

Bulletin



THE ROBERT McDOUGALL ART GALLERY

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Gerard Dou,
The Physician,
from the Heathcote
Helmore bequest
1965

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Christchurch City Council



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Good Works

30 November 1994–29 January 1995

Most New Zealand public art collections owe their origin in part to the beneficence of citizens and in this the Robert McDougall Art Gallery is no exception. Over the past sixty two years this gallery has acquired hundreds of works through gift or bequest. In acknowledgement of this the exhibition **Good Works** will reveal the extent of the generous support of donors over the years.

The first major gift to the gallery was received at its foundation from the Canterbury Society of Arts (C.S.A.). The society presented a large portion of a collection that had come into being during the previous half century when it also performed the role of Christchurch's Public Art Gallery. As the Robert McDougall Art Gallery building neared completion in 1932 it received the first of many individual gifts of work for its infant collection. The most

prominent of these were *The Dutch Funeral* by Petrus van der Velden presented by H. C. D. Van Asch and *La Lecture de la Bible* by Henriette Browne gifted by R. E. McDougall who was also the donor of the gallery building.

On opening day 16 June, 1932 a total of 15 gifts from other citizens had been assembled in addition to the 118 works presented by the C.S.A.

During August 1932 a further 27 works were passed to the gallery from the family of James Jamieson. Jamieson, on his death in 1927, left all of the 300 works in his Hereford Street home and private gallery to the city. This was perhaps the largest private bequest of art in the history of Christchurch. Unfortunately the acrimony which arose over the acceptance of works from this collection gave rise to protracted argument and deliberation between the principal trustee of the estate and the Christchurch City Council.

This lasted five years and was still unresolved when the gallery opened. The eventual outcome deprived the city of more than 120 paintings it might have had.

However, many fine works were selected including several watercolours which helped to increase the number of works on paper to 28. This modest beginning, considerably assisted by gifts and bequests, was eventually to develop over the years into one of the strengths of the collection. One of the earliest was in 1934 when the trustees of the estate of George Du Maurier presented several drawings by that artist. This gesture was repeated two years later when, on the death of Sir Joseph Kinsey, the gallery received 34 works of printmaking which effectively initiated the print collection.

Whilst there were many donors of works during these early years, there was no monetary bequest to assist in acquiring works. In 1935, however, on the death of Miss May Schlesinger, £200 was received. This was sufficient, three years later, for the judicious purchase by Sydney Lough Thompson of five important contemporary French works for the collection.

Over the years there have been a few individual donors who have regularly supported the gallery with gifts of art. One of the earliest of these was Miss Maureen Chute Raymond who made her first gift to the collection in 1941 and was to continue to be a supporter up until her death in 1978. It was also her initiative that began the gallery's association with the National Art Collections Fund in London. The grants from this over the years enabled a number of works of historical significance to be acquired.

Among the more notable bequests of works in the 1940s were those of the artist Rosa Sawtell received in 1940 and Robert Bell in 1943. The Sawtell bequest included the painting *Summer Morn* by Evelyn Page which was officially withdrawn from public view in 1944 after an objection was made by the model. It was not to be exhibited during her lifetime. This flurry of controversy which began in the early 1940s was minor in comparison with that which erupted in 1949 when several well meaning

citizens attempted to purchase, and gift to the gallery, the now celebrated watercolour *Pleasure Garden* by Frances Hodgkins. Its rejection by the Christchurch City Council was by far the most controversial but was by no means an isolated incident. There have been many other acquisitions by gift or grant which have only been accepted after spirited debate and a degree of controversy. A section of the **Good Works** exhibition will focus on some of these.

Unlike the 1930s and 1940s the gallery received few bequests in the 1950s but many gifts of works. There was, however, a major monetary gift in 1954 from the estate of William Ballantyne. Like the Schlesinger bequest of 1938 this enabled the assisted purchase of a number of significant works during the next two decades.

The 1960s and 1970s were among the richest in the gallery's history for gifts and bequests. Not only were there many made privately, but several were also from the New Zealand Government including two Rodin bronzes gifted in 1964 and the painting *Shoreditch Empire* by Walter Sickert the following year.

The gallery also became a member of the Contemporary Art Society in 1966 and benefited in the years that followed from this membership receiving several gifts of contemporary British works. In 1966 the gallery also received its first grant from the QEII Arts Council, enabling it to acquire the sculpture *The Bather* by Marcello Mascherini albeit under the threat of more controversy. The acquisition in 1969 of 22 works by John Weeks was significant and made possible through the Ballantyne Bequest and a substantial grant from the QEII Arts Council. Among the more notable bequests of the 1960s were those from Lottie Mathews, Heathcote Helmore, Marjorie Bassett, Dorothy Feaver, Sir John Heaton Rhodes and Sir Leonard Woolley.

The number of gifts and bequests from individuals during the 1970s was equally significant. These included substantial additions to the works on paper collection from Gordon H. Brown in 1972. The Gallery also benefited from the generosity of several artists. Among the first to gift

their works to the collection were Gretchen Albrecht, W. A. Sutton, Don Peebles, Alan Pearson, Olivia Spencer Bower, Barry Cleavin and Ria Bancroft.

Throughout the 1980s, whilst there were still numerous individual gifts of work, bequests diminished. The exception, however, was the monetary bequest made by Olive Stirrat in 1983 which has enabled the gallery over the past decade to acquire no fewer than 42 pre-1930 works. The continued assistance of the QEII Arts Council's subsidy purchase grant and the National Art Collections Fund ensured additional acquisition support for both historical and contemporary art.

Collective support has also been important during the past decade. In 1983 John Summers initiated the 'Everyman Fund' through which a significant series of works by G. Trevor Moffitt was acquired.

Also, with the formation of the Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery as an incorporated society in 1981, financial assistance became available and since 1983 many works have been purchased with their help.

The Christchurch Civic Art Gallery Trust was formed in 1991 to enable major additions to be made to the collections.

In the 1990s many of the older agencies for grants and funding have diminished. Grants are no longer available from the Contemporary Art Society or the National Art Collections Fund in London and the QEII Arts Council no longer provides subsidies for picture purchase. But the goodwill of citizens still continues as much as it did in 1932 and it is principally this that **Good Works** recognises through eleven gallery spaces.

In addition two galleries will be devoted to giving the visitor a look behind the scenes at special displays showing what happens to works that are acquired for the collection; how they are stored, and where necessary, how they are conserved.

To accomplish this exhibition and the publication of the commemorative catalogue the gallery is greatly indebted to Trust Bank Canterbury for their sponsorship.

based sculpture and installation, or who work in pure, space inspired, installation. The exhibition will be divided into three parts and will include Andrea Gerbic, Eugene Hansen, Maddie Leach, Carolyn Menzies, and Mark McEntyre in collaboration with Christchurch poet David Howard.

Maddie Leach will open the series with *Pearly Kings* which runs from 20 January to 5 February. The preview will be held 19 January at 5.30 p.m.

Look out for more information on **Inside the Solid** in the next issue of Bulletin!

An Apology

At the conclusion of the obituary of the late T. J. Taylor in the October–November issue of Bulletin, a reference was made to a 'wake' held at the School of Fine Arts during which certain comments were made inappropriate to the occasion.

I have been informed that these comments were not made by present academic staff and that those staff attending expressed their displeasure by withdrawing when the tenor of Mr John Hurrell's remarks became evident.

I therefore extend to the staff of the School of Art my apologies for the unjustified critical references in my article.

John Coley

Inside the Solid

20 January–2 April 1995

Inside the Solid is a series of sculptural installations aimed at complementing the object based exhibition *4X2: A Solid Equation*. **Inside the Solid** will feature five Canterbury trained artists who occupy the ambiguous position between object-

Art Annex

Child's Play

25 November 1994-15 January 1995

My first art memory is when I was four, sitting under the kitchen table, drawing on the table legs. Jane Zusters

While the joys of creation and mark making has inspired many a child and horrified many a parent, memories of childhood and experiences of parenthood have in turn provided 'grown-up' artists with a rich mine of inspiration for work that is enjoyable, exciting and challenging. As Philippa Blair has remarked, art making often begins with play.

Child's Play is an exhibition which focuses on art works inspired by relationships with children and the childhood reminiscences of twelve well known New Zealand artists. The themes that they explore include growing up in New Zealand, the love and fear of scary monsters, toys and games, books and their characters, such as the old favourite but now censored Noddy, and the inevitable advance of adulthood. These themes are expressed in a wide array of media from corrugated plastic to wire, fabric and paint on canvas. Some open and shut to reveal and conceal all sorts of surprises.



Philippa Blair, *Wild Things II*, 1993

Child's Play features: Philippa Blair, Debra Bustin, Judy Darragh, Malcolm Harrison, Nicola Jackson, Richard Killeen, Lauren Lysaght, Jeff Thomson, Philip Trusttun, Lorraine Webb, Tracy Wilson and Jane Zusters.

The preview for **Child's Play** will be held at the Art Annex at 5.30 on 24 November. **Child's Play** is generously supported by the **Apple Education Centre** .

Recent Acquisitions

The following works have been presented or purchased for the collection:

A. W. Walsh

Untitled (Two Men Fishing) 1901

Watercolour Sketch

Presented by Mrs Isobel Prosser

Charles H. Shannon

The Ministrants, 1894

Lithograph

J. M. Madden

Dusky Sound

Watercolour

W. B. Fortescue

In The Mowbay, 1915

Watercolour

Daisy Osborn

Untitled

Doreen Bonifant Bequest

John Buckland Wright

Judgement of Paris

Engraving 12/12

Kathryn Madill

Life of Emily Bronte (1,2,3)

Mezzotint

Tjok Dessauvage

Pot Structure with Energetic Pattern

Stoneware

The Cranleigh Barton Drawing Award 1995

If you recall the highly successful Cranleigh Barton Award which was won last year by Michael Dell with *Spoerri's Table*, you will be interested to hear that we plan to hold this event again in 1995.

The Cranleigh Barton Drawing Award seeks to give clear recognition to excellence in drawing, and to raise the status of this skill in visual arts education and practice. Each time \$2,000 is awarded for a drawing judged

to have the most merit. It is made possible through the legacy of the late Cranleigh Barton, a well-known Christchurch artist, and is jointly presented by the Canterbury Museum, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and the Guardian Trust, the executors of Mr Barton's estate.

Invitations to enter for the award will be issued to New Zealand artists soon with entries closing in early June 1995, and an exhibition of selected works planned for 7 July - 6 August in the McDougall Annex.



Friends at Alison Ryde's Studio on the September LocArt visit

Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery

President—Chris Brocket 355 7133
Vice-President—Mark Stocker 365 3895
Acting Treasurer—John Clark 365 4646
Secretary—Ann Watt 379 4055



Good Works of the Friends

Many of you will have already enjoyed the new **Good Works** exhibition, but not everyone realises the extent to which the Friends themselves have contributed to the permanent collection. Thirteen works have, over the years, been presented to the McDougall by the Friends:

They include - Kevin Capon photographs, and prints or paintings by Barry Cleaven, Sue Cook, Doris Lusk, Quentin Macfarlane, Stuart Page, Olivia Spencer Bower, M. O. Stoddart and Marty Vreede.

LocArt Visit to Alison Ryde

The initiative and planning of June Goldstein over the years has made it possible for many Friends to visit local artists' studios and to talk with the artists about their work and methods. We are most grateful to her for her efforts on our behalf.

The September visit was to the delightful home and unusual studio of Alison Ryde. This tree-top studio, built above a garage and designed by Kerry Mason, is reached via a steep stair along the abstract-textured concrete wall of the garage, painted by the artist in grey, pink and lilac. It has all that an artist could desire: hot water, stereo and well-planned storage for materials, finished and unfinished works. As Alison said, 'It is the first time for me to have a studio at home but still be apart from daily living and it works splendidly.'

Alison Ryde doesn't theorise about her style; instead she talks freely about working methods and the choice of subject matter which ranges from wide, colourful landscapes to intimate garden courtyards. She sets out to 'paint on the spot, working fast with lots of paint', telling amusingly of her struggles in negotiating wire fences on grassy hillsides with wind blowing and a very wet canvas. Alison kindly let us look at her own collection of New Zealand artists and her own works; some of the latter were due to leave for an exhibition in Australia. It was a most informative and pleasant visit, for which we are truly grateful.

LocArt Visit in February

Gennie De Lange, ceramic painter and knitwear designer will show her studios to Friends on Thursday, 9 February 1995. There will be two sessions, 10.30am and 2.30pm, each for a maximum of 20 people. Please meet June Goldstein at 10.20am or 2.20pm outside the studio at 72 Hackthorne Road.

To book (or cancel) please ring the answerphone on 379 4055.

Speaker of the Month

These functions take place on the third Wednesday of each month, commencing at 10.30am with the serving of tea and coffee. The charge is \$1.50 for members, \$2.50 for non-members.

The next programme will be in February. On February 15 the well-known Canterbury artist and actor Jonathan Elsom will talk on his lifelong involvement in the two very different arts and how he spans them.

Speaker of the Month:

Peter Shaw

The *Metro* critic and architectural historian Peter Shaw talked to the Friends in September about his role as Curator of the Fletcher-Challenge collection in Auckland. This ranks as the country's leading corporate collection and has been built up by Peter over the last decade into a fine showcase of contemporary New Zealand art. In his urbane presentation, what emerged was Peter's success in attempting to entertain but also to educate the tastes of the many Fletcher-Challenge employees and visitors. Quite rightly, the quality and interest of the work of art is the bottom line for the acquisition policy, not the name, status or investment potential of the artist. Currently cataloguing the collection, in the longer term Peter hopes that it will tour the country and be seen by a still wider public, a belief endorsed by the appreciative audience present.

Coming Events

December

- 1 **Good Works - until 29 January**
Child's Play - at the Annex - until 15 January
- 2 Friday Club 10.30am
- 3 Saturday Club 10.30am
- 4 *Hagley Singers* Christmas Concert 4.30pm
Margaret Maby Christmas readings for children 4pm
Friends Christmas Party 6.30pm-8.30pm. Tickets \$5 payable at the door
- 7 *Leipzig String Quintet* 5pm. Tickets \$5 at door
- 7 Wednesday Club 10.30am
- 10 Saturday 2 Club 10.30am
- 11 *Margaret Maby* Christmas readings for children 4pm
- 13 *Leipzig String Quintet* 5pm. Tickets \$5 at the door
- 20 *Classical Concert*. 5pm
Free admission.
- 25 A Merry Christmas to you all (and the gallery is closed for the day)

Judy Wilson

Coinciding with her installation **Tall Poppies**, Judy Wilson was our October Speaker of the Month. She had just returned from the Krakamarken Sculpture Park in Denmark where she was one of six overseas artists commissioned to make a sculpture on the face of the land. Judy's work consisted of two large craters, which referred both to Danish monoliths and to the New Zealand terrain. One of the craters was a deep hole, suggesting a hole through the earth into the Antipodes; the other was like a raised volcano, under which New Zealand rocks were buried. The landscape will grow over these 'living sculptures' and they will change through the seasons. Quite apart from the impressiveness of her work, it emerged from the talk that Judy Wilson is highly regarded overseas and Friends were left feeling that she should, in turn, be given the national recognition that she deserves. What better way than by a sculpture following the Krakamarken concept, somewhere in Canterbury?

New Greetings Cards

The Committee wish all Friends and their families warmest compliments of the season. A new set of greetings cards is now available in the Gallery shop, timed to coincide with the festive season but suitable for any occasion. They are: Karl Maughan's *Untitled*, Eileen Mayo's *Mother and Son*, Olivia Spencer Bower's *La Piccola Marina*, *Capri* and Russell Clark's *The Gathering*.

January

- 1 **Good Works until 29 January**
Child's Play at the Annex until 15 January
- 4 Wednesday Club 10.30am
- 6 Friday Club 10.30am
- 7 Saturday Club 10.30am
- 10 *The Second Wind Quintet*. 5pm
No charge
- 15 *The Reluctant Dragon* theatre for children 3.30pm. Performed by the Court Jesters in the Botanic Gardens. Meet at the gallery entrance.
- 17 *The Second Wind Quintet*. 5pm
No charge
- 19 **Inside the Solid** opens at the Annex 5.30pm with Maddie Leach *Pearly Kings*. Until 2 April
- 22 *The Reluctant Dragon* theatre for children 3.30pm. Performed by the Court Jesters in the Botanic Gardens. Meet at the gallery entrance.
- 29 *The Reluctant Dragon* theatre for children 3.30pm. Performed by the Court Jesters in the Botanic Gardens. Meet at the gallery entrance.