



Bulletin

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

A bi-monthly publication containing news, views, and reviews of activities at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

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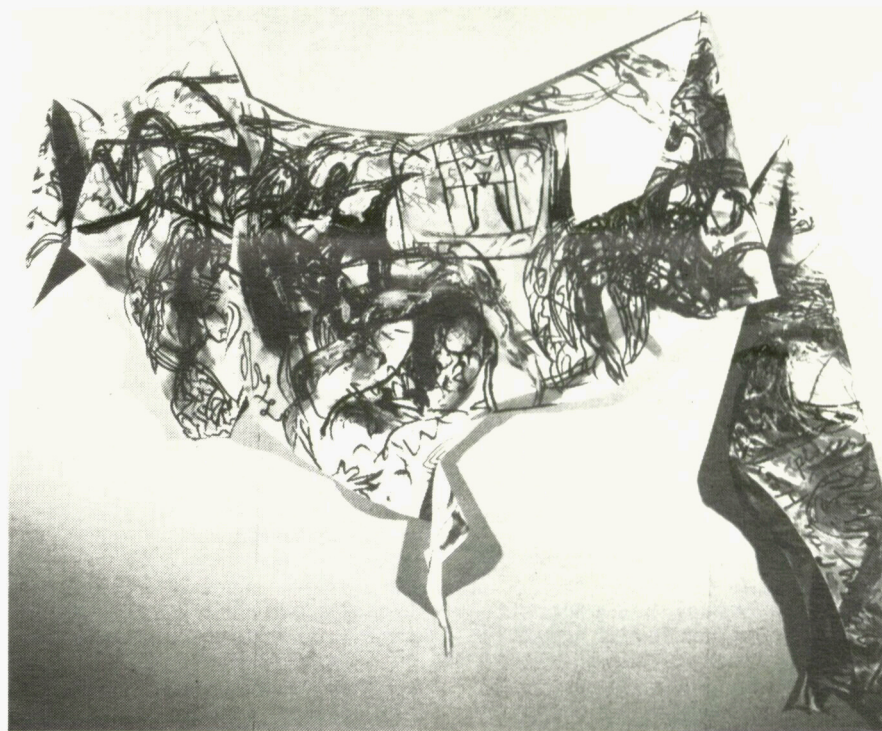
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Michael Armstrong Artists Project March 7 — April 14

Speaking on the works in this exhibition the artist writes:

"There is a feeling that talking and writing about one's own art undermines the point and effect of the visual statement. However, I do not feel that I cheat on the perception of my own work by offering this small explanation of my philosophy. I do not see my art as being separate from my life, or that it is an activity that needs the protection of silence. I work through different levels of my conscious and unconscious varying between immediate hedonism and emotion to a delayed reaction and detached analysis of events and situations and of how to express these as ideas. To use the terminology, I work in an abstract expressionistic manner, the use of paint conveying the attitude to life. This is a recognisable pattern of activity, that can be interpreted and identified with. As a social mechanism, art may deal with a cultural identity — those who recognise the art form and appreciate it, can identify themselves as belonging to that society, or group. Its mechanism also identifies the viewer as an individual, by asking for personal reflection, self awareness, according to one's own reaction to a given work and one's ability to assess and accept that work.

I paint as part of my existence, and painting is for me a conditioned response to my existence. It is a learned behaviour, adapted by me to enable me to express ideas and feelings in my own terms, demanding that I understand or accept my own feelings, through which I can solve the problems it confronts me with, problems that demand decisions and creative answers. Therefore I am



August 1984 by Micheal Armstrong

always being confronted with my own limitations, my own personality, that has to be adapted before constructive changes can be made. This is all only an oblique reference within the work, for it assumes a different interpretation according to the aesthetic of the viewer, the subjective and objective awareness and analysis of the view, and what they are prepared to put in and draw out of their perceptions."

"However to be more specific about the paintings: The canvas hangs loosely, has its own properties. It expresses itself. The edge, cut roughly, implies relationship both to the inner shape, and to the outer, surrounding space, that the canvas is

part of a real cosmos not isolating the painting within rigid structuring. The paint is as an event, something that happened across the surface of the canvas, forms created and ideas expressed, the balance between order and chaos, in the human striving to create order out of chaos, figures and gestures overlap, replace each other, within an abstract chaotic energetic cosmos. The canvas continues on both sides, part of an infinity that folds over itself, revealing only part.

There are two poles in a sense; respect for the object through awareness of its materials, and then the awareness of the human input, the social content and context."

Volunteer Gallery Guides

Each year we are impressed and delighted with the contribution made to the Gallery's activities by our team of volunteer Gallery Guides. We need around 30 guides to run our very energetic guiding programme and so recruit a few more each year as replacements for those who leave town, find permanent employment or

retire gracefully to do something else with their spare time.

Although guiding at the Gallery is quite a time-consuming and demanding activity with lots of exhibition changes to keep up with, it is also a stimulating and rewarding experience involving on average about 4 days each month.

We will be taking a new intake of Guides for training in March so if you would be interested in perhaps joining the team or in finding out more about the programme please leave your name and phone number at the Gallery (50-915) or contact the Education Officer, Ann Betts. She will be very pleased to talk to you about our Gallery Guide programme.

Artfull

It was significant that "Artfull" was responsible for the surge of visitors in November–December which broke the 52 year old annual attendance record in 1984. This made it the most popular exhibition in a year which offered many excellent exhibitions. 41,000 visits had been made to "Artfull" when the exhibition closed at the end of January. The annual attendance record since the gallery opened in 1932 is now 132,259.

The important point about "Artfull" was that it was an exhibition drawn from our own resources — the permanent collection.

In future major summer exhibitions will be presented from the wealth of resource available in the region and South Pacific area. There is scope for many exciting exhibitions.

Because of the low relative value of the New Zealand dollar, the cost of bringing major exhibitions from abroad has become virtually prohibitive. While nothing can replace the quality and stimulus of art works from important collections abroad, until economic conditions improve, we will have to be resourceful in creating good exhibitions from the art works at hand within the community.

The success of "Artfull" was in that its broad range provided a point of reference for every gallery visitor and each visitor whether artist, scholar or layman, had his and her private response. Many returned several times.

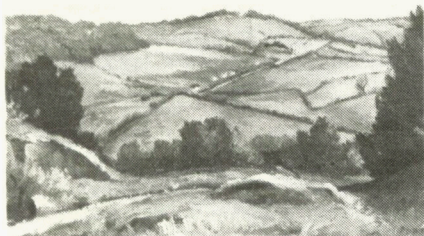
It is regrettable that the permanent collection could not be displayed through the year, but the pressure for space in the gallery means that most of the work must unfortunately return to storage.



The Wizard's Garden by George Leslie

Expatriates One and All — April 4 — June 16

The loss of artists from New Zealand shores during this and last century has been considerable. Prominent names like Frances Hodgkins, Owen Merton, Sydney Thompson and Raymond McIntyre are immediately recognised as expatriates of distinction, but what of Eleanor Hughes, Frederick Porter, Arthur Merric Boyd senior, Kenneth M. Ballantyne and others. These artists have only had limited recognition in their homeland but made their mark in their own unique way. This small exhibition of the work of 15 expatriates drawn from the gallery's painting collection is an attempt to focus on those expatriates whose place in New Zealand art history has been obscured by time.



Sussex Landscape by Frederick Porter

Acquisitions

The following works have recently been purchased:

Doris Lusk

Imagined Projects II — Limeworks
Acrylic on Canvas

Eion Stevens

Home Comforts
Acrylic on Board

Esther Archdall

Matrix of Light
Weaving

Denise Copeland

No Evil
Etching/Threads

John Drawbridge

Heloise and Françoise
Etching

Interior with Matisse
Etching

Marilyn Webb

Protection Work — Winter Garden I
Monotype

Debra Bustin

Untitled
Screenprint

Nigel Wilson

Painting Number One
Acrylic on folded canvas

James Koga

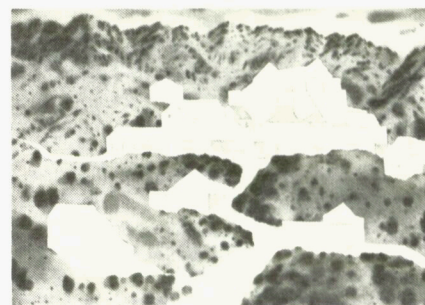
Akea's Kingdom Kapapahaunaumoku
Etching

C. R. W. Nevinson

A Valley in the Downs
Etching

Neil Dawson

Rock Construction 7
Etching



Imagined Projects II Limeworks by Doris Lusk

Ronald McKenzie

Miners Huts 1925
Watercolour

Vivienne Sloan

Structure Panels V VI VII
Wool

Ralph Hotere

Black Union Jack
Etching

In a Dream of Snow Falling
Etching

In the Labyrinth at the Demolishing
Etching

Sir Frank Brangwyn

The Beer Shop 1920
Etching

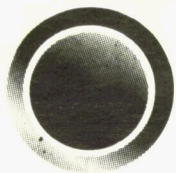
Barry Cleavin

Ann on a Tubular Chair 1973
Pencil

Sir Tosswill Mountford Woollaston

Winter Mapua 1936
Pen/Ink

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery
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Christchurch 1



Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery Inc

The Annual General Meeting

The Friends' Annual General Meeting will be held at 8pm on Wednesday 27 March. You will receive a formal notice concerning this shortly, but please make a note of the occasion in your engagement diary now. This is your opportunity to give the committee your suggestions and ideas as to what your society might be doing and we hope you will be able to attend. Following the formal part of the meeting we will be entertained by the puppeteer, Norbert Hausberg. Refreshments will be served. .

Forthcoming Coffee Mornings

The speaker at the coffee morning to be held at the Gallery at 10.30am on Wednesday 20 March will be Gavin Bishop, the well-known book illustrator, whose illustrations for the book, *Mr Fox*, recently won him first prize in the Norma Concours, an international award for children's book illustration. On Wednesday 17 April, Robert Erwin will continue the talk he gave at the February Coffee Morning with a discussion of paintings he admired in English and American Galleries.

On Wednesday 15 May, Dr Peter Simpson of the English Department at the University of Canterbury will talk on the Takaka rock paintings of Leo Bensemann. Dr Simpson, who was born in Takaka, has published a long essay on Bensemann in a recent issue of the new periodical, *Untold*.

Absent Friends

This month we introduce a new feature in which former associates of the McDougall Gallery tell us of their recent experiences, adventures, or projects. First in the series in the following piece from Bruce Robinson, well-known to many people in the South Island art world and now rapidly establishing himself as a leading figure in the North.

After six invigorating years in the McDougall as Exhibitions Officer and Deputy Director – those vintage years of refurbishing the gallery, introducing professional services, increasing professional staff and a massive expansion of the Exhibition programme – I was appointed Director of the Waikato Museum of Art & History in Hamilton in June 1984.

Whereas the McDougall is a Gallery of Fine Art with the strong presence of the Canterbury School and its

English origins, the Waikato Museum is a combined institution of Fine Arts, History and Archaeology with the dominant rich history of Waikato Maori. In that simple expression lies the real challenge and excitement of working in the Waikato for we truly have a bi-cultural heritage. The possibilities this offers are infinite, the ways in which each culture has embraced aspects of the other, and the ways they can profitably influence each other on the contemporary edge. I doubt that cultural institutions in this country can continue this English separatist policy of museums and galleries being distinct. It tends to evidence a narrow approach to the overall fabric of our culture; and certainly the WASP monopoly must be eradicated. I am particularly delighted to be in an institution where at least the first step has been made, but there are many more to take before we meet our obligations head on.

The most important step along the way has been the recent decision by the Hamilton City Council to build a new Waikato Museum of Art and History. The \$4.2 million building, in its 23rd week of construction, will be completed by December 1986, opening September 1987. Situated central city on a large handsome site, on the banks of the Waikato River, the 49,000sq ft building will be the most sophisticated purpose-built building of its kind in New Zealand. Designed by the Auckland based "JASMAD Group" the Museum incorporates many international and innovative concepts of museum design. All galleries will have views to the outside grounds through large windows which have been skilfully designed to cater for the specialist lighting requirements.

With the new building under way the professional staff are faced with the massive task of creating a new philosophy and programme for the new museum. The current philosophy and programme is restrained by the limitations of the present 14,000sq ft location on the top floor of a poorly situated commercial building, with a large percentage of the collection stored off-site. The 7,000sq ft exhibition area is divided into a history/archaeology area and Fine Arts Gallery. By contrast the new museum will have 17 large galleries and substantial river bank grounds which will be used for many activities.

In addition to the gallery spaces there is a 120 seat terraced coffee shop, a

bookshop, and an Education Wing. Substantial specialised storage facilities are surrounded by a large workshop, conservation studio, darkroom and studio facilities, a design studio, screenprinting studio, library, generous staff offices and staff recreational facilities. Movement around the museum will be via a ramp system and lift, with proper consideration for disabled visitors. Galleries will be lit with a combination of artificial and filtered natural light controlled by a sophisticated imported light control louvre system.

The first activity we are engaged in is to ensure the entire collection is correctly accessioned, photographed and recorded. This is well under way and will be completed in 1985. At the same time Collection, Exhibition and Education Policies are being examined. These are early days to announce our intentions, however a number of general concepts have evolved.

1. The failure on the part of museums in New Zealand – by and large – to present the history and art of Maoridom as being the rich continuous culture it is, with a vibrant contemporary edge, will change in the Waikato Museum. With the valuable and necessary assistance of Maoridom we are looking at interpretation, display techniques and content more appropriate to the needs of the Maori and Pakeha community today. Needless to say labelling will, throughout the whole museum, be in Maori and English.

2. While we acknowledge the difference at the extreme edges of our professional collection and exhibiting we are looking at ways of softening the near edges. There will be a "mingling" of material – Fine Arts, History, Archaeology, while at the same time a broadening of our exhibiting material.

3. We will be moving away from traditional "permanent" museum display in preference for a series of "units" which will change within a predetermined programme. By contrast we will be looking to longer exhibiting of aspects of our Fine Arts Collection.

4. We are interested in embracing infrequently-seen aspects of contemporary New Zealand Art, e.g. creative film, video, performance, aspects of photography, and in particular carving, weaving, the music and art of Maoridom, which is in fine form in the Waikato.

Bruce Robinson



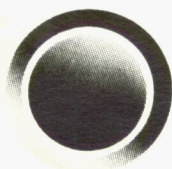
Coming Events

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

March/April 1985

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- March 1** **Raymond McIntyre** until 24 March
Olivia Spencer Bower drawings until 24 March.
- 7** **Preview Michael Armstrong Artists Project Exhibition** 5 p.m. Exhibition closes 14 April.
- 10** **Art Forum** Michael Armstrong will discuss aspects of his recent work 3 p.m.
- 21** **The Art Group** — a Gallery Club for the disabled 10.30 – 2.00
- 27** **Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Robert McDougall**, 8 p.m. and performance by Norbert Hausberg. Strings Attached Puppet Theatre.
- April** **Michael Armstrong Artists Project** until 14 April.
- 3** **For Tasman & Cook** Early works from the Gallery's collection until 26 May.
- 4** **Expatriates One & All** until 16 June.
- 6** **Australian Drawings** — Touring exhibition until 5 May.
- 8** **Maud Sherwood** until 1 July.
- 21** **Gallery Concert** Peter Lowe presents music related to the 17th Century works on display.
Exhibition dates could vary slightly.
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Treasurer — Annie Crighton



**Friends of the Robert McDougall Art
Gallery Inc**