

PROFILE: "Narcissus: Universal and Loved"—Tony Fomison: 1939 - 1990
PROFILE: Interview with Trevor Moffitt

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C H R I S T I A N C H U R C H



PREVIEW

MAY — JUNE 1990 152



The Journal of the Canterbury
Society of Arts
66 Gloucester Street
Christchurch
Phone (03) 667 261, (03) 667 167

Gallery Hours
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Sunday 2pm - 4pm

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Cover: Bob Martins Book Illustration
"The Tartan Ringers" by Jonathon Cash,
published by Mysterious Press.

MIXED MEDIA

1990 Art Awards Exhibition Otago Art Society

11 - 26 August 1990

Closing date for entries 21 July 1990

For more information write to:

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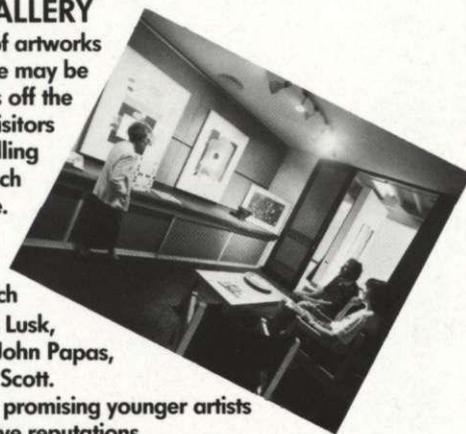
MEMBERSHIP

IMPORTANT BENEFITS TO CSA MEMBERS

From 1 March until July 1 1990 current C.S.A. members will be eligible for a 10% discount on any purchase from our Selling Gallery. To ensure this substantial benefit available for a limited period to members only, present your membership card upon purchase.

THE CSA SELLING GALLERY

The C.S.A. holds a comprehensive selection of artworks by a wide range of New Zealand artists. These may be viewed in the Selling Gallery which opens off the Canaday gallery space. The C.S.A. welcomes visitors interested in purchasing a work of art to the Selling Gallery to view works in a variety of media which are available for sale.



Artists represented by the C.S.A. include such established names as John Drawbridge, Doris Lusk, Gordon Crook, Philip Trusttum, Alan Pearson, John Papas, Elisabeth Buchanan and Ian Scott.

The Selling Gallery also holds works by some promising younger artists who are rapidly acquiring impressive reputations.

The recent refurbishments to the gallery have included the rebuilding of the entire storage area beyond the Selling Gallery and the installation of new track lighting. This has resulted in a storage system which gives artworks a high standard of presentation and ease of access for viewing. We have already received a very favourable response from clients to the new stock viewing area.

The C.S.A. Gallery's Art Consultant, Rona Rose is available Tuesday - Saturday, 10am to 4.30pm to assist with enquiries, sales and professional valuations on artworks.

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP

Corporate members enjoy a direct involvement in supporting a dynamic and lively visual arts organisation.

Corporate members are offered an attractive membership package with access to hiring of original works of art from the C.S.A. Collection, holding corporate functions at the gallery and extended membership for corporate personnel. The C.S.A. Gallery also offers a professional experienced consultancy service to our corporate members free of charge. This has already resulted in major commissions and developing collections that enhance offices, board rooms and public areas. Corporate membership is a great deal for \$270.00 per annum.

SPECIAL OFFER

Right now we are offering Corporate Membership until October 1991. 18 months membership for the same price as 12 months. That's 6 months free membership.

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When I headed Whitcombe and Tombs' second-hand book department in the latish fifties, a small dark, shy-seeming high-school boy sidled into it and presently dawned on my consciousness.

He rifled through ancient, no-account Victorian and Edwardian books searching for queer old engravings and lithos hung o'er with clouds of 'morality'. Presently he would snuffle out with one book concealed upon his person — loved euphemism! After gutting it for his needs he would sell it back to unsuspecting me; a true tale repeated with much relish by the culprit himself. Now, those books will have been throw-ins acquired in larger purchases I made. That boy's poverty was plain, and soon, knowing in him an obsession for the visual arts native to my own temperament, it was the least I could do to buy them. How many other lads forsake the great manic god, sport to pry into dark places of a late afternoon? So thus, by proxy, my firm became the first Fomison patron, not that Bertie Whitcombe would have been much disturbed, having some endearing loopholes in his commercial character I've dealt with elsewhere.

Tony and our whole family became friends (though, as with others, not without a clash or two.) So, in 1960, when he asked to take Llewelyn (14) and Gwilyn (13) off to the Opihi river to help trace Maori rock drawings onto polythene for Doctor Roger Duff's museum, it was no sooner asked for than given.

But one look at Tony and you'd know that he could live on fresh air and scenery as our growing ever-famished adolescents couldn't. Out in camp the trio lived on eels under Tony's direction.

"No", he'd snuffle, "keep that big fella for breakfast, eh!"

**“No”, he'd snuffle,
“keep that big fella
for breakfast, eh!”**

Humanely, holidays last a fortnight, so, when out from camp, the boys were shouted a restaurant meal by elder nursing sister Faith in Timaru, having asked if they could have what she left on her plate, they polished it off pronto, and when Dad Summers saw the couple with their huge starey eyes he had existential proof beyond photographs of the meaning of malnutrition.

This whole experience, however, pointed Llew Summers towards a life of sculpture in which Tony was a steadfast champion.

As to those gloomy pictures that his peers and mentors tried to put him off, they were surely the premiss of his soul. He had never been robust and at one stage was up at Glenelg Health Camp to restore him to well-being. You could say then, that his

**...in conversation
he had a sly gurgling
sense of humour.**

underlife was also steeped in shadow and that his very work issued out of it, although in conversation he had a sly gurgling sense of humour.

Nevertheless, his first objective pictures were dark-charcoal-as is our own head of his sister Janet. Such darks, on the whole were only to deepen, as later he left the outside world behind to deal with inner realities, in a purgatory to which his early life had predisposed him and which made him sympathetic to the lost and hopeless, either personally or politically — HART, Waitangi, etc.

All of us have limited options within which, only we can make the positive contribution, and Tony, in terms of his, was given a most difficult vocation: that is to 'speak' from the dark galleries of purgatory where he found himself, plagued at night, I'm told, by fearful nightmares, from which, too often, he fled into drink and drugs.

England, where he went on a grant in 1963, gave ambivalent signals. On the one hand in the direct experiences of the old masters, he felt that his own love of muted colours was justified. But the clamorous din of modernity was such that, back on these shores, he was to ask Toss Woollaston if he should go on painting. Hence, I do think, came a number of black 'Christs' redolent for me of an element of destructive self pity: maybe decadent.

When in 1970 he was sent to Rolleston prison for a drug offence, Tony painted a tremendous (1½ metres by 900 mm) untitled oil that I shall call "Yearning Hands". This most powerful expressionist work with its curious deformed and foreshortened fingers telling of spiritual stultification, may be compared with El Greco's elongated types expressing ecstasy. Here humanity yearns for its deliverance from ills hardly to be borne. To me, it seems as if, in prison, Tony found others even more lost than himself and, out of fellow feeling, came this wonderful unconventional gesture of prayer, not belonging only to Tony, but real, objective, universal.

I thought this painting came out of the blue, but in fact it had technical precedents I can not deal with here: Durer's praying Hands, for one, hated by me.

Greek myths are many-levelled. In 1903, Waterhouse painted his essentially pretty and colourful, full-fleshed "Echo and Narcissus". In 1979 Fomison gave us his detonater (32 by 36½ cm), "Narcissus". In a murky landscape with an ochre sky the reddish subject peers momentarily at us before returning to gaze in his muddy pool. His hands are useless stumps, his shanks wasted away.

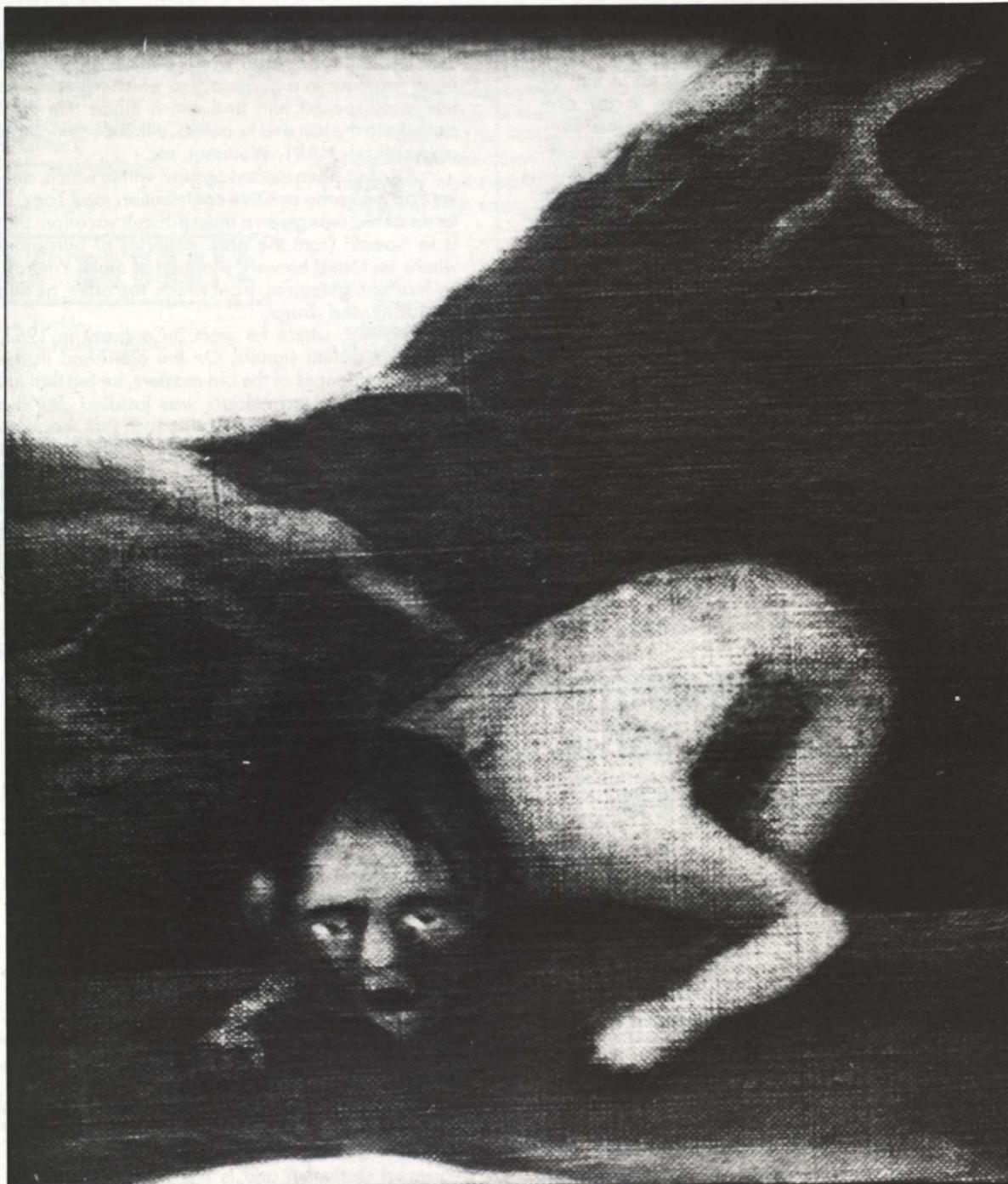
"Ah", said one, "That's Tony!". Right/wrong. It is him, but it is also us, consumed and wasted by self-love. Like our "Yearning Hands", it is also a universal statement and is therefore a very great little painting.

Despite exasperating friends, Tony had an affectionate disposition, strangely combined with a

patriarchal care for 'mum' and 'dad' and other members of his family, but also extending to ancient types like Colin McCahon and Daddy Summers. Close to his Christmas collapse in 1988, he had his young Samoan friend and chauffeur, Lei, run me wherever I wanted in Auckland. He needed a reciprocal warmth he felt he'd found first in the Maoris, later in Samoan people who adopted him as a chief. But at both the national and personal levels, he shall not be forgotten by those he came from.

John Summers.

Tony Fomison was born in Christchurch in 1939. He attended the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts from 1958-1960 and graduated with a diploma in sculpture. Fomison's first one man exhibition was held at the Canterbury Society of Arts in 1961 and from 1969-1971 he worked as Exhibition Officer for the C.S.A. His work is represented in public and private collections and was the subject of a major national touring exhibition in 1979-80. Tony Fomison died on February 7, 1990.



"Narcissus" Oil Painting, Tony Fomison

In 1987 at the age of fifty-one I believe, you took the plunge and retired from teaching in order to dedicate yourself to full-time artmaking. I would like to ask firstly what gave you the impetus to take this step?

A. The last major set of paintings I produced before I left teaching was the Stanley Graham Series, but I found that painting these and teaching at the same time was very difficult. This may be related to several factors; that I was running out of energy, and secondly, that teaching was becoming more demanding. I believe it impossible to put off painting for any length of time, for example, I couldn't see myself working until I was sixty and then pick up painting after this.

I had also received a good response from the Stanley Graham paintings with virtually a sell out show in Wellington in '87 and the purchase of a significant number of works by Lex and Hunnie Van Hossen from Holland gave a major boost to my confidence.

Q. What effects do you think being a full-time artist may have had on your career?

A. I think, as never before, my paintings have become a confrontation with myself. The benefits of being able to totally devote myself to my art is that now I have greater time to contemplate and indulge in self criticism and this has probably led to a greater degree of self dissatisfaction.

Q. An artist needs to have some sort of support system in order to keep on working. Where do you think any support or encouragement has come from for your work?

A. Well, if you mean economic support, I have provided this myself.

Q. Could you clarify?

A. That is, I tailored my worklife for early retirement so I would not have financial pressures. This left me free to paint what I want.

Q. There is another level of support in terms of critical understanding. Where do you think this has come from for you?

A. This has come from other artists, for example Barry Cleavin, Denise Copeland, Bing Dawe, Ralph Hotere, Wendy Wadworth and Michael Trumic.

Q. What role do you think the artist has in New Zealand society?

A. Well, I would have to answer this question negatively in that I do not feel that the artist is given a sufficiently important role (in the art world) generally. I feel that too much credence is given to the opinions of administrators, academics and art educators with their convoluted art theory and transposed ideas, which are devoid of any real meaning and certainly do not allow for greater understanding of the public at large.

Q. I note that you have tended to produce your paintings as a series. Exploring one particular aspect or concept — for example — the Southland Landscapes, your Father's life, the Life of Stanley Graham etc. Do you see a common theme or concern in your selection and presentation of content?

A. A common factor in all these works is that they are all part of my personal experience. For this reason I would like to think that these are uniquely New Zealand in flavour (I'm not ashamed of this either) but nevertheless, this need not set them apart from the universal human experience.

Q. This concern with human experience is apparent in your narrative series but how would you relate this to your landscape works?

A. In the Southland paintings particularly, a clear statement about the people and their lives is intended as they are contained by the bleakness, I suppose the rawness of the Southland coastal area.

Q. Would you see these works as metaphors for the human condition in that they may draw on symbolic forms and content?

A. Yes, one could, in particular the series of 86 paintings of the Rakaia River which I produced in '82-'83. The river represents, shall we say the tears of my grief for my late wife Alison. The Rakaia River being an area of wilderness we both loved. I would have to agree though, with anyone who might argue that the symbolism is not readily apparent to the public at large.

Q. Is public accessibility to your artworks an important consideration to you?

A. I have always attempted to make my paintings accessible to people who are prepared to take the time to contemplate them. For this reason, pricing has always been important. The criteria I use is this: Could I afford to buy one of my own paintings?

Q. I believe you have recently been commissioned to paint a series in the New Zealand freezing works. When I consider these, I am amazed that few New Zealand artists have touched on this topic. Why did you choose this subject matter?

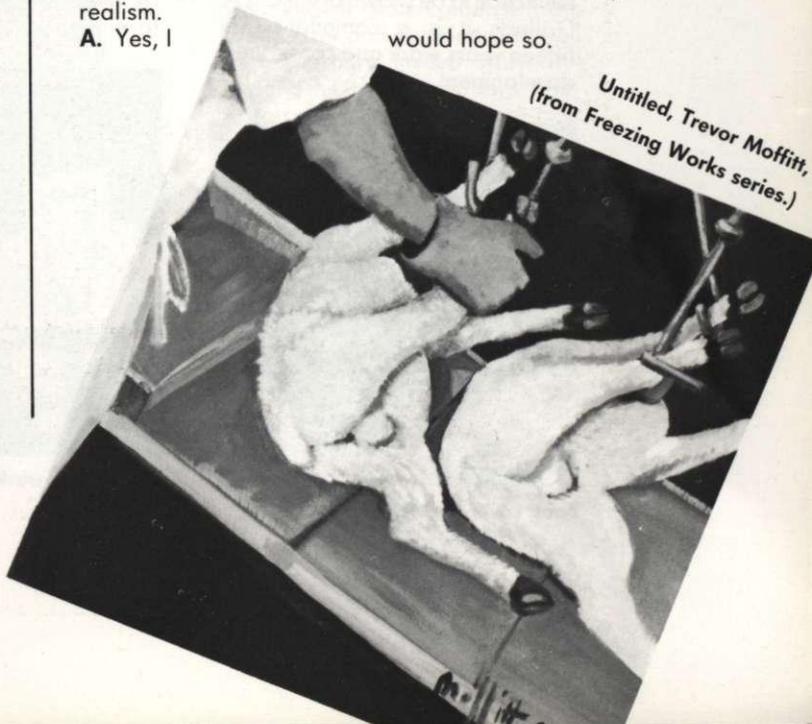
A. A simple answer is that I was commissioned to paint these by Lex and Hunnie Van Hossen for his factory in Rotterdam. (He imports and distributes casings from New Zealand.) Another reason is that very few New Zealand artists have shown interest in representing the figure either in the workplace or in landscape.

Q. What was your response when you researched the series? I mean, its a pretty bloody and brutal environment.

A. I've always been impressed at the efficiency by which millions of sheep are dispatched in our freezing works. Having worked for years as a sticker in Southland freezing works I see the process as efficient and as humane as possible. I'll agree it is an activity that New Zealand artists have not wished to contemplate.

Q. I do see these works as reflecting an earthy realism.

A. Yes, I would hope so.



Untitled, Trevor Moffitt,
(from Freezing Works series.)

PREVIEWS TUESDAY 8 MAY 8 PM

EDWARD MCKENZIE
"Meccano Art Beautiful"
Constructions

American artist, Edward McKenzie constructed these works as a fond reflection of a sojourn in England. The works represent a fascination with Meccano, the material itself, its system and the 'world' of which it is an expression, that of Britain in the first half of this century.



"Big Brother is Watching You", Sculpture, Edward McKenzie

BOB MARTIN
Book Covers and Commercial Illustrations

Bob Martin's collection of published book covers and commercial illustration is the first such collection to be shown at the C.S.A. Gallery. It is a compilation of fifteen years work and consequent development.



Book cover illustration Bob Martin.

"The Totally Incongruous Show"

RACHEL HARRE
Woodblock prints
LORRAINE WEBB

Paintings
PENNY CANT

Ceramics
 A group exhibition in a variety of media by three women artists.



"Rock Foundation", Woodblock print (detail), Rachel Harre

ROBIN NEATE
"Paintings and Other Objects"

Robin Neate combines found objects, canvas, plywood, paint and debris in this exhibition, with the purpose of moving away from representational painting and forming new visual associations.

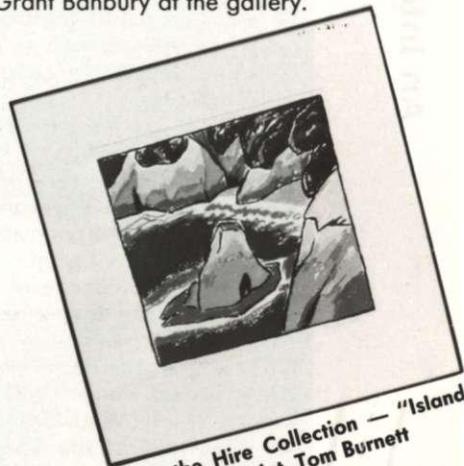


Sketch for work in progress, Robin Neate

"A SELECTION FROM THE COLLECTION"

Paintings
 This exhibition consists of a selection of over fifty New Zealand paintings and artists and prints from the large holdings, over 600 in total, in the C.S.A. Hire Collection. The broad range of styles shown offers a unique opportunity for the local business community to select individual works for their own specific requirements. Consultation, personal selection, delivery and hanging services are handled by our professional staff. Borrowers from the C.S.A. Hire Collection must be members of the C.S.A. A brochure with information about the benefits, rates and types of membership is available from the gallery.

For further information contact Grant Banbury at the gallery.



From the Hire Collection — "Island Bay", Screenprint, Tom Burnett



"Reflections of Boats", Oil on canvas, Alexa Grant

M A Y 2 3 — J U N E 3
 E X H I B I T I O N S

PREVIEWS TUESDAY 22 MAY 8 PM

VERA PAZAN

Paintings

In a series of oil and pastel works Vera Pazan explores themes of movement and light in the New Zealand landscape.

TONY BRIDGE

Photographs

GERARD MURRAY

Paintings

"ONTASK"

Teachers College Art Students Exhibition Paintings

At the Christchurch College of Education in 1990, eight art practitioners are training to be teachers of practical art in secondary schools. Seeing teaching and art making as being complementary, these students intend to pursue their individual art practices as well as teaching. In this exhibition they present a selection of their work.

MICHAEL REED

Mixed media: Prints, Paintings, Constructions

After looking at the diversity of indigenous Mexican art during a period of travel in Central Mexico, Micheal Reed's appreciation of South Pacific art forms was renewed. The works in this exhibition derive from his subsequent recognition of the strengths, diversity and continuing development of the South Pacific.



"Cycles" 1989, Xerox, acrylic, pencil and pastel on paper, Michael Reed

LIZ ABBOT

"Still Lives"

Prints and Paper Pieces

Liz Abbott works with etching plates, woodblocks and paper pulp to produce printed images and paper constructions. Her works are concerned with the passage of time and convey a strong sense of the processes involved in their making.

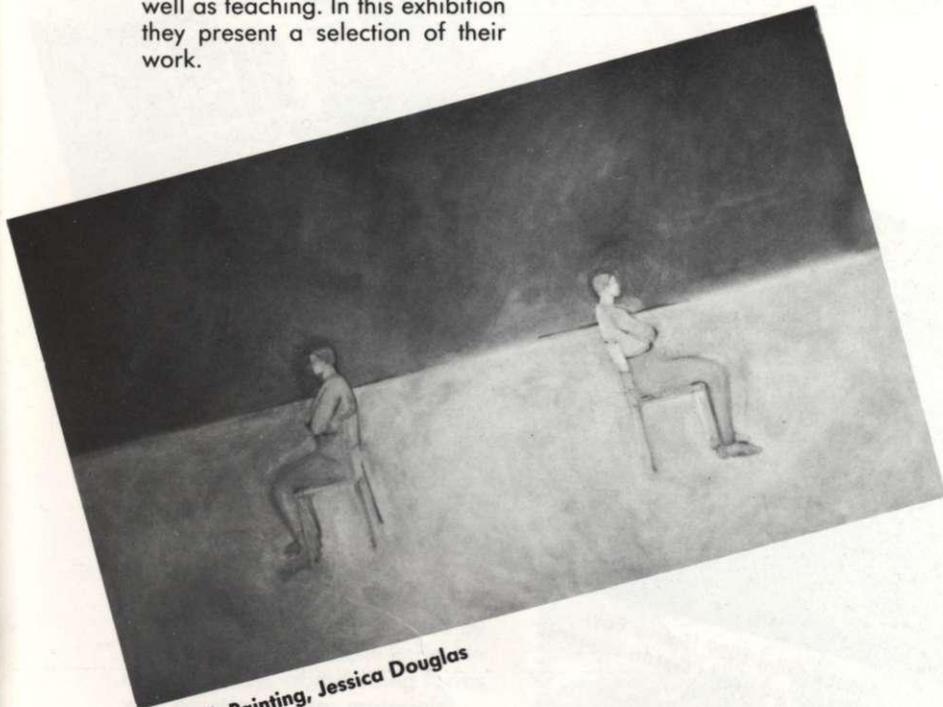


"Untitled", Sugarlift etching, Liz Abbott

"IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT"

Group Exhibition of Watercolours Curated by Rona Rose

Works on paper featured in the Front Gallery show the work of well known watercolourist from Wellington and Auckland as well as Canterbury. Invited artists will expand the intrinsic quality of paper to reflect and to resource their use of this medium in what is expected to be an exciting exhibition.



Untitled, Painting, Jessica Douglas

J U N E 7 — 1 7

E X H I B I T I O N S

PREVIEWS WEDNESDAY 6 JUNE 8PM

AUSTIN DAVIES

Paintings

This exhibition comprises paintings including acrylic and collage works by Austin Davies, an artist who has exhibited widely in England and is presently Director of the Suter Gallery in Nelson. Winner of the B.N.Z. Award in 1989 Austin Davies painted these works over the last two years after an interval of some twenty years.



"The Wall is a Start", Acrylic and Collage, Austin Davies

**"SELF/
ENVIRONMENT**

Paintings

Curated by Rona Rose

An exhibition of figurative art in which the artist is author of a self-portrait or figure study in his/her own environment.

Artists

Grant Banbury, Nigel Brown, Sally Burton, Tom Field, Doris Lusk, Sam Mahon, Piera McArthur, Evan McLeod, John Papas, Alan Pearson, Seraphine Pick, Ian Scott, Wayne Seyb, Bodhi Vincent, Wendy Wadworth, Rachel Zanders.

CHRIS LANGLEY

Paintings

HILARY HUGHES

Paintings

Hilary Hughes presents a series of abstract works painted in oils which reflects a heightened awareness of aspects of this country after her return from the U.K.



Untitled, Oil Painting, Hilary Hughes

J U N E 1 3 — J U L Y 1

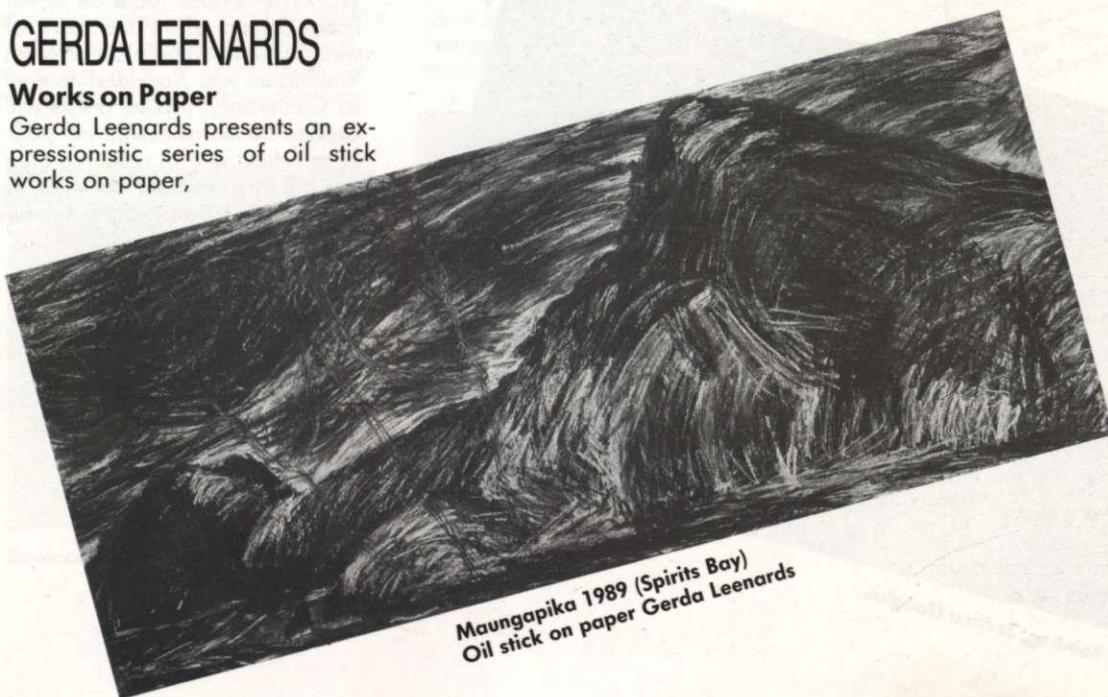
E X H I B I T I O N S

PREVIEW TUESDAY 19 JUNE 5.30PM

GERDA LEENARDS

Works on Paper

Gerda Leenards presents an expressionistic series of oil stick works on paper,



Maungapika 1989 (Spirits Bay)
Oil stick on paper Gerda Leenards

PREVIEW TUESDAY 19 JUNE 8PM

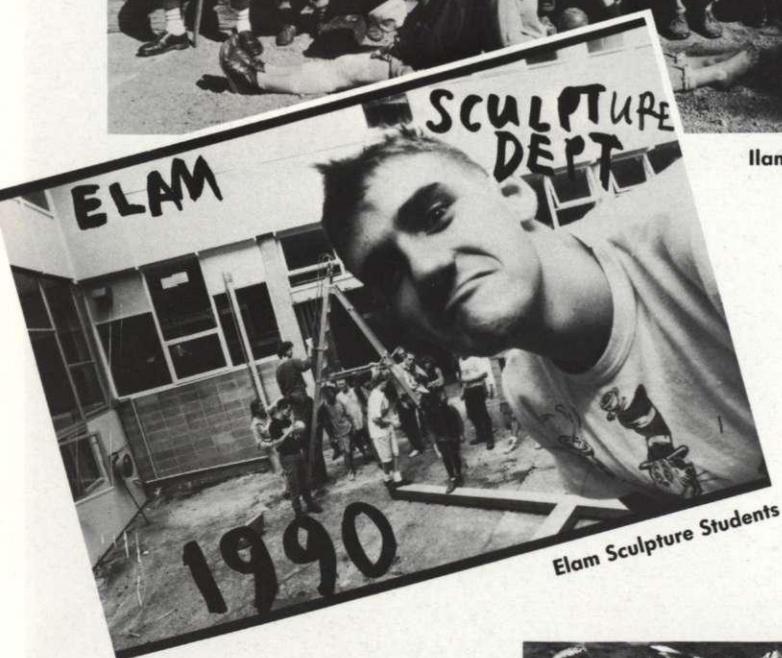
"SMALL CHANGE"

Sculpture by Elam and Ilam Students

"Small Change" is part of a series of annual collaborative exhibitions between Canterbury and Auckland sculpture students. The show's theme is 'portability'. Componentry, kitset, breakdown and reconstruction are all integral aspects of this concept. There are 40 students participating in the exhibition, therefore the response to the theme will be diverse. This diversity of approach should reflect current art production within Elam and Ilam.



Ilam Sculpture Students



Elam Sculpture Students

RICHARD WHEELER

Paintings

Richard Wheeler presents a series of acrylic works on canvas in which he experiments with a variety of different effects produced by the brush and the palette knife. He explores ways of moulding forms with paint and other materials.



"Storm Dance", Acrylic Painting, Richard Wheeler

"OPTIONS II"

Group Exhibition of Paintings

Curated by Rona Rose

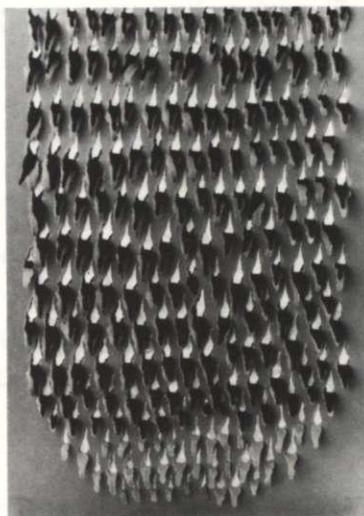
"Options II". Much of what you will see in this show will seem like an invitation to travel — wall hangings from Samakand, a Senneh woven by the Kurds and medieval helmeted heads. Also, Italian modern design, and much more.

"Paperly Yours"

TOMOKO MCKNIGHT

Paper works

Tomoko McKnight presents an exhibition of works in which she explores light effects upon paper through layering, cutting, tearing and marking its surfaces.

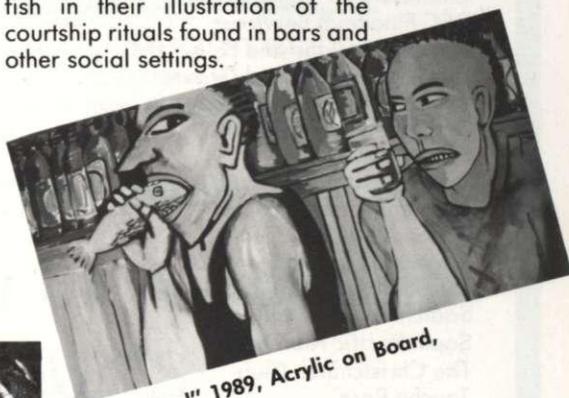


Paper Work, Tomoko McKnight

GERALDINE GUY

Paintings

Geraldine Guy's local country pub on the West Coast provides the stimuli for "Fish Rites", a series of acrylic paintings on board in a comic strip style. The works incorporate the male symbol of the fish in their illustration of the courtship rituals found in bars and other social settings.



"Fish Rites!" 1989, Acrylic on Board, Geraldine Guy

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The Selling Gallery is situated on the ground floor, leading off the Canaday Gallery. If you wish to view or buy artwork from our extensive stock, talk to Rona Rose, our gallery consultant, or enquire at reception. Phone 667-261 for an appointment.



"The Big Fisherman No. 3" Oil on Board, Trevor Moffitt

New work in stock includes:

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