

news

NUMBER TWO, July, 1965

DURHAM STREET ART GALLERY LOAN EXHIBITION

of Paintings, Objects d'art, Silver from
Canterbury Homes.

PRIVATE VIEW FOR MEMBERS AND GUESTS
Saturday, July 10th, 8 p.m.

Admission 5/- A specially selected N.Z. Sherry
per head will be served

This Loan Exhibition will open daily until Sunday July 25th but come to the Private Viewing for members, friends and exhibitors (see above) and meet your friends. A good sherry will be served you. We believe this is one of the most interesting exhibitions we have had. Never before has it been possible to see such a collection of paintings, objects d'art and silver from Canterbury homes.

The late Mr. Heathcote Helmore first suggested it. When we invited members to tell us what they would lend the response was immediate. By mail and phone replies came in and within three or four days we had offers enough to fill two more galleries. This was wonderful but also a bit sad for it meant we had to make a selection—we could not show too many of one artist's work—some will just have to wait for another day but the Organising Committee sincerely thanks everybody. Many paintings to be hung have never before or only once previously been exhibited.

The exhibition lay-out has been designed by Mr Tom Taylor of the School of Fine Arts to whom we are most grateful. The historical painting section is under the guidance of Mrs Rona Fleming and Mr John Oakley. The contemporary section, Miss Ivy Fife, Mr Quentin Macfarlane and Mr W. A. Sutton and Mrs Joan Gross and willing helpers are organising the objects d'art and silver.

We will defray expenses and the surplus will be put to the re-building fund so help by coming yourself to the opening and tell all your friends.

HEATHCOTE HELMORE

The Council records its deep regret at the death of Mr Helmore. He joined the Society as a working member in February 1913. He was elected to the Council in October 1926 and served as a Council member until his retirement in 1962. He was a Vice-President of the Society from 1930. His span of close association with the Society thus covered more than half the lifetime of the Society itself and his great services were recognised when he was made an Honorary Life Member at a General Meeting in 1963. It is difficult in short compass to cover the great help he gave to the Society in the many years of his close association. His active assistance on every occasion with the Society's regular exhibitions and his planning and staging of many important special exhibitions are practical examples of his assistance over many years, but equally important was his wise counsel and advice which were generously available at all times. His knowledge of the visual arts was wide and his approach tolerant. Although he preferred traditional painting, he was genuinely interested in and appreciative of modern movements in art and one of his valuable contributions was to be a helpful bridge between the old and the new. His services to the Society for more than fifty years are incalculable and we will always remember him with deep affection and respect.

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NOTES FROM THE SOCIETY'S RECORDS

This publication of the newsletter celebrates the 85th anniversary of the first General Meeting of the Society. The first entry in the Minute Book of the Society is dated 8th July 1880. On this date a General Meeting was held at the Public Library with Mr H. J. Tancred as Chairman. The Laws of the Canterbury Society of Arts were agreed to and the date was set for the enrolling of members. At the subsequent meeting the first Council of the Society was elected. The President was H. J. Tancred Esq., the Vice-President H. Wynn-Williams Esq., and Captain E. F. Temple was Treasurer and Secretary. Councillors elected were Professor J. von Haast, Professor F. A. Hutton, Professor C. H. Cooke, Rev. E. G. Penny and Messrs T. S. Cousins, B. W. Mountfort, C. C. Corfe, L. Harper, H. P. Lance, L. Melville, J. E. Parker and H. A. Scott.

The first Annual Report of the Society 1880-81 reads as follows:—

The Council in presenting their 1st Annual Report have to congratulate the Members on the successful commencement of the Society. The Exhibition was held in the Boys' High School, the free use of which was liberally granted by the Board of Governors of Canterbury College. It was open for a period of 24 days from 18th June to 13th July and may be regarded as having been fairly successful. The total number of visitors was 633. The number of original works exhibited 105. 23 Works were sold value £145. There was also a loan Collection of 41 works of very considerable merit and interest and the thanks of the Society are due to those gentlemen who so kindly lent their pictures. The Council deeming it advisable to give every aid to the Working Members and at the same time to form the nucleus of a gallery of art belonging to the Society, which may hereafter develop into one of some importance, passed a resolution devoting a large portion of the credit (after defraying all expenses) to the purchase of one or more works of art exhibited by members and accordingly this year they have purchased for the Society a work of Mr J. Gibb which Dr. von Haast has kindly allowed to be hung, for the present, in the Museum. The financial position of the Society may be considered as satisfactory. The total number of members is now 61.

The painting purchased "Shades of Evening," (an oil) was later given to the McDougall Art Gallery. The price was 22 gns.

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Recently the paintings and sculpture that formed the bulk of the Society's Permanent Collection were exhibited when the two galleries were not required for other exhibitions. The Council felt that the Collection, which was originally formed to encourage painters and to establish a representative survey of New Zealand art, should be made available for viewing by members, friends and for the schools of Christchurch.

In the plans for the new gallery provision is being made for permanent exhibition of those works which the Society owns. The time is therefore opportune to review the collection objectively and estimate its artistic, historical and cultural value to the Society and Christchurch.

As seen in the extracts of the first Annual Report of 1881 the aims of the founders of the Society regarding the Permanent Collection were farsighted and visionary but have these commendable aims been honoured?

It becomes apparent when studying the records of the Collection from its inception that had all the paintings remained in the Society's possession a more comprehensive coverage of New Zealand art would have existed. From 1880 until about 1910 the Society, with the intention of forming a gallery collection, acquired, by purchases from its exhibitions, from overseas purchases and from generous bequests and donations, an historically important survey. As there was no Municipal Art Gallery at that time the Society fulfilled this function with its own gallery and the collection was available at most times during the year for the people of Christchurch.

In 1912 the Christchurch City Council began to take an active interest in the Society's collection and made available grants for the purchasing of works for the future city collection. When the McDougall Art Gallery was opened these works formed the nucleus of their present-day collection. In addition the Canterbury Society of Arts generously presented a selection of its more important paintings to the McDougall Gallery. This gift entitled them to representation on the controlling body of the McDougall Gallery and the right to "appoint a sub-committee consisting of representatives of the Canterbury Society of Arts to deal with the technical and artistic side of the work and to inspect all pictures and decide which were of sufficient merit to be hung."

After the opening of the McDougall Gallery the Society was left with a depleted collection, but it continued to purchase works although unfortunately it appears that many works purchased in the 1930's and 1940's were not of gallery proportions and many were purchased for sentimental reasons. Perhaps because the city collection had been established the need to have a second representative collection was considered unnecessary.

In the 1950's it is evident that the Society embarked on a more ambitious plan of purchasing works by painters not represented in the collection. As an example the Raymond McIntyre Self Portrait was bought by the Society and subscribers, but the works were still of domestic proportions, and in many cases were minor works.

After Mr Andre Brooke closed his Gallery 91 and became the Society's new Secretary a fresh approach to the purchase of works was evident, and many new names began to appear on the records of the Society's Collection. Several major works by established artists were acquired. Among these works were important landscapes by M. T. Woollaston and Russell Clark and a major painting in the "Sunflower" series by Ivy Fife. Lately the purchases have included such diverse, interesting and important works as Ria Bancroft's bronze "Eclipse" and the Greer Twiss bronze "Exhausted Athlete" also a very distinctive pot from the Hamada collection. Another interesting feature of the purchases during this period has been the selection of paintings from a few of the serious younger painters. If the Society had bought paintings from many of today's important artists when they were becoming established the collection would have been more representative at a considerable saving and the aims of the original founders of the Society would have been more closely followed.

It is apparent that there are many serious gaps in the Collection—not only works of members of our own Society but from other artists of considered repute in New Zealand. To give a few examples the Society does not own a Gopas, or a Colin McCahon. The Collection has two earlier Suttons but does not possess anything of his more mature work. Of the many promising painters an outstanding omission would be the work of E. N. Bracey.

Of course it must be remembered that the funds of the Society are limited. At the present time the Society is committed to building an important New Gallery but it would be a wise move for the Council to bear in mind that once the gallery is built the need to have an interesting and rewarding collection of art upon its walls will be fundamental to the maintenance of interest in the gallery.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Society since the last News was published.

Miss Sharon K. Alston	Mr A. J. Johnston
Mrs Helen C. Bennet	Mrs S. M. Lawrence
Mr J. Bremner	Mr Norman Lemon
Mr Murray Coulter	Mr R. W. Mitchell
Mrs R. J. Cutler	Mr B. L. Ninn
Mrs N. C. Drayton	Mr John R. Turner
Mrs J. E. Fogden	Mrs D. Williams
Mrs N. P. Jamieson	Mr James R. Wyley

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS ANNUAL EXHIBITION

The Annual Exhibition of painting, sculpture, graphic and textile design seen in the gallery during June revealed a high standard of achievement in each of these fields. The faults in a lot of the work shown was not of a disturbing nature nor were they necessarily indicative of a fundamental lack of ability. Rather they pointed to the fact that while there is no substitute for accumulated experience such experience will come when the training of the young person places greater emphasis on the creative rather than the imitative act.

The textiles displayed a careful introspective concern for colour, form and structure whilst many of the painters showed a quick instinctive response to the more rapidly developing images. The graphic works were, in spite of understandable shortcomings, never dull—form was never allowed to get bogged down by static lifeless line. In the sculpture the existing character of the material used did much to influence the finished design. Where, for example, wood was used its inherent qualities were preserved.

The works of each group of students—painters, sculptors and designers went a long way towards showing the dynamic nature of the creative force. The fact that Art is something basically natural to man; an activity motivated by a faith in the actuality of existence, was as amply demonstrated in this students' exhibition as in any other.

D.P.

PRICES FOR PAINTINGS

An exhibition of Australian paintings was held by the Auckland Society of Arts in 1948. The work they exhibited included a Russell Drysdale sketch—price 20 guineas.

The Australian Financial Review is a daily paper in Sydney, devoted to company reports, stock exchange quotations etc. In the issue of May 26th, there is a well written article on buying paintings for investment and among examples given of prices now being paid for the work of some Australian painters, the writer says—"A Drysdale is now unprocurable at £4,000"—and—"Ten or even six years ago, one could buy a Dobell for £60, for which today is bid £700 by a dealers who intends to resell." A good many Nolans on view in Australian galleries today are priced at from around 1,000 to as high as 8,000 guineas.

In recent months paintings of the New Zealand artist C. J. Goldie, have sold at from 250-700 guineas. Is this a sign that in New Zealand we may be about to see something of the sort of thing that has happened to prices for paintings in Australia. It could be true for the older New Zealand artists no longer living, and for some older New Zealand artists who have passed their peak. This writer recently had the experience of selling for 80 guineas a painting by a well-known New Zealand artist which had been bought only seven years ago for approximately half the price.

This is not a plea to New Zealand artists to raise prices. Better that they maintain their reasonable prices meantime, sell and obtain recognition from a wider market, rather than store their work in a back room. This is certainly, however, a plea to buyers to recognise that there are bargains available in New Zealand today for those who have an eye to see. Soon jet planes will bring more visitors to this country and like travellers everywhere, many will wish to take away a souvenir. Many will prefer a painting by a New Zealand artist rather than a Maori doll, a piece of greenstone, or even a 12 inch ruler made of as many varieties of New Zealand woods. If galleries are available wherein visitors can select New Zealand work, our established artists may be on the doorstep of a bigger market, wider recognition and better prices.

Already there are commercial buyers. A well-known city store recently purchased a painting of Susan Chaytor from our last Autumn Exhibition and our Society recently received a request to aid in the selection of a large painting for a chain of hotels. There is today a fast increasing interest.

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NEW GALLERY

The Minister of Lands, Hon. R. G. Gerard, who is Chairman of the Canterbury Provincial Buildings Board has now advised that the Board cannot support an application for an Art Gallery on this Historic Site and consent is therefore refused.

At a recent meeting the Council of the Society decided to seek clarification of the Government's view in regard to future use of the old Council Chambers and possible use of the land to build an Art Gallery. The Council is grateful to the Minister and Board for its consideration of this matter and it is hoped that a decision on the site of a new gallery will not be far away.

GALLERY PROGRAMME

LOAN EXHIBITION—10th July to 25th July.
SECONDARY SCHOOLS' ART EXHIBITION, Organised by the Christchurch Star—7th August to 20th August.
SPRING EXHIBITION—10th September to 26th September.

WORKING MEMBERS NEWS

The EXHIBITION OF NEW ZEALAND SCULPTURE POTTERY AND GRAPHIC ART will be held at the N.Z. Academy of Fine Arts Gallery from 28th August to 19th September. Receiving date in Wellington 27th July, 1965.

Art books recently acquired by the Canterbury Public Library

The art of Buddhism—Dietrich Seckel; Art treasures of Japan—Yukio Yashiro; An aesthetic approach to Byzantine art—P. A. Micheles; The technique of sculpture—John Mills; The new 'how' to draw—Victor Perard; Creative pencil drawing—Paul Hogarth; The Tudor, Stuart and early Georgian pictures in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen—Oliver Millar; Bonnard: Biographical and critical study by Antoine Terrasse; Delacroix—Text by Maximilien Gauthier; Matisse—Jean Selz; Rembrandt and his world—Christopher White; Turner—Sir John Rothenstein and Martin Butlin; Life with Picasso—Francoise Gilot and Carlton Lake.

ROBERT McDUGALL ART GALLERY

The Christchurch City Council will show in early August in the Robert McDougall Art Gallery the **Contemporary Painting in New Zealand** exhibition recently shown at the Commonwealth Institute, London.

The **Contemporary German Painting Exhibition** will be shown in September—dates will be specified in the next News.

JUNIOR ART CLASSES

For the past few years the Society of Arts has been organising a Junior Art Class for children every Saturday morning during term times. At present a very happy and industrious band of children are working under the tutorship of Mr Ray Mitchell and Mr Maurice Angelo. The children's class takes children from the ages of 7 to 14 years and the special tutoring class is for students sitting School Certificate Art. Parents interested are invited to call and see the classes at work Saturday mornings between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. There is a reduction for the children of members of the Society. It is hoped to hold an exhibition of their work in September.

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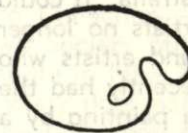
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