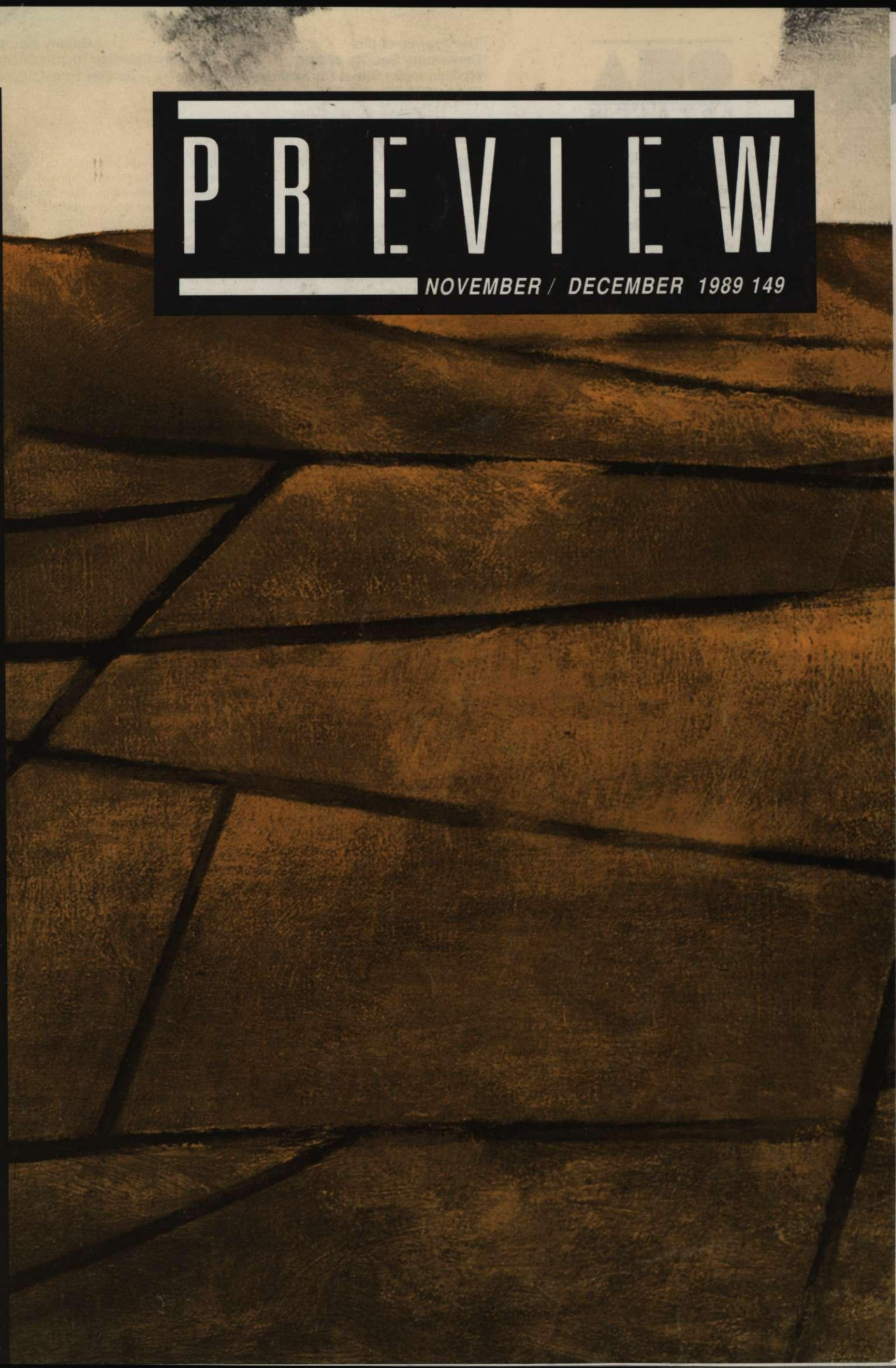
PREVIEW

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 1989 149



JOHN HURRELL ON COLIN McCAHON

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PREVIEW

The Journal of the
Canterbury Society of Arts
66 Gloucester Street Christchurch
Phone 667-261, 667-167

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Sunday 2pm-4:30pm

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MIXED MEDIA

Craft in Wool Award 1990 Design in Fashion

The Craft in Wool Award is presented each year in order to promote and recognise excellence in works crafted in wool. The winner will receive a prize of $5,000 and public recognition as one of New Zealand's leading design talents. The winning entry, along with other meritorious entries will be shown and modelled at the 1990 Wool-Crafts Festival in Palmerston North next March. If you would like to enter, send for an entry form to:
Craft In Wool Award, Crafts Council of New Zealand, P.O. Box 498, Wellington.

South Canterbury Summer Art School Monday - Friday 8-12 and 15-19 January 1990.

Following courses offered: Printmaking, Painting, Mural Painting, Drawing, Sculpture and Art History.
For more detailed information about the courses and enrolment forms ring 667001, extensions 8405 or 8460. Enrolment before 24 November saves 10%.

Wanganui Summer School of the Arts 3-12 January 1990

Offers courses in Performing Arts, Printmaking, Writing, Music, Painting and Drawing, Ceramics and many others.
For further details on courses and tutors contact: Summer School Co-ordinator, Wanganui Regional Community College, Private Bag, Wanganui. Phone 064-50997. Enrolments close 24 November 1989.

Application For Working Membership

The CSA Council of the CSA Gallery recently clarified the application procedure for Working Membership.

Each Year in June the gallery holds the Open Exhibition where any Associate member can submit two works.
Entry forms are sent with the Preview magazine prior to the exhibition and to receive one you have be in our system as an Associate member. So if you are not in this category of membership and wish to be, just let the office staff know.
On the forms will be a space to be completed if you wish to apply for Working Membership. Brief information on your art background will need to be stated eg. qualifications, training, classes, exhibitions or any other related activities.
The artists committee from the council will meet and select new working members from just the two entries in the Open Exhibition.
Notification will be posted to each artist.
Working members can submit two works for the Autumn and Summer exhibitions, both of which are selected shows.

Discovered at the Gallery

An article was found at the gallery during a recent spring clean. The only identification of ownership is a piece of paper attached inscribed: Mrs Moore. If you are, or know the owner please contact the gallery. It appears the gallery has had it approximately 8 years. If we received no response it will be sold before 23 December.

Membership Subscriptions

All members should have recieved an invoice for one years membership of the CSA Gallery. If you havent please let us know by phoning the gallery.
As from December 1st, only the current membership card (which is green) will be acceptable for free entry to the gallery. Please note the discounts available on door entry to special exhibitions such as the forthcoming 40 Years of British Sculpture, that your membership secures.
Membership is excellent value and this years members will be getting more good news.We are working on more benefits and discounts to be available to card holders. We'll let you know more soon.
We want you to present your card at reception on entering the gallery as it helps us to get a better picture of what you want through our visitor survey.
And dont forget to tell your friends
about the CSA.

Cover : Colin Mc Cahon North Canterbury Landscape *1951 oil on canvas 915x 1080*
Auckland City Art Gallery .Presented by the Friends of the Auckland City Art Gallery, 1960.

1989 CSA AGM

The 109th Annual General Meeting of members will be held at the CSA Gallery 66 Gloucester Street Christchurch, at 7.45pm Wednesday 29th November 1989. The meeting will be followed by a report from Michael Reed ,the 1988 CSA Guthrey Award recipient.

1989 CSA Guthrey Travel Award

The recipient of this years award is Michael Armstrong. The award will enable Michael to travel to Australia for 3 weeks to study art practice in areas of his interest. Michael has exhibited at the CSA Gallery in 1989, 1988, 1983 and 1982, as well as other major public and dealer galleries in New Zealand. The CSA thanks the continuing support by the Guthrey Group of Companies and in particular Mr A. R Guthrey.

Trustbank Grant

The CSA Gallery recently received $1000.00 from Trustbank under the community grants programme. Thanks to Trustbank for its continued support of the CSA in recognition of our community service.

PROFILE

COLIN McCAHON AND THE KABBALAH

JOHN HURRELL

There is one painting I find especially interesting in "Gates and Journeys", the touring McCahon show. Catalogued as "V5" in the "Victory Over Death" section, it is entitled "Open Door", and is part of the "Sacred" series of 1976.

This painting consists of a few words written casually with a brush dipped in white paint, and scrawled over a dark background. They are positioned within a loosely drawn diagram of what appears to be a cross-section of a vault or shaft, or perhaps a part of a house.

When looked at closely this work becomes very puzzling, for it doesn't seem to make sense.

According to the catalogue entry the words read "The door is always open the light's on in the hall." It seems to be a message concerned with grace, saying that no matter how sinful a person may have become, God's love and forgiveness is always there for the asking.

Despite what is written in the official gallery publication, an inspection of the painting itself shows that the words actually say something quite different. "Hell" is definitely written, and not "hall". Of course it would be more sensible to have written about the "hall" rather than the "hell", but the lettering is clear and the spelling deliberate. It is similar to another work in which "Jet Out" can be read as "Get Out".

Now I believe that this painting is one of several McCahon paintings preoccupied not with Christianity (or Roman Catholicism in particular) but with the practices of Jewish mysticism commonly called "Kabbalah". In particular, a type of belief known as Lurianic Kabbalism.

Issac Luria was a rabbi who lived in sixteenth century Palestine. His teachings greatly influenced interpretations of Jewish mystical texts, and he is especially important for his discussion of the nature of evil and its relationship with the Divine.

THE DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN.

Luria believed that God deliberately permitted evil to exist so that humankind could have freedom of choice. Through exercising free will humankind is provided with an opportunity to restore God's work, for without human participation, God's universe remains incomplete.

In the Kabbalist belief system, there are ten stages that link the material world we are familar with with the upper infinite world of the Divine. These ten stages (sefiroth) zigzag through four levels of creation and represent Divine attributes. The phenomenon of evil is the result of ancient events in Azilut, the highest level of creation, where the seven lowest stages, unable to contain the flow of Divinity, shattered and caused the sefirothic shells and Divine sparks to fall below into hell.

THE LIGHT IS ON IN THE HELL.

Hell is part of the material world we live in, but where the shells are condensed together. In this dark realm, evil (the shells) and good (Divine sparks) are mixed up. In the universe there is no evil which does not contain some good, no good which does not contain some evil.

Luria taught that humankind was created by God to help restore His unity. Mostly this is done by certain daily rituals and devout prayer, but it is also done by believers who in a mystical state can via meditation descend to hell to retrieve God's sparks, and through a series of reincarnated lives, return them to Him.

The gap left by the seven disintergrating sefiroth is called by Kabbalists 'the abyss', and this has to be crossed at great peril in order to descend further, and in order to get back.

McCahon's 'Jump' paintings of 1974 from the "Necessary Protection" series, are a specific reference to this spiritual journey. His 'Blind' series from around the same period is painted on blinds, and it seems to refer to blind faith and the act of total submission to God's will. Luria's early followers used to throw themselves onto the ground during prayer, in order to symbolicly cross 'the abyss' while in a state of total dependency on God's love.

There are other McCahon paintings which through their Kabbalistic content connect him with other Kabbalist artists. For example his interest in the magical properties of numbers and letters links him with Imants Tillers, and his symbolic waterfalls and illuminating lamps connect him with Marcel Duchamp, most of whose work is Kabbalah based.

Probably the most clearly established link between McCahon and Jewish spirituality (as opposed to Christian) is his early painting "I and Thou". This cubist rendering in letters of the title of Martin Buber's book, connects McCahon with Buber's existential interpretation of Hasidism, an Eastern European movement that grew out of Kabbalism.

It is my view that the aspects of McCahon's thought referred to here are just as important as his preoccupation with Roman Catholicism. As with Gordon Walters, critical discussion and historical research concerning McCahon's work has been poor so far and not developed much beyond the anecdotal. The complexity of his endeavours and the wide range of his influences has not yet been acknowledged.

Fortunately, interpretations of McCahon's images can never be closed off and finalised. The door is always open.

EXHIBITIONS

NOVEMBER 10 - DECEMBER 3

40 YEARS OF BRITISH SCULPTURE

Sculpture

FORTY YEARS OF BRITISH SCULPTURE

Preview Thursday 9 November 5.30pm

The works in this exhibition are drawn from the collection of the British Council. It is not intended to be full scale survey, rather it is a rare opportunity to see the work of eleven internationally acclaimed sculptors including Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth.

The strain of war and suffering following World War 2, together with the anguish and neurosis of the cold war, gave rise in the early 1950's to sculpture very different from the cool formal abtraction of the inter-war period as exemplified by Hepworth and Moore. Sculptors such as Armitage, Chadwick, Adams, Meadows and Turnbull used distorted form and angularity to assert urgent emotional realities and tension.

There was a growing interest in primitive and non-traditional sources of sculptural style derived from anthropology and archaelogy. There was also a renewed interest in geometric abstraction, and during the 1960's Anthony Caro became an important influence with his constructed works. These changes and works by the sculptors that reflect them are the exhibition: 40 Years of British Sculpture

This exhibition is toured through New Zealand art galleries by the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council in conjunction with the British Council.

Due to the high costs involved in freighting this exhibition and the associated handling and packing, it is necessary to charge for entrance to the exhibition. **Members will receive a substantial concession upon presentation of their membership card.**

Charges will be:
Adults - Public $2.00, Members $1.00.
Students and Superannuitants: Usual Discounts
Children - free.

This is a major exhibition in the CSA Gallery calendar and will utilise almost all the gallery. Make sure you see it!

Kenneth Armitage/ Study for large seated group

PREVIEW

EXHIBITIONS

NOVEMBER 8 - NOVEMBER 19

PAUL CULLEN
GARETH WILLIAMS

Sculpture

PAUL CULLEN

Preview: Tuesday November 7 8pm

Natural Laws/Universal Homes.
a) Natural laws.
b) Building/house/ furniture.
c) Geology/architecture.
d) Landscape/architecture.
e) Universal homes. Houses.
f) Disjunction, place.
g) We inscribe our passage.

Sculpture

GARETH WILLIAMS

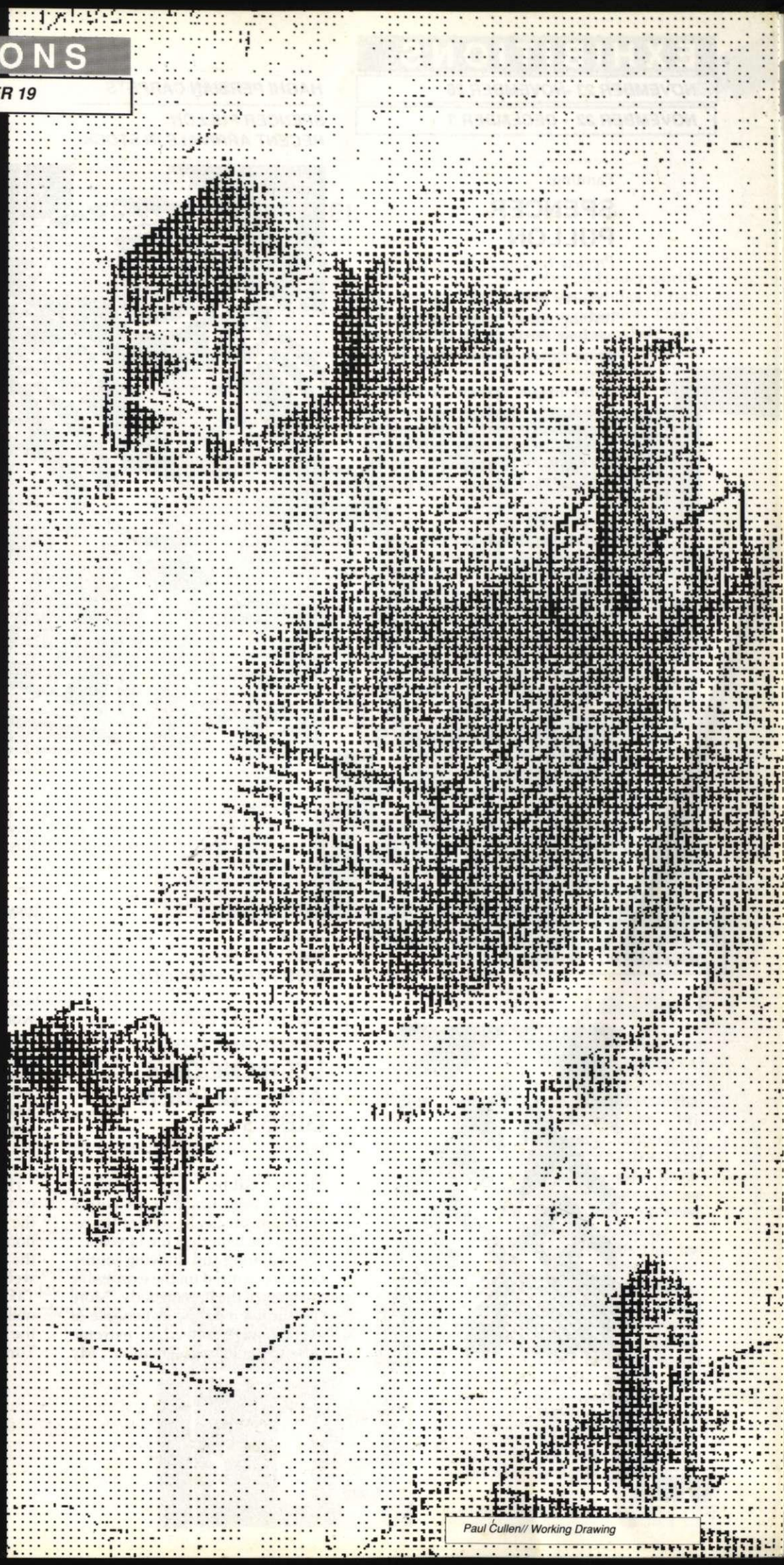
Preview: Tuesday November 7th 8pm

Abstract

These works derive from my interest in the landscape - the New Zealand wildlife, plantlife and landforms. I have attempted to make small objects reminiscent of particular elements from the landscape, aware that abstract forms can cause associations in the conscious or subconscious of the viewer or participant.

The objects, I have related to the horizontal, the landscape, because it is from it they derive. Some of the pieces are direct translations from a particular micro- or macro-landscape e.g. "Dusk", "Grey Heron Landscape".

The latter pieces show a shift from interpretation of natural forms, to an interpretation of man-made objects found on the landscape.



Paul Cullen// Working Drawing

EXHIBITIONS

NOVEMBER 23 -NOVEMBER 26

NOVEMBER 22 - DECEMBER 3

HAGHI PERSIAN CARPETS

SPENCER PULLON
RECENT ARRIVALS IN STOCK

Paintings

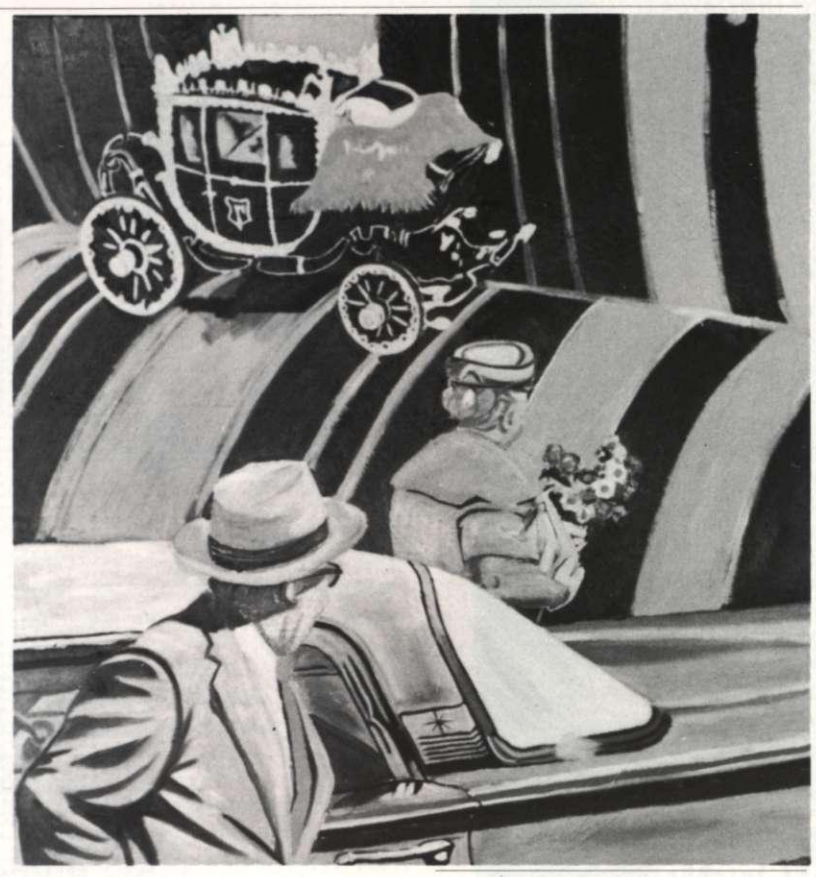
SPENCER PULLON

Preview Tuesday 21 November 8pm

Works in this show depict a disturbing social condition which is evident through advertising and propaganda in one form or another.

The images operate on a narrative level which is encouraged *"forestalled, or, put another way, the possibility of narrative is indicated but not fulfilled". Quote: The Old The New and The Different. Janet Kardon.*

Born in 1962.
Educated in Hamilton.
Attended School of Fine Arts 1985 - 1988.
Various group shows - James Paul Xmas Show 1986-1987,
Young Contemporaries CSA 1987,
Exit Stage Four CSA 1988,
Jonathan Jensen Drawing Toward Submission 1988.



Pullon/ "Royalty in another land"

RECENT ARRIVALS IN STOCK

Preview November 21st Tuesday 8pm

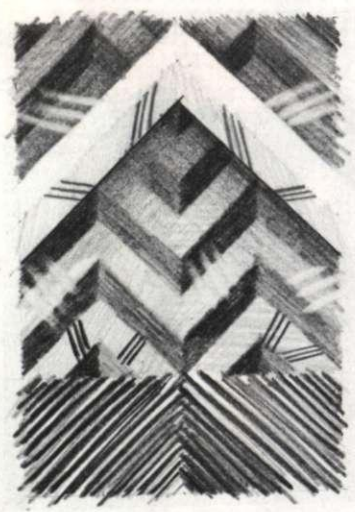
An exhibition of recent arrivals into stock. This includes paintings, prints, works on paper, ceramics and sculpture. The price range reflects a choice of works that will have appeal for the first time art buyer to the serious collector. If youre thinking about buying an artwork, wait until you have seen this show.

EXHIBITIONS

DECEMBER 7- JANUARY 21 1990

KAY HUNTER
JOSIE JAY
MARY ZOHRAB
GIBBS AND HANCOCK

WHITWORTH AND REID
HELEN ROCKEL



Stephen Gibbs

Paintings and Drawings

Recent Works

LIZ HANCOCK AND STEPHEN GIBBS

Preview Wednesday December 6 8 pm

Stephen Gibbs

I have been teaching art with a couple of breaks in service (to recharge the batteries) for 14 years.

My painting and drawing continues to be centred on the expressive qualities of the human body. More specifically over the last couple of years I have moved to extreme closeups and fragmentation. My work is now done largely on paper using layers of mixed media culminating in fine linear work. I aim to draw the viewer into the image while at the same time continually bringing the focus of attention back to the picture plane.

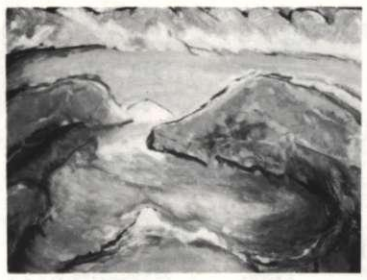
This exhibition presents a series of working drawings that explore the theme of "Conflict and Resolution". The images are derived from the traditional Maori Tuku Tuku weaved patterns of Kaokao and Takitoru. This work is the continued developments of ideas from the last exhibition "He Wairua O Turanganui".

Drawings and Paintings

MARY ZOHRAB

Preview Wednesday December 6 8pm

In my work I seek the energy of life itself and I try to feel out the natural rhythms of life within and around us all. In this my second exhibition at the CSA I am looking for a spontaneous and fresh approach to the land which we all share and people who live in it.



Mary Zohrab

Paintings

KAY HUNTER

Preview Wednesday 6 December 8pm

Born in New Zealand in 1940. Gained Diploma of Fine Arts(Hons) in early sixties. Presently lives and paints near Mount Somers, Mid-Canterbury.

This exhibition is made up of recent paintings, executed in acrylic, most of which are landscape based and have evolved from sketches done on the spot and worked up and completed in the studio. Others are more spontaneous. All are fairly self-explanatory. I have tried to show, in my own way, my love for our landscape and its many moods and my feeling for the importance of colour and composition.

Paintings

JOSIE JAY

Preview Wednesday 6 December 8pm

Recent works are presented in this exhibition. Josie Jay has recently returned from study and travel in Europe.

Paintings and Drawings

HELEN ROCKEL

Preview Wednesday December 6 8pm

This exhibition includes work which looks at both inner and outer worlds. The choice of water colour in some peices supports the feelings of transience and intangibility of the inner world and its experiences. Larger mixed media works result from recent travel in Indonesia, where such things as weathered sculpture, tropical foliage, gnarled banyan trees and an endless array of interesting features caught the artists attention. These are reflected in the work.

Helen Rockel/ "Woman with Flowers(detail)

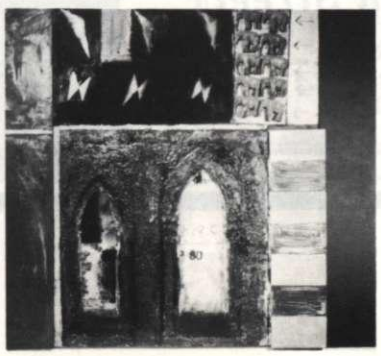
Paintings

MARTIN WHITWORTH DAVID REID

Preview Wednesday 6 December 8pm

Martin Whitworth

"The invention of writing and of a convenient system of records on paper has had a greater influence in uplifting the human race that any other intellectual achievement in the career of man". *James H. Breasted.The Conquest of Civilization*



David Reid

Alternative to the Big Bang. Order or Chaos?

It is attractive to speculate that the early universe was chaotic (A) and might subsequently have developed into the ordered state that we observe at larger scales. Primordial chaos could conceivably lead to sufficient mixing to account for the uniformity of cosmic blackbody radiation. Alternatively, one can argue that the early universe was very (but not completely)

regular and ordered(B) This hypothesis also accounts for the uniformity of the cosmic blackbody radiation and is more in accord with the thermodynamic concept of increasing entropy(or the degree of disorder). Since the chaos hypothesis is unproven (and specifically in the mixmaster universe is known not to work) many cosmologists prefer an orderly beginning to the universe. *Quoted from Joseph Silk. The Big Bang 1980*

David Reid / "P 80 7 C"

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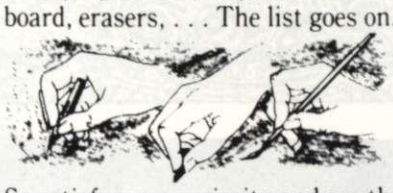

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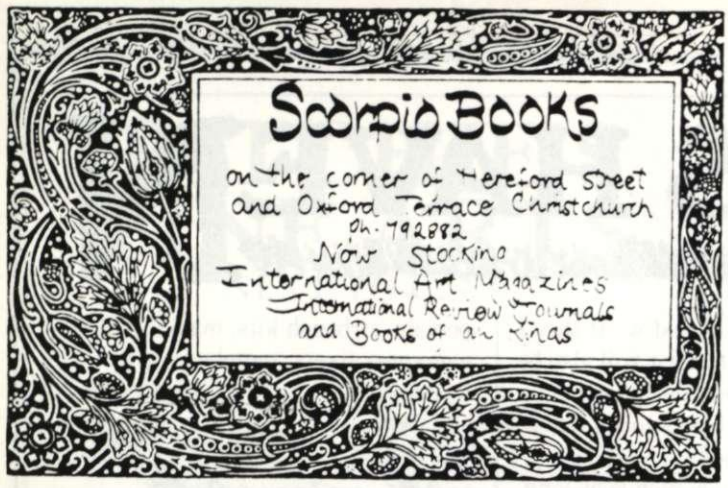

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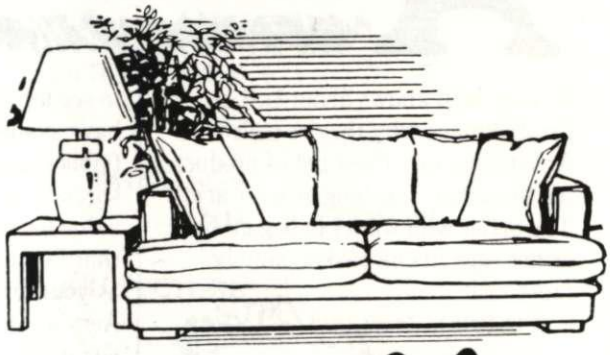

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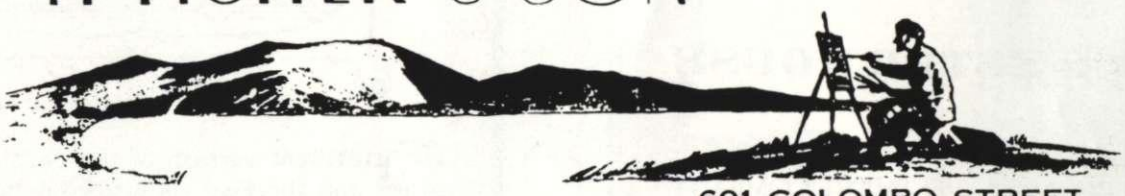

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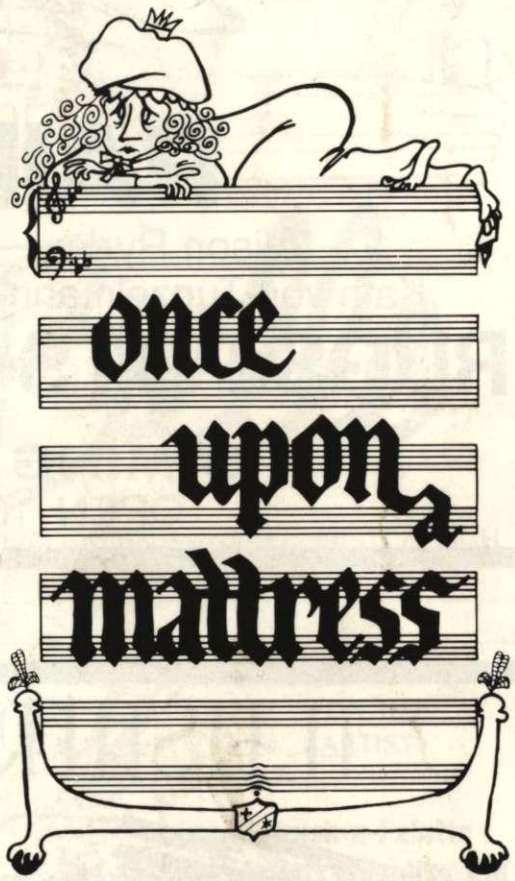

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This musical, staged by Rodgers and Hammerstein, made Carol Burnett's name famous. The extremely tuneful, foot-tapping score was composed by Mary Rodgers, the daughter of Richard Rodgers.

ONCE UPON A MATTRESS
opens 2nd December

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