

NUMBER 55

Quarterly

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY



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PARADIGMS OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS

For the Auckland Festival of the Arts no greater contrasts could have been brought together than the works of Freidensreich Hundertwasser and those of Luc Peire. Both sets of statements are individual and assertively individualistic in the extreme. Both, however, express a single creative aim, held in common by these so diverse artists: the creation of an eloquent non-verbal work of art. Do both exhibitions, proudly presented by this Gallery, represent any consensus on what a work of art is? Decidedly not.

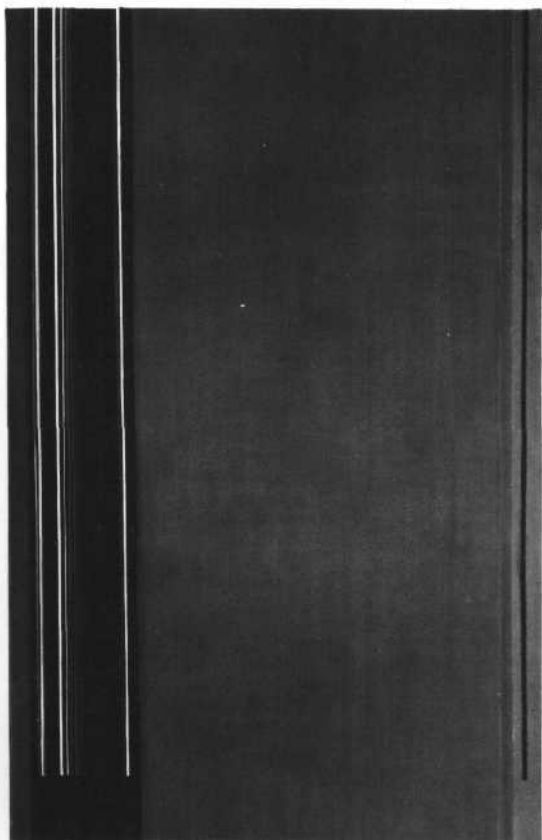
The paradox is that each display complements the other to our viewers' satisfaction in demonstrating the vast range of the valid, rewarding artistic creative *act*. One, Hundertwasser, reflects the images received by the outer eye, the street, the field, the tree, the sea, and then tells us of other ways by which to see them, to sublimate them, to assimilate their psychic echoes or their universal meanings, whether threat or promise.

The other, Peire, has evolved – as his Retrospective demonstrates – from an immersion in the world of immediate appearances to the musicality of pure cerebral line in a Cartesian concept of infinite space, defined, but still limitless.

1. FREIDENSREICH HUNDERTWASSER
Funchal Mixed media 1973

2. JEAN LUC PEIRE *Murcielago* Canvas 1966

Cover JEAN LUC PEIRE *Environment III* 1973



One, therefore, is a philosophical Romantic – in the best sense – his sensibilities at his fingertips; the other, a rigorist, ascetic in all his methods, classical in his search for the sparest means by which to impart his rich sense of space, his interpretation of an objective infinite. The objectivity of a Luc Peire, however rigorous, is infused with colour. He has always relied on it as a dimension, the field on which his linear concepts act. To Hundertwasser, colour is both action and line, an action of great complexity; lines, most often convoluted ones, freely painted in an opulence of forms, of patternings as organic as trees.

In his latest work, Peire's colour is affirmed as a single vibration. Its modulations derive from the subtle spacing of his even more affirmative straight lines. Hundertwasser's colour – he passionately loves the greens of growing things – is always modulated through its own meanderings. Hundertwasser is not a timid colourist: his uses of metallic foils prove that, as do his sudden accents of pure, unadulterated pigment. The basic contrast between these two artists is, however, more substantive than any technical devices, patterns of composition or choice of

themes. All these latter are, obviously, divergent. Paradoxically, both express a selective and rare richness of resources, visual and emotional. It might be tempting to call this a matter of temperament, merely. But there is much more to it than individuality, as important as that may be as a component of the work of these two men.

The essential factor is philosophical. Hundertwasser composes his world as, alternately, paean and dirge. Peire composes his in a mood of silent aspiration. Both meditate. It is the objects of their meditation that keep them poles apart. Peire, by marvellous stages of abstracting, first reality and, then, his private concept of space, seeks to impart, as was said, a quite Cartesian absolute. Hundertwasser aspires differently and communicates his aspirations in an emotive vocabulary that is his alone. Neither artist has pupils, nor do they seek disciples. This is part of their creative gift, of their integrity: their publics, alone, become converts. But of what, in each instance? Hundertwasser, prototypical ecologist, concerns himself with land and sea, with streets and roads, with onion-roofed church towers and the landscapes of the inner man, the hypnotic dream of himself and, always, of others: the Protean others, with what he calls their 'Brô-eyes', secretive as hieroglyphs. Using an enchantment of colour, Hundertwasser is a melancholy painter. In his search of the laughing line, the foliated, the tidal, tears are welling up, often to fall across the surface as blood, as a silent rain, defined as precious gold or fluid silver. He may create 'A Street for Survivors', but the memory of those who did not survive is more present than the triumph. His seas are for sustaining boats with bright sails or as fundamentals for Venetian palazzi. His Olympic athletes, though human, he quadrangulates, for the first and perhaps last time, as would-be destructors of an orthodox Greek Munich church, threatened by the Games of 1972. Much more is to be said and, perhaps will be, of what can in some small measure explicate the world-view, and, at the same time, the inner-worldly view of Hundertwasser's cosmos. There is, also, his Japanese empathy.

Peire, on the other hand, builder of façades, open walls, habitable modulated mosaics and immaculate paintings and prints, finds the vertical as both symbol and the fulfilment of aspiration. Where Hundertwasser defines the straight line as 'the Godless line', 'the line of death', Peire propounds his view that it, alone,



satisfies man's need of the infinite by the inspiration of a symbol reduced to an absolute.

To present these two artists together in conjunction with the Auckland Festival of the Arts has been not only a privilege but a fruitful demonstration of creativity in action. Their films, shown daily at the City Gallery and their continuous audio-visual presentation, devised by the Gallery, have explored the two confronting philosophies in such a way as to honour Auckland's most distinguished guests from overseas. We have had in our midst two extraordinary artists to exemplify by their rare talents the paradigms of creativity. We should listen with the inner ear. And ponder.

R.T.H.

3. Hundertwasser's concept of a multi-storied apartment building, each level with its own parkland or miniature farm.
4. JOHN CONSTABLE *Flatford Mill from a lock on the Stour*. This oil sketch from the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum will be shown with the Auckland exhibition in September.

Looking for exhibitions.

In October of last year, as Exhibitions Officer for the City Art Gallery, I visited America and Europe in search of major exhibitions for Auckland. My principal expectation was to arrange for an important showing of paintings by John Constable.

For some months before my departure I had corresponded with the artist's great grandson, Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Constable of Wood-

bridge in Suffolk. Lt.-Colonel Constable has a long association with New Zealand, having first visited here when he was a boy of seven. He had informed the Gallery that he was hoping to make another visit. He was approached to see if he would consider bringing his collection of Constable oils, sketches and drawings with him.

Graham Reynolds, an authority on Constable and, as Curator of Paintings, Drawings and Prints at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Keeper of that Museum's magnificent Constable collection, was approached to see if he would support an exhibition on a larger scale than that initially proposed with Lt.-Colonel Constable. He was asked to consider lending from the Victoria and Albert's collection and further was invited to be Special Curator of the exhibition should it eventuate. When Reynolds replied in the affirmative it was felt, albeit somewhat optimistically, that the Constable exhibition was a reality.



Two other files went with me about which the Gallery was equally optimistic.

The first concerned a loan of seventeenth century Dutch pastoral master etchings from the Rijksprentenkabinet, print department of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. The idea for this exhibition and the initial negotiations with the Netherlands government had been undertaken by Richard T. Hirsch, Gallery Director, in March 1972. My brief was to call upon Dr. K. J. Boon, Director of the Print Collection, to arrange the details of the exhibition. Considering, however, the impression that such small works might make on the public, I hoped that an opportunity would occur to ask for the loan of a large landscape painting of the period, which would offer, besides its colour, a contrast in scale, while remaining true to the theme.

My other file was connected with a young New Zealander, Rodney Wilson, who three years ago had left his position as Director of the Manawatu Art Gallery to study in Holland, where he completed a thesis in Germanic arts. During a vacation he had assisted the curator at the Kröller-Müller Museum, famous for its sculpture park and its van Gogh collections – especially strong in drawings. Writing to Auckland, Rodney Wilson had offered to give me an introduction to the Director of the Kröller-Müller Museum, if I thought it likely that any New Zealand Gallery would contemplate a van Gogh exhibition. This was too good an opportunity to miss, since it would only mean an hour's journey from Amsterdam in order to present Auckland's case for a loan exhibition of van Gogh drawings.

Secondary matters took up a great deal of time during these nine weeks of travel. Most enjoyable were the visits to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Rothschild in New York, and to the studios of William Stanley Hayter and Luc Peire in Paris. The Rothschilds showed me their fine collection of post-Impressionist and Cubist drawings and the exceptionally fine Vuillard drawing they have generously donated to the Auckland City Art Gallery. At Hayter's studio a fascinating morning was spent watching students preparing their intaglio prints and discussing Hirsch's earlier proposal that he, Hayter, bring a retrospective exhibition of graphics to Auckland and conduct artist-in-residence classes during his stay in 1974. Luc Peire was to bring to Auckland his third *Environment* and a retrospective exhibition of his paintings and graphics in May 1973.

I visited seventeen of the world's leading art museums and countless private galleries. Few discussions in these institutions proved fruitless. A number of major projects and exhibitions will result from them in the next few years. It was gratifying to discover the extent of the goodwill our relatively small gallery has earned for itself over the years. Next to the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, renowned for its permanent collection, the Auckland City Art Gallery proved to be the most generally known art museum in Australasia. This reputation is based on the standard of the Gallery's publications, which have been distributed abroad for many years.

Of all the 'modern' significant movements in Western art, none is more poorly represented in New Zealand public or private collections than Cubism. Bringing a small collection of top quality Cubist works to Auckland was an appealing project. During two discussions held at The Museum of Modern Art with Waldo Rasmussen, Director of the overseas programme of the International Council, and his assistants, John Stringer and Barbara London, I stressed the importance of a Cubist exhibition for Auckland.

John Stringer undertook to investigate the feasibility of sending a very small collection of Cubist paintings, supported perhaps by graphics,



films and slides. There were difficulties: the reluctance of owners to lend such valuable works; and the difficulties Auckland and eventually Australian borrowers might find in paying the high insurance premiums (the total insurance premium of \$15,000 paid on the recent *Mediaeval Arts in France* exhibition would scarcely bring three major Cubist paintings to Auckland). What emerged from our talks on Cubist exhibitions was a promise by The Museum of Modern Art to assemble an exhibition of paintings by Fernand Léger – an artist very well represented in their own collections. This important exhibition should come to Auckland early in 1975.

As to audio-visual and television presentations, my file had been quite empty on departure. It gradually filled as I travelled. After my visit to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where I found most of the information needed, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, provided the complement. As a result of these findings the Auckland City Art Gallery has introduced an experimental audio-visual programme to support the Luc Peire and Hundertwasser exhibitions. Such a presentation will also accompany the Picasso and Constable exhibitions.

My visit overseas ended on December 9. At the Metropolitan Museum in New York, John Walsh, of the Department of European Paintings, had agreed to support the 1974 seventeenth century Dutch pastoral etchings exhibition with the loan of a major work from their collection: a magnificent oil by Jacob van Ruysdael, measuring 40 by 54 inches. In Amsterdam, Dr Boon had agreed to write the text for the catalogue. The visit to Arnhem, where I met Rodney Wilson and drove with him to the wonderful forest-encircled Kröller-Müller Statemuseum at Otterlo, provided one of the most pleasant and rewarding days of my tour. A meeting with Drs Joosten, Deputy Director of the Museum, gave high hopes for a superb exhibition of drawings by Vincent van Gogh to come to Auckland during 1974.

In Boston, my first requests for Constable loans resulted in assurances that the matter would be given favourable consideration. In London, during conversations with Graham Reynolds of the Victoria and Albert Museum, it became clear to him that he would have a much greater involvement in the exhibition than our earlier correspondence had suggested. Mr Reynolds, however, could not have been more generous with valuable help. Through him, I was introduced to Mr Sidney Hutchison, Secretary

of the Royal Academy. From Burlington House we will get one of the two principal pictures in the exhibition. The Academy still has in its possession the painting that Constable submitted in 1826 for acceptance. The Diploma Painting, as it is called, *A boat passing a lock*, measures 40 x 50 inches and will come from the Academy with four other small oils.

These five works had brought the tally of loans up to twenty-six, Graham Reynolds having undertaken to request the loan of twenty-one items from his own Museum's collection. Within a day or two this preliminary total nearly doubled. Two short days with Lt.-Colonel John Constable and his family, at their Old Rectory in the country that is still described as Constable's, were the best of my overseas tour.

The Colonel's forbears over the years had parted with most of the large paintings, and his collection comprises chiefly oil sketches and drawings. A selection of sixteen items was subsequently made by Graham Reynolds from the Colonel's collection. Because of the interest the general public will take in them, it was also arranged to borrow the artist's palette and his paint-box. A quick visit to Melbourne was made on my return, resulting in the National Gallery of Victoria agreeing to lend five paintings to the exhibition, including a variant of the Diploma Painting in the Academy.

Besides the lenders mentioned above, in recent weeks the Gallery has received confirmation of loans from the Louvre; the National Galerie, Berlin; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; the Tate Gallery, London; the Manchester City Art Gallery; the Birmingham City Art Gallery; the Christchurch Mansions Museum, Ipswich; the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and the sole New Zealand owner, the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Confirmation has also been received from Mr. Graham Reynolds that he will come to Auckland to open the exhibition on September 24, this year.

PETER WEBB

5. VINCENT VAN GOGH *Peasant working, with two cottages in the background*. Black chalk collection of the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.

The watercolours of Alfred Sharpe

August 14 – September 23

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY: KITCHENER STREET, AUCKLAND

LOCATION: The new entrance to the Gallery is off Kitchener Street via the Sculpture Garden and the Edmiston Wing.

TELEPHONE: 74-650. POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. Box 6842, Auckland.

GALLERY HOURS: Monday to Thursday 10 am to 4.30 pm, Friday 10 am to 8.30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays 1 pm to 5.30 pm.

GIFTS AND BEQUESTS: Gifts to the Art Gallery in the form of cash from income upward to \$100 are allowable for purposes of income tax deductions. Gifts in the form of paintings, or other property do not qualify for such deductions. Gifts to the Art Gallery of money or property would not attract gift duty, and the value of such gifts made during the donor's lifetime would not form part of his dutiable estate. An exception to this is where an intending donor declares a gift to the Art Gallery, but reserves to himself, during his life, an interest in the property so that the full beneficial interest does not attract duty, but the property remains part of the donor's estate and qualifies for purposes of estate duty.

AUCKLAND GALLERY ASSOCIATES: The aims of the Associates are to stimulate and sustain public interest in the Art Gallery; to extend the Gallery's influence throughout the community; and to acquire funds through gifts, subscriptions and bequests, for the purpose of adding to the Art Gallery's collection of paintings, drawings and sculpture.

Any member of the public is eligible for membership. Members are invited to previews of exhibitions arranged by the Art Gallery, to lectures, discussions, film evenings, and social functions arranged by the Associates. Regular newsletters are sent out, and Members also receive the Art Gallery's *Quarterly*. Further information can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, C/o Auckland City Art Gallery.

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