

THE
BEST OF
BRITISH

Auckland City
Art Gallery

20 March — 12 July
1992



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Lady Montagu laughs uproariously at the poet Alexander Pope's sexual advances, while he, rejected, sits fuming and biting his nails. An unusual subject for a painting, but one that the popular Victorian painter, William Powell Frith, found compelling: "My admiration and respect for Pope should perhaps have prevented me from exposing so great a man to ridicule." The painting, *Pope makes Love to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, is one of the highlights of the Gallery's collection of Victorian paintings that includes such masters as John Waterhouse, John Everett Millais, Frederick Goodall, James Tissot, Laurence Alma-Tadema and Daniel Maclise.

These are part of a broad historical selection of painting and sculpture from the Gallery's collections, entitled *The Best of British*, that celebrates the genius of British painting from the 17th century to the present day.

The painting *The Spirit of Justice*, by Daniel Maclise, was part of the original gift, in 1885, of the substantial art collection of the Glasgow-born merchant James Tannock Mackelvie to the city of Auckland. Mackelvie arrived in Auckland in 1865 and spent six years here; long enough to make a fortune from goldmining investments before returning to England to assemble his collection. With additional funds from Mackelvie's bequest, the trustees of his estate have continued over the years to develop the Mackelvie collection of European and British art.



above:
William Powell FRITH (1819-1909)
Pope Makes Love to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu 1852
oil on canvas
Auckland City Art Gallery collection,
presented by Sir Frank Mappin, 1974

left:
Joseph WRIGHT OF DERBY (1734-1797)
Portrait of the Honourable Mrs Boyle
oil on canvas
Mackelvie Trust collection,
Auckland City Art Gallery
acquired 1956

The cataclysmic seascape *The wreck of a transport ship* by J M W Turner, perhaps the greatest of marine painters, the imposing portrait of *George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter*, by Thomas Gainsborough, one of Britain's greatest portrait painters, and the recently acquired *Focal point* by John Tunnard, one of Britain's foremost Surrealist painters, are just three examples of the Mackelvie Trust's discerning acquisitions of British art. These and many other fine works from the Mackelvie Trust Collection are included in this selection from the Gallery's extensive holdings of British art.

Among the examples of sculpture exhibited are Jacob Epstein's menacing *Rock Drill*, (one of the great masterpieces of British 20th century sculpture); Henry Moore's *Head of a Girl* (the first bronze he made); Barbara Hepworth's *Torso II* (one of the most controversial acquisitions in the Gallery's history); and *Toward the lips* by the acclaimed contemporary sculptor Bill Woodrow, who works origami-like transformations on junked domestic appliances (in this case a copper hot water cylinder).

Some of the other British artists represented in the exhibition are Henry Fuseli, Joseph Wright of Derby, Henry Raeburn, Frank Brangwyn, Walter Sickert, Roderick O'Connor, John Bratby and L S Lowry. *Industrial City* by Lowry, one of Britain's most popular 20th-century painters, and *Still life with Mandolin* by Robert MacBryde have been kindly lent by the Wellington office of the British Council.



above:
John TUNNARD (1900-1971)
Focal point 1943
oil on board
Mackelvie Trust collection,
Auckland City Art Gallery
acquired 1992

below:
Henry MOORE (1898-1986)
Head of a Girl 1923
bronze
Auckland City Art Gallery collection,
purchased 1956



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Kitchener at Wellesley Street, Auckland 1
Admission free 10am-4.20pm daily (closed Good Friday)
Open late until 9pm Thursdays 26 March, 30 April, 28 May, 25 June
Floor talks every Wednesday at 1pm
For further information phone (09) 307-7704; (09) 309-0831