

Pat Hanly

PURE PAINTING



cover: Wonder Full 1983 *Innocence Series*
acrylic and enamel on hardboard
Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki,
courtesy of Waikato Art Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato

Figures in Light No.14 1964 *Figures in Light Series*
oil on hardboard Private collection, New Zealand





Deluge of Fire 1960 *Fire Series*
oil on hardboard Private collection, New Zealand

back cover: Girl Asleep 8 1965 *Girl Asleep Series*
oil on canvas on hardboard Private collection, New Zealand

THE JOURNAL OF

Pat Hanly



Figures in Light No.17 1964 *Figures in Light Series*
oil on canvas Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki purchased 1964

AUGUST 1960

LONDON: I am still plagued with the depressing thought that north of the line particularly Europe will some day, if not tomorrow, be scorched out of existence and my frank reaction is to find a place of security and serenity other than Europe where it might be possible to hope that life itself could continue after the devastation, even for just a time. Perhaps Australia or New Zealand would withstand the immediate destruction of a nuclear war and the clear blue antipodean freedom is perhaps the place.

AUGUST 1960

Somehow I am not fully aware of the paradise, the utopian land I wish to paint, can't see it or really feel it - perhaps it's not ready to come - yet the fire business is perhaps near it's end - an eternal subject though, life, death, destruction, regrowth - if I could only get a clear idea about the birth and growth of things, sweetness and abundance and general unity - paradise in fact, reality is not the artists world.

DECEMBER 1960

Unlimited canvasses, paper, paint and all the materials - just to begin with this would break the habitual 'make do' with so little and the over-painting on tired canvasses when one really needs to carry on working from one canvas to another evolving, building up ideas and skills in rendition. It's so difficult and it's money that's preventing this, just unable to afford to afford the irresponsibility of it all, yet it must happen or mediocrity will always be the blight and canvasses will be painted over and over and timidity will strangle ideas and production - New Zealand trait perhaps - care, over careful in familiarity and competence, work, work, work fast and fiery at full pitch, gathering momentum and range and all the aspects of fine painting.

DECEMBER 1960

This series of paintings; dancers, acrobats, strippers and audiences, tricky subject but finding in the 10 finished canvasses so far something near what a lucid, not too tragic, colourful and in some authentic sense of the 'spectacle' element involved.

OCTOBER 1961

We will not refuse the ark, a refuge is necessary to preserve all from obliteration. For myself I do consider the making of self is the first thing because it is the living and tangible example that makes effect. I now know that I can work anywhere and make good works but only in a place where hope, no matter how naive, exists. Here in Europe hope does not exist in the majority any more.

DECEMBER 1961

One's life is a gift of responsibility to make with it and from it the most fruitful contribution directly to mankind. It is to me of first importance to make your existence full in regard to all things particular to the person and to think and live your life for yourself first and if done well, with moral success, others benefit, if it is not a success you will at least have avoided exemplifying failure and limitation on those whom I love.

FEBRUARY 1962

The New Zealand excursion promises little in the way of material benefit but I have been inwardly very warmed and excited by the prospect of seeing that so beautiful land again and getting to grips with the raw grandeur and spaciousness of the Pacific South, hope it works out alright, it is a beautiful land and so much in contrast with the rather pleasant but dull aspect of England and the Low Countries with their dismal climates. It will be too an important change to exclude people from the canvas, they seem to have encroached with all their fears and loves into my work, yet they are an end in themselves as demonstrations.

APRIL 1962

CARRIBEAN: Make a trip, a ship trip, sea voyage, put away 'no revolution', fact and fear of England for a while. And the prospect of the land of milk and money, a beautiful wilderness mostly, there perhaps quietly away and above the stupid and cultivated conformity of the children of God's own country we'll find our own again, wholly and clearly and honourably. In the land of the blind the one eyed men are kings and best mute, and to work.

MAY 1962

AUCKLAND: In New Zealand again but not at home yet. Same everything, people, things and attitudes, unmoved, suckled on plenty and now stumbling in affluence, cars, homes, clothes, holidays, horses, filled up with things all numb and pleasant. No penetration of the other world, no marks of provocation or concern or eagerness. The few of our kind exist and fruit conscientiously nearly in the other world, Auckland. McCahon painting and thinks of things and they are true paintings, rare anywhere and he is here. No home for us and Gil is soon to have the baby, hard times and difficult but worth it all to be together and doing what we want despite continuous grind. Auckland sprawl and coloured mixture is pleasure, the world seems to cease south of its boundary.

JULY 1962

The attitude to 'Art', (painting and sculpture) in New Zealand on behalf of 90% of artists and of course the public is one of total amateurism. It is regarded almost as sinful to have a professional material as well as 'refined' intentions, and even improper and incompatible to have that attitude as an artist and some of the more rarefied 'artists'. Painting and sculpture are NOT entertainments offered merely as a social indulgence or cultural dunking events, they are professions, expensive in every respect. If we in New Zealand wish to regard ourselves as having responsive, mature attitudes to the arts we must also accept our obligation to pay for it. We are not receptive to aspects from abroad, (we are not aware) it is naively supposed that we are, however not one of the 4 movements in the last 5 years has reached us here, doubtless true Impressionist paintings if they were ever to get this far would stun us... we are literally at the end of the earth and are in fact insular... we cultivate an attitude of acceptance of dumb scepticism. The affluent overfedness of the New Zealand condition does not provide provocation for realisations of aesthetic worth, the world is not New Zealand. We are very small in many ways and wish to remain so. Awake, awake or remain unrealised, not just about the arts but trade and industry and the bomb!

JULY 1962

This land is pure, pure alive, growing vibrant hills, mountains, trees the bush and shrubs, pure sky, open high or crammed cloud...So here is Auckland's province at the end of the world, a geographical paradise, disaster and fear unhappily are the awful requirements to make people alive, some people.

SEPTEMBER 1962

In this country of affluent mediocrity the very presence of a specialisation attitude in almost any field is enough to provoke the only positive reaction to the New Zealander, that of suspicious incredibility or common disbelief that it is possible that a person in the arts, is able, despite them, to develop some facets of their work beyond the expected. The 'art professional' is regarded as a sort of super parasite having isolated himself by development, no comfort to him as there are so few like him here - truth is, the gifted simply go away.

OCTOBER 1962

The time for shedding the veil and prop of traditional picture making has now arrived. It is today, in our present circumstances, no longer possible or proper to render the contemporary environment through ideas no longer useful or apt. Object imagery is still foremost but now of a kind which is derived and founded from the discoveries of our 'new world', New Zealand, its strange and beautiful vacuums, the rigid new tensions and weights - the realm of the new now, has finally presented itself. Traditional figurism and picture making - finished. McCahon is old enough to believe there is 'a way' through the daze of fearful confusion - I am young enough to believe there is not 'a way'. Concerned and drawn to the mighty physical aspects of the antipodean space, light, and also slightly aware of the predicament of this area and its situation in the world. Order of all, objects, weight, density, volume, space, area, suspension, tension, relax, passive, painting is paint. The *Fire Series* 1960 incorporates literal symbols to describe a subject concerned with escape and regeneration in a holocaust of destruction. The *Showgirl Series* 1961 were made in Florence - they develop personally, the subject objectively rendered

regarding the aspect of review theatre as one nourishing diversion from the excessive pressures in the modern metropolis.

MAY 1963

The fragile lush beauty of exotic elements, the rich dull heavy power of this country. Too clear, bright tranquillity of sea and sky disguises the waiting harsh savagery within all the physical elements and that will come to show itself one day. Remember the rich heady frail growing things and pure colour - fragile exotic elements suspend the savagery of eventual thunder in the too clean antipodes. There will be a meeting of thunder here all the more terrible because of the shine of this place, and a people distended, putrefying opulence.

MAY 1963

Light, bright, pure, exciting, free, expansive painting must come, there is nothing else here yet.

APRIL 1964

Figures in Light Series: 18 works. Anonymous people passing through this physical environment without direction, concern or purpose. Non individuals leaving no sign or mark yet on the physical situation of perpetual continuance. People are too new here and nature absorbs them.

APRIL 1965

Girls Asleep Series is not a heavy weight idea, an extension of figures in light but no intimacy is there. The works have a flat indifference of a flat indifferent people and the distortion evolved in the works is a slothful sprawling of features and limbs let go, a distortion too which is not unpleasant either as a distortion of Hiroshima deformities is not unpleasant, just startlingly different at the moment. *Girls Asleep* is much effort and little joy.

MARCH 1966

Many of the best things are done young... ideas are there always... one should work at every chance, at every second of perception.

APRIL 1967

With the idea of the potential law less, rule less type of thinking in painting I do not know where to start and am just letting the whole idea saturate me before I make the first attempt at beginning again...I begin again. If I set out my materials, put up a canvas and arrange total darkness I might throw off the mannerisms of vision and hand and make in the blindness as pure a work as possible at the moment.

APRIL 1967

I am in the dark, blindfolded with a scarf. On a black canvas I paint the words NO, in colours I do not know, I turn the canvas and paint in colours again not seen, the word, RULES... I FEEL the thing I am making, in the darkness, it is strange, this primary experiment, I take off the blindfold, it is exciting and the result is obviously still a compromise of the total idea but it is strangely new and exciting. Our eyes have limited our vision. Through this physical blindness I might find a light.

NOVEMBER 1967

When I painted Figures in Light the people here seemed to me to be a race of vacant silhouettes...now it is clear that everything living is full of colour activity of molecular happening.

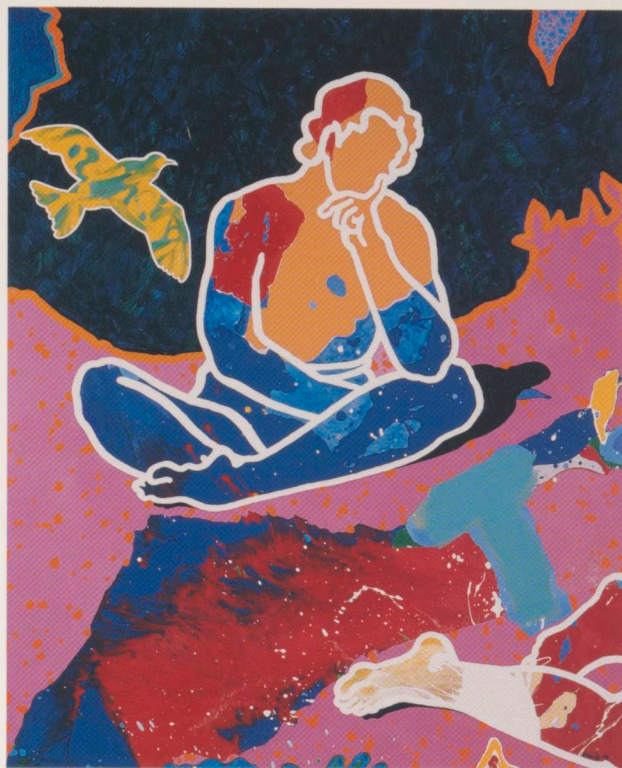
APRIL 1968

My work now will have nothing to do with appearance save for the 'containing' or boundary outline of a form or object. I am concerned with cause and effect within and without any 'object'.

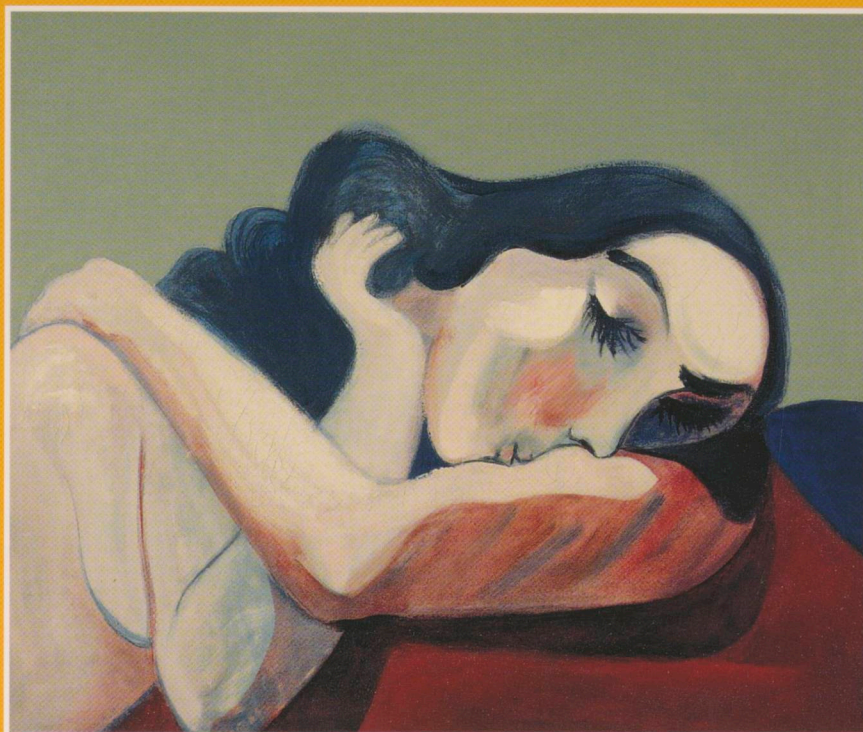
FEBRUARY 1969

ART IS LOVE. LOVE IS EVERYTHING - *Pat Hanly*

Between 1960 and 1971 Pat Hanly kept a Journal in which he recorded notes about painting, as well as issues of culture, politics and philosophy. The three original hand-written Journals were destroyed in the early 1980s. On the occasion of the Pat Hanly Pure Painting exhibition I have made a selection of Pat Hanly Journal writings from a typescript of the Journal - Ron Brownson



Who Am I? 1973 Energy Series
oil on hardboard Private collection, New Zealand



Pat Hanly Pure Painting

An exhibition for Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki
12 February - 11 June 2000

Curator: Ron Brownson Exhibition Designer: Fiona Wilson Registrar: Sarah Rennie Conservation: Sarah Hillary, Neil Rol
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