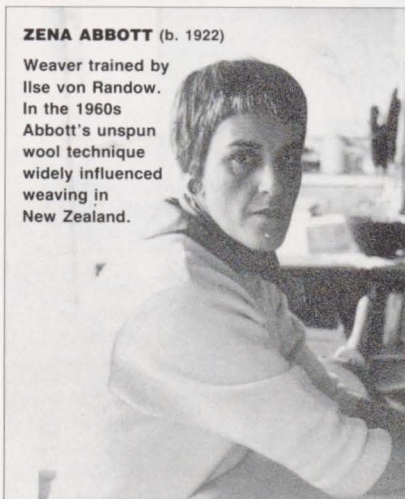


'New Zealand must have more bookshops and pubs than anywhere else in the world,' says Mr William Kling, first secretary of the United States Embassy. 'Undoubtedly there are some very good reasons for this but I will leave you to figure it out since I haven't done so yet.'

DIRECTORY of NAMES

ZENA ABBOTT (b. 1922)

Weaver trained by Ilse von Randow. In the 1960s Abbott's unspun wool technique widely influenced weaving in New Zealand.



RAYMOND S. BARNABY (b. 1922)

Architectural draughtsman inspired by Vernon Brown to design a modern dining chair in 1950.



CHARLES BOND-SMITH (b. 1924)

Potter who published theory and criticism in the 1950s. Trained by Patricia Perrin.



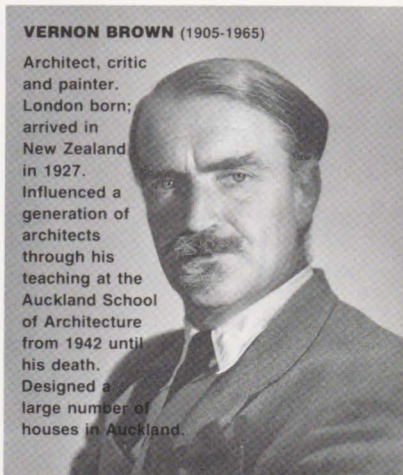
LLOYD BROOKBANKS (b. 1924)

Influenced by architect R.G.S. Beatson to produce a chair making use of boatbuilding materials and glues.



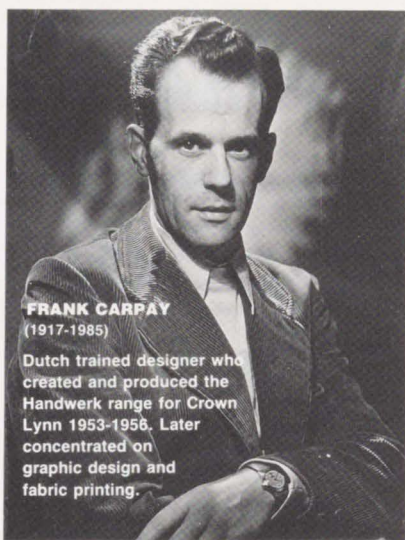
VERNON BROWN (1905-1965)

Architect, critic and painter. London born; arrived in New Zealand in 1927. Influenced a generation of architects through his teaching at the Auckland School of Architecture from 1942 until his death. Designed a large number of houses in Auckland.



VLADIMIR CACALA (b. 1926)

Architect and member of Brenner Associates. Trained in Prague; arrived in New Zealand in 1952. During the 1950s became internationally noted for the Blumenthal House in St Heliers, which was published in *Domus* and *Arts and Architecture*. Also one of the most active furniture designers of the period.



FRANK CARPAY (1917-1985)

Dutch trained designer who created and produced the Handwerk range for Crown Lynn 1953-1956. Later concentrated on graphic design and fabric printing.

LEONARD CASTLE (b. 1924)

Potter, whose work did much to establish ceramics as an important art form in New Zealand.



GARNET CAMPBELL (GARTH) CHESTER (1915-1968)

Designer of wide interests and achievements particularly in the creation of bent plywood furniture. Notable also for his design films made throughout the 1950s.



LILLIAN CHRYSTALL (b. 1926) and DAVID CHRYSTALL (b. 1927)

Architects. Their work related to the concerns of the Architectural Group, whose members were their friends.



RUSSELL CLARK (1904-1966)

Painter, sculptor, illustrator, muralist. Well known for his drawings in the *Listener* and the *School Journal*. Sculpture was his major interest in the 1950s. His 1959 *Anchor Stones* outside the Bledisloe State building on Wellesley Street are abstract forms which show the influence of Henry Moore's work. They are based on the anchor stones of the Matakahora and Tainui canoes.



RUTH COYLE (b. 1905)

A founding member of the Rutland Group and fabric designer throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

JOHN CRICHTON (b. 1917)

English trained designer and photographer who introduced professional interior design to New Zealand in the early 1950s.



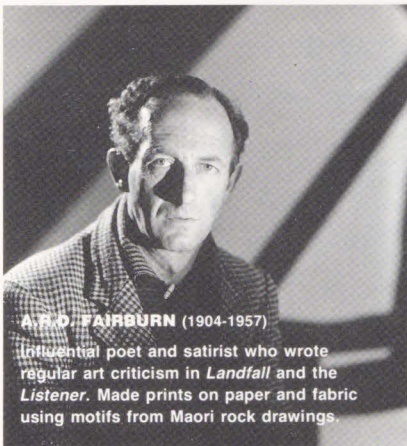
DIRECTORY OF NAMES

TIBOR DONNER (b. 1907)

Architect. The Auckland City Council's City Architect during the 1950s. Designed the Auckland City Council Administration Centre in 1954.

ALISON DUFF (b. 1914)

Sculptor in stone, wood, concrete and steel. Exhibited with Molly Macalister and Ann Severs at Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s. Principally abstracted human and bird forms, and portrait heads of prominent people.

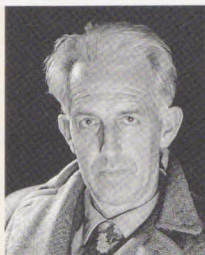


A.R.D. FAIRBURN (1904-1957)

Influential poet and satirist who wrote regular art criticism in *Landfall* and the *Listener*. Made prints on paper and fabric using motifs from Maori rock drawings.

G.E. FAIRBURN (b. 1905)

Painter with a strong interest in Oceanic motifs and European abstraction. Longtime art critic for the *Waikato Times*.



ALAN FAIRHEAD (b. 1926)

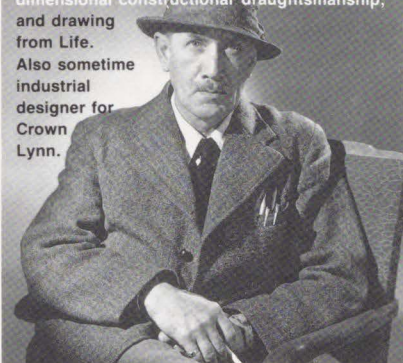
Architect in partnership with Peter Mark Brown in the 1950s. Influenced by Californian trends particularly Richard Neutra's work. At the end of this decade this partnership specialised in commercial work.

CLIFTON FIRTH (1904-1980)

Photographer especially noted for his dramatically lit studio portraiture of individuals. Favoured by clients from commerce and the arts. His fashion photographs were both innovative and influential.

ARCHIE FISHER (1896-1959)

English born director at Elam School of Art 1924-1959. His main interest was three dimensional constructional draughtsmanship, and drawing from life. Also sometime industrial designer for Crown Lynn.



FRED FREEMAN (b. 1930)

Photographer, later Chief Photographer at the *Auckland Star*.

ALBERT GOLDWATER (b. 1907)

Architect. Educated at Auckland University College. Served with the Engineers in the Pacific. Paintings exhibited in the *Artists in Uniform* show. Domestic architecture was his main interest.

RUDOLF GOPAS (1913-1983)

Lithuanian trained painter and teacher. Arrived in New Zealand in 1949 and taught painting at the University of Canterbury School of Art. His expressionist approach influenced a generation of younger painters.



ANTHONY GREENHOUGH (b. 1931)

Architect in partnership with Geoffrey Newman and Gordon Smith.

JAMES HACKSHAW (b. 1926)

Architect. Member of the Architectural Group and of Group Architects in partnership with Ivan Juriss and Bill Wilson. Designed a number of houses and later, schools and churches. Several of the latter feature stained glass designed by Colin McCahon.



DIRECTORY of NAMES

AMY HARPER (b. 1900)

Photographer. With her sister Dickie Harper Steer ran Belwood Studios, a popular portrait studio. Renowned for her portrayals of wedding and family groups.

LOUISE HENDERSON (b. 1902)

French born painter who arrived in New Zealand in 1925. After studying in France in 1951 returned to New Zealand where her cubist influenced work was widely exhibited. Also designed stained glass and tapestries.



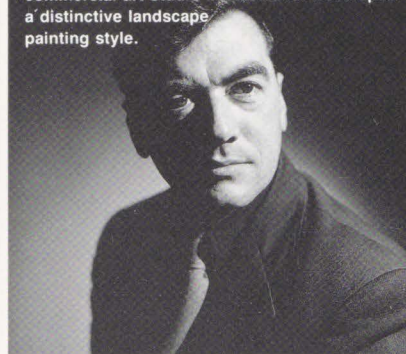
FRANK HOFMANN (1916-1989)

Photographer and teacher. Trained in Prague; arrived in Christchurch in 1940. Later, in Auckland, worked with Clifton Firth as a studio assistant. Partner in Christopher Bede Studio known for informal group portraits in the home. Leading practitioner of modernist photography and an early advocate of colour photography.



JOHN HOLMWOOD (1910-1987)

Painter, set and costume designer who ran a commercial art studio in Auckland. Developed a distinctive landscape painting style.



GABRIELLE HOPE (1916-1962)

Painter. Exhibited at Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s, principally figurative work but some lyrically abstracted landscapes.

THE 1950s SHOW

DIRECTORY of NAMES



JEAN HORSLEY
(b. 1913)

Painter. Exhibited many assured and fluid abstractions at the Auckland City Art Gallery in the late 1950s.

RALPH HOTERE (b. 1931)

Nga Puhi. Painter. Exhibited abstractions at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in 1952 and once in Auckland in 1959 before travelling to London to study. Involved with Matchitt and Wilson in the teaching of Maori art in schools in Northland.

ROBERT (TOM) HUTCHINS (b. 1921)

Photographer. Worked for the *Auckland Star*. His 1955 photo-essay on the inadequate housing of Auckland Maori caused a furore and was instrumental in the redevelopment of inner-city housing.

ALAN INGHAM (b. 1920)

Sculptor. Assistant to Henry Moore at Much Hadham between 1943 and 1953. Exhibited works in stone and bronze at the Auckland City Art Gallery.



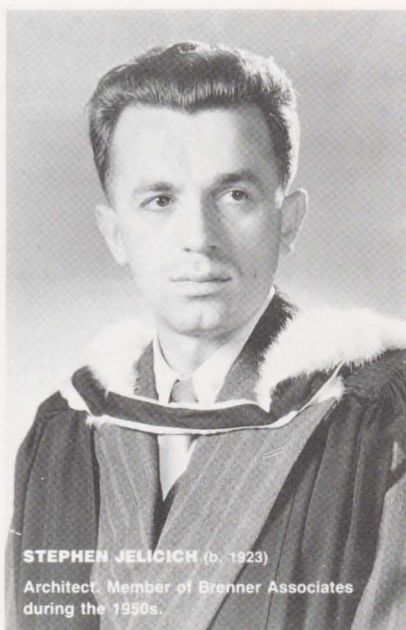
A. GIFFORD JACKSON (b. 1922)

Pioneer New Zealand industrial designer. Worked for Fisher & Paykel in the late 1940s, before leaving for a prestige design career in the United States. Returned to practice in New Zealand in 1966.



KASE JACKSON
(b. 1926)

Painter. Began making abstract works in 1953 with a particular interest in cubism.



STEPHEN JELICHICH (b. 1923)

Architect. Member of Branner Associates during the 1950s.

T. DAVID JENKIN
(b. 1919)

Elam trained designer. Headed Crown Lynn design team after 1948.



OTWAY JOSLING
(b. 1926)

Wellington based graphic artist. Took first place in 1959 Crown Lynn design contest with pattern *Reflections*.



IVAN JURISS

(b. 1921)
Architect. Member of the Architectural Group from its foundation and a partner in Group Architects.



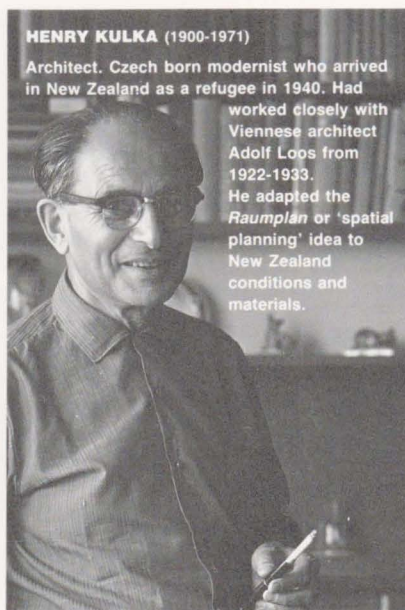
DAVID KENNEDY
(b. 1931)

Popular painter and sculptor responsible for a number of interior schemes and murals throughout the 1950s.



HENRY KULKA (1900-1971)

Architect. Czech born modernist who arrived in New Zealand as a refugee in 1940. Had worked closely with Viennese architect Adolf Loos from 1922-1933. He adapted the *Raumplan* or 'spatial planning' idea to New Zealand conditions and materials.



LALOLI BROTHERS

Designers and manufacturers of modern nursery furniture.

ERIC LEE-JOHNSON
(b. 1908)

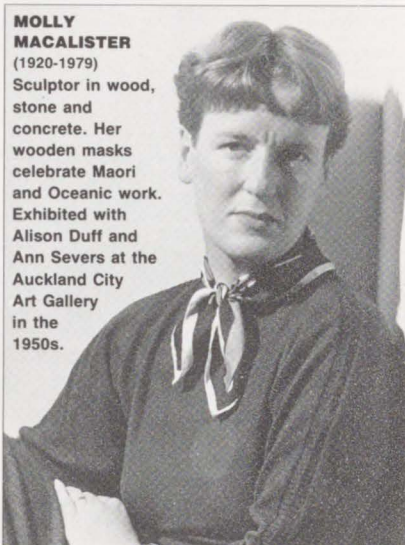
Painter and photographer. His paintings in the 1940s developed an influential romantic-realist style. Edited and designed the 1950 and 1951 *New Zealand Arts Yearbooks*.

As a photographer he experimented with media, technique and portraiture. Was among the first in New Zealand to explore night and infra-red photography. Made innovative photographs of Northland in the 1950s and fine photographs of Maori.



MOLLY MACALISTER
(1920-1979)

Sculptor in wood, stone and concrete. Her wooden masks celebrate Maori and Oceanic work. Exhibited with Alison Duff and Ann Severs at the Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s.



DIRECTORY OF NAMES



COLIN MCCAHON
(1919-1987)

Painter, curator and teacher. Produced his most 'pure' abstractions in the 1950s. Curator of the *Object and Image* exhibition at the Auckland City Art Gallery, the first exhibition in New Zealand devoted solely to abstract art.

EDWARD (TED) MCCOY (b. 1925)

Architect. Trained at the Auckland School of Architecture. A contemporary of members of the Architectural Group. From 1950 built up a prolific practice in Dunedin.



JOHN (JACK) MANNING (b. 1928)

Architect. During the 1950s was associated with Group Architects and later worked with Cutter, Pickmere, Thorpe and Douglas. He designed Auckland's AMP building in 1958.



PETER MARK BROWN (1929-1978)

Architect. During the 1950s was in partnership with Alan Fairhead. Their Neutra influenced houses were highly distinctive in the context of Auckland architecture during the decade.



PARATENE MATCHITT (b. 1933)

Painter and sculptor. One of a generation of Maori artists who explored semi-abstract and the synthesis of Maori and Pakeha art traditions. As Arts Advisor to schools promoted Maori arts in the community.

JAN MICHELS (b. 1908)

Dutch painter and printmaker. Arrived in New Zealand in 1952 and exhibited widely. Designed Ilse von Randow's woven hanging, *Fertility*, 1955.

PETER MIDDLETON
(b. 1917)

Architect, teacher and writer. English-born; arrived in New Zealand in 1950. Taught at the Auckland School of Architecture.

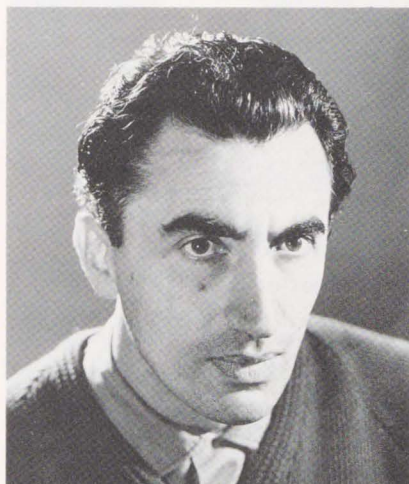


DON MILLS (dates unknown)

Graphic artist whose *Narvik* pattern took second place in 1959 Crown Lynn design contest and remained in production for over 25 years.

ROBERT MORTON (b. 1928)

Woodturner encouraged by Kees and Tina Hoss to supply New Vision Gallery with wooden salad bowls and utensils.



MILAN MRKUSICH (b. 1925)

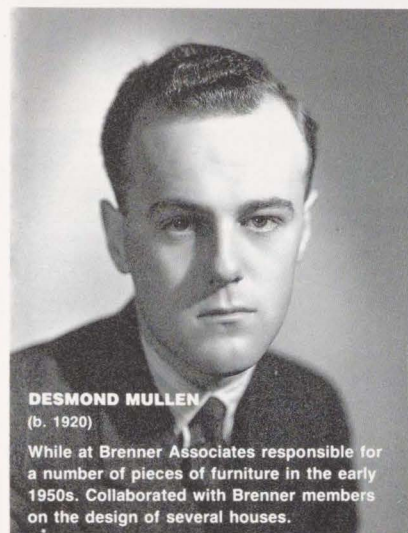
Pioneer abstract painter who also worked as a designer and architect in the 1950s. Paintings renowned for brilliant colour and rigorously structured composition. While attached to Brenner Associates was responsible for interior schemes and furniture.

TONY MULLAN
(1922-1988)

Architect in partnership with Alan Rigby. Designed many houses which were perceived as advanced, particularly in their use of glass. From 1953 this practice was preferred by Kerridge-Odeon for whom they worked throughout New Zealand. Their 246 building in Queen Street was intended to have an enormous mural designed by Milan Mrkusich.



DIRECTORY of NAMES



DESMOND MULLEN
(b. 1920)

While at Brenner Associates responsible for a number of pieces of furniture in the early 1950s. Collaborated with Brenner members on the design of several houses.

GEOFFREY NEWMAN (b. 1930)

Architect in partnership with Anthony Greenhough and Gordon Smith. Their Wanganui War Memorial Hall and St Helens Hospital in Auckland attracted wide publicity during the 1950s.



MICHAEL NICHOLSON (b. 1918)

English born painter and sculptor. In Auckland from 1954-1959, lecturing at Elam School of Art, exhibiting and writing art criticism. None of his abstract works from the 1950s survives. He has recreated for this exhibition a sculpture installation commissioned from him by the Group Architects for the Trieste Coffee Bar in Wakefield Street. It is in the Auckland City Art Gallery's cafe.

JOHN O'SHEA (b. 1920)

Film maker. Together with Roger Mirams made *Broken Barrier*, New Zealand's only feature film during the 1950s. Their production company, Pacific Films formed in 1950, is New Zealand's most enduring independent film company.

DIRECTORY of NAMES

STANLEY PALMER (b. 1936)

Printmaker and painter. Produced handprinted fabrics as a student in the 1950s.



PAUL PASCOE (1908-1976)

Architect. London-trained modernist who sought to develop a New Zealand architecture 'expressive of national character', in partnership with Humphrey Hall. Designed Christchurch International Airport in 1955.

KEITH PATTERSON (b. 1925)

Painter who left New Zealand for Spain in 1951 and was influenced by the work of Picasso. Returned in 1957 and exhibited widely.

DON PEEBLES (b. 1922)

Painter who trained in Wellington, Sydney and London. First exhibition of abstract paintings in Wellington in 1955.



PATRICIA PERRIN (1921-1988)

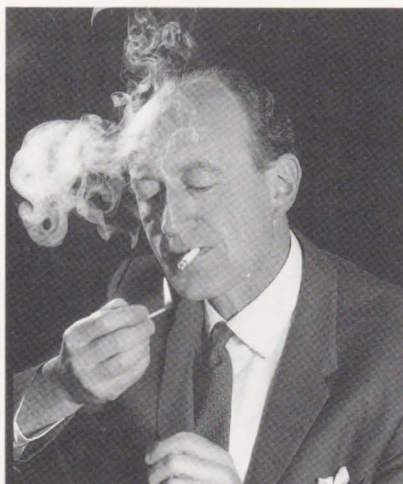
Prominent potter whose activities as a teacher did much to inspire the next generation of potters.



ERNST PLISCHKE (1903-1992)

Austrian born architect who attempted to introduce modern notions into the design and planning of the New Zealand State House. Lived in New Zealand from 1939 until 1963.

Author of *Design and Living*. Notable work includes the Sutch House, Massey House and modernist schemes for Naenae and Mt Roskill in the early 1950s.



I.V. (IMI) PORHOLT (b. 1909)

Czech born architect, critic and teacher. Taught at the Auckland School of Architecture. Wrote on painting and architecture for *Landfall*; one of the first critics in New Zealand to support abstract art.



ALAN RIGBY (1916-1985)

Architect in partnership with Tony Mullan. Supported Garth Chester and his furniture particularly in the Kay's French Beauty Salon project.

BRUCE ROTHERHAM (b. 1927)

Architect. Original member of the Architectural Group. Designed the Rotherham House which was used as the Group's studio for a time.



EDZER (BOB) ROUKEMA (1920-1964)

Dutch trained furniture designer. In 1952 was appointed head of Jon Jansen's design department.



THEO SCHOON (1915-1985)

Born in Central Java. Studied art in Rotterdam and Bali. Arrived in New Zealand in 1939. Influential abstract painter and photographer who introduced Gordon Walters and others to Maori rock drawings. Grew and decorated gourds with Maori motifs and made decorated pots with Len Castle using images from rock drawings.

JOHN SCOTT (1924-1992)

Architect. Briefly employed by the Architectural Group. Noted for his houses and for the boldly experimental Futuna Chapel in Wellington and Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Havelock North.



FREDA SIMMONDS (1912-1983)

Painted in Northland from 1945. Attended Summer Schools taught by Colin McCahon in the 1950s at the Auckland City Art Gallery. Abstractions based on the New Zealand bush and coastline.

PETER SMEELE (b. 1918)

Dutch trained interior designer. Designer and shop fitter in the 1950s.



MIREK SMISEK (b. 1925)

Born in Bohemia, Czech potter who produced Bohemia Ware sgraffito pots at Crown Lynn. Moved to Nelson where he set up his own studio in 1958.

DIRECTORY OF NAMES

GORDON SMITH (b. 1926)

Architect in partnership with Geoffrey Newman and Anthony Greenhough.



MAY SMITH (1906-1988)

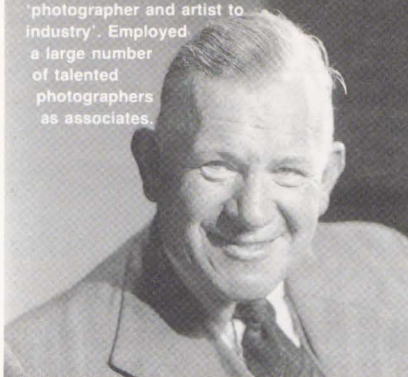
Indian-born, New Zealand educated painter and textile designer. Upon her return to Auckland after ten years in London she introduced block printing on fabrics. Her paintings were widely exhibited during the 1950s.

JOHN PINE SNADDEN (b. 1913)

Painter who worked in advertising. Exhibited abstract works at the Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s.

BILL SPARROW (1896-1967)

Photographer. Sparrow Industrial Pictures pioneered the commercial use of photography. Bill Sparrow described himself as 'photographer and artist to industry'. Employed a large number of talented photographers as associates.

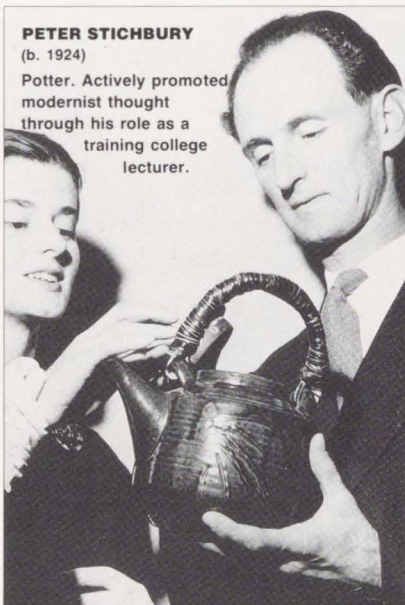


DICKIE HARPER STEER (b. 1907)

Photographer. With her sister Amy, ran Belwood Studios. She was one of the most popular artists in Auckland.

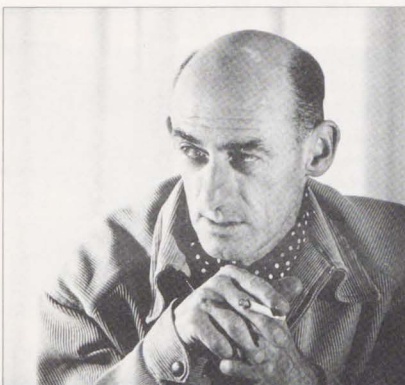
PETER STICHBURY (b. 1924)

Potter. Actively promoted modernist thought through his role as a training college lecturer.



ODO STREWE (1910-1985)

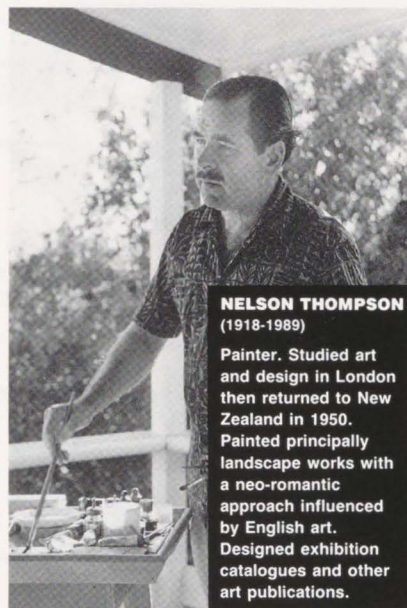
Landscape and garden designer whose modernist gardens featuring sub-tropical plantings greatly altered the appearance of the Auckland garden. He designed several notable gardens in association with the Architectural Group.



E. MERVYN TAYLOR (1906-1964)

Sculptor, painter and virtuoso wood engraver who designed and published many books of engravings. A solo exhibition of his work toured Russia in 1958. He was on the editorial board of the magazine *Design Review* and was responsible for its elegant look.

DIRECTORY of NAMES



NELSON THOMPSON (1918-1989)

Painter. Studied art and design in London then returned to New Zealand in 1950. Painted principally landscape works with a neo-romantic approach influenced by English art. Designed exhibition catalogues and other art publications.

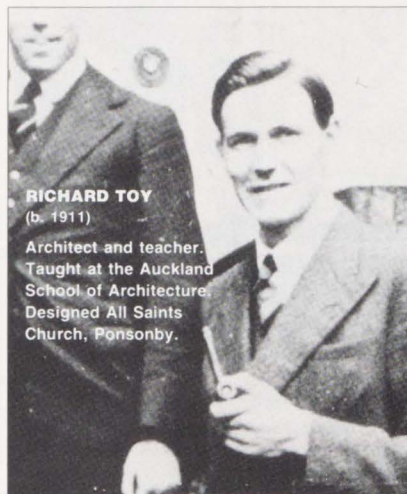
LOUISE TILSLEY (1900-1984)

Rutland Group artist who produced a wide range of fabric designs often using Maori motifs.



S.W. (BILL) TOOMATH (b. 1925)

Architect. Original member of the Architectural Group. In the early 1950s he established a flourishing Wellington practice.



RICHARD TOY (b. 1911)

Architect and teacher. Taught at the Auckland School of Architecture. Designed All Saints Church, Ponsonby.

DIRECTORY of NAMES

ANTHONY TREADWELL (b. 1922)

Architect and painter. Worked in Wellington in partnership with Allan Wild. Painted a mural in the First House designed by the Architectural Group.



DENNIS K. TURNER (b. 1924)

Painter and illustrator who often worked with Oceanic motifs. Member of the Contemporary Artists Group, exhibiting abstract collages at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1950.

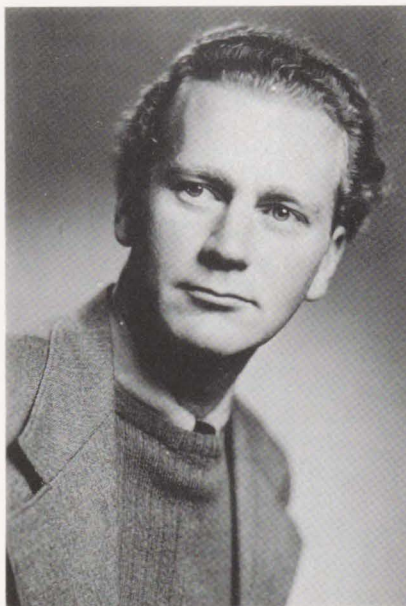


ILSE VON RANDOW (b. 1901)

Weaver. Born in Germany; arrived in New Zealand in 1952 and introduced professional craft weaving. Wove monumental curtains for the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1956.

WILFRID STANLEY WALLIS (1891-1957)

Medical doctor who received art training from John Weeks. Experimented with abstract painting in the 1950s.



GORDON WALTERS (b. 1919)

Painter. Committed to abstraction from the late 1940s. Left New Zealand to study abstraction in Europe; returned in 1953. Worked as a graphic designer for the Government Printer. Also gave design advice to the Maori magazine *Te Ao Hou* and was, with Theo Schoon, an early admirer of traditional Maori art.

MILES WARREN (b. 1929)

Architect. Educated at Auckland School of Architecture. In the early 1950s travelled to England and Scandinavia then returned to Christchurch where he has practised since.

JOHN WEEKS (1886-1965)

Painter. Travelled to Europe in the 1920s. Communicated an interest in cubism to students at the Elam School of Art where he taught until 1953. In the late 1940s was producing abstract fantasies in colour, and expressionist compositions.

A. LOIS WHITE (1903-1984)

Painter who taught figure composition and design at Elam School of Art 1927-1963. Known for rhythmic, lyrical figurative painting.



ALLAN WILD (b. 1927)

Architect and teacher. Original member of the Architectural Group. Practised in Wellington. Later dean of Auckland University School of Architecture.



ARNOLD MANAAKI WILSON (b. 1928)

Ngai Tahu, Te Arawa. Sculptor. The first Maori graduate in sculpture from Elam School of Art. His training there was in the European classic tradition. Not until he left art school was he able to combine European modernism with Maori motifs. An important contributor to the revival of Maori art in schools and the community. Exhibited at the Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s.



BILL WILSON (1920-1968)

Architect, writer and theorist. Driving force of the Architectural Group. From 1953 was a partner in Group Architects with James Hackshaw and Ivan Juriss. Later taught at the Auckland School of Architecture.

GORDON WILSON (1900-1959)

Government Architect. Supervised the design of various blocks of high-rise flats and also the Bowen State Building 1955, and the Bledisloe Building 1950.

BLANCHE WORMALD (b. 1910)

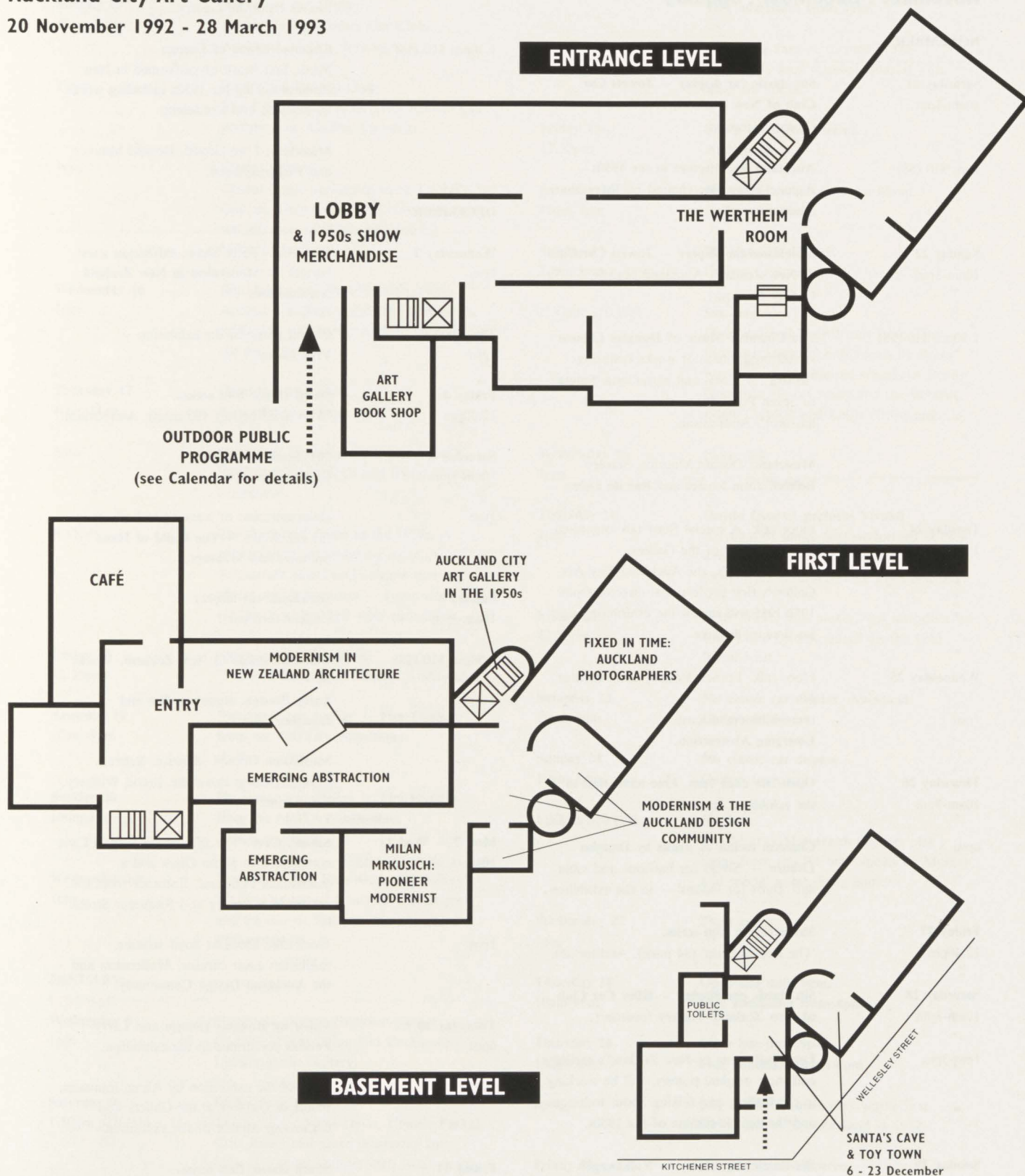
Fabric painter active during the 1940s and 1950s. Member of the Rutland Group.



THE 1950s SHOW - EXHIBITION PLAN

Auckland City Art Gallery

20 November 1992 - 28 March 1993



The Newstalk 1ZB 1950s Show

EVENTS GUIDE

November . December . January

NOVEMBER

- Saturday 21**
10am-3pm
50s classic car display — Jowett Car Club of New Zealand, Auckland branch. Gallery forecourt.
- 2pm \$10 (\$8)
Auckland Architecture in the 1950s.
A panel discussion chaired by Peter Shaw. Auditorium.
- Sunday 22**
10am-3pm
50s classic car display — Jowett Car Club of New Zealand, Auckland branch. Gallery forecourt.
- 1.30pm \$10 (\$8)
The Chamber Music of Douglas Lilburn
A full programme of works featuring 'Sonata for violin and piano' and 'Salute to Seven Poets for violin, piano and narrator'. Auditorium.
- Musicians:** Donald Maurice, Stanley Bolton, John Rosser and Rae de Lisle.
- Tuesday 24**
1pm
Floor talk. A special floor talk organised by the Friends of the Gallery. Eric Westbrook, the Auckland City Art Gallery's first professional director from 1952-1955 will review the exhibition and his time as director.
- Wednesday 25**
1pm
Floor talk. Francis Pound, guest curator of the exhibition, discusses **Emerging Abstraction.**
- Thursday 26**
10am-9pm
Open late until 9pm. Free admission to the exhibition from 4pm.
- 6pm
Classical recital of works by Douglas Lilburn — 'Songs for baritone and viola' and 'Duos for violins' — in the exhibition.
- Friday 27**
12.30pm
Sharp classic film series.
'The Red Balloon' (34 mins). Auditorium.
- Saturday 28**
10am-3pm
50s classic car display — Riley Car Club of New Zealand. Gallery forecourt.
- 1pm-3pm
Len Castle, one of New Zealand's earliest and most original potters, will be working in the Gallery and talking about technique and the artistic climate of the 1950s.
- Sunday 29**
10am-3pm
50s classic car display — Volkswagen Owners' Club Register. Gallery forecourt.

11am \$5

1.30pm \$10 (\$8)

1950s Auckland Architecture — Bus tour with Peter Shaw, well-known writer on New Zealand architecture and guest curator of the exhibition. Leaves from the Gallery.

Chamber Music of Europe
Music first heard or performed in New Zealand during the 1950s including works by Poulenc and Hindemith.

Musicians: Uwe Grodd, Donald Maurice and Philippa Ward.

DECEMBER

- Wednesday 2**
1pm
Floor talk. Peter Shaw, exhibition guest curator — **Modernism in New Zealand Architecture.**
- Thursday 3**
1pm
Choral music in the exhibition — **Viva Voce.**
- Friday 4**
12.30pm
Sharp classic film series.
'Wild Strawberries' (90 mins). Auditorium.
- Saturday 5**
10am-3pm
50s classic car display
Gallery forecourt.
- 1pm
Demonstration of weaving techniques in the exhibition — **The Guild of Hand Spinners and Weavers.**
- Sunday 6**
10am-3pm
50s classic car display
Gallery forecourt.
- 1.30pm \$10 (\$8)
Chamber music of New Zealand. Works by Larry Pruden, Roderick Biss and Douglas Lilburn.
- Musicians:** Donald Maurice, Rebecca Maurice, Coral Bognuda, Ingrid Willbery. Auditorium.
- Mon 7 — Wed 23**
10am-3.30pm \$2 child
Santa's Cave. The fifties-style Santa's Cave complete with Santa Claus and a mechanical Pixieland. Entrance from the corner of Wellesley and Kitchener Street.
- 1pm
Floor talk. Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins, exhibition guest curator, **Modernism and the Auckland Design Community.**
- Thursday 10**
6pm
Music by Douglas Lilburn and Larry Pruden performed in the exhibition.
- 7.30pm
Tour of the exhibition by Alexa Johnston, Principal Curator at the Gallery and organising curator of the exhibition.
- Friday 11**
12.30pm
Sharp classic film series.
'Pather Panchali' (112 mins). Auditorium.

EXHIBITION EVENTS

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Saturday 12 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display — Consul-Zephyr-Zodiac Car Club, Auckland. Gallery forecourt. | Wednesday 13 1pm | Floor talk |
| Sunday 13 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display — Consul-Zephyr-Zodiac Car Club, Auckland. Gallery forecourt. | Thursday 14 6pm | Open late until 9pm. Free admission from 4pm. 50s Swing Jazz performed in the exhibition. Jack Randell Quartet with Rozy on vocals. |
| 11am | Rock'n'roll Revival Club The City of Sails Rock'n'roll Revival Club performance. Gallery forecourt. | Friday 15 12.30pm | Sharp classic film series. Auditorium. |
| 3pm | Choral Music Choral music performed in St Joseph's Church, Grey Lynn. This church features stained glass windows designed by Milan Mrkusich. | Saturday 16 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display, Auckland. Gallery forecourt. |
| Wednesday 16 1pm | Bill McKay and Rick Pearson, two Auckland architects and designers of the exhibition will discuss their involvement in the project. | Sunday 17 10am-3pm | 50s class car display. Gallery forecourt. |
| Thursday 17 10am-9pm | Open late until 9pm. Free admission from 4pm. | 1.30pm \$10 (\$8) | 50s Jazz Dixieland and Mainstream from The Birdcage Jazzmen with vocals by Brian Roome — featuring the sounds of Benny Goodman, Bob Crosby and the Bobcats, Eddie Condon and Louis Armstrong. |
| 6pm | Cool Jazz from the 1950s performed by Crombie Murdoch and friends in the exhibition. | Wednesday 20 1pm | Floor talk. |
| 6.45pm | The Auckland Scene in the 1950s. A conversation remembering some of Auckland's social and cultural meeting places and happenings — come along and reminisce with others who were there. | Thursday 21 1pm | Haydn Quartet perform Vivaldi A recital of music first performed in New Zealand in 1952 — Spring and Summer movements from Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons'. |
| Friday 18 12.30pm | Sharp classic film series. 'The Red Balloon' (34 mins). Auditorium. | Friday 22 12.30pm | Peter Wells, film maker, will introduce his film 'Little Queen', based on the 1953 Royal Visit. |
| Saturday 19 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display — Fire Engines from the MOTAT collection. Gallery forecourt. | Saturday 23 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display, Auckland. Gallery forecourt. |
| Sunday 20 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display — Fire Engines from the MOTAT collection. Gallery forecourt. | Sunday 24 10am-3pm | 50s classic car display. Gallery forecourt. |
| Wednesday 23 1pm | Floor talk. Ron Brownson, the Gallery's Senior Curator of Research Collections and curator of Fixed in Time:Auckland Photographers. | 1.30pm \$10 (\$8) | 50s Jazz The Murray McIlwraith Quartet play songs from the 50s with vocals by Murray and special guest, Sally Sadler. |
| JANUARY | | Wednesday 27 1pm | Floor talk. |
| Wednesday 6 1pm | Floor talk. Roger Taberner, Senior Curator of Education and Community Liaison at the Gallery. | Thursday 28 10am-9pm | Open late until 9pm. Free admission from 4pm. |
| Saturday 9 1.30pm \$10 (\$8) | Fifties Jazz The music of Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Chet Baker and more. Featuring the Murray Tanner Quintet with Brian Smith. Auditorium. | Thursday 28 10am-9pm | Open late until 9pm. Free admission from 4pm. |
| | | 6pm | The Haydn Quartet play works first performed in New Zealand in 1952. |
| | | Friday 29 12.30pm | Sharp classic film series. Auditorium. |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Checklists of all the material included in *The 1950s Show* are available from Auckland City Art Gallery.

Endpapers

May Smith *Abstract fabric* c 1950
blockprinted slub linen, cerise triangles black lines (fragment)
Private collection, Auckland

Auckland in the 50s

Reproduced from *Auckland City and Province*
Auckland City Council c. 1955

Auckland City Art Gallery in the 1950s

Eric Westbrook
Clifton Firth collection
Auckland City Libraries

The Mackelvie Gallery, before and after
Peter Tomory and Colin McCahon
Object and Image
Lunchtime crowd at Henry Moore
Freyberg Place Exhibition
All from Auckland City Art Gallery
Research Library

The Wertheim Room Christina Barton

Lucy Carrington Wertheim
Photo by Lafayette
Auckland City Art Gallery Research Library

The Wertheim Room, 1948
Sparrow Industrial Pictures
Auckland City Art Gallery Research Library

Christopher Wood, *The Sloop Inn, St Ives* 1926
oil on canvas, 753 x 612mm
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
Mrs Lucy Wertheim, 1948

Humphrey Spender, *Design for a tapestry* 1947
crayon and watercolour, 292 x 377mm
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
Mrs Lucy Wertheim, 1948

Modernism in New Zealand Architecture Peter Shaw

State Housing Block, Waikari Dunedin
Courtesy National Archives

Birkenshaw House
Reproduced from *Arts Yearbook* No 7, 1952

THE 1950s SHOW

Fleming House at Christchurch by Paul Pascoe
Reproduced from *Arts Yearbook* No 3, 1947

First House, Belmont 1950
Plan courtesy of the University of Auckland
School of Architecture Library
Interior photo courtesy Allan Wild

W.C. Rotherham House
Photo and plan reproduced from *Home & Building* Dec 1954

Juriss House, Stanley Point 1954
Photo by Robin Morrison

Blumenthal House 1957
Courtesy Vladimir Cacala

Greer House 1959-1960
Reproduced from *Home & Building* 1 Sept 1960

Pan American Building (demolished) 1960
Courtesy University of Auckland School of
Architecture Library

AMP Building 1958-1962
Reproduced from *Home & Building* 1 July 1952

Drawing of St Helens Hospital 1959-1960
Courtesy Geoffrey Newman

Emerging Abstraction Francis Pound

All measurements are in millimetres, height
before width.

Open air exhibition outside Wellington
Public Library December 1956
Courtesy Don Peebles

Colin McCahon *Kauri trees* 1954
oil on canvas 777 x 883
Hocken Library, Dunedin
Charles Brasch bequest 1973
Reproduced with permission of the Colin
McCahon Research and Publication Trust

Gordon Walters *Papier collé* 1960
black and white paper collage 375 x 300
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa
Tongarewa, Wellington

Colin McCahon *Moss* 1956
oil on board 546 x 756
A.T. and J.B. Gibbs Auckland
Reproduced with permission of the Colin
McCahon Research and Publication Trust

Louise Henderson *Eastern City (Amman, Jordan)* 1958
oil on canvas 545 x 755

Private collection, Auckland
Reproduced with permission of the Colin
McCahon Research and Publication Trust

Paratene Matchitt *Guitar player* 1959
crayon on board 760 x 305
Private collection, Auckland

Jean Horsley *Painting* 1960
oil on canvas 505 x 1035
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1989

Gordon Walters *Untitled* 1952
oil on canvas 482 x 360
Collection of the artist, Christchurch

Colin McCahon *Painting* 1958
oil on board 1218 x 764
Fletcher Challenge Art Collection
Reproduced with permission of the Colin
McCahon Research and Publication Trust

Theo Schoon *Untitled (stones)* c. 1950
gelatin silver print 251 x 251
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
the artist 1983

E. Mervyn Taylor *Silence* 1950
wood engraving 102 x 76
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1988

Eric Lee-Johnson *Root forms* c. 1946
oil on board 440 x 530
Private collection, Thames

Alison Duff *Bird* 1956
rimu and totara 605 x 95
Private collection, Auckland

John Weeks *Fantasy 2* c. 1950
oil on card 603 x 393
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1970
with assistance from the Queen Elizabeth II
Arts Council of New Zealand

Dennis K. Turner *Untitled* (undated)
watercolour, collage, frottage 335 x 500
Gow family, Auckland

Gordon Walters *Composition* 1954-1955
gouache on paper 315 x 439
Private collection, Auckland

Arnold Manaaki Wilson *Ringatu* 1958
kauri 910 x 175 x 90
Collection of the artist

Molly Macalister *Mask* 1948-1950
kauri 415
Haydn family, Auckland

E. Mervyn Taylor *Composition* 1959
totara 560 x 185
Hawkes Bay Cultural Trust Museum, Napier
Photograph by Christopher Matthews

Gordon Walters *Study for koru series* (undated)
gouache 344 x 247
Private collection, Auckland

Milan Mrkusich: Pioneer Modernist
Alexa M. Johnston

All measurements are in millimetres, height
before width.

Milan Mrkusich c 1949
Courtesy of the artist

Constellation with yellow 1946
ink and gouache on paper 309 x 245
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
the artist 1991

Constellation with blue and yellow 1946
ink and gouache on paper 309 x 245
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
the artist 1991

Constellation with red 1946
ink and gouache on paper 309 x 245
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
the artist 1991

City lights 1955
oil on cotton fabric marouflage on board
762 x 923
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1989

Landscape 1955
oil on panel 508 x 660
Auckland City Art Gallery, purchased 1955

Yellow with blue circle 1946-1953
gouache on board 332 x 514
Auckland City Art Gallery, presented by
the artist 1991

Painting on red ground 1955
oil on plywood, 1215 x 910
Collection of the artist

Painting F48 1948
gouache and pencil on paper on board 457 x 330
Collection of the artist

Painting C48 1948
gouache and pencil on paper on board 457 x 336
Collection of the artist

Painting No 8 1950
wax gouache and crayons on paper 578 x 756
Collection of the artist

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Composition on red 1954
oil on canvas on board 558 x 565
Private collection, Auckland

Festival painting 1954
oil on canvas on board 731 x 609
Private collection, Auckland

Composition 1-5 1958
gouache 374 x 273 (all works)
Collection of the artist

Stained glass windows at St Joseph's
Catholic Church, Great North Road, Grey
Lynn 1958-1960

Modernism and the
Auckland Design Community
Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins

All measurements in millimetres: height,
width, depth

Ca d'Oro Coffee Bar 1957
Sparrow Industrial Pictures

Roukema advertisement for jon jansen
Reproduced from *Home & Building* Oct 1953

Peter Stichbury *Vase* 1954
salt-glaze stoneware 330 x 140
Patricia Perrin *Bottle vase* 1954
earthenware 300 x 130
Len Castle *Bottle vase* 1954
salt-glaze stoneware 340 x 145
Len Castle *Bottle vase c* 1955
salt-glaze stoneware 300 x 160
Patricia Perrin *Bottle vase* 1954
earthenware 300 x 145

Patio lifestyle
Photo by John Crichton
Courtesy John Crichton

Des Mullen *Side chair* 1952 (one off)
pine and webbing
Private collection, Auckland

Brenner Associates interior, exterior and
exhibition stand Easter Show 1950
Sparrow Industrial Pictures
Auckland Institute and Museum

Interior Mrkusich House 1950
Sparrow Industrial Pictures
Auckland Institute and Museum

John Crichton *Java chair* 1956
(edition unknown)
wicker and black steel, 768 x 668 x 825
Private collection, Auckland

Peter Smeele desk
Private collection

Roukema advertisement for jon jansen
Reproduced from *Home & Building* Dec
1953

John Crichton information sheet
Reproduced from *Home & Building*

jon jansen display
Sparrow Industrial Pictures
Auckland Institute and Museum

Laloli Bros factory 1947
Courtesy Laloli Bros

Garth Chester *Barber's chair, Kay's French
Beauty Salon* 1953 (one of three)
bent plywood and steel, 880 x 570 x 620
Auckland Institute and Museum

Interior Kay's French Beauty Salon
Sparrow Industrial Pictures

Interior Winter's Salon
Sparrow Industrial Pictures

Frank Carpay working at Crown Lynn c.
1955
Courtesy Carpay family

Frank Carpay *Fish in a cage ferris wheel*
1953 (one off)
Six dishes of underglaze decorated
earthenware; black soldered wire, 420 x 380
x 200
Private collection, Auckland

Vase 1953 (one-off)
handpainted earthenware, 205 x 180
Private collection, Auckland

Bowl 1953 (one-off)
handpainted earthenware, 33 x 193
Private collection, Auckland

Frank Carpay's desk at Crown Lynn 1953
Courtesy Carpay family

Len Castle
Photo by Tony Pausma
Courtesy Len Castle

May Smith *Abstract fabric c.* 1950
blockprinted blue and orange squares
Private collection, Auckland

Ilse von Randow curtains at Auckland City
Art Gallery c. 1955
Auckland City Art Gallery Research Library

THE 1950s SHOW

Ruth Coyle
Courtesy Ruth Coyle

Fixed in Time: Auckland Photographers Ron Brownson

The following are not vintage prints. All photographs have been reprinted for the exhibition by Jennifer French for Auckland City Art Gallery.

The negatives of Sparrow Industrial Pictures are lodged at the Auckland Institute and Museum Research Library. A conservation programme has been initiated to reduce the deterioration of any unstable negatives. Some reference prints have already been made from selected negatives. This is an on-going process which will eventually provide access to this major resource of Auckland's commercial photography.

Holeproof summer swimwear, Piha surf club
Sparrow Industrial Pictures collection
Auckland Institute and Museum

Anne McKeever, Sono Osato, R.A.K. Mason,
Dennis Turner, Clifton Firth Studio
Clifton Firth collection
Auckland City Libraries

The Rowell/Salt Wedding, the Leilua
family, the Yelash boys, the Chan family
Belwood Studios collection
Auckland Institute and Museum

Auckland Star photos
Auckland Star collection
Auckland Institute and Museum
Courtesy News Media (Auckland) Ltd

Eric Lee-Johnson photos
Eric Lee-Johnson collection
Frank Hofmann photos

Hofmann collection,
Auckland

John O'Shea Deborah Lawler-Dormer

Courtesy of the Stills Collection (Pacific
Films Collection) New Zealand Film Archive

Home & Building in the 1950s Peter Shaw

The following all reproduced from *Home & Building*:
Building Today cover Oct-Dec 1936
Mallitte House Nov 1955
The Odeon April 1958
Marcel Breuer house Jan 1956

Rose Seidler house Dec 1952
Cover Jan 1956
"An Adaptable Living Room" Aug 1957
Furnishing Exhibition Feb 1958
"Catching up on Our Production Schedule"
Feb-Mar 1951
New Zealand Contemporary Sculpture July
1955
April 1957
Ilse von Randow/Len Castle Nov 1955
Titirangi as Art Feb 1958
Illustrated *Home & Building* covers by John
Crichton July and Oct 1952

That Definite Chill: The Fifties Revisited Peter Wells

Stereo-Realist Viewer

Jude Henderson's birthday book
Courtesy Jude Henderson

Timeline

Gottfried Lindauer *Pikirakau, Te Atihau-a-
Paparangi*
Partridge collection, Auckland City Art Gallery

Directory of Names

Zena Abbott
Courtesy Zena Abbott

Raymond Barnaby
Courtesy Raymond Barnaby

Charles Bond-Smith
Photo by Grant Smith
Reproduced from *Home & Building* 1 Aug
1954

Lloyd Brookbanks
Courtesy Brookbanks family

Vernon Brown
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Art Gallery Research Library

Frank Carpay
Courtesy Carpay family

Len Castle
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Garth Chester.
Courtesy Chester family

John Crichton
Courtesy John Crichton
Auckland City Libraries

Lillian Chrystall
Courtesy Allan Wild

Ruth Coyle
Courtesy Ruth Coyle

Alison Duff
Courtesy Alison Duff

A.R.D. Fairburn
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Geoffrey Fairburn
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Alan Fairhead
Courtesy Allan Wild

Archie Fisher
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

James Hackshaw
Photo by Christopher Bede
Courtesy James Hackshaw

Louise Henderson
Auckland Star
Auckland City Art Gallery Research Library

Frank Hofmann and Eric Lee-Johnson
Photo by Frank Hofmann
Courtesy Stephen Hofmann

John Holmwood
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Jean Horsley
Courtesy Jean Horsley

Alan Ingham
Reproduced from *New Zealand Arts
Yearbook* No 6

A. Gifford Jackson
Photo by Clifton Firth
Courtesy A. Gifford Jackson

Kase Jackson
Courtesy Allan Wild

Stephen Jelich
Courtesy Stephen Jelich

T. David Jenkin
Courtesy David Jenkin

Otway S. Josling
Reproduced from *Home & Building* 1 Oct 1959

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Ivan Juriss
Courtesy Allan Wild

David Kennedy
Reproduced from *Home & Building* 1 Feb 1955

Henry Kulka
Photo by Marti Friedlander
Courtesy Marti Friedlander

Molly Macalister
Courtesy Haydn family

Colin McCahon
Courtesy Brenda Gamble

Edward McCoy
Courtesy Allan Wild

Paratene Matchitt
Courtesy Paratene Matchitt

Peter Mark Brown
Courtesy Allan Wild

Peter Middleton
Courtesy Peter Middleton

Milan Mrkusich
Photo by Clifton Firth
Courtesy Milan Mrkusich

Tony Mullan and Alan Rigby
Sparrow Industrial Pictures
Courtesy Chester family

Desmond Mullen
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Geoffrey Newman
Barry McKay Industrial Photography
Courtesy Geoffrey Newman

Michael Nicholson
Courtesy Michael Nicholson

Paul Pascoe
Courtesy Pascoe Linton Sellars

Patricia Perrin
Courtesy of Y. and P. Perrin

Ernst Plischke
Reproduced from *Architecture New Zealand*
Feb 1991

I.V. Porsolt
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Bruce Rotherham
Courtesy Allan Wild

Edzer (Bob) Roukema
Reproduced from *Home & Building* Jan
1953

Theo Schoon
Courtesy The Bath House Rotorua

John Scott
Courtesy Allan Wild

Peter Smeele
Courtesy Peter Smeele

Gordon Smith
Reproduced from the *Wanganui Chronicle*
1960

May Smith
Photo by Clifton Firth
Auckland City Libraries

Bill Sparrow
Sparrow Industrial Pictures
Auckland Institute and Museum

Peter Stichbury
Photo by The Dominion
Courtesy Peter Stichbury

Odo Strewe
Photo by Theo Schoon
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Dennis K. Turner
Photo by Clifton Firth
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Allan Wild
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Arnold Manaaki Wilson
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Blanche Wormald
Courtesy Blanche Wormald

Unless otherwise stated, all photography is
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**next up at the
auckland city art gallery**



Alfred Sharpe (1836-1908) *Oyster Cove, North Head Auckland 1879*
watercolour 505 x 412mm. Auckland City Art Gallery Collection,
presented by Norman B. Spencer, 1967.

GOLDEN EVENINGS: THE ART OF ALFRED SHARPE

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Sixty superb watercolours by one of New Zealand's most distinguished colonial artists. Also on show are exquisite examples of inlaid woodwork in New Zealand timber by Sharpe's contemporary, Anton Seuffert.

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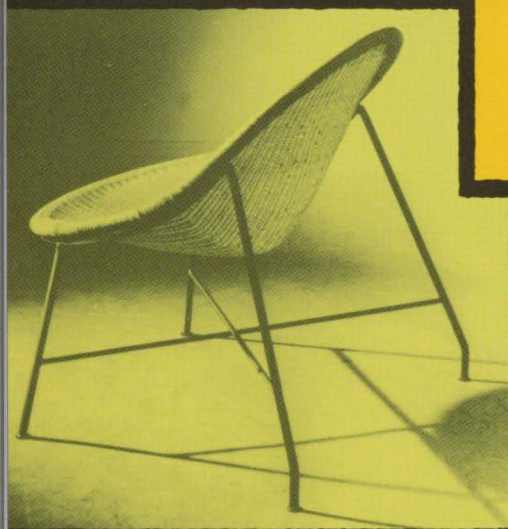
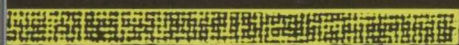
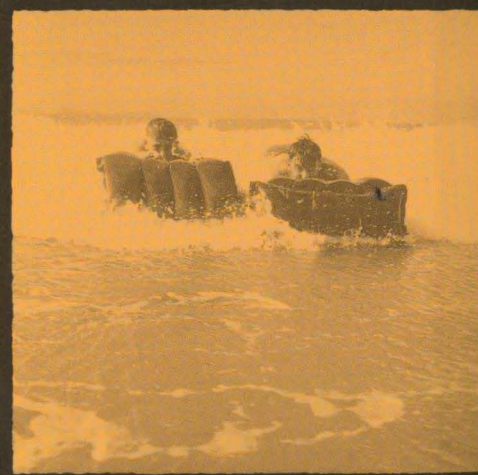
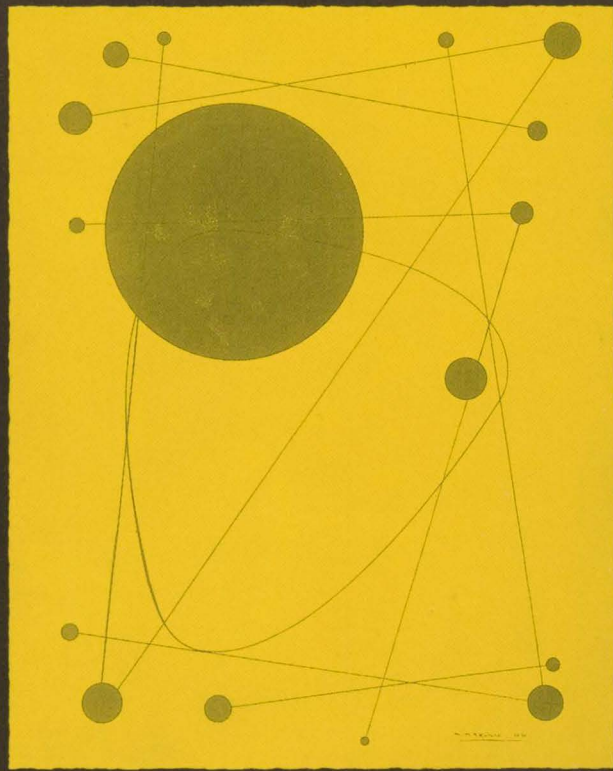
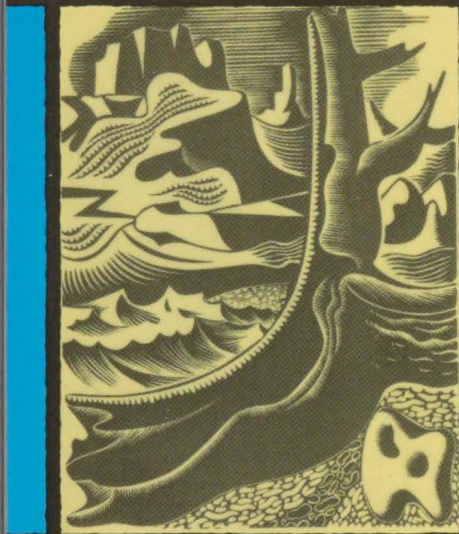
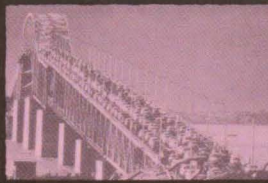
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65 masterpieces of European painting from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

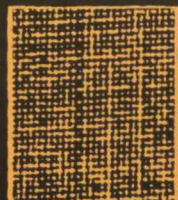
18 June – 16 August 1993

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