



Christchurch City Council

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

Number 40 July/August 1985
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Robert McDougall Art Gallery
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Bathmates

The Stuffed Stuff Show Fabric Art Company 11 July to 25 August

Opening to the public on 11 July is The Stuffed Stuff Show, the latest installation of sewn, stuffed, knitted, and patched commentary on life in the 'burbs by Wellington's most irreverent artists, the Fabric Art Company.

'Stuffed Stuff' is the product of seven women, all domestic engineers and all keenly aware of the household liturgy demands, chores, situations and solutions. In an effort to expand their artistic life the Company members all began a fabric art class at WEA with artist Jean Beattie. Group projects were assigned and Fabric Art Company was born. The Group hasn't looked back.

The class had its first public success with pieces hung in the Academy of Fine Arts, Fabric and Fibre Exhibition, in 1982. They later exhibited in the Lombard Exhibition. At Kapiti over Easter, their installation 'Ladies a Plate' amused many visitors. This was followed by another Academy Fabric and Fibre show and a piece called 'Wedding Breakfast' for the New Zealand Jazz Foundation 10 Dimensions Concert.

No matter where they exhibit or what the title in particular is, viewers can

expect a rib-tickle from Fabric Art Company. Using everyday materials in copious quantity, the Group sews up the domestic scene and presents the humour and joy of ordinary life. There are surprising choices of form and material and extraordinary bursts of imagination.

This is a great show and a definite must! There is an informative catalogue available, sponsored by the Community Arts Council and is toured by the Wellington City Art Gallery.

IMPORTANT GIFT TO GALLERY

Appropriately, in the Friends section of this Bulletin, announcement is made of the gift to the Gallery of 'Mountains, Cass' a watercolour by Rita Angus. The work is gifted by the President of the Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Mr Robert Erwin, in memory of the late Laurence Baigent.

'Mountains, Cass' is a painting of considerable vitality and visual movement, relating to 'Cass' the Gallery's best known Rita Angus painting.

The Gallery is delighted to have this fine example of the work of Rita Angus in its collection and is appreciative of the spirit in which it is presented to the people of Christchurch by Robert Erwin in memory of Laurence Baigent.



Ahuriri Drawing

Maori Rock Drawing August 15 — September 15

The existence of drawings on rock shelter walls is a global phenomenon and has aroused the interest of artists since the middle of last century. On most continents this art form is associated with pre-history but in New Zealand its origin is more recent. Most authorities date the majority of Maori rock drawings to between 1100 and 1500AD contemporary with the Gothic era in Europe.

Canterbury and North Otago are fortunate in having such a large concentration of decorated shelters along their river valleys.

The interpretation of the imagery represented however remains an open ended question. Who made them, when, and for what reason remains largely obscure.

For more than 130 years, speculation has led recorders of these drawings to a variety of conclusions; often these have been as varied as the interest of the recorders themselves. Surveyors, archeologists, amateur historians, and artists have all been involved. The focus of this exhibition is with that of the artist recorder. Only three artists T.S. Cousins, Theo Schoon, and Tony Fomison have been concerned with copying Maori rock drawings over the past century. Of the three however, the activity of Theo Schoon is perhaps the most notable and it is a selection of his paintings made during 1946 and 1947 that forms the basis of this collaborative exhibition between the Canterbury Museum and the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

Although only a small number of the painted panels that the artist made will be included, his interpretations of the drawings at the most notable sites in Canterbury and North Otago are represented. There will also be some that

were discovered by Schoon in the course of his field exploration as for example the Ahuriri Drawing, (illustrated) now lost forever as a result of flooding for the Benmore Hydro Development Scheme.

Theo Schoon was a pioneer in the rediscovery and interpretation of Maori imagery and design. For many years he attempted to have it recognised by contemporary artists but had only small success.

In Maori rock drawing designs Schoon found as an artist the same message that attracted Paul Klee and members of the modern movement to more primitive art forms earlier this century.

In New Zealand these drawings had previously been dismissed as nothing more than the idle scribbles of nomadic Maori tribesmen. Schoon's understanding and genuine enthusiasm gave rise to something of a reappraisal of their merits as works of art. In a lecture delivered to the Royal Society of New Zealand on July 27 1947 the late Dr Duff a recognised authority on early Maori Culture remarked:

"While artistic merit was generally passed over by previous observers I have learnt through association with Mr Theo Schoon to recognise in many cases a refinement of line and occasionally apparent and pleasing play on design".

Theo Schoon's interest in primitive art forms dates back to his childhood in Indonesia but really developed while he was an art student in Rotterdam, Holland, during the early 1930's. By the time he came to New Zealand in 1939 he already had a vast store of knowledge on the subject.

He was not fully aware of the true nature of New Zealand Rock drawing until he read an article published in a 1943 issue of the Journal of the New Zealand Polynesian Society. Fired by interest he

moved to the South Canterbury district late in 1945 to study the drawings for himself. He was fascinated not only by the drawings he saw but also their setting.

This was also a time when there was much discussion among members of the South Canterbury Historical Society about the deterioration and neglect of Maori Rock drawings in the region.

Dr Duff of Canterbury Museum was approached to carry out a field survey and make a report of his findings.

His report indicated that some preservation measures were essential and also some immediate steps should be taken to record what had survived. It was therefore most opportune that when Theo Schoon approached Canterbury Museum expressing his interest in copying rock drawings, that he should be offered an Internal Affairs grant to do just that.

He commenced his project during August 1946 by making a copy of the Waitohi Frieze. For the next two years he explored the main sites known, on the Ophi, Pareora, Waitaki rivers and their tributaries.

During this time he recorded what he could suffering often considerable privations through lack of adequate shelter and food. One thing that became apparent to him from the outset was that he would not be able to work at a level he would have preferred. Considering the limited resources at his disposal what he achieved is commendable. On completing his contract with Canterbury Museum, Schoon continued his own investigations for some time, but without financial support it was difficult for him to carry on for long.

The results of his interest in and knowledge of Maori rock drawings have not been widely recognised, however some artists did benefit directly from Schoon's discoveries. Both Denis Knight Turner and Gordon Walters were introduced to this art form by Schoon and were able to translate and develop it into their own unique imagery.

Evelyn Page Seven Decades

A touring Exhibition of the work of Evelyn Page (nee Polson) entitled 'Seven Decades' is being prepared by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch.

The gallery wishes to make contact with all owners of work by this artist.

Those able to advise on the whereabouts of paintings are asked to contact:
The Curator,
The Robert McDougall Art Gallery,
P.O. Box 2626,
CHRISTCHURCH.

Monet Problems

The Auckland City Art Gallery's Monet Exhibition has been hugely successful. The magical impressionist's name and his 36 stunningly beautiful paintings drew crowds. The management of this major international exhibition has been outstanding. But the enterprise was not all plain sailing.

In Auckland recently Dr Rodney Wilson, the Auckland Art Gallery Director, spoke of the tribulations he experienced in bringing the show together.

Until shortly before Christmas the project was on schedule. Then an airline with which an agreement had been made to carry most of the works to New Zealand withdrew support. The void left had to be filled by adding significant transport costs to the budget. It was a worrying Christmas for the Gallery staff but the problem was solved.

Within a few weeks of this setback the original sponsors of the exhibition were showing reluctance to proceed with the very substantial advertising commitment required. After a series of meetings and an ultimatum from Dr Wilson, the sponsors withdrew. Another major sponsor had to be found. Intense preparation and persuasion brought the New Zealand Insurance Group into the venture and Dr Wilson began to breathe easier once again. This had been a very stressful situation, but once more the project was back on line.

But even more traumatic times lay ahead. Three weeks before the Exhibition was due to open the complex loan documents, prepared by Auckland now returning from institutions in the U.S.A., France, Great Britain and Australia were found to be faulty. Each institution had made changes to the loan contract, invalidating the legal equality of all the lending museums. Department of Internal Affairs Legal advisors pronounced the documents worthless. Dr Wilson said the experience gave him the most stressful day he had ever experienced. He cannot recall the flight from Wellington to Auckland. He passed out.

But the following day he marshalled his resources and raised an entirely fresh set of legal contracts, despatching them by courier pack to all the overseas institutions. In some cases staff were also despatched to see that the documentation was carried out urgently and properly. In due course they came back; this time signed, sealed and valid.

The response to the exhibition has made this effort worthwhile. Sales of the catalogue and accompanying merchandise have been extraordinarily high and it is clear that the exhibition will be not only a great cultural event but a financial success.

As with concerts by rock stars where the organisers anticipate their audience flocking by rail, bus and air from all points of the compass to a single venue, Monet has drawn its visitors from the

length and breadth of New Zealand.

This great achievement of the Monet exhibition is that more than 150,000 people have been able to see and appreciate the great impressionist master's work and experience a quality of painting which they would otherwise have had to travel extensively to view. This kind of response demolishes the myth that New Zealanders are oblivious to the satisfactions of the arts.

There were many reasons why the Monet show was not offered to other New Zealand Galleries. Because many of the works are stars in the collections of the lending museums, attracting many visitors, the owners do not wish them to be absent for extended periods.

Time limits are therefore placed on loans which means a restricted number of venues. Only 2 or 3, may present the works. Because of their great value lenders and insurers insist that the paintings be subjected to as little handling as possible and that they be kept in carefully controlled, air conditioned and secure environments.

These factors together with the necessity to recover the very large expenditure involved, directs the exhibition organiser's choices to centres with very large galleries and large populations; galleries which can afford substantial fees and can expect to recover costs from big attendances. The Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney and the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, became the two other venues for the Monet show.

Acquisitions

The following works have been recently purchased

Rudolf Gopas
SELF PORTRAIT 1970
Acrylic on Ivory Board

Rudolf Gopas
CITY LIGHTS 1962
Egg Tempera on Ivory Board

Max Hailstone
FIFTEEN TOPOGRAPHIC PRINTS
A Portfolio 1984

Raymond F McIntyre
PORTRAIT OF JAMES JAMIESON
1906
Oil on Canvas

Robin White
14 prints from THE SERIES TWENTY
EIGHT DAYS IN KIRABATI
Woodblock

Margaret Stoddart
NORTH CANTERBURY STREAM
Watercolour

New Guides Welcomed

In April we undertook the training of a new group for our Volunteer Gallery Guide programme and are very pleased



UOUMAN MANE AIKA A KAKIBAA TE UTUAO

to welcome to the team, Muriel Blewett, Stephanie Brice, Joan Edgar, Estelle Empson, Monique Ettema, Gloria Neale, Cathy Neare, Janet Rodden and Helen Seeker.

We are sure they will enjoy working with the community as Gallery Guides and most heartily welcome them to the team.

Arts Works: A Closer Acquaintance.

As many adults feel they have missed out on 'understanding' or 'appreciating' art we are running a special course for 10 adults on the four Saturday afternoons in July. Guides will introduce ideas involved with understanding and enjoying the art work currently on exhibition and will lead group discussions and guide active and informed viewing of a selection of art works. Then there will be coffee and a chat making it both an instructive and enjoyable afternoon at the Gallery.

'Art Works: A Closer Acquaintance' will be run July 6, 13, 20, 27, from 2-3.30pm. The course fee will be \$12 and the group limited to 10 so it will be important to enrol at the Gallery as early as possible.

If sufficient numbers are interested in a weekday course on Wednesdays or Fridays we would be pleased to take names and phone numbers so that further courses could be arranged.

Artists Photographic Project by Peter Bannan

For the last six months I have been working as photographer for the Gallery, under a PEP scheme. When not involved in routine work for the Gallery, I undertook what has become labelled the 'Artists Photographic Project'.

Our idea was to develop an archival photographic resource that would depict artists as they live and work. Often the Gallery requires photographic material to supplement exhibitions, education material, and as a resource for special publications and catalogues.

My approach was to contact as many artists in the region as I thought and I

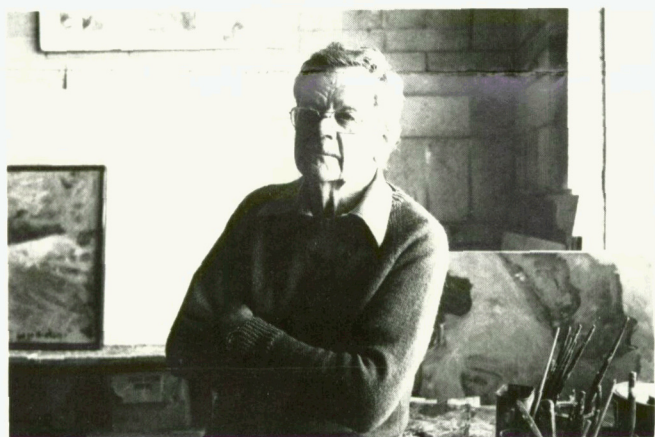
could photograph in the time available, and ask for their support. Some priority was given to working artists who are represented in the gallery collection.

Where possible, I then visited those artists who had agreed to be involved, and tried to get to know them a little before a second visit to photograph them. This gave me time to think about how to best portray the person. In most cases the resulting photographs reflect my personal response to the artist. All photographs were taken in black and white, being more permanent and versatile for publication use.

Twenty four artists were photographed during the project and unfortunately my time ran out before I could finish my list of artists. Trips to Nelson and Dunedin

allowed me to include Sir Toss Woolaston, Jane Evans, Marilyn Webb, Andrew Drummond, among others. Christchurch artists included Philip Truettum, Barry Cleavin, Don Peebles, Doris Lusk, Bill Sutton, Alan Pearson, and Quentin Macfarlane.

Some of the photographs produced have already been used in conjunction with recent exhibitions (Michael Armstrong, Morgan Jones). The Gallery is now considering other possibilities for making maximum use of these photographs, maybe even as an exhibition in themselves, but, nevertheless, they will speak strongly for themselves when future art historians are reconstructing the art milieu of the 1980's in Canterbury.



Sir Toss Woolaston



Marilyn Webb



Alan Pearson



Don Peebles

Paul Beadle (Sculptor)

I am a Master's student at the University of Auckland currently involved in thesis research on the sculptor Paul Beadle. I would appreciate any information concerning the artist particularly details of works held in private collections. If you are able to assist, please advise:

Andrew Greenhough
Art History Department
University of Auckland
Private Bag
AUCKLAND.

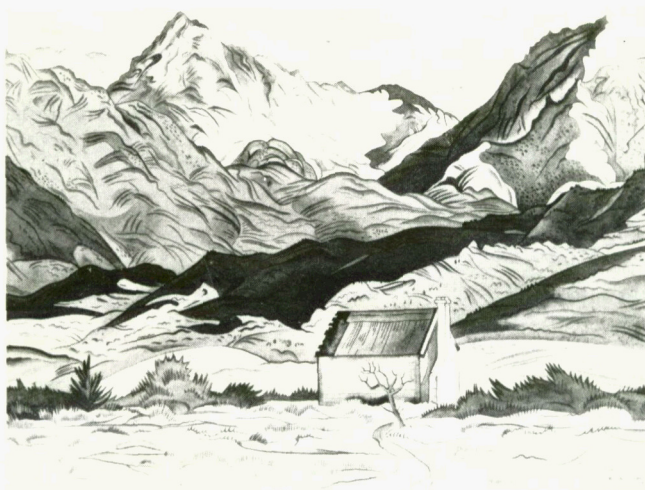
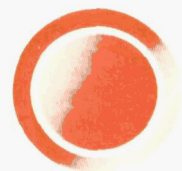
The Epic of Gilgamesh

This is the second of our special OutReach projects for 1985, the International Year of Youth.

William Direen, Carol Direen and Malcolm Doige, called 'The Blue Ladder' troupe are working with the ancient Babylonian hero Gilgamesh. The legend, presented in a four part programme, will open at the Gallery on 5 July.

In retelling the ancient epic, Blue Ladder are hoping to combine the atmosphere

of the earliest civilisations with aspects in the world around us today. Traditionally-made musical instruments, sculptural objects, painting, live and recorded sound, light, photography and drama are all involved making this a particularly exciting project. We are grateful for the Department of Labour employment programme's support and are certain many young Christchurch citizens will enjoy being involved with the Gallery on this programme.



Mountains, Cass



Cass

Presentation to the Gallery

Mountains, Cass, 1936, by Rita Angus, has been presented to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery by Robert Erwin, President of the Friends. The painting, which belonged to Lawrence Baigent and Robert Erwin was exhibited in New Zealand in the recent major showing of Rita Angus's work. After the death earlier this year of Lawrence Baigent, it was Mr Erwin's wish that the painting be given to the Gallery in remembrance of him.

It is one of a group of paintings which were done by Rita Angus of this region of the Alps in 1936. It was not until 1955 that the Gallery first acquired a work by Rita Angus and this was her well known image of the railway station at Cass. A watercolour of the Mountain biological station at Cass belongs to the University of Canterbury which means that three works from the trip to Cass are held in Christchurch. In 1956, the Gallery added **A Goddess of Mercy** to its collection and in 1981 to mark the formation of the Friends as an incorporated society, a watercolour, **Lambeth Palace from Westminster Bridge**, was presented to the McDougall by Mr Erwin and Mr Baigent.

This most recent presentation of **Mountains, Cass** means that the McDougall holds two important examples of the work which Rita Angus was doing during the 1930's. These were vigorous and exciting years for those painters who were aspiring to capture what they felt were the distinctive characteristics of the New Zealand landscape and who explored the imagery of this region. It was during these years in Christchurch that a group of artists and intellectuals who included Lawrence Baigent, Leo Bensemann, Walter

Brookes, Olivia Spencer Bower, Douglas Lilburn, Jean and Rita Angus supported each other, talked together and stimulated each other's work. For Rita Angus, the 1930s were creative years in which she found some basic elements of her style and worked towards those beliefs which she expressed some years later with "I work to represent love of humanity and faith in mankind in a world, which is to me, richly variable and infinitely beautiful".

It is with sadness and affection that the Friends remember Lawrence Baigent for his deep love of art, the ready and generous communication of his insight and for all that was freely given in his own very quiet way.

Coffee Mornings

In April, a morning of pure pleasure was held when Robert Erwin continued his travelogue and talked of galleries he had visited and paintings which excited him in England and America.

In May, Dr Peter Simpson talked to the Friends about Leo Bensemann whose work was the subject of a recent article which appeared in *Untold*. Dr Simpson's critical appreciation, developed by literary references, provided a valuable opportunity to learn more about an artist whose significance has not always received just attention. Dr Simpson, also announced the presentation to the Gallery by the Friends of a landscape painting by Leo Bensemann. Watch for the next issue of the Bulletin.

Future Coffee Mornings

In August, the Director will speak on current developments in the Gallery and on some directions for the future. In July,

Mrs Pam Wilson will discuss the work of the Historic Places Trust in the classification of buildings in the Canterbury area. Her talk will be illustrated by slides of important and threatened buildings.

Three centuries ago this year, Bach, Handel and Scarlatti were born. In September, Robert Erwin will talk about the art and architecture of their time, relating music and images.

Watch for Monster Book and Art Works Sale to be held in Spring by the Friends and for The Gallery.

Further information will appear in the next issue of the Bulletin.

New Members

Sara Cave
Jillian Carey
Mrs J. P. Clark
Rev. John Coleman
Tania Fairhall
Mrs B. Fletcher
Miss Fletcher
Ms A. J. Maginness
Mr and Mrs. Manser
Miss Angela Matheson
Gloria Neale
Cathy Neave
Mark Schroski
Mrs J. B. Struthers
Jean I. Sutherland
Valda Woods

P.O. Box 2626, Christchurch
Rolleston Avenue
President — Robert Erwin 558-675
Secretary — Pat Unger 518-506
Treasurer — Margaret Glass



Stuart Page

**Tripping USA — Photographs by
Stuart Page
6 August to 15 September**

This exhibition consists of 40 colour photographs made in Los Angeles, New York, and other cities during a tour of the USA in 1982.

The tour and Cibachrome printing were both generously assisted by the QEII Arts Council of NZ, and this exhibition has been organised in collaboration with the Manawatu Art Gallery.

The photographs were all taken on long walks up and down the avenues and boulevards of the largest cities in USA. Minimal equipment was used: a 35mm camera with 28mm wide angle lens, and colour-slide film. Trash cans and newspapers boxes were used as tripods where necessary.

The most exciting and relative communication seemed to Stuart to be happening 'on the street', much of it in an unconscious spirit, many people recording their feelings on walls, or dancing, dressing in costume and playing music, as well as accidental collages which occur from layers of paint and paper on surfaces which are scraped away revealing lower layers, and paint which has spilt from a passing truck, or rust and rot and scratches and dents on old steel surfaces. Erosion and trash caused by constant crowds of people passing through streets renders the environment as a hologram from which an understanding of people's concerns and lifestyles can be gradually picked up.

Audio tapes were made on a walkman cassette-recorder in much the same way as the photographs — 'snaps' or 'sketches' — sights and sounds grabbed on small portable machines and later edited and mixed to create a composition of urban cacophony.

Stuart's photographs capture the atmosphere of city life in the States and this is reinforced with the addition of New York sounds pervading the viewing area. This exhibition is the next best thing to tripping USA yourself!



Grant Banbury

**Grant Banbury Artists Project
4 July — 18 August**

Grant Banbury, exhibitions officer at the Canterbury Society of Arts and a well known young artist in the Christchurch community, is the next artist featuring in our Artists Project series.

Since his first exhibition of honours works at the Brooke Gifford in 1979 Grant has been concentrating on works on paper. First in the Terrace Drawings series and then in Paper Parcels and Thread Works we saw his manipulation and experimentation with the material nature of paper.

In this new show however he is applying the distinctly personal elements of his own style to a series of larger works on stretched canvases. The new canvas works still have his usual interest in vertical elements and the interrelationships of horizontal and vertical forms. They have also inherited his use of squeezed paint and of finely threaded thin cotton threads, but this time there is a new sparseness and spaciousness which will greatly interest those closely following his career.

The colour combinations are also those we usually associate with his earlier works. High key colours not much tonal contrast with soft muted shades are again bounced off the occasional element of strong bright colour. Also carrying over from his earlier works are blotches of directly applied paint. This time however they have grown into large areas of thickly textured and strongly marked paint and in this form interact most intriguingly with the more lightly coated canvas surfaces and the fine cotton threads. As before Grant's sense of personal orderliness and preference for crispness and neatness comes out clearly in these new works. The sense of ordered, controlled composition conveys well the balance, harmony and interplay of the formally abstract elements.

This is an interesting exhibition for those who enjoy abstract works and particularly for those following the careers of our younger Christchurch artists. An opportunity will be given to meet the artist at a preview for this exhibition on July 4 at 5 pm. You are all most cordially welcome.

Coming Events

July 1 **Fresh Art** until 11 August **Tom Scott: Hung, Drawn and Quartered**, until 21 July **Anxious Images** until 14 July **17th century works** until 21 July

4 **Artists Project:** Grant Banbury, Canvas Works until 18 August. Opening preview 5 pm.

5 **Gallery Concert The Epic of Gilgamesh, Part I**, a multi-media performance by the Blue Ladder Troupe and supporters, 8pm.

11 **Stuffed Stuff** until 25 August. Opening 7.45pm

17 **Friends Coffee Morning**, 10.30 am Speaker: Mrs. Pam Wilson 'The work of the Historic Places Trust in the Classification of Buildings in the Canterbury Area'

August 1 **Grant Banbury** until 18 August **Stuffed Stuff** until 25 August

6 **Tripping USA** — photographs by Stuart Page

10 **Gallery Concert Petrus van der Velden** — a drama tableau on the life and work of van der Velden by Dramadillo touring theatrical group, 2pm

15 **Maori Rock Drawings** — Theo Schoon's Interpretation until 29 September. Preview 5pm.

21 **Friends Coffee Morning**, 10.30 am Speaker: John Coley: Current Developments in the Gallery and some direction for the future.

30 **Gallery Concert The Epic of Gilgamesh, Part II**, a multi-media performance by the Blue Ladder Troupe and supporters, 8pm