

# RETROSPECTIVE



OLIVIA  
STANFORD  
BOWER

759.  
993  
SPE



Olivia Spencer Bower  
Boscombe, Bournemouth  
cf. 1918



Waimakariri from Woodstock  
c. 1932. Cat. no. 8

#### FOOTNOTES

- (1) Birth Certificate verified.
- (2) The two series of Holton le Moor Hall paintings Olivia made on both occasions of her return trips to England are not simply paintings of an arbitrary place — they are a pilgrimage of family identity — a lost heritage. The cows, trees, horses, fields, ponds, and sundial have an unprecedented exactness of placing. Their presence is as if in family tradition — immovable as family genealogy yet transient and mysterious as the homes must have been to her, intangible. Sometimes the sundial Olivia depicts in the Hall paintings 'opens' right out into the surrounding spaces, other times is embraced by flanking yellows, as other secluded and concealed. Holton le Moor Hall made a significant impression on Olivia. The later 1960's series have a sensitivity unsurpassed in most of Olivia's paintings. It seems as if the return to the place of the heritage that might have been hers fostered in her, some of her greater artistic strengths. The lucid colour and wide tonal quality of the watercolours suggest a deep sense of location related to symbolic content. Landscape here is the diarist of feeling. Olivia has preferred not to sell most of these paintings.
- (3) Amongst Olivia's collection of her mother's Slade Art School memorabilia are some anatomical life drawings Rosa salvaged from a life drawing class dustbin. It was done by one of the 'better' students and in keeping with the criteria at the time, works not excellent in every way were destroyed. Analyses of the drawing shows a laborious preoccupation with anatomical draughtsmanship with little attention to the life of the drawing as a graphic entity. In many ways Rosa's more academic nineteenth century training was used as a yardstick to gauge Olivia's own artistic approaches, both by Rosa, relations, and Rosa's generation of New Zealand painters with whom Olivia would later be judged by, and exhibit with. Many of the older generation did not choose to share in 'the great art experiment which was about to reshape Western Art'. (Gordon Brown, *N.Z. Painting 1920-40*.)
- (4) The Spencer-Bower family lived at 48 Westby Road, Boscombe, Hampshire. (It is now a boarding house; 'every house in the street is a boarding house. It was a nice sort of villaggy place but now everyone pours into it in the holidays with their children').
- (5) Olivia felt her mother's paintings as a student were superior to those she later did when, Olivia felt, she restored to prettiness. Rosa became very involved in making a living from her work, and quite probably sacrificed her inventive talents for something more commercial.
- (6) A newspaper clipping of Rosa Spencer Bower's October, 1920 Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition speaks of her English paintings with an appreciation for her versatility in handling different subject matter; old castles, quaint roadways, peeps of blossoming gardens, orchards, streams, and woods, and wild flowers. 'Especially do her studies of English woods appeal. Streams with bordering carpets of bluebells flung like azure mists beneath old trees, are the principal features in several of her most poetic compositions.'
- (7) One of Olivia's earliest recollections of her mother is this: 'Mother would go to meetings of Pankhurst in the long twilight. Father had been tutoring. Mother had come home in great excitement — we were dancing on the lawn. Father's pupil had knocked a man down who had attacked mother. 'Are you going to fight to get your way?' the man has said. 'We women don't kill, we bring life into the world, we give birth, we don't kill'. Mother repeated it often — she thought Mrs. Pankhurst was so marvellous.
- (8) Receipts for passport verified as permanent resident of New Zealand. 5th April, 1920.
- (9) All the later paintings done at Woodstock including the 'by the river' series shown at the Brooke Gifford Gallery in 1976 are the same view as those early paintings done when Olivia arrived here.
- (10) Brian Muir in his 'Guide to the Collection of the McDougall Art Gallery' comments on New Zealand landscape and habitation. 'What this country had in its strengths of land forms it lacked in the way of people; consequently an unpopulated landscape became almost a traditional form of New Zealand painting.'

OLIVIA  
SPENCER BOWER

BIOGRAPHY

Olivia Spencer Bower was born April 13th, 1905, at 7.30 p.m. in St. Neots, Huntingdonshire, England.(1) Her twin brother Marmaduke was born some twenty minutes later. Olivia's grandfather, Marmaduke Dixon, was related to the family of Holton Le Moor in Lincolnshire, but lost any interest in his English inheritance when he and Eliza Wood(2) had married and came to New Zealand to run a sheep station near the Waimakariri, thus beginning the family's association with New Zealand.

Olivia's mother, Rosa Dixon, was born and brought up on the sheep station in Canterbury. She became a painter of some note and was encouraged by Frances Hodgkins and Margaret Stoddart to travel to England where she studied with Henry Tonks of the Slade, and later, in Rome with Signor Nardi. She painted mostly flowers or records of places where she had lived. At the age of forty, Rosa married Antony Spencer Bower. He was sixty.(3)

The Spencer Bower family lived at Boscombe, in Bournemouth.(4) Antony, a brilliant mathematician, had been a civil engineer. He invented rustless iron. He was not, however, particularly involved in capitalising on his inventions and Olivia as a child remembers him at home or occasionally teaching.

It was Rosa who supported the family by painting pictures of English gardens, and teaching at a local girls' college. Olivia began painting as a child with her mother. She readily submitted her work in local children's painting and drawing exhibitions and competitions.(5)(6)(7) At St Oswalds School in Boscombe she studied among other things; piano, elocution, painting and drawing. Her Art Mistress, Miss Coles, taught watercolour and insisted on three washes only, all subject matter being resolved in terms of these clearly defined tones. 'What it did for me' Olivia said, 'is that with a brush full of paint I had to think before I put it down.' Therein lay the foundations of Olivia's aptitude for intense technical and mental discipline. Olivia's future life and career as a painter was already established. She recalls, 'we were walking along the beach, I remember the elocution mistress teasing Mother; 'perhaps she could go on the stage?' 'No', said Mother, 'She's to be a painter.' I always remember my brother was disgusted because they were talking about me. I can just imagine myself mincing along and Marmie sourly kicking the sand!' Olivia's school days at Boscombe were full and happy. She and a friend Vivienne Eckford wrote and illustrated school girl stories (typical of girls' annuals at the time, with spy thrillers, useful information; a link between young women and girls). Olivia and her friends showed a marked assuredness in the ventures they set themselves. When Rosa arranged for the family to return to New Zealand Olivia did not want to leave either her school, friends or teachers. At the time Olivia had 'the best part in a school play' and because she was leaving she had to watch it played by someone else. The journey was delayed several times as there were difficulties connected with the war, either there were no ships or there was the likelihood of being mined at sea. (A family of children from Olivia's school returning to South Africa towards the end of the war was torpedoed).

Rosa had something to go back to, land: and as the monies she earned in England could not adequately pay for the children's education she felt there would be more opportunity in New Zealand. Mostly, Rosa wished to return to New Zealand so that Olivia's brother Marmaduke could go to Christ's College where, if he was to be a farmer (and take over part of the Dixon sheep run) he would have companions for later life. Marmaduke knew nothing of farming at the time but if he took to it he would have the opportunity to be successful. Like Olivia, her father Antony was not keen to leave England. He had two sisters and a brother there and was long past being concerned about 'opportunity' in New Zealand.

The contents of the Spencer Bower residence at Westby Road were auctioned on January 7th, 1920, and on the 13th January Olivia sailed for New Zealand with her family on the *Athenic*, a ship mostly carrying soldiers returning from the war. They arrived in Wellington on the 5th March, 1920.(8) Olivia did not go to school in Christchurch immediately. Her parents were undecided about the school she was to attend. Rosa had been a pupil at St Margarets but that school would not accept a pupil who also wished to study concurrently at the School of Art. Because Olivia was not at school she did not immediately make new friends. At first Olivia stayed with her Aunt at Mt. Torlesse. Olivia's first experience of New Zealand was of the peopleless river beds and rugged high country.(9)

'I was trying to discover New Zealand. After having been brought up in such a habitated country as England, I was trying through my painting to find out how to cope with such a different environment.(10) There was very little precedent or help to find a way to understand the country. I longed to do people in the surroundings. New Zealand is so without people.' I'd be with my Uncle R. O. and he might have to see to this or that on the farm, and he might leave me at some spot for an hour. I don't think he'd be interested in what I was painting. I was practically a freak because I was interested in painting. Probably nobody ever saw what I'd done and it is only now

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(11) However, Olivia's father did take some interest in her perspective studies and evolved an orthographic projection formula which Olivia found too complex to use.

(12) Now called Rangī Ruru College.

(13) Dennis Glover in his notes about Rita Angus in *Art New Zealand* No. 3. Dec/Jan 76/77. Quotes Fairburn on Canterbury painting 'I remember Rex Fairburn saying, when I drove him over a sunset Porters Pass, 'These are great crouching tigers! Why does your Canterbury School make them look like Sunday ice-cream?'

(14) This preoccupation with aerial views can be traced throughout Olivia's career. e.g. Italy 'La Piccola, Marina' The Punakaiki pan-cake rock studies, views of Eric Newton's garden, and the paintings of clouds and atolls in the Island series.

(15) Olivia won the Canterbury College School of Art Certificate of Honour Free Scholarship in Modelling in 1922, In Advanced Art in 1923, and The Advanced Day Art Scholarship in 1924.

(16) The notable change Olivia observed in the palette of local Canterbury artists was also observed by the reviewer for the 1926 C.S.A. Exhibition in which Olivia was for the first time to exhibit. 'The influence of our leading artists is very visible in the work generally and Mr Sydney Thompson's visit obviously has given new ideals toward which to attain.'

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Nikau Palm, West Coast  
c. 1939. Cat. no. 11

that the paintings have seen the light of day.(11) My father wasn't in the least bit interested. He was beginning to fade out then, as I am now. He was seventy-five by this time, and a very lonely man when he came here. He used to talk to the man in the little railway hut, but he had no friends of his own ability. Later, there was Mr Flower and Mr Hogg, who were mathematicians. I think he was very lonely, not that I appreciated that at the time.'

Marmaduke began learning the skills of farming under his uncle, the family home in Fendalton was bought, and in the second term of 1920 Olivia became a pupil at the Girls' School in Papanui Road.(12)

She studied on Wednesday afternoons at the Canterbury College School of Art under Wallwork who took the 'Drawing and Painting from life' classes. She remembers the school still life work as 'tight little still lifes' and felt that her training under Miss Coles in Boscombe had been more definite. 'I was always interested in economy, because of my earliest training in those early still lifes — I was trying to find out the important elements in painting. When I came out here the average work at art school and in the gallery was very spit and polish, finished. They didn't do flat and clear washes.'(13)

During the nine years she remained at the art school, Olivia studied under Cecil Kelly, Leonard Booth, Archibald Nicoll, and Richard Wallwork. Her fellow students were Eve Page, Russell Clark, Ceridwin Thornton, Rhona Haszard, Ivy Fife, Ngaio Marsh, Rita Angus, Rata Lovell-Smith and John Oakley.

Under Kelly she learnt a watercolour convention commonly taught and practised among New Zealand artists at the time. 'We did a yellow ochre wash, down to the horizon, (stronger at the horizon), then a venetian red (all pretty pale) then cobalt blue (very often) — it would be dark at the horizon and go pale upwards. That makes a heaviness I've long since abandoned because it was too much following from all the water-colour books, and was so unreal; it meant you didn't make clear colours. I would sooner now use a plain emerald green.'

During these art school years Olivia would sometimes accompany her mother, and Margaret Stoddart and Cora Wilding, on their painting and sketching excursions near Arthur's Pass, or at Woodstock.

Other times she would venture further into the West Coast, and secure companionship and board with other young painters and go with them on painting trips.

Already Olivia's predilection for directness in paint colour, coupled with calligraphic brushwork, was emerging. Far from abandoning the real world Olivia strove to 'discover' it, painting those places she knew so well, and pioneered in, at Mt. Torlesse, Claxby, and the Castle Hill terraces. 'Nobody painted the terraces since the early days, because it was so far away.' She remembers her student contemporaries Rhona Haszard and Ronald McKenzie being amazed at these paintings of the land, and wanting to know where she had seen the terraces. 'I was interested in painting the land, looking down on it — from an aerial, top of the mountain view.'(14) 'Sometimes we had to walk from Castle Hill to Cass, to catch the train home to Christchurch; with a pack on your back it's no joke.'

There was no actual degree to work for at the School of Art, although there were scholarships which Olivia won for several years. 'One meandered rather.' As well as the assistance from the scholarships, Olivia's mother helped her financially.(15)

In 1924 Olivia's old Boscombe school friend Vivienne Eckford was writing to her from Italy making encouraging sounds about Olivia returning to England. At the same time an English cousin was visiting suggesting Olivia's return. But, her mother said 'No'. Olivia had felt it would have been nice to go back then. 'I was right for it then.'

That same year Sydney Thompson returned to New Zealand and showed his work in Christchurch. 'Everyone took notice; he'd brought more colour than had been in the place. Even though a lot of his colour was not like New Zealand colouring. He probably knew far more about it; he was influenced by Cezanne and the Post-Impressionists. He gave impetus to the local art world and one noticed from that time a bold change in the colour of local artists.'(16)

Olivia had begun experimenting with colour and design and was painting hard lines with soft tonings, using an intuitive kind of art deco technique. (Although Olivia did not know that Art Deco existed as such then she realises that its visual presence had made an impression on her artistic consciousness.)

She painted the early morning mists at Mt. Torlesse 'when the mists are up the hills are like that. The trees are like little lamps.' (She had delineated the trees and hills with graduated lines of deep blue.)

Professor Shelley's criticism was that she was 'too young to use these gimmicks' but she felt she was seeing the land like that at the time.



La Piccola Marina  
1931. Cat. no. 4

(17) From a letter in France, August 14, 1929, to Olivia's family. 'I have done some market scene sketches. They are very interesting. The women get in such quaint attitudes when they are so busy haggling over the prices. They also manage to look very picturesque with the flickering shadows of the trees upon their white headresses and dresses, many still black, many stained lovely shades of green and purple with long usage and a background of masts. The wares are spread out on stalls which have shelters of scarlet and yellow and green above them. Their wares of lace, clothes, sabots, tools, medicines and fish. Sometimes a band comes too, and plays the same tune over and over again all the morning! That's a great thrill.'

(18) Letter to Olivia from her Mother, August 21, 1929. 'We are going to have a fairly tight time here — as the house will be such an expensive affair. If we could possibly have gone on with it as it was, we should have done so, but we simply could not, and it was impossible to go on living here. Dad could not do the garden and the house wanted one hundred pounds spending on it so I am truly thankful to have sold.'

(19) Olivia at Holton le Moor Hall wrote to her Uncle Dick in New Zealand (who Marmaduke farmed with) 'I feel I must write to you from the first Holton, if for only sentimental reasons. It is very charming here, and all the cousins have been so good and kind to me — quite a family — the Squarson — cousin Tom, Cousin Ethel and a son George who was at the war and the three daughters, Mary, Dora and Joan Gibbons are all at home. Very soon after I arrived I was taken round and up and down and round about to see the various portraits and was told who everybody was, and what relation they were to me. Ancestors are they? Well, they have not much looks, rather stupidly Victorian most of them — husbands and wives leaning affectionately towards one another and in real life they probably quarrelled cat and dog. The older ones are rather nicer — the Georgian ones. They were not so keen on having wonderful family portraits rather badly done — they were content with a simple silhouette, or small miniature.'

(20) From Dec. 11 1929 Diary. 'Painting as usual. Had an amusing time with Tonks re tone of chest — in fact I firmly disagreed with him. Told him certain lights could be as light as ever they wanted. He even came round in afternoon to see if I had changed my mind.'



Olivia (left) and friend  
near Anacapri 1931

1926 was the first year Olivia exhibited at the Canterbury Society of Arts Annual Exhibition. It would have been 'unthinkable' to have exhibited as a student any earlier than this. Olivia regarded herself as a 'bit of a rebel' at the art school, and like Rita Angus could see the personality clashes and political struggles of the staff and students. She remembers the social life fostered by the Wallwork's as a lot of fun with the magnificent art school fancy dress parties. But, noted too that for many the social life was more important than the artistic. Olivia exhibited again at the Canterbury Society of Arts in 1928 as an art student but by this time she had begun to feel she was really 'meandering' in her studies with nothing very much to work for. Olivia's mother had suggested she return to England for study at her old art school the Slade. Although Olivia had her friends here in New Zealand the idea of travel was quite an exciting proposition. In February 1929 she was granted a pass in the then controversial and just instated Preliminary Examination for the Diploma of Fine Arts, and on April 25th, 1929 Olivia departed from Wellington for England arriving on June 9th at Southampton. She went directly to stay at her cousin's home in London. Three days later Olivia was visiting the Slade making the necessary arrangements to join Tonk's life study class.

Next, Olivia arranged a trip to Paris to meet Vivienne Eckford where for a month they travelled, catching up with the years since they had seen each other and visiting the opera, museums, and seeing the work of Rubens, Van Dyke, the Venus and the Winged Victory at the Louvre. When Vivienne returned to England after a month Olivia joined Maureen Raymond and together they travelled to visit Sydney Thompson in Concarneau. She was thrilled with Concarneau and the 'warm welcome the Sydney Thompson's gave them'. Intrigued by the beautiful French landscape, the buildings, and the vistas and market places Olivia spent time sketching, and once painting with 'odd paints mixed in a powder puff case'. (17) She remained there till August, returned to England with a case of the measles, and was immediately admitted into the London Fever Hospital thus delaying the start of her Slade study. Meanwhile from New Zealand her mother wrote of economic hard times and the selling of the family home in Fendalton. The Spencer Bowers had shifted to a rented house in Sumner. After a month Olivia was discharged from the hospital and went to make arrangements for her accommodation at the Cicelia Club, a Women's Hostel at the West End. From there she went for a time to convalesce at the Lincolnshire Dixon Holton le Moor Hall with her cousins. (19) Here she painted and sketched. Olivia finally commenced her life classes under Professor Tonks in October of 1929. The women and men had separate classes each with nude models. From Tonks Olivia learnt to paint by form and correct by tone. He suggested to her how to arrange her canvas and herself correctly for painting from the model.

During this time Olivia worked on set projects. An Adam and Eve theme. Some work on the 'Flight from Egypt' and worked painting inspired by the sketches she had made at Concarneau. Meanwhile Tonks saw that essentially Olivia was a water-colourist and had some difficulty in working with oil paint, and he suggested she work as if with water-colour in turpentine washes. Her improvement in the product of her technical change was noticeable, and soon she was painting more confidently in thicker paint.

She recalled that once Tonks had said that she was the only one in the class who had got the spirit of the model, and that the Masters could not have done better at her age. Olivia however didn't in the least feel pleased with her work at the time. 'I never quite believed in any praise. I don't know if I ever have. You just struggle along don't you. You have the feeling that people won't really understand.' It is apparent from her diaries that Olivia sometimes tired of the repetitiveness of her drawing classes, and certainly questioned the theories of her teacher if they were not in accordance with her own discoveries. (20) While Olivia learnt deliberate methods of formula from Tonks along the traditional lines of tonal systems for modelling, anatomy analyses and highlighting for texture, his emphasis for artistic achievement was founded very much in the life of the work, the spirit of the subject, and the necessary transcendence over formula.

Socially Olivia felt she had missed 'half the fun of the Slade' because she had not been well, and she had been lonely because most of the students had gone straight from school with their school friends. 'I got to know some people, but mostly they weren't artists. I was very shy — I needed desperately to have a friend.' Vivienne Eckford was, though, from time to time in London and although she had a lot of Art Gallery and social connections Olivia had wished for 'artist people — people who painted, to go to'.

'I went to an exhibition where Frances Hodgkins' work was showing but when I asked if I could meet her they said, 'Oh, you can't possibly see her' which disappointed Olivia. Olivia visited the 'Great Italian Exhibition' at the Tate, the works of Botticelli and Piero della Francesca, and also did some work at the Grosvenor



Olivia at Mt Cook, 1929



La Piccola Marina, 1931.  
Cat. no. 7



Santa Chiara, Assisi.  
1931. Cat. no. 5

(21) Letter from Rosa to Olivia warning O. of the drawbacks of going to Italy; (Rosa had been to Italy and remarked on her experiences) 'I found it so difficult to sketch in Italy — one is afraid to go to out of the way spots — still, you might do very well. I found it so hard to get about without a bicycle and you only just begin to feel to know your way about when your time is up. I had two months in Italy — it was a lovely trip, but as far as sketching went my time was wasted. Florence is so beautiful and full of paintability — but hard to settle down to real work.'

(22) From a review of Olivia's painting in the *Otago Daily Times*, 16 November, 1932 p.4. 'The artist sees nature in pattern, and boldly eliminates detail for effect, elements that are well illustrated in her La Piccola Marina, Capri painting.'

(23) The Nuns of Assisi, Olivia once noted, showed a great respect for artists. 'In such an atmosphere, one doesn't feel as in New Zealand or England, something curious and queer.'

(24) Aubrey Waterfield wrote to Olivia's mother after Olivia's stay. It is interesting to note his cousinly concern for her artistic future, but also the hint of a slightly older and conservative generation with qualms about 'modern art': 'Olivia seemed to me to have plenty of talent and I was astonished at a lot of the work which she showed me. Her power of accurate drawing shows that she has worked much harder than her manner would sometimes imply. I do not believe anyone can tell, or advise, with any certainty. She is so young yet and whether one has anything to say or not depends so much on how much a character develops and deepens. At the present minute I would never advise anyone to adopt painting as a profession, I mean with any hope of making a livelihood of it. It does not seem to me that anyone will buy pictures for years to come, and I think that probably she might be better to settle down to try to help you and her brother for the time being. She can always keep her painting going and training her eyes and the mere fact of not being free to paint every day and all day may considerably strengthen her intellectually — I remember Tonks saying once of Sarjeant years ago '... if only Sarjeant would paint a little less, and think a little more'. Financially there is certainly nothing to be made in Europe by painting. I think that if she keeps her eyes open she may be able to express a whole new world of beauty from New Zealand. Only it must be the essential beauty that is around her and it seems to me from what you tell me of your life that she would be back amongst real live people who do not float through life and that she should find much to do and in time, if opportunity is offered, much to say about it all. Even if one cannot afford to give all one's time to painting or to do it exclusively it is the most valuable hobby that anyone can have. Learning to paint is a sort of calligraphy, the hand has got to learn to follow the brain and make the statements correctly of what the brain feels so intensely, and the actual amount of creation is a subconscious minute of complete absorption and unselfconsciousness. So much of the modern art in painting and music is far too intellectual and selfconscious. They are all terribly obsessed by ego. They approach nature with half a dozen problems ready and not with a mind completely open to receive impression. If nature does not play up and provide the stuff that they need for their particular problem — so much the worse for nature.'

(25) See reproduction 'Toiling sisters of Saint Clare' linocut by Olivia Spencer Bower in *Art in New Zealand*, Quarterly Magazine, March 1938. Also, article by C. A. Marris in same issue; 'Olivia Spencer Bower and her Art'.

(26) Vivienne Eckford left New Zealand to return to England in 1933.



School of Modern Art. She travelled fairly extensively throughout Britain sketching with Slade friends at Norfolk, and motoring to Scotland with Mary Hogg, another Christchurch artist, as well as to Ireland. In Cornwall Olivia and Mary hired the English painter Dod Proctor's huge studio where they painted.

Olivia sent works back to New Zealand to show at the C.S.A. in 1930. By this time the Spencer Bower family back in New Zealand had moved into their new home at 'Claxby' farm, Swannanoa, near Rangiora. The farm was now being worked by Olivia's brother. The difficult slump years of the early 1930's had hit New Zealand and art sales were at an all time low. Olivia's mother was keen for Olivia's return, and wrote of her apprehension about Olivia's plans to visit Italy.(21) But, while Rosa stressed in her letters to Olivia the need to be frugal she was most concerned for her to get good work done, and felt confident her daughter could make a reasonable living from painting in New Zealand where she was known. Olivia had already arrived in Italy by the time her mother's apprehensive letter reached her. For a month Olivia and Mary Hogg painted in Capri. It was here that Olivia was to paint her watercolour 'La Piccola Marina, Capri', a painting that probably most approximates the culmination of her skills, sensitivity and experiences as a painter at that time. It was to be reviewed in the *Christchurch Sun* on her return to New Zealand as a 'broadly conceived and skilfully executed study that shows how greatly is the artist impressed with rhythm and design'. The reviewer, 'Chiaroscuro' noted how 'the perspective problems in the painting intrigued her, how with a definite scale of tones she gave a sense of unity and completeness to a subject that might easily have lapsed into incoherence'. The painting, showing pigeons in the foreground, perching high above a house-studded peninsula with swirling seas is reminiscent in its elevated positioning to the earlier 'looking down' paintings of the terraces near Castle Hill. Olivia's work here in Italy showed the significant change that had come about in her time overseas. The decorative Art Deco element already tapped in her earlier School of Art works was elaborated with design elements confidently integrated with a convincing sense of economy.(22)

After painting for a time in Capri and Rome Olivia travelled to Assisi where she stayed in an Italian convent for ten weeks, painting the nuns at their washing and gardening and in the surrounding landscape.(23)

At Florence Olivia stayed with relatives at their home at Settignano, Poggio Gherardo.(24) In many ways her stay here and the stimulating company and life of her cousin Aubrey Waterfield and Lina Duff Gordon his wife is still regarded as the highlight of her trip. The Waterfields were both writers and painters. Lina was anti-Fascist, and was the Italian correspondent to the Manchester *Guardian* and the *Observer*. Olivia, when she left, took letters across the border for them. 'You never mentioned Mussolini's name in public', she recalled.

The 1930/31 group of paintings, especially the Italian, display two very distinct styles. On the one hand Olivia painted strikingly illustrative 'art deco' type work, using dark inked bounding linear stylizations of form. And, the other approach was her softer, more characteristic watercolour handling. Both styles were mostly done on the spot, but some were later done as sketches in preparation for lino cuts. Her preparatory linocut drawings for 'Toiling Sisters of Saint Clare' is included in this exhibition.(25)

Olivia returned to New Zealand to join her family at Swannanoa in November, 1931.

Olivia exhibited in the March 1932 Annual Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition. She submitted eight works including *La Piccola Marina, Capri*, and *Springtime, Assisi*. C. M. Lester reviewing the Exhibition for the *Press* said that she 'had made excellent use of her time overseas, and has more than justified the hopes for her success as an artist, which her student days encouraged us to form'. He went on to say 'her pictures, of course, show the influence of the new art world to which her years of travel gave her the key, but she has by no means lost the individuality shown in all her early work'. Art was not selling at all well due to the Depression, only one painting from the Exhibition was bought that year for the Canterbury Society of Art's permanent collection, 'La Piccola, Marina, Capri'. It must have been some consolation to Olivia and possibly more so her family to feel some recognition for her years of travel and study in hard times. That same year Vivienne Eckford arrived in New Zealand. She and Olivia motored on a tour of the Mackenzie Country, Te Anau, Central Otago and through to Dunedin. In much of the two month tour Olivia painted and sketched while her friend explored the country. 'We went all the way down the Skippers in a Baby Austin, with its tiny wheels. We were the last people over the Crown Range that year.'(26)

The remainder of that year appears to have been a frustrating time. 'Here I was, back from England with my pretty clothes and self confidence I hadn't had before, and I was incarcerated in the slump.' Olivia's contribution to the 1933 Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition indicates her location at home on the farm. Her paintings of



Nuns and children at Assisi

(27) Professor Shelley in a review of the 1934 Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition discussed Olivia's paintings. 'Miss Spencer Bower is one of the outstanding exhibitors this year — she makes her colour almost unimportant, it seems sometimes as if it only just succeeded in being recognised, but her tone and drawing are excellent, and the almost-lack-of-colour in the shingle beds of the Waimakariri in (210) and (233) is a stiff test of technical reticence. The lumpiness of the hills, the sense of mass and of space in Miss Spencer Bower's pictures are strong in their kinaesthetic as well as in their visual appeal. This artist has vigour and power given to few, but she must beware lest she play so much upon one technical method that it becomes a facile trick, as one suspects might happen with her use of swirling curves'.



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74 Beside the River 1976

63 Getting About 1969

19 Clouds over Lake Wakatipu c. 1938

55 Holton Le Moor 1965



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shearing sheds (one illustrated in that year's Canterbury Society of Arts catalogue, and another 'Wool' illustrated in the 1938 issue of *Art in New Zealand*) are probably the closest approximation made of her family's life and farm work ethic. Olivia, however, felt herself something of an incumbrance in the sheds.

During the early 1930's Olivia became involved in the Group from which the New Zealand Society of Artists emerged. In October 1933 at the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery in Durham Street Olivia showed with the New Zealand Society of Artists' first general exhibition. This group, including Christopher Perkins, Rata Lovell-Smith, Jenny Campbell, Louise Henderson, and Ross McGill, grew out of a commonly felt dissatisfaction with the limitations of the Art Societies, the Art Schools, and the lack of purchasing power invested in the Art Galleries. When 'The Group' merged into the New Zealand Society of Artists, other artists including Rita Angus, James Cook, Flora Scales and T. A. McCormack also became exhibitors.<sup>(27)</sup> This was the first time Olivia was to see any of McCormack's paintings. She described his work as a 'breath of fresh air', and was impressed by his 'wonderful lightsome touch'. Not long afterwards 'The Group' reformed.

Olivia's Punakaiki works are especially interesting as they represent a body of works painted from 1934 to 1942 that were at the time quite a departure from the kind of work being exhibited at the Canterbury Society of Arts and a deliberate striving on Olivia's part to come to terms with some of the intricacies of painting movement of the sea, and of the forces of nature. She tackled many times the same place at the Pancake Rocks, watching the swell, the pounding thrashing of the sea through the tunnelled, forged passages, blowing great sea-spray fountains and rhythmically receding with the swell. Olivia worked hard at the problems of composition, reworking many of the paintings of the period again and again to achieve horizon lines with suitable diagonals, higher in some paintings, lower in some to show the sense of movement. Her palette of this particular series is subdued in colour, with strong tonal gradations, and a strong linear element which reinforces the drama of sea waves continuously pounding and disintegrating on rock. One is amongst the spray and atmosphere of these paintings as if in direct encounter. On submission to the selection committee, a number of these works were rejected.

Elizabeth Kelly who was at that time one of the moving forces behind the selection committee commented to Olivia that it was not her best, and that it would not do her (painting reputation) any good. Olivia remarked of the rejection 'It does something to you — to be discouraged from showing an idea you are trying to develop — it was the first time I was being interested in movement. In theory one doesn't take notice — but it is very difficult — I didn't know enough about making it into a picture. These works aren't gathered together enough. They were design pieces that I don't feel I carried out — a rebuff can so easily stop you following up an idea — although not altogether — it is still a latent idea, although you know you can't put them towards that committee when that committee is all that exists'.

At this time Olivia was also painting the gold miners huts on the coast, nikau palms, and the bush. 'The blue days on the Coast were wonderful, I hate blue days in most places — but there was a kind of way the blue reflected in the water. Probably because usually the Coast is so grey. But it was always exciting watching the sea come in. It was seldom calm so it was very interesting when it was calm. The bush was a weird place with a lot of strange stories. If you went one yard inside the bush your paper was wringing wet. . . you just couldn't get it dried'.

'At that time I was generally much more interested in flat pattern, the trees painted on the Coast were distorted with wind and salt — lovely shapes some of them, but often compositionally there isn't a resting place, a space in some of the paintings. I later became more three dimensional in my work, wanting to get behind the tree, the eye punching off the frame. Looking at it from now — if I'd sat for longer I might have made that space in the pattern.'

A glimpse into Olivia's methodical and exacting attack of her work is clearly seen in her West Coast beach paintings. One particular painting of beach, driftwood, fisherman, headland, sea and sky is notable in that an inadvertent splodge caused her to paint the composition three times again at home. But, each time she felt the paintings didn't 'come off' as she tried to capture the essence of the original. 'After trying that sort of thing I realized it was no good trying to copy another painting because the original compulsion wasn't there as it is on the spot. I can see shapes that are missed. I was trying to rectify some of the shapes original shapes.'

In 1936 Olivia went to Wellington for a time where she visited T. A. McCormack, who had Dorothy Kate Richmond's old studio. Her diary entry reads 'enjoyed seeing his work very much'.

The next year a Russian Ballet Company toured New Zealand with Pavlova, and as the reviewer of the Canterbury Society of Arts Exhibition of 1938 was later to remark



Olivia and friends at Arthur's Pass



Punakaiki Seas.  
c. 1935. Cat. no. 9

she had the 'wit to turn to the recent visit of a Russian ballet company for material; she has certainly captured some grace of line'. Olivia attended rehearsals and worked 'behind stage' during which time she painted and drew figures in movement. These paintings were quite a new departure for Olivia, and struggles with drawing the figure in motion and 'anatomically correct' are evident. Probably the problem lay in her desire, at the time, to use a distinctly delineated line and large blocked out areas of colour, an approach that surely evoked an essence of the ballet, but meant too that it rather held her figure drawing, bounded by these graceful lines, up to the scrutiny of anatomy conscious critics. Had Olivia pursued this work more in studying figures in motion and simplifying the figures to more easily 'marry' with the very convincing sense of colour, line, light and animation her enthusiastic involvement with ballet painting might have continued. One wonders if the following 1940 Group Show reviewers comments had anything to do with dampening her spirit about this work. 'Her painting 'Paganini Ballet' on which she herself sets a higher value than her landscapes strikes me as an unfortunate venture into the fantastic. Her drawing of figures, never very strong, is not good enough to carry through such an idea successfully.' That she valued her ballet work higher at this time than her landscape indicates that perhaps she might have preferred to work with figures more than she had. Though later Olivia became disenchanted with these studies her experiences with ballet work were later to benefit her figure work drawing, regardless of the damning comments of the critics. Comparatively the success of her high-country painting of the time is undoubted; the Lake Wakatipu paintings of the late thirties, her Mackenzie Country and Canterbury work, especially the skyscapes, are remarkable for their lucidity in colour. The electric blue skies, steely high nor-west arcs, clouds trimmed with gold light in these locales were painted with a visionary sensibility.

In 1938 Olivia agreed to have her work 'Nikau Palms' and the 'Untidy Verandah' printed by Harry H. Tombs Ltd. for *Art in New Zealand* quarterly. She also illustrated at this time Alan Mulgan's book 'First With The Sun'. The following year, 1939, Olivia's father, Antony died. He was eighty-seven.

During the war years Olivia painted in both North and South Islands. In 1940 Olivia painted at Kaikoura. She stayed with her Christchurch school friend, Fan Blunt, many times. The lively company and hospitality of 'Steepdowns' made an easy environment for painting and friendship. The paintings that remain in her own collection are mostly what is left from works sold and tend to be rejects or unfinished. Always with more than a 'germ of an idea' her Kaikoura work is a confrontation with another spatial dimension, quite distinct topographically from her high country work. Her drawing of the rolling hills, looming snow capped mountains, clouds and sea very skilfully show an understanding of the terrains form; the lay of the land.

'You're aware of the shifts of the hills and how they go into terraces. You can't help but be aware of it. 'Steepdown' is rough country to walk in; when the floods are in you've got to get on horses and swim across the river to get out of the place.' Speaking of her painting 'The Kaihutama River', south of Kaikoura 'where it goes down to the sea' she says 'The farm called 'Steep Downs' is well named. — I used to climb as far as I could to get the view over this country. We used to go for picnics to the top of the hills with the horses.' Somehow these Kaikoura paintings are rather like tramping. They are hardly 'scenery'; rather they are three dimensional places, the essence of the land recreated in brush strokes, bumpy, smooth, steep or flowing, hard going, or sparse.

Olivia's brother Marmaduke married in December, 1942. Olivia and her mother moved house to live in Memorial Ave. Christchurch. By this time Olivia was beginning to think of travelling to the far north. She had a hankering to paint Pohutukawas, and in 1943 during another visit to the West Coast, was busy corresponding with Sydney Thompson and Katerine (Kitty) Airini Vane, negotiating a painting trip to Mahurangi with them. She travelled from Auckland to Mahurangi Heads in the Hauraki Gulf which could only be reached by launch through Mangroves. 'We'd go off painting, sometimes we'd be near, sometimes we weren't. I thought I'd be so thrilled with those red trees — when we were there (March) there was no red on them. Airini had painted them at Christmas time when they were in bloom. They were so sinuous those tree shapes. I was disappointed with my work. The grey/green of the Pohutakawa and the tussock colour, yellow ground and blue sea never quite jelled. They never really intrigued me'.

One painting at Mahurangi was of a United States landing practice craft but she washed them out when she was planning to exhibit the paintings because she felt 'the Defence might have taken it down — as it was a display of defence strategies.'

In April of the same year Olivia joined the University of Auckland, School of Art, Elam. She worked with Lois White in a life class, and a sketching class with John Weeks and A. J. C. Fisher. It was Fisher's methods in form that most involved Olivia. Under Fisher, a former Slade pupil, she was able to resolve some aspects of Slade teach-



Alison Pickmere.  
c. 1943 Cat. no. 24



(28) From a letter by Olivia to her mother addressed and dated Masonic Hotel, Rawene, April 25th, 1948. 'The women in maternity wards are very interesting but it of course takes plenty of tact and patience and speed once that has been established as they rarely stay more than four days, they are very placid mothers'.

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Rawene Mothers. 1948  
Cat. no. 31



The School Launch. 1948  
Cat. no. 30



Maori Baby  
1948.  
Cat. no. 32A



Olivia  
in Auckland  
c. 1936

ing. Her first portraits were done at this time including the portrait of Alison Pickmere. The method Fisher taught was to look at the form entirely, he offered his students a darkened room with a pinpoint of light, subdued, to find the form. Fisher was not very concerned with colour, but his 'drawing through the round method' helped Olivia's life work to become more 'solid'. This concern for form did not readily resolve itself in her landscape work. The flat planes of colour that she had formerly used were now emerging through her own processing as definition of form through colours. Olivia worked extremely hard over this period whilst under a certain amount of pressure from her mother to return to Christchurch to nurse her.

'I worked so hard drawing at Auckland. I remember Rona Woods, who was a sculptor, she could do the most wonderful drawings of form, without even a model, because of Fishers' method of drawing and thinking in the round.'

'I didn't use much design at that time; the background didn't come into it much. It was rather like sculpture. (It is out of date now). I felt I had to use it, learn it, and interpret it in my own way. Weeks was the colour and design man. But at the time all I wanted was learning to draw around and through the form.'

Olivia during these Auckland years painted at Piha and Huia views of Auckland from her room overlooking Grafton and Rangitoto; sometimes she painted in the Gully with Weeks' class. Like the School of Art in Canterbury, Elam had no degree to work for, so the students often stayed off and on for years. Olivia, perhaps having had the experience of 'meandering' at Canterbury worked consistently in the areas that concerned her, seeking interesting places to travel to and to paint.

The resolve she most sought with form and colour in her landscape painting eventually appears with ease in a group of paintings she did in the early sunrise light at Piha. Here Olivia painted campers' pitched tents, their shapes casting long early morning shadows on the dewy grass. There is a skilful sense of form, combined with her juicy fluid colour washes. Certainly her Auckland 'form quest' paid off but was apparently missed by Gordon Brown and Hamish Keith in *New Zealand Painting* when remarking on Olivia's association with the Rutland Group they said 'her work had declined in quality since her Canterbury Days. Only after she had severed her connections with Auckland did her work regain some of its former qualities.' One wonders, in fact, if her student like approach to the technical problems she posed herself has not blinded some to the quality of the successes that culminated periodically during that time. For quite a period during 1944 and 1945 Olivia was ill with suspected rheumatic fever and was hospitalized for treatment which each time lasted for several months. Her complaint lingered and by 1948, Olivia, on medical recommendation travelled to Rawene for the 'change of air' where she met the back-blocks hospital doctor, Dr. G. N. Smith. Here she became deeply interested in the Maori way of life and accompanied Dr. Graham Kemble-Welsh, who was at that time association with Dr. Smith in his work, on medical trips to Maori settlements in Northland. She remained here some months and spent a great deal of the time painting and drawing Maori mothers and their babies at the hospital (28) 'I always wanted to draw Maori babies; they were so beautiful, the pakeha babies seemed too limp in comparison, their brown eyes seemed so alert.'

Certainly her maternity drawings and paintings have a clarity of form and expression that surpasses much of her previous portrait work.

Olivia became friendly with Dr. and Mrs Smith and was for a time, their guest. During her stay with them she painted Dr. Smith's portrait and made several fine watercolours of the Smith's in their living room. 'Mrs Smith was glad of the company, she was terribly well read — she read fiction. There was very little company for her: I read, so we got on well together.' Olivia recalls 'she had a fine sympathetic voice, and a disregard of unimportant things.' Olivia admired the nature and work of Dr. Smith very much. 'He gave power to the district nurses to visit and administer to the sick; he did say 'Doctors were God' in his book, but he recognised the work of the nurses. He would go out at any time to visit sick children.' Olivia worked while she was there on illustrated drawings for one of Dr. Smith's book: *Later Notes From A Blackblocks Hospital*. She felt that although in many ways he 'didn't have a clue about painting', and the ideas for the illustrations were largely his, as an illustrator she had to put herself a certain amount in subjection to the Author's wishes. 'I suppose it was a new line of country; I hadn't really found my own interpretation of what he said. I was doing to a large extent what he wanted.'

The design requirements of the illustrations, however, possibly heightened Olivia's sense of her new found artistic quest; she began to work in ways of combining form and design. And it is here ten years or so after completing the ballet series that Olivia consciously and successfully approached the matter again. Her series of coloured drawings and designs of Maori children waving down from a hillside to a small school ferry boat departing upstream seem period pieces of the time. But, they indicate also



Cape Kidnappers. 1956  
Cat. no. 40A

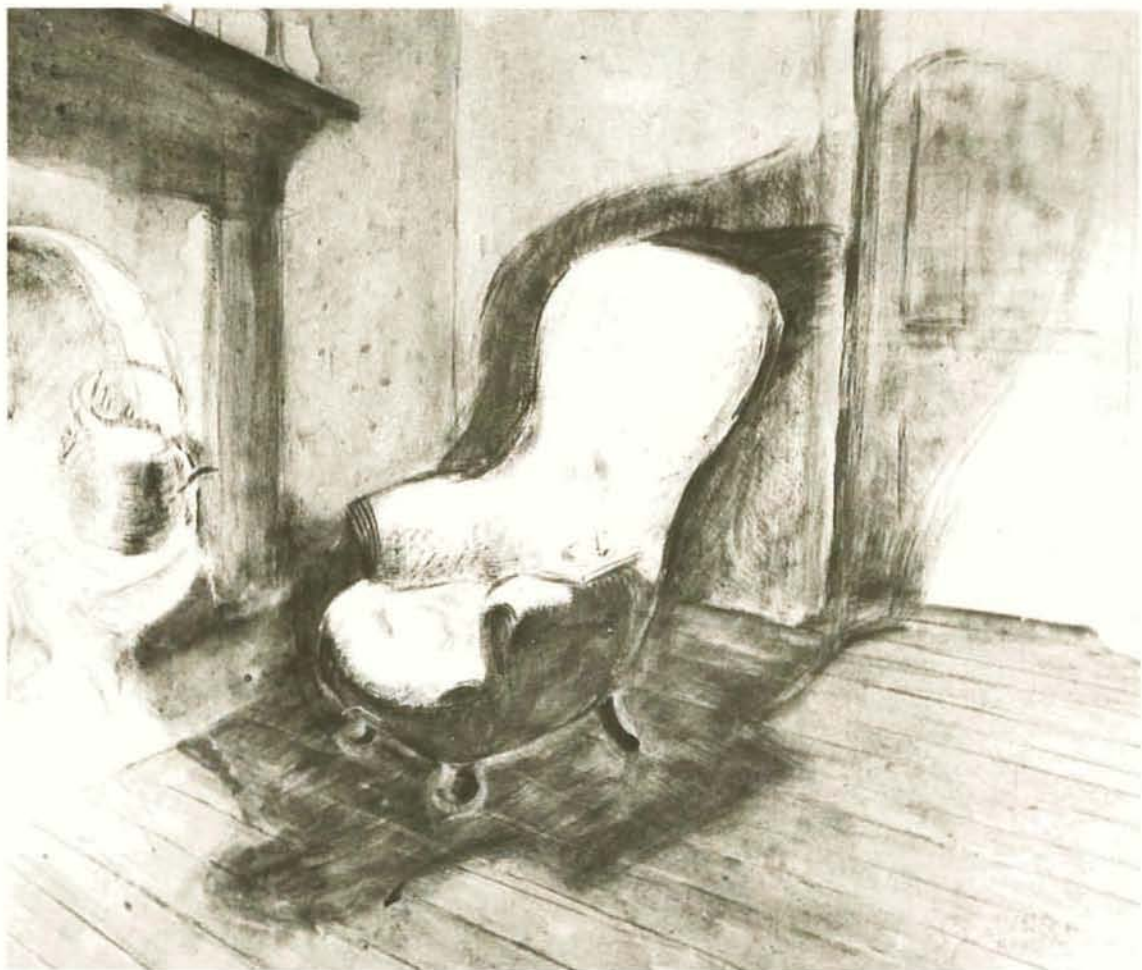
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(29) From *Ascent: A Journal of the Arts in New Zealand*, Vol. 1, No. 3. Caxton Press, April 1969.

(30) Here Olivia's painting has naturally progressed from the 'top of the hill-top-looking-down' paintings of the Terraces, and *La Piccola Marina* works to the extension of a thoroughly air-born view.

(31) A *Press* reviewer in 1961 J.N.K. that Olivia had 'long been notable for the lyrical charm and fluency of her watercolour painting, but this has generally been offset by compositional deficiencies, resulting in lyricism which is pleasing but too amorphous to hold the attention. However, occasional paintings have shown the existence of latent compositional powers manifesting themselves on a more conscious level. This is shown particularly in 'Tall Ships' a gouache in which the poetry of the colour is complimented by the spacious, gently rectilinear composition. More in keeping with Miss Spencer Bower's accustomed style are her watercolours where she has a quite dramatic way of using slashing diagonals in an otherwise loose composition. Her handling of watercolours seems to have become even more assured and at its best, as in 'Spear Fishers' 'Apia' and 'Coconut Trees, Apia' it is calligraphically eloquent. Miss Spencer Bowers Colour in these works is wider in range than before. Sometimes, as in 'Terena' with its echoes of Gauguin, she steps right outside the previously narrow confines of her palette to work most successfully in strong oranges and reds'.

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The Musterer's Chair  
1951. Cat. no. 40



the marked achievement of combining rhythmic, linear design with the real observed form. A cathartic moment in her career, these works display a sense of being spiritually 'at home' with her subject without the hampering effects of a critical artistic climate which always had certain expectations of her work. No wonder the stylistic change which binded symbolism and subject has such an assured character. Olivia further painted and drew women planting kumeras, the medical staff at the hospital, and landscape studies.



Getting About.  
1969.  
Cat. no. 63

Sometime later Olivia returned to Christchurch to remain for nearly a decade minding her ageing and ailing mother. From time to time in these years Olivia ventured to Queenstown (1949) and to Kaikoura and Castle Hill. She painted from the top of Queenstown Hill ('I climbed to the top, every damn day — it's a long climb — with all my painting things'.) Some paintings still have the remains of ice traced into the watercolour, such were the weather conditions.

One of the poignant group of paintings of this ilk is 'The Musterer's Chair'. These paintings show glimpses of clothes drying on a rope by a fireplace in the musterer's hut and others of a solitary chair drawn up to the fire's warmth. Somehow a striking, conglomerate picture of a hermit is felt. Yet the hermit is nowhere in sight. Unless, that is, it is to be found in the artist's empathetic eye and hand. John Oakley was to say of 'The Musterer's Chair' exhibited at Olivia's 1972 Canterbury Society of Arts show that there was a sense of immediacy and an assurance in the painting. 'At times her work has a magical quality, as in the Musterer's Chair with its book and a candle; the chair takes on a life of its own. It has a presence.'

She says of Queenstown 'There is a wonderful light around Queenstown, it's because of the great body of water. I went there quite a bit at skiing time, after I'd had rheumatic fever — it was kill or cure, I though I'd try skiing, but I went more for the painting. You get wonderful skies there, clouds tearing across the sky. Its extraordinary up in the Routeburn, its like a kind of parkland. We had to go through icy rivers again and again to get to Paradise, and I screamed all the way across. I wasn't able to stop on the way to paint. We had to carry our belongings on our shoulders. It's mountain birch up there. It was the most exciting bush bent with the wind. Only things that could survive in the valley could be seen, giving it an extraordinary tidy appearance rather like a parkland. The wind bent the birches all up and around the Routeburn hut. I did a little sketch of the 'tidy parklands'. One visit to the North Island occurred in 1956 when Olivia stayed for a time at Cape Kidnappers painting the East Coast seas, hills and valleys and the gannets of the gannet sanctuary. Olivia's work was included in the late fifties in two collections made by Peter Tomory of the Auckland City Art Gallery for a tour of New Zealand. One exhibition was called eight New Zealand Painters. The other was Five New Zealand Watercolourists, and included Rita Angus, Gabrielle Hope, Eric Lee-Johnson and T. A. McCormack.

After the death of her ninety three year old mother in March, 1960 Olivia left New Zealand for the Pacific Islands where she painted extensively in Tahiti, Samoa, Fiji and the islands of Tahaa and Bora Bora (29).

An *Ascent* reviewer of her 1968 Retrospective Exhibition notes of the paintings 'her subsequent spectacular one-man show in Christchurch revealed a tremendous sense of liberation and vigour never subsequently lost'. The paintings extend over a wide range of subject matter, from Fijian fishermen, Tahitian nuns teaching a class under the cool shade of palms, to penetrating portraits of mothers and children. Probably the most unusual group of pictures and drawings Olivia worked on during this time were her aerial works of clouds above the sea and the atolls below. On her way to Samoa from Tahiti Olivia flew in a sea-plane low over the atolls. She noticed that the clouds below, and on the horizon seemed at first to appear as 'white looking spots on the sea' then gradually as the plane flew over them the clouds came higher; 'then, gently they rose into little columns of puff balls.' Olivia began drawing what she saw on the plane. She encountered a problem with such a spatial perspective; 'either I could do the clouds going down in a vortex, spiralling down, or else I could be the 'eye' and it would be small from where I was and the clouds would not seem upright enough.

Olivia worked from both sides of the problem, returning with many intriguing and spatially convincing exploratory drawings, several of which she worked into finished paintings. The atoll and cloud paintings represented in this exhibition not only evoked a South Pacific atmosphere but indicated a curious sense of looking down on the world (30). Here Olivia was confronted with painting 'the whole of the thing the atoll seems to turn because you are flying around it.' Olivia spent three months touring the Islands in which time the native peoples caught her attention greatly and this group of paintings is frequently peopled, something not very common in the bulk of her work. She remarked on her return 'the people were there' and 'I feel I ought to go into Cathedral Square now'. The critics and newspaper reporters received her



Life class at the Cass.  
1964. Cat. no. 53

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(32) Olivia drew and painted at Enys during the sixties and early seventies up until Minta Britton's death in 1974.

(33) According to Olivia the Izard Brothers founded Enys. 'Just below was the old West Coast Hotel. I used to go there when the Poulton's had it. Castle Hill is that farm with red roofs which is built at the foot of the Castle Hill Rocks. You go along the West Coast Road where they want to build the mountain village. Its near Lake Pearson, you go over Porters Pass and beyond Castle Hill Farm, where you go past a cutting till you come to Enys — nobody much knows its there, you go through there to St. Andrews school hut. (They've got some land there, a great building with bunks). There's sheep. In the spring . . . gosh; the poor little lambs; terrible weather for them'. It's a marvellous place to walk from. It's on the way to all the ski places up there. I stayed there so much I used to go there weekend after weekend. I used to paint in the snow and all weather. The best paintings were done when I stayed there longer. During the weekends there were more people there and I couldn't work so well. It was a marvellous place — there was this natural shower of ice cold water, better than any fridge. All our food and milk in a box covered over by the water and covered so the opossums couldn't get it. The secret underground river is most exciting to go through, you have to go with torches. It's terrifying. When the wind blows, you can't get to paint the hills in tone, its just moving in waves on the tussock. I think I haven't got a lot of paintings from Enys because we were always doing something. We used to play cards into the evening. We didn't get up as early as we should because we'd stayed up late. They had a lovely old wood stove'. Amongst Olivia's collections of Enys paintings and drawings are quite a few of her friends and Minta Britton is such an atmosphere.

(34) This interest in spatial relationships became apparent to Olivia when she was working as a student with Fisher in Auckland. 'He was interested in the form of the figure but had very little interest in the form or spaces behind or around the figure. He would often put a flat background behind the people he painted. I became further interested in space'.

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Eric Newton's Garden,  
Islington, London.  
1964. Cat. no. 54

1961 exhibition with enthusiasm, noting her wide use of colour and stronger compositional powers. (31).

For the 1961 Group exhibition Olivia painted herself and other members of the Group. Doris Lusk, Rudi Gopas, Leo Benseman, Bill Sutton and Toss Woollaston. She says of them 'they were rather swashbuckling, so to speak, I didn't have much time. I just wanted a group of paintings — the others came to the house in Memorial Ave. I thought I'd do some quick sketches that was all there was to it. I didn't put any frames around them; there was a dark corner in an alcove. They were called 'crude' paintings by the reviewer, but to my mind they were not without psychological insight'.

In 1963 Olivia left New Zealand again for Europe. She arrived in Naples where she painted for a time before visiting Amalfi and Perugia. Her Italian paintings are a remarkable collection of works; structurally sound in drawing and abstract elements they offer a tone of immediacy of ease and calligraphic humour, warmth, colour and musicality found in the most unselfconscious and successful of her work. This ease evolves Olivia believes 'when your working hard, you can touch a deeper consciousness, when you're not consciously pushing it, shapes and ideas come into the painting from the brush'. One of the most sensuous aspects of her Italian work, which is found also in her English painting are the clear dark-light contrasts between forms; loosely applied, the paint in these contrasting areas looks so easily in place and fortuitously on the paper, that the auras of light found to be contrasting a dark form look as if they might nearly move, as does natural light. Particularly is this exciting aspect of Olivia's painting seen in the 'Roman Busts' 'Amalfi' and her 'Holton le Moor Manor' series. But, the Italian painting where this light aspect most pleases Olivia is to be found in 'Perugian Buildings.' 'What excited me about it was the whirling shapes in space. The Italian paintings were a development of my first Italian paintings.'

In Perugia Olivia joined Professor Antonelli who took his students on extensive tours to cities and remote villages and showed them little-known art works which illustrated his lectures. Olivia sketched all the while; church architecture, sculpture and paintings, as well as cafe scenes, local life and landscape. During the next two years she toured Europe, and England, and settled for a time in London where she minded Eric Newton's house while he and his wife Stella Newton were in Greece. Her painting of London and particularly the Newton garden as seen from an upstairs window is as easy, fluid, well structured and as good as those she painted in Italy.

Olivia worked for a while at the Cass School of Art, again with a sophistication easily appreciated in her paintings 'Cass Life Study Class'. One wonders, at this point of her career when formal problems of picture design became a conscious interest why Olivia did not choose to move closer to abstract symbolism. Apart from an occasional experiment she did not do so. Perhaps, despite her admiration and knowledge of abstract art her years of coming to terms with progressive foreshortening, form colour, structure movements and subject matter in nature gave her the powers to reveal the 'isness' of the seen and lived-in world, which she chose to continue working with.

This power of translating the nature of the seen world linking it to human feeling was, during her second European tour most sensitively used in her Flatford Mill paintings and the Holton Le Moor work.

In 1966 Olivia returned once again to New Zealand. For the next three years she painted again in the Mackenzie country, Castle Hill, Kaikoura, Lyttelton and of course, her own home environment.'

Two years after her return from Europe in 1966 Olivia had a large Retrospective Exhibition at the Canterbury Society of Arts. It carried a wide selection of works, ranging from the Early English and Italian paintings up to and including her Spinning paintings.

The series of 'Spinners' paintings evolved over a period of years during the sixties and seventies when Olivia joined the spinner Minta Britton's spinning bee at Enys' near Castle Hill. (32) (33). These paintings are of interest as they show in many sketches and drawings, through to templates and paintings, Olivia's attack on the problems of composition, particularly the spatial relationships between people and things, and the nuances of feeling she could transmute; the sense of women spinning together, their movement, their individual involvement in their work. (34). Olivia worked at first directly drawing the spinners, noting many times the way the wool passed from hand to spindle, whirling to wheel, drawing the action and the constant rhythm between the spinner, her hands and her wheel. She used these drawings as notations for the growth of paintings such as 'Two Spinners'. In this oil, Olivia was interested in using colour to express the sense of isolation between the two spinners. Using the space around the two figures she wanted to paint them 'as different



Amalfi. 1963  
Cat. no. 48



Cana. c. 1943  
Cat. no. 34

(35) Olivia's 'Happy Spinners' painting was reviewed in the 1970 'Group Show' in the Nov. 28 *Christchurch Star*. He said of it '... the lyrical quality of 'The Happy Spinners' by Olivia Spencer Bower makes this work a landmark in her artistic development'.

(36) The Fendalton garden paintings have a slight sense of similarity in design as Olivia's later Italian and English works painted in the mid-sixties. The garden paintings were done about the time (1949) of the Frances Hodgkins Pleasure Garden controversy 'all of us (Canterbury painters) were conscious of colour at the time'.

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The Happy Spinners.  
c. 1967. Cat. no. 61



In My Garden —  
Memorial Ave.  
1962. Cat. no. 47

people, having their own aura' and through the use of subtle modulations of green, creating a space between the two, she established 'a certain loneliness about them, isolated in their own world, in a sea of green'. In another work 'The Happy Spinners' Olivia successfully used the spinners figures placed in the landscape of Enys' to evoke a mood of lightness and companionship. (35). To compose a picture which caused a 'coming and going' between the two spinners Olivia worked with moveable template drawings of two spinners, reshuffling them until she arrived at a suitable format from which the connecting linear movement of her painting could then be drawn. The thrusting right arm of the left spinner in the painting introduces the linear direction which is continued through the centrally situated wheel and is met by the upward 'coming into the picture' gesture of the spinner on the right. Olivia liked the idea of painting the spinners in this picture; 'spinning in the most impossible place where they could never have got their spinning wheels'. This pictorially impossible combination, spinners and rugged hill country landscape, amplifies the spinners airy dreamlike and joyful atmosphere. Olivia's absorbing interest in the land, its formations and vegetation have naturally extended into her personal environment where as a keen gardener she has planted out many native New Zealand shrubs, trees, grasses, tussock and 'weeds'. Her home and environs paintings therefore, over the whole span of her painting career echo this love of the land. There are hundreds of her 'home' paintings. She says 'They are mostly beginnings which never came to a conclusion'. But, one wonders what the conclusion is that Olivia might be seeking, when the 'beginnings' say so much about her world which she halts, as she views and paints it. She remarked of her 'Solomon Seal' paintings done in the forties 'They have such lovely flying leaves — the reason why so many of these "Solomon's Seal" paintings are unfinished is that they can only remain in water for a couple of hours before they droop and the leaves no longer 'fly'. Then the whole idea is gone.'

A keen iris grower, Olivia has drawn, photographed, and painted many an October's season of Iris blooms, but again, probably because of the short lived translucent life of the blooms her impressions of them have remained at a sketchy level.

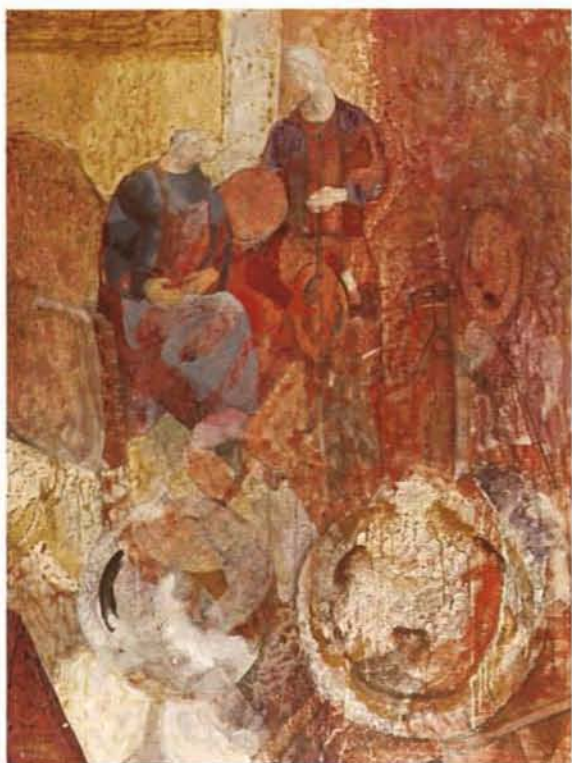
Occasionally she has worked through from the drawings and direct observation watercolours to painted compositions. Here, echoes of the rhythmic folk dancing paintings can be seen, but the initial life of the Iris is somehow in subjugation to the composition, and so far Olivia has rejected her designed efforts. Perhaps this is a group of paintings her viewers can look forward to in the future. Olivia's indoor still-life paintings include many arrangements of bowls of fruit, pumpkins, ornaments and flowers often painting during the season: 'Autumn is such a good time to paint — because the light is so interesting — the long shadows are so exciting'.

Although Olivia describes her Fendalton home garden paintings as 'a little thin' they hold an air of simplicity close to an archetypal childlike sense of 'home'. 'View from the Conservatory' is such a painting. It is a picture showing part of her house, the high gabled neighbour's roof (which appears so often in this group of paintings) a pale haloed sun in a greyish sky on the paving sits a little solitary terracotta pot with plant, the house is depicted with minimal notation, and in the foreground gladioli — strokes of Sengai-type animated suggestion, exactly evoking their colour, exactly evoking the weather and season. One begins to wonder at the life of these things — their intrinsic 'beingness' and their meaning to Olivia. In the way that utensils used for years have their own place, use and character which somehow merges with that of the user, these garden pictures tell us of Olivia's days at home and of her. (36).

Olivia remained at her home in Memorial Ave. until 1969 when she moved to her present home in Leinster Road which she had built to her requirements, including studio and painting storage facilities. Her work of the seventies has mostly been done in the South Island — the Mackenzie Country, Mt. Torlesse, Greymouth, Queenstown and the Waimakariri River.

The Brooke/Gifford Gallery showed a collection of her Waimakariri paintings last year in an Exhibition called 'Beside the River, 1936-1976'; thirty-six paintings traced Olivia's painting evolution during this period, showing on the one hand her elevated vista views of the river, and a ground level view of the river bank studded with trees. She has painted here many times over, being fascinated by the ever changing nature of the river and its course. When for her most recent River paintings including 'Quiet Day' it was 'pale green with blue edges' when she arrived. 'Then came the floods and the river was brown'. 'Just as I left it was blue. You've got to work like hell to get all your thinking going, you've got to be able to use your peak time; have you ever tried to paint a river?' Her calligraphic abbreviations of form in several of these 1970's works tell of her increased ability to build a painting by omitting all but the essential detail, leaving large expanses of white paper.

In this same manner, last year, Olivia painted several portraits of note. Her sitter was a model arranged for a combined group of Canterbury and Ashburton painters. The



Spinners c. 1967  
Cat. no. 66



The Spaniard. 1975.  
Cat. no. 72

portrait of the elderly Scotswoman though brief in paintwork articulation is an acutely observed and caring work.

Like all her paintings her recent work in the Mackenzie country is prolific and only a little of it has been exhibited. Amongst these paintings 'The Spaniard' was shown at the President's Exhibition at the Canterbury Society of Arts in 1975. It is a daringly simple composition of a lone plant situated in an otherwise sparse windswept landscape with mountain ranges in the distance. Again, her life long concern with economy and the most simple graphic notation give these acutely perceived plant, tussock and sometimes sheep paintings an overwhelming sense of the land, of the woman, and her relationship to it. Similarly, her excursions in the last two years to Lake Ohau, with Nora Temple, have produced another remarkable group of works. These are of interest especially as they show the same view often. That of a foreground stretch of lakefront beach, reaching diagonally up to mid-centre left, then met with a horizon line of lake meeting mountainfoot, the mountains loom another quarter section of the page into the sky . . . then space, then overhanging foreground branch of beech tree curves with leafy foliage to top the composition. Olivia has worked on this composition and another similar one, over and over again, exacting subtle nuances of compositional shifts. 'I like to get out painting at Ohau, early in the morning, to get the light. Sometimes you get calm water with reflections, but I believe Ohau means 'wind' and the wind comes pouring down the mountains. You might put your first wash on, but by the time you have its changed completely in seconds: you get wonderful wind skies. The winds are bitterly cold, straight from the mountains. It's hard to hold anything down'.

During the last year Olivia has developed her Lake Ohau studies into quite a different medium; linocut. With the help of Barry Cleavin in the Graphic Art Department of the Christchurch Technical Institute she is currently using the process to create prints that in some cases, have the same compositional structure as the Ohau painting, but, instead of an overhanging branch, a winged woman appears. This particular print is called 'The Visitation' and is the first of a group of affiliated prints, which all present a startling wealth of imagery that has not until now been seen in Olivia's work, except that is, for the truly imaginative but childish illustrations she did at secondary school.

Olivia's gradual arrival at the imagery in 'The Visitation' is remarkable as the most recent of her work. She juxtaposed this with a landscape drawing and after a series of fastidious sessions of linocutting and printing the first print emerged. The development of these exciting ideas could lead in so many stimulating directions, and one wonders what other images from her experience of landscape are yet to appear.

Probably one of the very last in a tradition of New Zealand's Watercolourists, Olivia Spencer Bowers' work shows in its evolution of clarity of vision; a dedicated woman constantly by discovering certain freedom through disciplined control of her medium.

Her liquid watercolour, with its calligraphic brush work and bold elimination of unnecessary detail, indicate work of thoughtful intelligence, wit, care, love and humour. Factors which inspire a fascination with her subject matter and an affirmation in the intrinsic beauty of the seen world. Her work is satisfying, one can easily travel through her landscapes, to discover painted passages of movement and form. Her brushwork over each page evokes a fresh sense of feeling, sometimes delicate & fragile other times bold and courageous. Her paintings are an enthusiastically rich and sensitive encounter.

Alison Mitchell  
April, 1977



Beside the River —  
Lifting Clouds. 1976.  
Cat. no. 73



Tussock Country  
1974  
Cat. no. 71

## CATALOGUE

Measurements are sight, centimetres, height before width.

- 1A **Schoolgirl study.** c1914  
Watercolour, 19.4 x 32.6cm  
Signed L/L O. S. Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 1B **Schoolgirl study.** c1914  
Watercolour, 21.8 x 26.6cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: These studies were done according to the method Miss Coles taught at Boscombe (see note in essay).
- 1C **Self Portrait.** c1925  
Watercolour, 39.7 x 30.8cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: Painted as a subject for the Canterbury School of Art Sketch Club.  
Collection: The Artist
- 2 **Nude Study.** 1929  
Conte, 28.0 x 22.5cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: Drawn at Slade School of Art under Professor Tonks.
- 3A **Donegal.** c1931  
Watercolour, 24.2 x 34.3cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 3B **Dancing Dolmans, Cornwall.** 1929  
Watercolour and ink, 24.2 x 34.2cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 3C **Dolman and Houses, Cornwall.** 1929  
Watercolour and ink, 24.2 x 34cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 4 **La Piccola Marina.** 1931  
Pen and Wash, 35 x 25cm  
Signed and dated L/R Olivia Spencer Bower 1931  
Collection: Mr Marmaduke Spencer Bower
- 5 **Santa Chiara, Assisi.** 1931  
Pen and wash, 35 x 24.6cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mr Marmaduke Spencer Bower
- 6 **Springtime, Assisi.** 1932  
Watercolour,  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 6A **The Followers of Santa Chiara.** c1932  
Lino cut, 20 x 25.8cm  
Unsigned,  
Collection: The Artist
- 6B **Washing Day, Nuns, Assisi.** 1931  
Watercolour 16.8 x 24.3cm  
Signed Pencil L/R O.S.B.  
Collection: The Artist
- 6C **La Piccola Marina.** 1931  
Ink, 24.2 x 33.7cm  
Signed L/R O.S.B.  
Collection: The Artist
- 6D **Via Krupp, Capri.** 1931  
Ink, 33.3 x 22.8cm  
Signed L/L O.S.B.  
Collection: The Artist
- 7 **La Piccola Marina.** 1931  
Watercolour, 47.6 x 37.2cm  
Signed  
Collection: Robert McDougall Art Gallery  
Waimakariri River from Woodstock.  
c1932  
Watercolour, 56.0 x 40.5cm  
Signed Pencil L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 8 **Punakaiki Seas.** c1935  
Watercolour, 47.3 x 61cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 9 **Spindrift Punakaiki.** c1935  
Watercolour, 37.5 x 48.2cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist
- 10 **Nikau Palm, West Coast.** c1939  
Watercolour, 31.2 x 40cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 11 **Waimakariri.** c1939  
Watercolour, 36 x 43.5cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 12 **Shearing Shed.** c1939  
Watercolour, 40.8 x 58.2cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mr Marmaduke Spencer Bower
- 13 **Living Room, Claxby.** c1939  
Watercolour, 46.3 x 62cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: A view of the Spencer Bower living room
- 14 **The Yellow Hat, a Self Portrait.** c1934  
Oil on canvas paper, 26.6 x 20cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: B. J. McLeavey
- 15 **Violinist.** c1940  
Watercolour, 39.7 x 46.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Peter McLeavey, Wellington
- 16 **Waimakariri.** c1940  
Watercolour, 49 x 66cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Robin Bent
- 17 **Clouds over Lake Wakatipu.** c1938  
Watercolour, 24 x 31cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Ian Bennetts
- 18 **Mist rising over the Remarkables.** 1938  
Watercolour, 33.5 x 40cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 19 **Rising Mists, Lake Wakatipu.** c1938  
Watercolour, 25.5 x 38.6cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 20A **Nor'west Light, Wakatipu.** c1938  
Watercolour, 28 x 38cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 20B **Bleached Terraces.** c1940  
Watercolour, 25.4 x 38.8cm



- 23 Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: H. C. Archer  
**Bleached Terraces.** c1940  
Watercolour, 56 x 74cm
- 24 Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: F. Miles Warren  
**Alison Pickmere.** c1943  
Oil, 45.7 x 32.7cm
- 25 Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist  
**Morning Camp, near Huia, 1947**  
Water colour, 35.5 x 50.7cm
- 26 Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist  
**Week's Sketching Class, Grafton Gully.**  
1943  
Watercolour, 39.5 x 51.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: Weeks can be seen as the gentleman  
in the hat.
- 27 **Boyd Neil Strings**  
Oil on board, 38.3 x 43cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: W. W. Cumming
- 28 **Dr Smith of Hokianga.** 1948  
Oil, 40 x 38.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library
- 29 **Coffee.** 1948  
Watercolour, 40 x 55.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Dr Janet Irwin, Brisbane,  
Australia  
Note: Dr and Mrs Smith at home in Rawene
- 30 **The School Launch.** 1948  
Watercolour, 31.4 x 40cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library  
Note: I was excited by the spirit of the old  
fortified hills, the mixture of the old Maori  
culture with the new, the mangrove  
swamps, the remoteness of the place and  
the speedy accessibility to them by launch  
— I went to these places with Dr Smith and  
Dr Kemble Welch.
- 31 **Rawene Mothers.** 1948  
Oil on board, 51.3 x 41.6cm  
Collection: Margaret Best  
Note: New born babies and their mothers,  
Rawene Hospital
- 32A **Maori Baby.** 1948  
Pencil drawing, 20.5 x 19.5cm  
Signed L/middle Olivia Spencer Bower
- 32B **Maori Baby.** 1948  
Pencil drawing, 13.5 x 13.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower
- 32C **Maori Baby.** 1948  
Pencil drawing, 21.5 x 18.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library
- 32D **Korewha.** 1948  
Pencil drawing, 18.5 x 24.4cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Alexander Turnbull Library
- 33 **Red Earth.** 1948  
Oil 53 x 40cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 34 **Cana.** c1943  
Watercolour, 55.8 x 37.7cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 35 **Solomon's Seal.** c1950  
Watercolour, 48 x 71.6cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Canterbury Public Library
- 36 **Self Portrait.** 1950  
Oil on board, 65 x 49.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Robert McDougall Art Gallery
- 37 **Riverbed from Steepdowns, Kaikoura.**  
c1943  
Watercolour 54 x 74.7cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 38 **Bleached Terraces, Waimakariri.** c1951  
Watercolour 54.5 x 150.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Robert McDougall Art Gallery
- 39 **The House and Shearing Shed, Arthur's  
Point near Queenstown.** 1951  
Watercolour, 46 x 56.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 40 **The Musterer's Chair.** 1951  
Watercolour, 46.2 x 53.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mrs Lou Murray
- 40A **Cape Kidnappers.** 1956  
Watercolour, 59 x 44cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 41 **Castle Hill.** 1955  
Watercolour, 55 x 118.2cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 41A **Tussock Country.** 1957  
Watercolour, 74.4 x 52.3cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery
- 42 **Two Fijians.** 1960  
Watercolour, 45.2 x 58.2cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mrs Loughnan
- 43 **Fijian Woman.** 1960  
Watercolour, 58.5 x 45cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 44 **The Atoll.** 1960  
Acrylic on board, 90.3 x 60cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 45A **Clouds and Atoll.** 1960  
Watercolour, 44.5 x 56.3cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: Exploratory drawing
- 45B **Clouds and Atoll.** 1960  
Watercolour, 44.5 x 56.3cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist
- 46 **Making Tapa, Samoa.** 1960  
Watercolour, 25.3 x 31.8cm  
Signed and dated L/R Olivia Spencer  
Bower  
Collection: Joan Maling

- 47 **In My Garden — Memorial Ave.** 1962  
Watercolour, 58 x 49.7cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Dr and Mrs C. L. Clark
- 48 **Amalfi.** 1963  
Watercolour, 64 x 45cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Barry Palmer
- 49 **Amalfi.** 1963  
Watercolour, 65.3 x 47.4cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mr and Mrs Simon Stammers-Smith
- 50 **Memories of Perugia.** 1963  
Watercolour and collage, 54.5 x 74.8cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: Mrs Kate Thompson
- 51 **Houses at Perugia.** 1963  
Watercolour, 36.7 x 45.8cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 52 **The Tall Room.** c1964  
Oil, 62 x 75cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: David Cheer  
Note: Painted at the Cass School of Art, London
- 53 **Life Class at the Cass.** 1964  
Oil 62.5 x 75cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist
- 54 **Eric Newton's Garden, Islington, London.** 1964  
Watercolour, 75 x 54.5cm  
Collection: Professor and Mrs N. C. Phillips
- 55 **Holton le Moor, Lincolnshire.** 1965  
Watercolour, 47 x 65cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 56 **Willy Lott's Cottage, Flatford Mill.** 1965  
Watercolour, 38 x 48cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mr Malcolm and Mrs Patee Ott  
Note: Willy Lott's cottage is featured in many of Constable's paintings. A favourite painting spot for many painters including Frances Hodgkins.
- 57 **The Weir.** 1965  
Watercolour, 44 x 53.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 58 **Summer Days at Enys.** 1967  
Watercolour, 44 x 57.4cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 59 **Minta and Dorothy at Enys.** 1967  
Acrylic on board, 75.5 x 57.2cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 60 **Preparatory Composition sketch painting for 'Spinners'.** c1968  
Watercolour, 37.5 x 46cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist
- 61 **The Happy Spinners.** c1967  
Acrylic on board, 107.4 x 75.5cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 62 **Festive.** 1972  
Acrylic, 121 x 90cm  
Signed and dated, L/L Olivia Spencer Bower, 1972  
Collection: The Artist
- 63 **Getting About.** 1969  
Acrylic, 74.5 x 61cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mrs Holm  
Note: This painting was composed from drawings Olivia made of her Mother in the last years after she had broken her leg.
- 64 **Green Spinners. Triptych.** c1969  
Acrylic on board, 76.3 x 152.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 65 **Oh What a Beautiful Morning**  
Acrylic on board, 77.5 x 56.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Rosemary Perry
- 66 **Spinners** c1969  
Acrylic on board, 120.5 x 91cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mrs Steele
- 67 **The Readers.** c1967  
Oil on board, 59 x 69.5cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: Doris Lusk
- 68 **Wind over the Waimakariri**  
Acrylic on board, 105.5 x 120.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mr and Mrs Paul Hargreaves
- 69 **The Old Road.** 1974  
Watercolour 54.5 x 74.7cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Ian Bennetts
- 70 **The Terraces.** 1974  
Watercolour, 54.8 x 74.7cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Esther Archdall  
Note: Painted at Mt. Torlesse Range from the West Coast Road
- 71 **Tussock Country.** 1974  
Watercolour, 54.5 x 74.3cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist  
Note: View of Broken River. Here are to be found underground rivers and limestone caves.
- 72 **The Spaniard.** 1975  
Watercolour, 53 x 72cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: Mr and Mrs E. W. Turrell
- 73 **Beside the River — Lifting Clouds.** 1976  
Watercolour, 71 x 53cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 74 **Beside the River.** 1976  
Watercolour, 71 x 53cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 75 **Mackenzie Country.** 1969  
Watercolour and acrylic, 54.5 x 75.8cm  
Unsigned  
Collection: The Artist
- 76 **Morning Mist — Lake Ohau.** 1974  
Watercolour, 36.8 x 54.7cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist



- 77 **Lake Ohau — Blue Day.** 1974  
Watercolour, 43.5 x 62.2cm  
Signed and dated L/L Olivia Spencer  
Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 78 **Lake Ohau —Branch of the Beech Tree.**  
1976  
Watercolour, 71 x 54cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 79 **Lake Ohau.** 1974  
Watercolour, 75.5 x 54cm  
Signed and dated L/R Olivia Spencer  
Bower, 1974  
Collection: The Artist
- 80 **The Little Hills.** 1976  
Reduction lino cut, 31 x 30.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 81 **The Visitation.** 1976  
Reduction lino cut, 30.7 x 31.5cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 82 **Ariel.** 1977  
Reduction lino cut, 30.5 x 31cm  
Signed L/L Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist
- 83 **Portrait of a Man.** 1976  
Watercolour, 74.5 x 54cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection:
- 84 **Portrait of a Woman.** 1976  
Watercolour, 53.7 x 42.8cm  
Signed L/R Olivia Spencer Bower  
Collection: The Artist



Photograph Alison Mitchell, 1975.

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40-754

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2.00 p.m.-4.30 p.m.

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### *Manuscript prepared by Design Photography*

Alison Mitchell, Dip F.A.  
Kath Algie, Dip. F.A.  
Lloyd Parks (colour)  
Julian Bowron (black & white)

Most grateful thanks are extended to Olivia Spencer Bower for her untiring assistance, and to all those who have made paintings available either for selection or for final inclusion in the exhibition.

Cover: The Yellow Hat, a Self Portrait  
C. 1934. Cat. No. 15  
Calligraphy by Olivia Spencer Bower