



RITA ANGUS

CELEBRATING  
**50** GOLDEN  
YEARS OF THE FRIENDS  
OF THE GALLERY

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Rita Angus

**AD 1968 1968**  
**oil on board**

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY, 2004

The Friends' gift of Rita Angus's brilliant painting *AD 1968* is a notable event for this public art gallery. It strengthens the representation of the artist's paintings and it adds a rare example from her final years. The Gallery already holds *Scrub burning, Northern Hawke's Bay 1965* and *Fog, Hawke's Bay 1968-9*, purchased in 1966 and 1969 respectively. *AD 1968* is one of the artist's major paintings and it brings together some essential themes found within her art.

*AD 1968* is the final instance of Rita Angus's late paintings concerned with her family's long-time association with the regions around Napier. It is a symbolic epitaph honouring the artist's father William McKenzie Angus, who had died during July 1968. Unlike many other of her works, Angus completed *AD 1968* within a few months. The painting encapsulates the artist's grief as actually being surrounded by a specific time and place. The year 1968 floats like a monument rising above a lush East Coast landscape that leads into a scintillating Pacific Ocean. *AD 1968* envisions New Zealand as a mystic place - a land of Peace.

In early 1968, Rita Angus was travelling by bus from Wellington to Napier. This had been her childhood home. Arriving into Napier, she saw the shapes of the letters A and D in the sky, formed by two adjacent clouds. Later on this trip at Napier's seashore, she found a wooden branch eroded by water into a shape like the number 1. A few days afterwards, while visiting Napier's aquarium, she saw a pair of sea horses swimming back-to-back. Their coming together formed the figures of the numbers 9 and 6. Finally, at Petone while returning home to Wellington, she saw two freestanding oil-tanks that created a joined silhouette, which made up the shape of the number 8. From a confluence of objects identifying a specific year, Rita Angus created a lyrical masterpiece that gathers a monument to her father and a self-portrait into an unforgettable record of time, place and emotion.

Ron Brownson  
SENIOR CURATOR, NEW ZEALAND AND PACIFIC ART

**DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD**

Fifty years is a long time in the life of any friendship; it's a major milestone and a real cause for celebration. When the Gallery's first professional director Eric Westbrook established the Gallery Associates in 1954, I can't imagine that even he could have foreseen the huge impact that their endeavours would come to have on this gallery, its collections and its community.

The Friends of the Gallery, as they are now known, have a proud history of support for this institution. They have added great richness and depth to its collections through gifts of painting, watercolour, drawing, print, sculpture and installation, and their close interest in everything that we do places them among the Gallery's most passionate, regular and committed visitors.

While the general membership of the Friends and its Acquisition Trust have made periodic excursions into the purchase of early European art, emphasis has predominantly been on the art of New Zealand. In that, the Friends have been spectacularly successful, having been responsible for the acquisition of numerous works that are now unarguably icons of the Auckland collection.

The Friends have always striven to grow their support and to search out new ways to make the Gallery a more lively and engaging place. They are ceaseless advocates for the visual arts and true believers in the Gallery's role and place within its community. This exhibition is but one measure of our indebtedness to them. They are friends that we simply couldn't do without.

On behalf of the Gallery, its enterprise board and its staff, I wish to convey sincere thanks to Niyaz Martin-Wilson, president of the Friends, to her wonderful executive committee, and to former president's and office bearers alike. You have played an important role in one of this community's great success stories. That success has gifted a rich artistic legacy to the future.

Chris Saines  
DIRECTOR  
AUCKLAND ART GALLERY TOI O TĀMAKI

**PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD**

This exhibition, of 27 works of art from a collection of more than 60, brings together highlights of the gifts given to the Auckland Art Gallery by the Friends over fifty years. It is a testimony to the artistic integrity and knowledge of art of the Directors, Curators and the Friends. It is a window into the most successful cooperation between a voluntary support group and the icon of our city, the Auckland Art Gallery. It is appropriate that an icon of New Zealand painting *AD 1968* by Rita Angus, which takes pride of place in this exhibition, has been chosen as the Friends' Golden Jubilee gift to the Gallery and the people of Auckland.

We will continue to work closely with the Gallery and contribute in the next 50 years to the collection as wisely and astutely as we have done in the past.

Niyaz Martin-Wilson  
PRESIDENT  
FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY



## Colin McCahon

***Six days in Nelson and Canterbury* 1950**  
oil on canvas

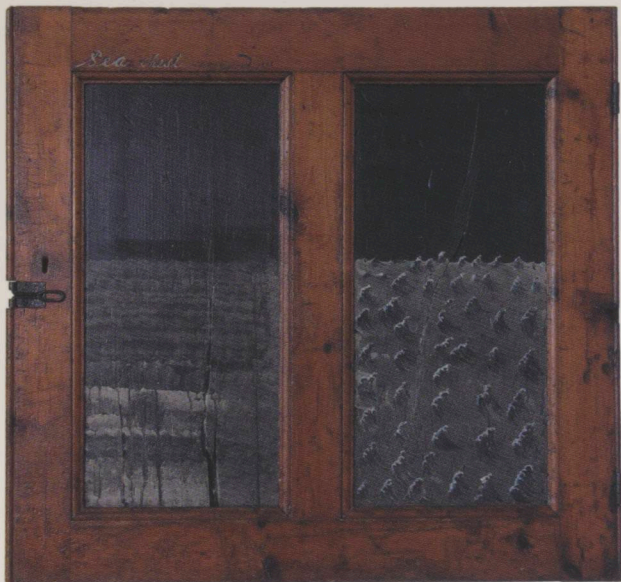
GIFT OF COLIN MCCAHOON THROUGH THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY, 1978  
REPRODUCED COURTESY OF THE COLIN MCCAHOON RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION TRUST

'This painting I never explain but am often asked to', Colin McCahon wrote in 1972. 'To me it explains itself. It was, I suppose, reconciling gains and losses, stating differences, hills and horizons. Simple. A bit of blood shed in the middle.' First shown at the 1950 *Group Show* in Christchurch, *Six days in Nelson and Canterbury* has subsequently enjoyed a stellar exhibition history, featuring in all the major surveys of McCahon's work and many other exhibitions besides. That it was an important work to the artist is apparent from the fact that he retained it in his own collection for nearly thirty years, rejecting offers to sell it for increasingly large sums. Instead, McCahon gave the work to Auckland Art Gallery in 1978, via the Friends. A means of ensuring his legacy by

placing major works in public collections, the gesture also honoured McCahon's debt to the Friends. They had played a vital role during his tenure at the Gallery, supporting acquisitions of his own work and that of other artists, as well as sponsoring plays, poetry readings and music recitals. *Six days in Nelson and Canterbury* reflects life's journeys, both spiritual and artistic. By giving the work to the Gallery through the Friends, it might be said, McCahon acknowledged some of his fellow travellers.

### William McAloon

CURATOR OF CONTEMPORARY NEW ZEALAND ART AT AUCKLAND ART GALLERY FROM 1993-1998. WILLIAM MCALOON IS NOW AN INDEPENDENT CURATOR AND CRITIC BASED IN WELLINGTON



## W. D. Hammond

**Sea chest 1996**  
oil on wood

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY  
ACQUISITIONS TRUST, 1998

The title suggests that the painting is the lid of a sea chest but it is more likely that it was a ship-cabinet door complete with unseen latches, key holes, locks and hinge plates on the reverse side. *Sea chest* has been stripped, scraped and transformed into a painting that unlocks and inspires memories of our geographical and social relationship with the sea. Bill Hammond's rendering of a sperm whale, about to take a deep dive in the sub-Antarctic seascape, with a contrasting view of a pending sea storm evokes the power and force of nature and the unique animals that thrive there.

The artist also refers to a maritime tradition of naïve art and scrimshaw painting where sailors developed a distinct art form to beat boredom at sea. They would spend hours, engraving pictures of tall ships under full sail, whale hunts and other lively subjects on to whale's teeth. They also painted and decorated their sea chests.

Through exploration of maritime history and art, Bill Hammond describes the sea and its creatures as our inheritance as island dwellers. *Sea chest* could be a view from the past, made from the safety of a ship's deck or from the distance of a whaler's cottage, yet, equally its subject references whale-watching expeditions of the present.

**Ngahiraka Mason**  
INDIGENOUS CURATOR, MAORI ART



## William Beechey

**Miss Windham 1828**  
oil on canvas

PURCHASED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF  
THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY, 1976

The Friends of the Gallery have acquired a number of works by international artists over the years. This portrait depicts Mary Christina Windham, the fourth daughter of Vice-Admiral William Windham of Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk.

Portraiture was an important genre in 18th-century English painting. Patrons sometimes commissioned small-scale conversation pieces which showed them in the company of their families. However, as more and more of the gentry built grand country houses, the need to fill the walls with scenes that could be read from some distance became imperative. While classical themes and sweeping landscapes continued to find favour, representations of individuals or family groups depicted out of doors served as indicators of the family's personal dominion. The coastal view in the background possibly refers to William Windham's career as Secretary of State for War – Beechey certainly painted him in naval uniform at this time.

From the 16th century, when the exchange of rings became formalised to symbolise matrimony, artists often posed female sitters to draw attention to its presence on their hand. Although a ring is prominently displayed on Mary's finger, she didn't marry Lt Col. Richard Hare until seven years after this painting was created. In this instance, therefore, the ring may have been added to the painting at a later date. The play of light and superb handling of flesh tones shows Beechey at his best, while his warm palette and lively brushstrokes perfectly evoke the tactile quality of Mary's velvet coat.

**Mary Kisler**  
MACKELVIE CURATOR, INTERNATIONAL ART



## Christopher Perkins

**Frozen Flames 1931**

oil on canvas

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY, 1962

It is something of an irony that one of New Zealand's most iconic painters was an Englishman who was here for a mere four years. Even more ironic is the fact that most of his works left the country with him and were known to the next generation only through a handful of reproductions in a 1931 edition of *Art in New Zealand*. This particular painting was reproduced in the influential centenary journal *Making New Zealand: Pictorial Surveys of a Century* which had a vast influence on a generation of school children, myself included. The writer and historian Eric McCormick was involved in that publication and by coincidence he was in England unsuccessfully trying to track down Perkins and his work, when this painting turned up in New Zealand and was gifted to the Gallery by the Friends. Most of his major New Zealand paintings eventually entered the Gallery's collection in 1967, after the artist himself was located in the north of England.

*Frozen Flames* is an iconic work in a couple of ways. It is a classic of 1930s New Zealand regionalism – the later version of the style dismissed by A.R.D. Fairburn as 'dead trees and the significant houses of Freemans Bay'. It also captured in a single powerful image the growing fear of the destruction of the indigenous New Zealand landscape by fire and farming.

Perkins's influence was immense for all the brevity of his stay here. He came determined to find a new landscape that could be painted in a distinctive way. Nothing he painted subsequent to his time in New Zealand had either the power or quality of these few works.

### Hamish Keith

STUDENT ASSISTANT, AND THEN KEEPER AT AUCKLAND ART GALLERY FROM 1958-1970.  
HAMISH KEITH IS NOW A WRITER AND ART CONSULTANT BASED IN AUCKLAND



## Jean Horsley

**Exegesis 1988**  
oil on board

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY  
ACQUISITIONS TRUST, 1997

In July 1957 Jean Horsley was selected for the exhibition *Three Women Painters* at Auckland City Art Gallery. The same year, she attended Colin McCahon's Thursday evening art classes at the Gallery. McCahon agreed to show the students one of his own recent works, *On Building Bridges*, 1956, and Jean Horsley described the impact of seeing that painting as the catalyst for her decision to travel. Although already a significant New Zealand painter, she was determined to challenge herself and to keep her art growing and developing. A physiotherapist, she spent 8 years in London and 15 in New York, every spare moment devoted to seeing contemporary art. Her infectious enthusiasm for new and puzzling work never diminished.

A year after Colin McCahon's death, Jean Horsley painted *Exegesis*. The word means to explain, to lead and to refine, and is usually associated

with biblical scholarship. Horsley's painting affirms McCahon's involvement in the paradoxes of doubt and faith and the difficult task of communicating through painting. Yet it has about it an airy, joyful lightness, qualities that reflect Jean Horsley's own approach to life and faith. Behind drifting patches of colour, a white cross hovers in space – both a gateway to an unknown reality and a calm, reassuring presence in the midst of change. In *Exegesis* Jean Horsley has made a masterly painting – and a tribute to a master.

Jean Horsley was a Life member of the Friends of the Auckland Art Gallery and in 1996 she was awarded an OBE for Services to Art.

**Alexa Johnston**  
CURATOR OF NEW ZEALAND PAINTING AND SCULPTURE AT AUCKLAND ART GALLERY FROM 1978, ALEXA JOHNSTON BECAME PRINCIPAL CURATOR IN 1990 AND REMAINED AT THE GALLERY UNTIL 1997. SHE IS NOW A FREELANCE CURATOR AND WRITER IN AUCKLAND



## Pat Hanly

**Fire and Rainbow 1985**  
enamel and acrylic on hardboard

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY  
ACQUISITIONS TRUST, 1986

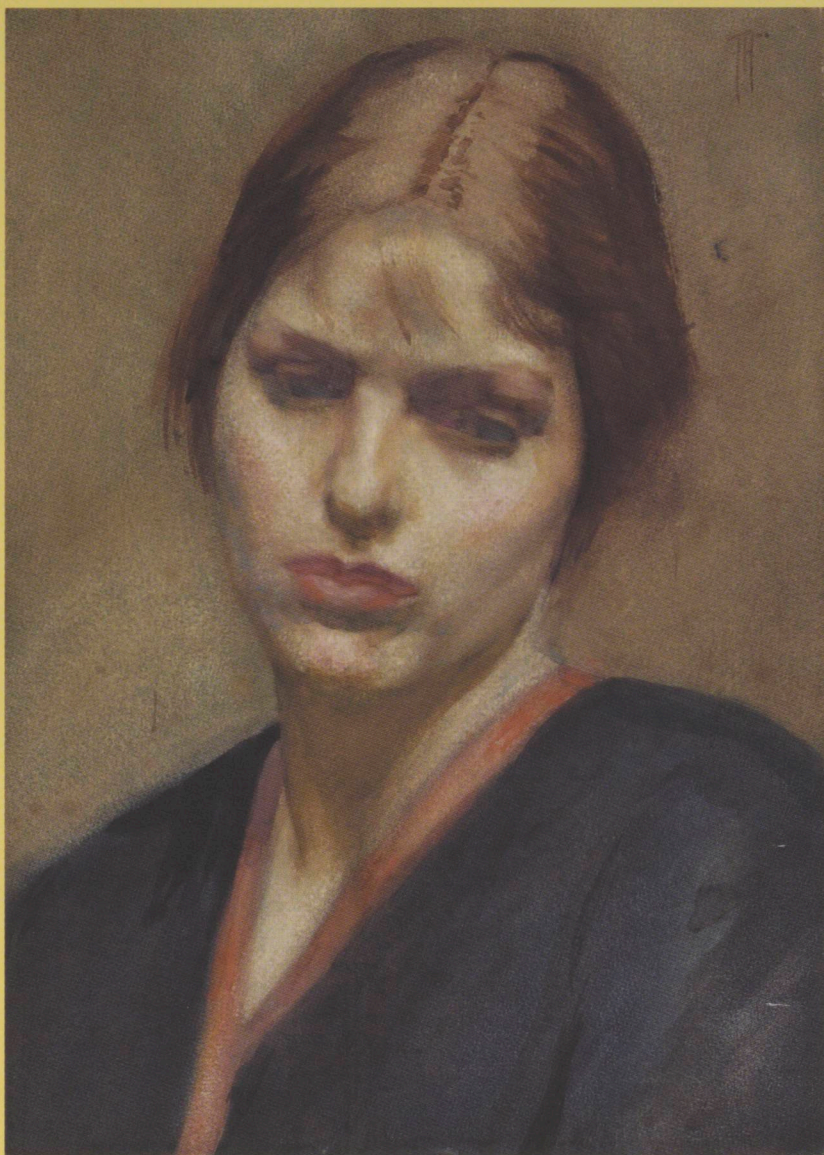
Pat Hanly's painting appears on first viewing to be a quintessential Auckland summer scene full of jubilation – a regatta on the harbour overflowing with the attendant colours and movement of boats and spectators. However the title *Fire and Rainbow* and the date it was painted – 1985 – allude to a specific moment from Auckland's history, the bombing of the Greenpeace vessel, the *Rainbow Warrior*.

This dissonance between image and title capture something of the time: the joy with which the boat was welcomed into Auckland harbour by the Peace Squadron (of which Hanly was a member) and the disbelief three days later that something of this magnitude had happened in the Waitemata. Where the boat in Hanly's work had previously been a generic symbol of hope, in this painting it gained a specific reference, sailing across an ocean licked by fire. The handling of the paint is highly expressive and freely worked, using a relatively restricted primary and

secondary palette. The depths of the sea are created by wonderfully layered scumbled glazes. Hanly's response to the event conveys the shock, chaos and confusion of the moment yet somehow remains optimistic. A rainbow after all is a symbol of hope, and despite the efforts of the French Government, a flotilla of boats was to sail later that year to Moruroa atoll to protest the nuclear testing under the banner 'You can't sink a rainbow'.

Hanly has been one of the Patrons of the Friends for many years and in 2002 the *Pat Hanly Student Membership Awards* were established in his name to reward promising senior high school art students with a membership to the Friends.

**Jane Davidson**  
ASSISTANT CURATOR



## Frances Hodgkins

### *Portrait of a girl* circa 1900 watercolour

GIFT OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUCKLAND ART GALLERY  
FROM THE J.B. SPRING BEQUEST, 1995

This picture of a pensive young woman, looking inward to some private sadness, speaks eloquently of the time when the innocence of the girl, caught with such freshness in Hodgkins's *The Girl with Flaxen Hair* of 1893, has given way to the more troubled state of early womanhood. Both paintings are based on the contrast between cool blue and warm yellow/ochre, but the tones in this work are muted, and the sombreness of colour is matched by the unadorned simplicity of the background, the gown and hair style. The plain strong curves of the shoulders reach out to the frame, bringing the viewer very close to this intimate moment and its emotions. And then the eyes, painted as an opaque screen, shut us out. Into this dark tonality Hodgkins has introduced characteristic touches of subtle pinkish-mauve, orange and red. The painting of the lips is exquisite in its mingled warm colours, which are repeated in the border of the robe and the surprising touches of pink in the eyes. Watercolour can be a limpid, lucid medium but in Hodgkins's hands here it becomes vigorous: dense and saturated; or brushed on dryly, perhaps lifted off, for the highlights on neck, chin, nose, cheeks and hair. The use of Hodgkins's monogram places this work between 1895 and 1906, with an earlier date more likely since Hodgkins moved on from depicting particular people and the specifics of the human condition (youth, old age and so on) to more painterly interests in brush stroke, high-key colour and the effects of light.

Linda Gill

ART WRITER AND EDITOR OF THE LETTERS OF FRANCES HODGKINS

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