

# PREVIEW

NOV/DEC 1988 143

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PROFILE / DON PEEBLES







The Journal of the Canterbury Society of Arts  
66 Gloucester Street Christchurch,  
New Zealand P.O. Box 772, Christchurch  
Phone 667-261, 667-167.

**Gallery Hours**  
Monday-Friday 10am-4.30pm  
Saturday-Sunday 2pm-4.30pm

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

There has been some criticism recently about the visibility of art by women at the CSA. For the record the CSA is exhibiting 102 shows in 1988. These comprise group shows, travelling shows (national and international) and one person shows. Of these 102, 30 are one person shows by women, and many are group shows or two person shows that include works by women.

In April and early May of this year we exhibited "28 Christchurch Artists", this exhibition was entirely of art by women. It included work by Pat Unger, Valerie Heinz, Sue Cooke, Kathy Anderson, Liz Hancock, Helen Sutherland, Audrey Parker, Alison Ryde, Barbara Mitchell, Tomoko McKnight, Glenys Parry, Margaret Ryley, Linda Hart, Diane Swain, Lucille Vial, Margaret Hudson-Ware, Josie Jay, Rachel Harre, Helen Rockel, Catherine Brough, Marian Maquire, Sarah Anderson, Tiffany Thornley, Judy Vaughan, and Rosemary Roake.

As I write this column we are exhibiting a fine one-person show by Dunedin artist Angela Burns, ceramics by Marie Ross, banners by Robin Royds, an exhibition entitled Exit Stage Four which includes works by 5 women artists and a 3 person show of 3 women artists: Margaret Parker, Celia Guy and Julia Cleveland-Brooks.

In 1989 look forward to exhibitions by major West German abstract painter Gisela Genter, Wellington artist Barbara Strathdee, an Olivia Spencer-Bower retrospective, sculpture by Marion Fountain currently exhibiting in Milan to much acclaim, Diane Miller's strong paintings of interior life, Susan Chaytor... the list could go on.

Chris Taylor

## MIXED MEDIA

### CSA Guthrey Award

The recipient of the 1989 CSA Guthrey Award is Michael Reed. Michael is well known for his outstanding work particularly in the printing media. His work is represented in public and private collections both here and overseas. He has exhibited widely in New Zealand, and last exhibited at the CSA Gallery in 1980, although he has been represented in many group shows since then. Michael is a tutor at the Craft Design and Visual Communication course at the Christchurch Polytechnic.

### Summer Painting Workshop

29 Dec-6 Jan  
(excluding New Years day)  
Venue: Art Centre

An untutored workshop with draped and undraped models — 3 hour poses.  
9-12 am; 1-4 pm. Fee \$80.00  
Limited to 12 Places

### Contact organiser:

Josie Jay  
Tancreds Road  
RD 2 Christchurch  
Phone 252-467

### Louise Henderson NZ Artist

Elizabeth Grierson, Auckland University, is researching Louise Henderson's life and work, for a Masters Degree Thesis. She requests information on the artist, personal accounts of association, teacher-pupil experiences, collaboration with other artists, and location of works in public and private collections for production of a Catalogue.

Full acknowledgement of all assistance will be given. Please forward relevant information to 4 Lucerne Rd, Auckland 5; or phone Auckland 501-161, collect.

## SUBSCRIPTION INVOICES

### NOTICE OF ERROR

Members please note that there is a printing error on your subscription invoice.

Instead of reading: Annual Subscription to 30th September 1988, it should read ... to 30th September 1989.

All subscriptions are paid in advance for the financial year 1 October 1988 to 30th September 1989.

Cover: Janine Mayson 1987

photo by Maurice Lye



# PROFILE

## Gerrit van der Lingen talks with Don Peebles

(Talks nrs. 1 (Bill Sutton) and 2 (Doris Lusk) were published in CSA News Nrs 93 and 101)

### Biographical data

Born 5 March 1922 in Taneatua (15 km southwest of Whakatane, Bay of Plenty). Father a public servant with the Railways. Two brothers. Educated at Wadestown Primary School and Wellington College. Married with two sons and a daughter. From 1937 worked for the Post Office. Attended evening classes at Victoria University in Wellington to obtain further qualifications for a Post Office career. Became controlling officer, later staff training officer for the Wellington District. Served during the war as signalman in the army, first in the Pacific (Solomon Islands), towards the end of the war in Italy. Returned to the Post Office in 1946. In 1947 started part-time art studies at the Art School of the Wellington Technical College. From 1950 to 1953 studied full-time at the Julian Ashton Art School in Sydney, under John Passmore. Went to London in 1960 on an Association of New Zealand Art Societies fellowship. Stayed for two-and-a-half years. Also travelled around continental Europe. Started his career at the University of Canterbury in 1965, when appointed Lecturer at the School of Fine Arts. Became Head of Painting in 1980, Reader in 1982, and was Acting Head in 1985-86, after which he retired from the University. Is now painting full-time. During his career travelled extensively to America, Europe and Australia.

**GvdL** When did you become interested in art?

**DP** As a small boy. I was supposed to be the best at drawing in primary school. When I was in standard six, I sometimes even was asked to give art classes for standards three and four. I was good at art and good at sport. They were my main interests, and still are.

**GvdL** Was there a particular moment in which you realised that you wanted to practise art more professionally?

**DP** Oh, yes. I was doing it seriously before I went into the army. I was trying to copy Matisse and things like that from reproductions, and wondering why I could not get those seemingly simple pieces right. I was more successful in getting right some academic copy. But this wonderful quality of Matisse which looks so simple. I tried to work in that way, not directly copying. But it just collapsed on me all the time and I slowly started to realise that there was so much more to Matisse and similar artists that simply could not be just picked up from a reproduction and pushed onto another piece of paper, as I could with Royal Academy type paintings. There is this subliminal magic which comes across, that one in one's youthful naivety simply cannot copy or grasp. You respond to it, as I did. Mind you, one never saw many Matisse reproductions in those days, but a few came out in Studio Magazine which I subscribed to. These were the things which interested me. I was never really interested in academic art, although my first four years at art school were devoted exclusively to it. And I went along with it.

**GvdL** Were those evening art classes in Wellington?

**DP** Yes. Life classes in the weekends and life classes in the evenings. A friend and I also went out to paint landscapes on Sundays. It was getting close to full-time art school. I was working every day. It was very academic. I remember, once, somebody in Wellington had imported some Fauvist prints and those were on view in a shop. There was this wonderful Derain. It was quite a big one, a landscape with these brilliant punches of colour, evoking light, not trying to copy it. Next day at art school I mentioned it, but the teacher really could not understand it. He said "what is so good about it. You say it's good. I saw those things, they were terrible. No drawing, no this, no that". And, of course. I could not really say what was good about it in any words that he could accept, or words that I could accept myself. I just felt that kick in the guts when I saw them.

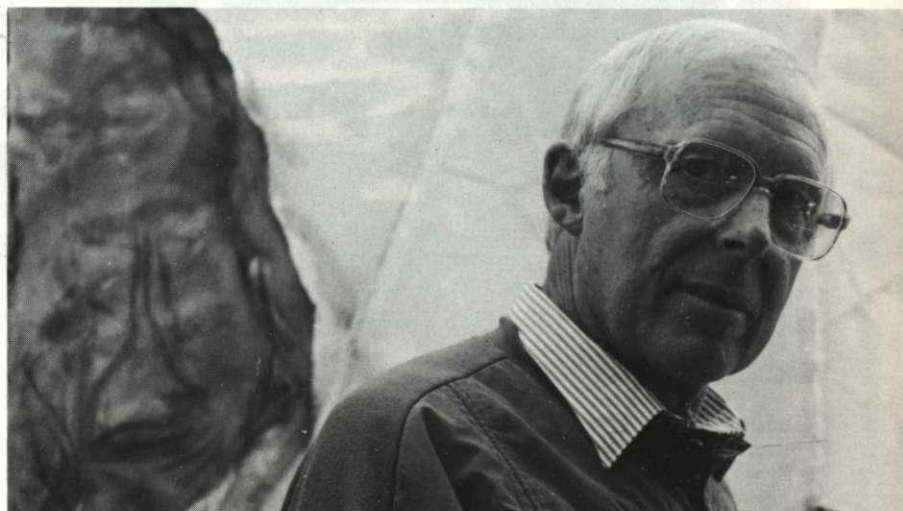
**GvdL** Could you put it into words now?

**DP** I could say more than I said then, but the power and mystery of art is something one can never translate into words, because it is eloquently stated visually. But when one is teaching, one has to resort to words at times. One cannot just confront students and say "look, that's wonderful, because I think it's wonderful". You go through a process of analysis. When I was trying to copy those Matisse reproductions, I suppose I was looking in a sense in a descriptive way, but I couldn't catch them, couldn't get the magic.

awareness of the Bonnards, the Picassos, cubism, Cezanne, etc. That was modernism to me. That was the latest thing as far as I knew in those days. There was still a tremendous emphasis on drawing, but not on the academic sense. It was more a concern about differences in planes, structure, a deeper and more penetrating analysis of reality. That, I think, was the catalyst for me. I knew then that I had my direction in some way, although I did not quite know yet what I wanted to do. I stayed for three years. By that time I felt that I probably had enough of art schools. I had seven years. It was time to get out.

**GvdL** You are known as an abstract artist. When did you start to paint abstract?

**DP** I made my first purely abstract works in 1961. That was in London. I had been moving towards abstraction for a number of years before that. I left art school and came back to New Zealand in December 1953. As I mentioned earlier, I had this wish to be free of art schools, to find my own path and to try to make personal sense of what I learned from teachers. I did not make a conscious decision to become an abstract artist, not at all. I did not quite know what I was doing, but looking back on it one sometimes understands. What I was doing from 1954 to 1960 was part of this process of trying to make sense of things, and it was a slow six or seven year process in which I was trying to remove from my work things which I felt in some way

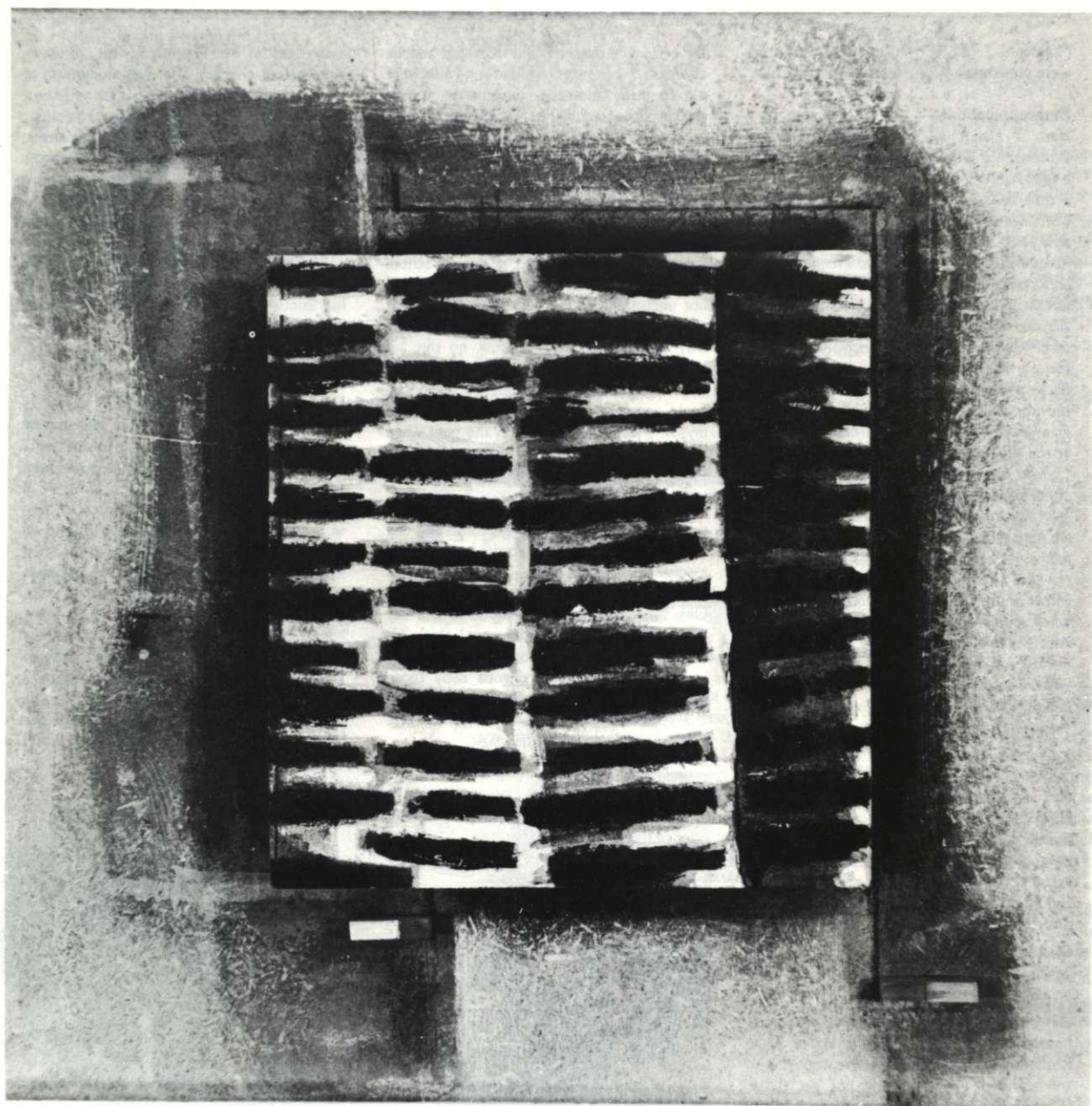


**GvdL** But the result was that you became aware of what was behind them.

**DP** Yes, and that's why I went to Australia. I just felt that this was for me, and that really nothing much was going on in Wellington other than us being taught to draw a foot that looked like a foot. I didn't think that it was entirely a waste of time. I probably got things from it. But I knew from those reproductions that those people were not concerned with all the things that we were being taught. So I went to Sydney, to the Julian Ashton Art School to study under John Passmore. Although he was not a great modernist in the sense that he was up with the latest developments in modern art, he did bring to us, and introduced us to this

contradicted my intentions as an artist. I felt that naturalism was no longer a thing that really interested me. I was much more interested in the juxtaposition of shapes, light and luminosity. So I tended to pare down the naturalistic content of my work, and tried to build my own artistic rationale of what was left once I had discarded the things that were for me personally useless baggage and therefore undesirable. This paring away of things that did not interest me and building my structures from elements that did, was a long process, and it is still going on, of course. After this long process I thought one day, gosh I am an abstract artist. I had not really thought that I was moving towards abstraction.

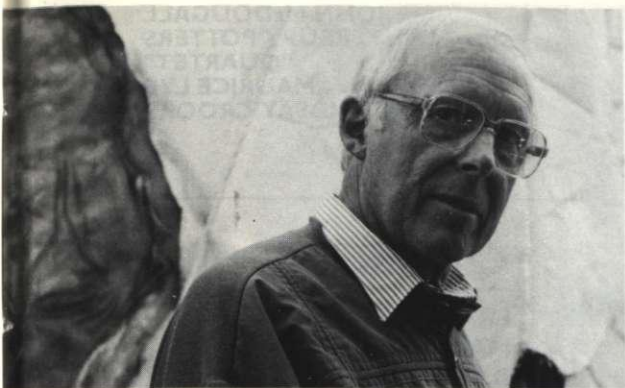




*Don Peebles / Relief Painting*

*By kind permission of the McDougall Art Gallery*





**GvdL** Your description explains the process of abstract art very well.

**DP** Another word that one could use for this process is "expunging". Or perhaps the correct dictionary understanding of the word abstraction: to delete, to take from. The feelings I had that I did not need this or that often left a bit of a vacuum. I sometimes wondered what the hell I did need. I never reached the stage in art when I just could comfortably paint a picture, as I could when I was painting representations. I go through endless studies, maquettes and drawings. It is as much of a struggle to me now as it was then. In fact, it is more of a struggle now than it ever was.

**GvdL** I remember, years ago, Max Gimblett giving a lecture to your students. You kindly invited me to attend. One of the things he talked about was "ancestors". He used the term in the sense that every artist has other artists who are important to him, and have influenced him. You already mentioned a few of your "ancestors", like Matisse, Cezanne, Braque, and Derain.

**DP** You can add Giotto to that. And Rembrandt, with capital letters.

**GvdL** Any others?

**DP** Titian is another. I see connections between Titian and Renoir. I don't think anybody else does. I saw that when I was overseas once, and visiting the National Gallery. I could elucidate that more clearly if we would be standing in front of works by them both. Poussin would be another one. They are all artists who have dealt more specifically with art's formal structure rather than art's literary connotations. This results in works that are more completely autonomous rather than referring to and depending upon something outside themselves.

**GvdL** What about Mondrian?

**DP** Oh, yes, he certainly is an "ancestor".

**GvdL** I know that you are an admirer of Mondrian. How would you describe his work?

**DP** Mondrian works are apparently static, rigid, grid-like structures. But he is going for what he calls "dynamic equilibrium". Even with his colours. They are always solidly locked within a square or a rectangle. Not flowing into anything else. The colours become very abstract in that way. The lines and grids are precisely placed. Superficially, his pictures look very static, almost mathematically contrived. But overriding all this is a wonderful spatial sense, in the way

the colours are placed within the grid. The balance is dynamic rather than static-symmetrical. Pulling and pushing both in and out, up and down. The most direct dynamic opposition is the right angle. He was dealing with equilibrium, dynamically stated. Mondrian's work is to me as vibrant and active, and spatially conscious as a Jackson Pollock. His work has a direct relevance to nature. Although, the story goes that, when he went into a cafe with a lovely view through the window, he would turn his back to it. But he probably did that as a bit of a joke. He had a great sense of humour. I'll tell you a wonderful story. When he first arrived in New York, he was taken to see a dealer, who was living high up in a skyscraper. He walked into this room looking out over a concrete jungle. But clinging to a wall outside were these spindly little twigs of a plant, desperately trying to hold on. That was the only sign of anything relating to nature. Mondrian, seeing this pathetic little plant, turned to the dealer and said: "I had no idea you were living in a rural area".

**GvdL** That's a marvellous story. In his early years, Mondrian was of course very much a "rural" painter. His famous chrysanthemums, landscapes with farms, and his later fauvist paintings of windmills, dunes and clouds. Those were exuberant, expressionistic paintings. I have therefore always been intrigued by his last works, the Boogie-Woogie paintings he did in New York. I feel that he was "loosening up", almost returning to earlier experiences. Where would he have ended up, had he not died from that pneumonia? Canvas paintings like Peebles? You seem to have gone through a somewhat similar phase as Mondrian. But there has always been a looseness in your work. That is especially apparent in your drawings, like we have seen recently in the McDougall Art Gallery, when they showed your travelling exhibition "Drawings of the eighties". But there were not only drawings, there were also some canvases.

**DP** Yes, those were added on request from the McDougall Art Gallery people, to show where some of those drawings were heading.

**GvdL** Are many of your drawings working drawings?

**DP** Most of those drawings in the exhibition were. As you have seen in my studio, they are lying all over the place. Just notations, sketches, bits and pieces. The process of drawing is going on all the time. I might be watching TV and do a few sketches from a programme.

**GvdL** You also do landscapes. What is the purpose of those?

**DP** Just looking at shapes and things. I may be sitting in the car and my wife is driving, and I make a few quick sketches of the landscape we are travelling through. I draw constantly. It is all part of trying to solve painterly problems.

**GvdL** What are the philosophical or conceptual problems you are trying to solve in painting?

**DP** Stated in its simplest form, to me the problem is to make a good painting. I have not solved in any sense the riddle of how one makes a good painting.

**GvdL** What is a good painting?

**DP** I am more interested in the question than in the answer. I feel that once a thing has been answered it is already obsolete. Therefore one must push on beyond that. Art to me, rather than being some fixed and unchanging entity, the mere repetition of what old masters did, is an ongoing evolution, an ongoing sense of possibilities. In my paintings and constructions I am trying to solve an internal problem which I have, about the nature of art as I see it. I know I'll never solve that problem, I don't want to solve that problem. I want to confront it, to try to handle it. I am just trying to find out what it's all about for me. Using the means which I feel comfortable with, painting on canvas, or three-dimensional structures of wood and perspex.

**GvdL** How do you see the function of those products?

**DP** I wrote that down recently for the catalogue of Di Lana rugs. They executed a few designs for me, which will be exhibited shortly in the New Zealand Embassy in Washington. I hope to be there for the opening. That statement I wrote for them is not about my approach to rugmaking, but about my work generally. This is what I wrote: "Concerning my work I can say little more than this — my intention is to realise pieces which are self-sufficient, governed by their own internal rhythms and dependant neither upon verbal explanation nor literary association. My paintings, for example, proclaim no messages, nor do they act as envoys in the service of this or that transient significance. I acknowledge, however, a certain altruism which impels me to seek imaginative and idealistic alternatives to the moral grubbiness of our world. If ever I succeed in this aim I shall have created something of social as well as artistic value".

**GvdL** What would be the social value?

**DP** The social value of, say, a Mondrian. Opposed to all moral grubbiness. I do not mean moral in a puritanical sense. Mondrian's work stands like a beacon of rationality and uncorrupted vision. A sort of purity of thought activity.

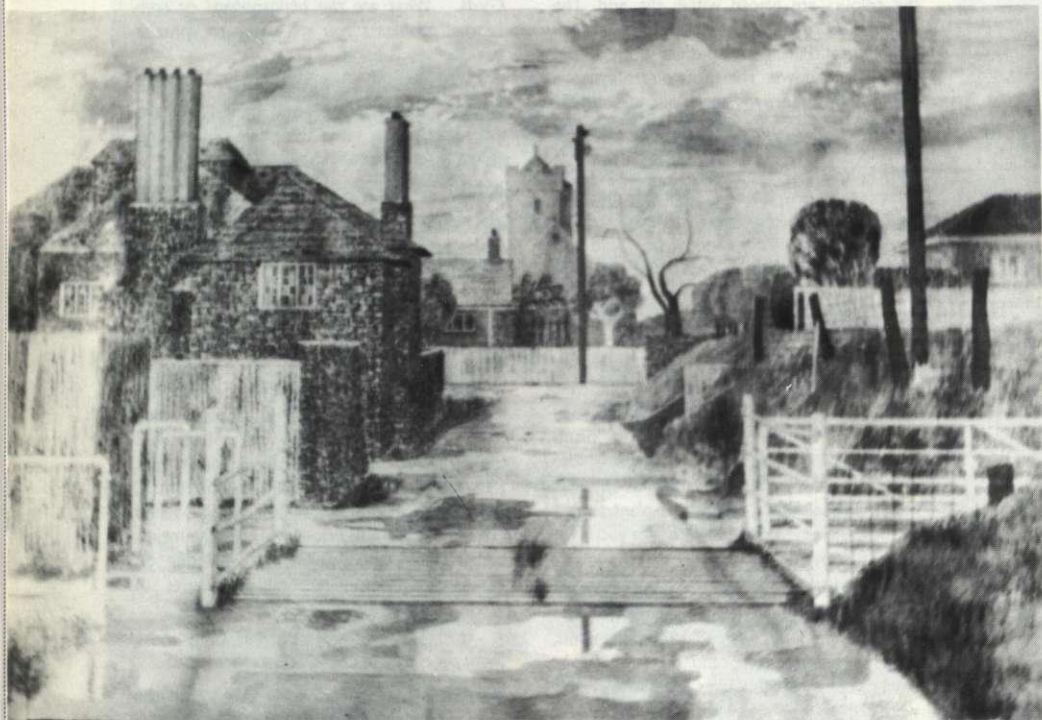
Discussion was held on 16 April and 14 May 1988.



# EXHIBITIONS

9-20 NOVEMBER  
PREVIEW 8 NOVEMBER

JOHN McDUGALL  
CANTERBURY POTTERS  
"QUARTET"  
MAURICE LYE  
LINDSAY CROOKS



Shakespeare Village Landscape / Maurice Askew



Work from Stone Sculpture Symposium 1988 on  
view at Spencer Park / John McDougall

## QUARTET

FRANCIS ALLISON  
MAURICE ASKEW  
DAVID CHEER  
FREDERIKA ERNSTEN

Jewellery and Silverwork  
Francis Allison

A Christchurch artist who has trained extensively overseas, particularly in London and Israel, exhibited widely and also held teaching positions. This is the first exhibition of work 'back home'.



Earrings / 18ct gold inlay silver by Francis Allison

Landscape Paintings  
Maurice Askew

Graduated Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts. He was head of design at Granada Television then moved to Christchurch to set up graphic, photographic and film sections at Canterbury School of Fine Art. The paintings are a set of eight Shakespeare village landscapes.

Drawings

David Cheer

Recent work to be shown in this exhibition — large and in colour.

Pottery

Frederika Ersten

Well known for her finely controlled functional work, she uses variations on a deliberately limited range of semi-matt glazes to develop a subtle harmony of form and surface. ••

Sculpture

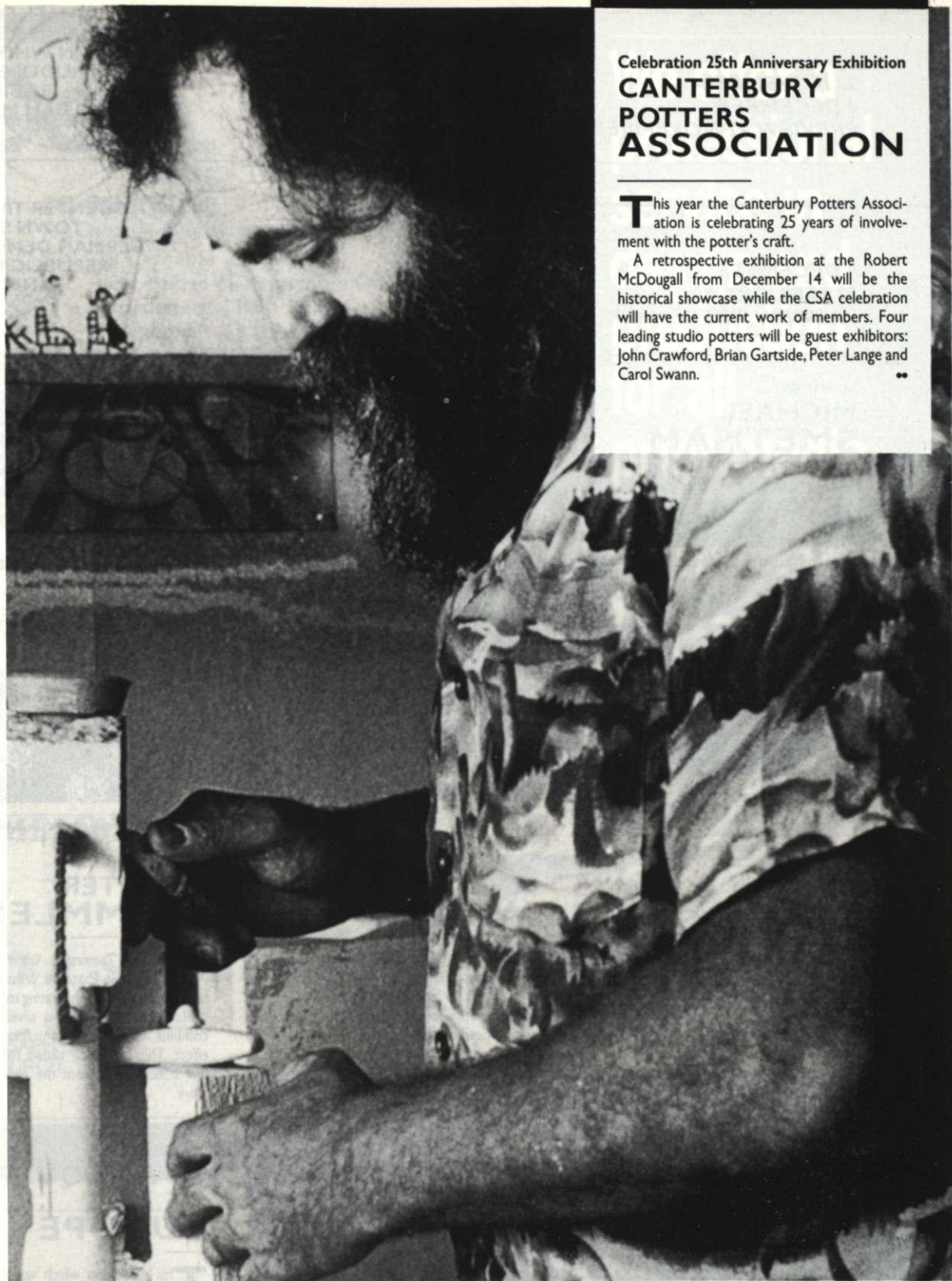
JOHN  
McDOUGALL

Born 1952. Attended Art School, Dunedin 1972-4. John's sculptural work and drawings have been shown in exhibitions throughout NZ.

Work for this exhibition includes sculpture in Oamaru Stone, Serpentine and Totara, and pastel and ink drawings. ••



Peter Lange at work / photo by Anna Campbell



## Celebration 25th Anniversary Exhibition **CANTERBURY POTTERS ASSOCIATION**

**T**his year the Canterbury Potters Association is celebrating 25 years of involvement with the potter's craft.

A retrospective exhibition at the Robert McDougall from December 14 will be the historical showcase while the CSA celebration will have the current work of members. Four leading studio potters will be guest exhibitors: John Crawford, Brian Gartside, Peter Lange and Carol Swann. ••

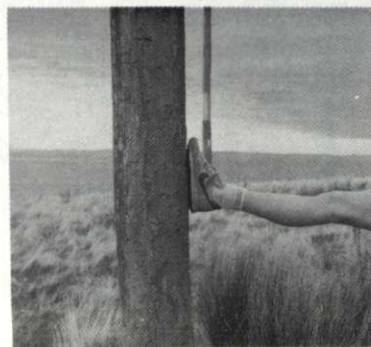
## **LINDSAY CROOKS**

**I**n his work Lindsay Crooks combines a passion for experimenting and a love for his environment which gives a unique vision of coastal, rural New Zealand and its people.

Portraits / Colour Photographs

## **MAURICE LYE**

**M**y photographic direction has evolved to a more personal approach that aims at showing how people feel about themselves. The subjects could be photographed in any way they chose; in an environment they felt happy in, engaged in an activity they particularly enjoyed, or, they could choose a part of themselves they especially liked and have that as the dominant feature in the photograph. The participation of the subject had a strong influence on the final result. ••



Janine Mayson 1987 / photo by Maurice Lye



23 NOVEMBER-  
4 DECEMBER  
PREVIEW 22 NOVEMBER

MICHAEL SMETHAM  
SUMMER SHOW  
MARTIN WHITWORTH  
RUDOLF BOELEE  
ROBIN NEATE  
BRIAN McMILLAN

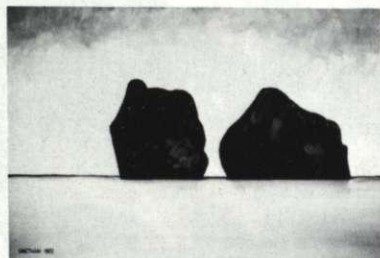
8 DECEMBER-  
22 JANUARY 89  
PREVIEW 7 DECEMBER

GUENTER TAEMMLER  
TOWN SQUARES  
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC POSTERS  
ANN WILSON

Island Images

## MICHAEL SMETHAM

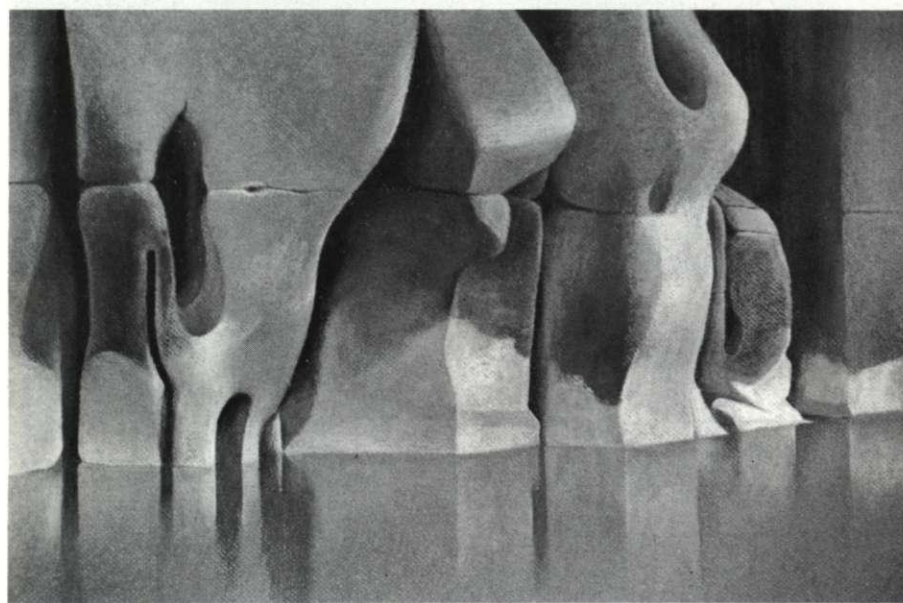
The idea for this series came as a result of a boating holiday in the Marlborough Sounds. Here at last was a theme — Islands — in which I could be released from the tyranny of a compulsion to paint representationally, and work solely with colour, shape and space. ••



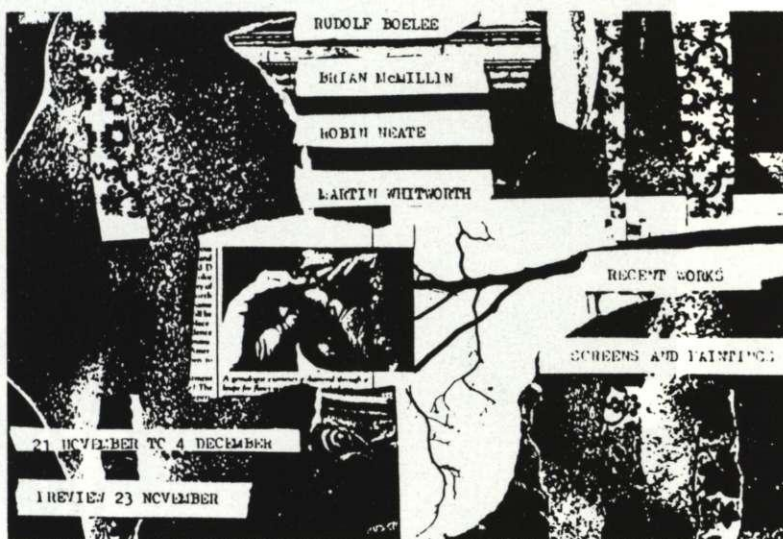
Island Images / Michael Smetham

## GERMAN POSTERS

From the German Democratic Republic, this exhibition comprises a selection of current theatre, film and political posters. The exhibition is being toured by the NZ Art Directors' Council. ••



Pastel Landscape / Ann Wilson



From Screens and Prints / Martin Whitworth.

Pastel Landscapes

## ANN WILSON

Sea and forest dominate this exhibition, with a feeling of flowing lines and patterns. My search for the simplification of sensuous shape and the play of colour and light continues with renewed vigour. ••

Jewellery

## GUENTER TAEMMLER

Gunter Taemmler, born in Germany, worked in East and West Germany and later Canada before emigrating to New Zealand.

He works in gold and silver and likes to combine two or three precious metals for effect. This exhibition allows him to display a few select pieces from the wide range of his work. ••

Photographs

## TOWN SQUARES OF EUROPE

This exhibition which was first exhibited at the George Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1984 and has since toured Europe, depicts famous town squares in the European Community. The photographs — many of which are award winners — illustrate "the human face of Europe": people working and living in space specifically reserved for them.

The exhibits are presented by the Delegation to New Zealand of the Commission of the EC, in association with the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors' Council.

"Town Squares" focuses on the history of architecture particularly, — besides it is very good photography. ••





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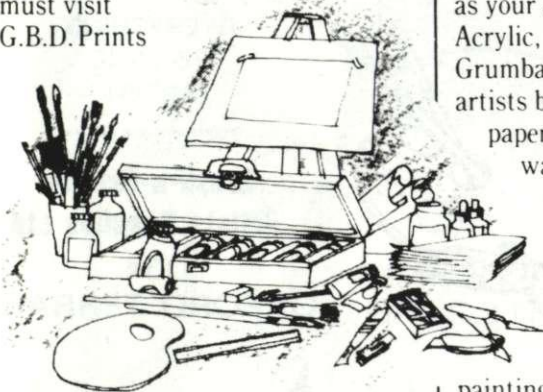
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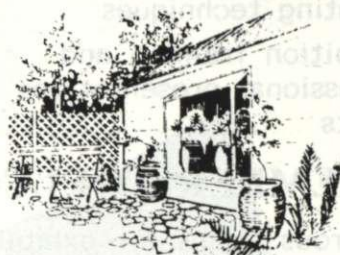
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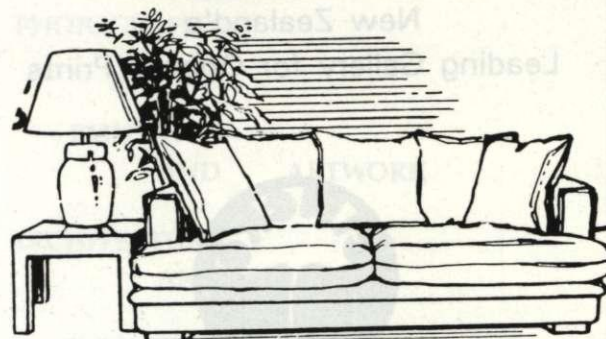
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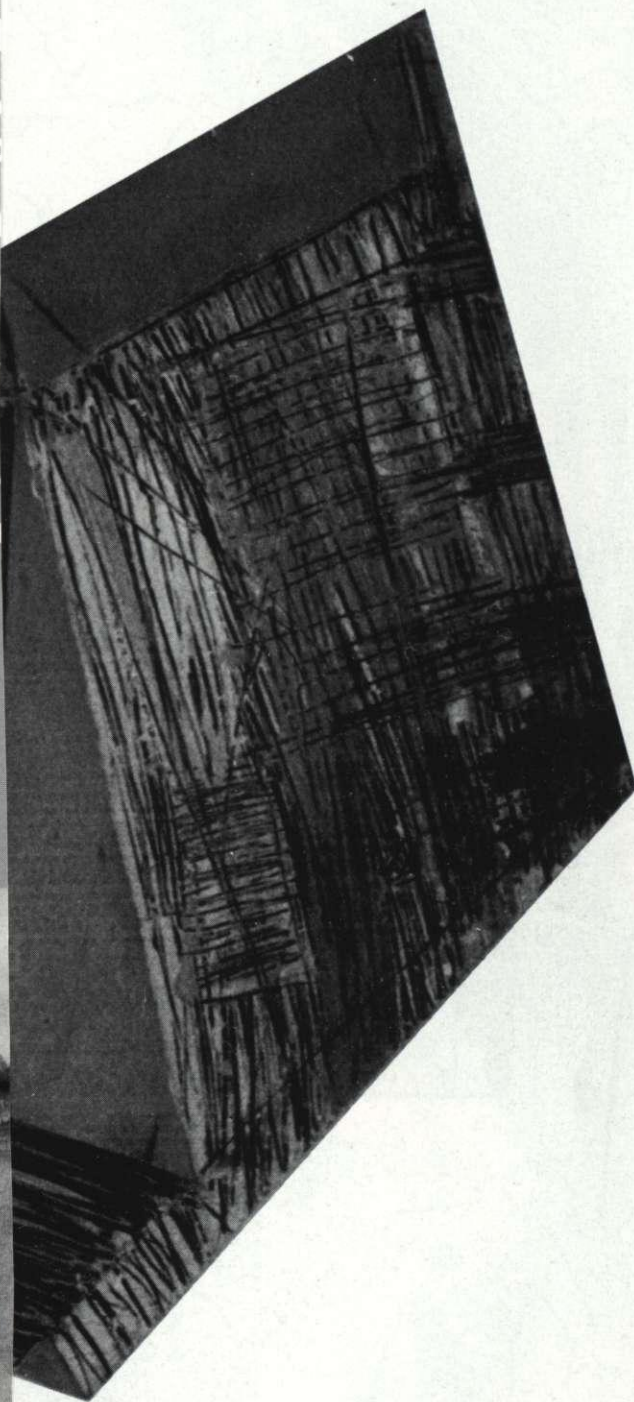
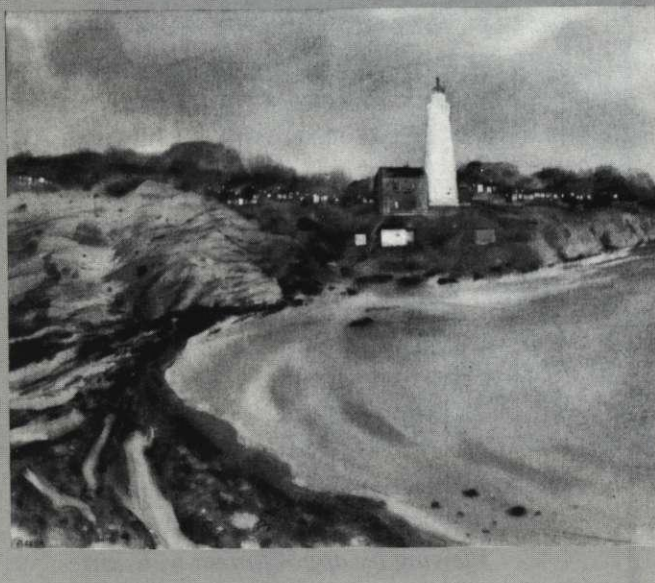
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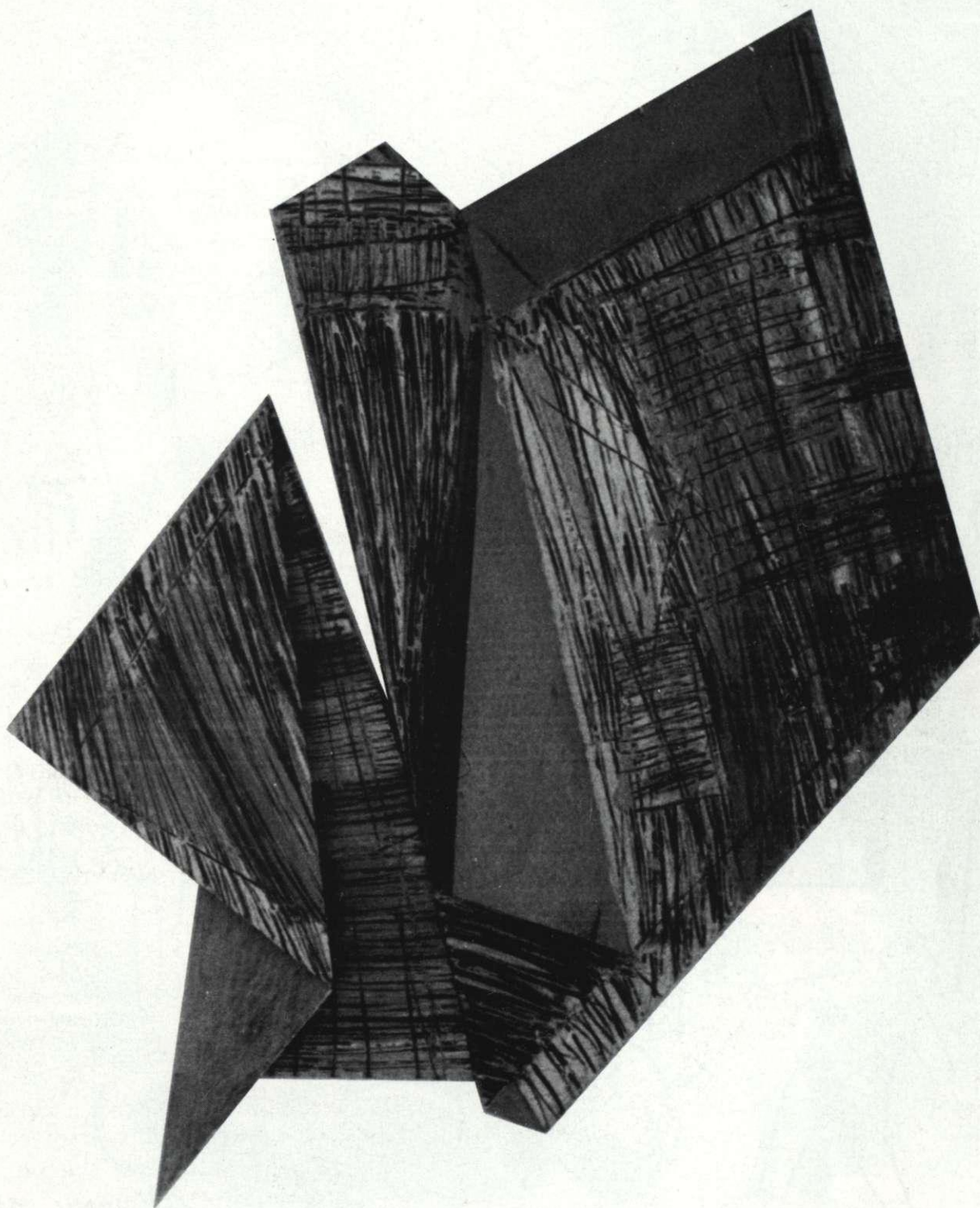
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