

JOHN KINDER. Mount Tarawera, from the Landing Place near Rotomahana, 1866. Watercolour, 18 x 10 inches. Purchased 1970.

SURVEY

FEBRUARY 1971

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL : ROBERT McDOUGALL ART GALLERY

Introduction

BRIAN MUIR

THIS is the first issue in what is **hoped** will be a series of publications produced periodically as a means of informing the public about the activities of the gallery, and especially on the addition of works to its collection.

Basically, the collection comprises three groups, namely European art from approximately 1600 to the Twentieth Century. New Zealand art from earliest colonial times to the present day, and the arts in Australia and Japan.

While the European collection serves to indicate major trends and movements in art over the past four hundred years or so, and factors influencing artists working in New Zealand, the Australian and Japanese collections act, and will increasingly act as they grow in size, as a means of comparison.

For these reasons, purchases during the past year have been directed at strengthening the various sections of the collection as well as attempting to keep abreast with contemporary developments.

Students-on-section scheme

A new departure for galleries in New Zealand, and one which has shown signs of considerable value and success, is a scheme recently implemented by the Gallery, in association with Christchurch Teachers' College Secondary Division, whereby student-teachers (who have already completed Diplomas in Fine Arts at University) are seconded each school term for four or five weeks. During that period the students become familiar with the running of a gallery, its collections and are then responsible for organising and conducting visits by school parties. This scheme, although as yet in its infancy, is proving most valuable. and already good work is being achieved with students studying art for the University Entrance examination.

John Weeks, O.B.E., (1888-1965)

A COLLECTION OF WORKS PURCHASED 1970, BALLANTYNE BEQUEST, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND

GIL DOCKING

WEEKS, whose work is known to every serious collector of New Zealand painting, lived most of his life in Auckland and taught many students who subsequently became established painters.

After his death, a large group of works was found in his studio—bequeathed by the painter to a friend of the Weeks' family, Mrs Hilda O'Connor. Following the wishes of Mrs O'Connor a number of people agreed that an effort should be made to keep a substantial selection of these works together, rather than allow them to be fragmented and dispersed in single lots.

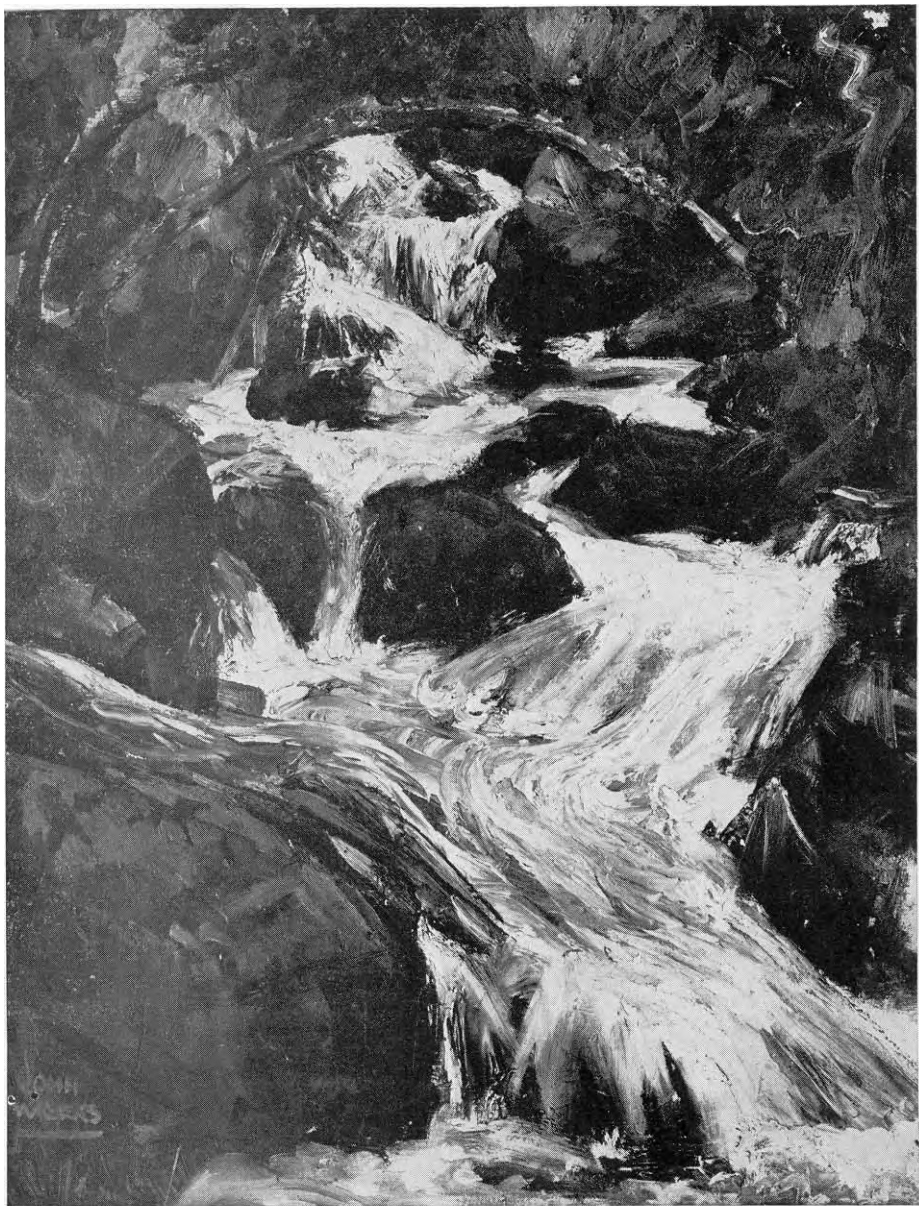
Accordingly an ad hoc committee was formed in 1966 to devise and implement a plan for this purpose. The members who assisted were: Sir Gilbert Archey, Dr Eric McCormick and Messrs James Turkington, Peter Brown, Allan Swinton, Pascoe Redwood and the present writer.

Of the works in the studio, 74 oils, 13 water-colours, 16 pastels, 13 drawings and 10 prints were selected as being representative of the best work of John Weeks. This collection was then offered to several business firms and a trust board who were approached in turn by the committee with the idea that the people concerned might be interested in buying the 126 works as a company collection: or lending or donating the collection to public art galleries. But these overtures were

unsuccessful. Finally in 1969, on the initiative of Councillor Mrs Wint Holland and Councillor Harold Watts, the Auckland City Art Gallery undertook to share the collection with the public art galleries at Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington. This proposal was accepted and on 17th December, 1969, the directors of the four galleries met in Auckland. They drew lots and selected individual works until the whole collection was distributed. The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council generously made a \$2,000 grant-in-aid and each of the four galleries contributed \$2,000 towards the total price of \$10,000.

By this means each of the four metropolitan galleries of New Zealand holds a quarter of the collection. The project demonstrated the spirit of co-operation which exists between the public galleries and has the advantage of making the work of a distinguished painter and teacher more accessible throughout the country, whilst the whole collection may be brought together for special occasions.

This sharing of a collection is unique in the history of New Zealand's art galleries. The scheme is recommended for consideration by any beneficiary who holds a large collection of works by a major artist.



JOHN WEEKS. Mountain Stream. Oil on board, 20 x 16 inches. Purchased 1969.



PHILIP TRUSTTUM. *A Royal Hanging*. Oil on board, 47) x 72 inches. Purchased 1969.

Ray Thorburn & Philip Trusttum

A. P. GEDDES

Two recently-acquired paintings which typify two of the many parallel streams in **modern** painting are *A Royal Hanging* by Philip Trusttum and *Modular 3 Series 2* by Ray Thorburn.

Both are 'modern' in the sense that they are not pictures of any objects in the world of appearances, nor do they depict an emotional state of mind as many people think abstract painting must. 'They must be pictures of something' this argument runs.

These painters accept their painting surfaces as an area in which certain 'events' can take place in a pictorial space completely ordered by the painter and corresponding in no way to what we regard

as visual reality. Unless this is accepted by the viewer these paintings will be incomprehensible. (Readers who do not accept this point of view are urged to read *Painting and Reality* by Etienne Gilson which treats this point in great depth.)

Where the two paintings contrast sharply is in the type of 'events' the painting contains.

Basically in Trusttum's work the 'events' are qualities possessed by the paint itself. The paint is applied in large washes, tiny dots, allowed to flow according to chance or rigidly controlled. The work is slowly built up, guided by a painterly instinct for what is appropriate in the continually evolving situation.

The physical act of painting and the exploitation of chance effects was pushed to a brief and brilliant extreme by the American 'action painters' (Pollock, Kline, De Kooning) in the 1950s.

Trustum's painting is a sensitive, quieter variant of the heyday of abstract expressionism.

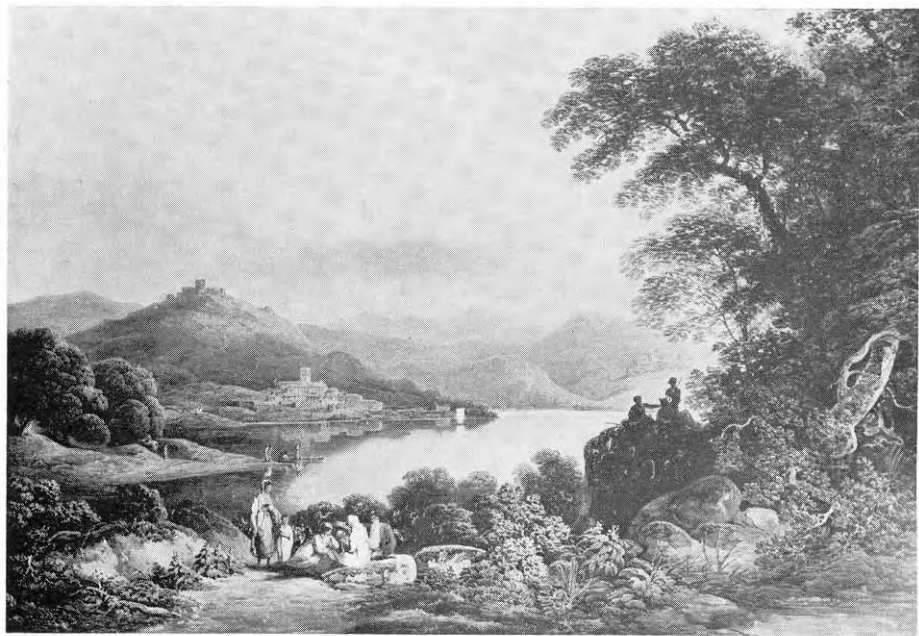
Modular 3 Series 2 by Ray Thorburn is more speculative and scientific than instinctive and painterly. In this work the 'events' in paint have been replaced by 'events' of precise geometric elements. It is an experiment to find the qualities possessed by lines arranged on colour fields. The title of this work suggests that this artist like many

'hard-edge' abstractionists works in series of paintings in which particular problems of line, colour or form are explored and developed.

A contemporary trend in this work is the concern for the purely optical effects of line and colour. The early hard-edge painters such as Mondrian were chiefly interested in traditional qualities of form, harmony and balance. Thorburn's painting creates an illusory and ambiguous space with diagonals suggesting perspective and increasing frequencies of line (of equal thickness however) suggesting recession; an elaborate and subtle optical illusion.



GEORGE BALDESSIN. *Personage in Striped Dress*. A recent addition to the collection of Australian prints.



ANTHONY VAN DYKE COPLEY FIELDING (1787-1855), *An Italian Landscape*. Watercolour, 23½ x 33¼ inches. Purchased 1970.

An Italian Landscape

CHRISTINE HELLYAR

A watercolour recently acquired for the Robert McDougall Art Gallery is *An Italian Landscape* by Anthony Van Dyke Copley Fielding. Fielding's reputation is that of 'the most popular' watercolourist of the early nineteenth century in Britain, and he is represented in most major collections there. His father was a portrait and landscape painter and so Fielding was technically very good at an early age. He lived on the income from his paintings. The landscape of North Wales in particular attracted him, and some similarities can be seen between his paintings and the stylistic paintings of early New Zealand watercolour artists. He was a stylistic painter. He received a Cold Medal from the Paris Salon in 1824, the same year that Constable and Bonnington received theirs.

His greatest admiration was for Claude and for Wilson. He was an academic painter; Ruskin, that 'lover of nature' praised him more than was usual in such a strict judge.

An Italian Landscape has an overall golden and pink tone, in contrast to the blues to be found in New Zealand 19th Century paintings. There is a harmony of colour, and a harmony of shape; the rounded rock forms in the foreground are repeated in the trees in the centre foreground and in the rolling hills. The theme of trees, water and mountains in this work can be seen in most New Zealand watercolours as well. The reflection of the rounded shapes receding into the distance follows academic principles of space, as does the colour, and the use of the three groups of idyllic

buildings. The first plane has the shadow and the large clump of trees to one side, which is typical of Claude Lorraine. Figures form a high point of interest in the second plane and a small sail relieves the large area and straight line of the stilled lake surface. The reflection in the water of this sail, the first group of buildings, and the hills are muted with regularity and precision. There is a rhythm everywhere; even an interest in the larger tree trunks on the right-hand side has a repetitive rhythm with the small trunk and the two rocks on the far left-hand side.

The paint itself is applied rhythmically, and faultlessly. The cloud and the distant hills are misty, the closer hills are made more solid with a more opaque application. The rocks have been painted with drier brushwork and consequently look more textural. The drapery of the women has flowing brushwork, and the small flowers and vegetation have the tiniest dots of detail on them.

It is only when the painting is looked at closely that the superb craftsmanship that is involved can be seen. In a casual glance it does not look like such a work of concentration and detail, but like a reproduction of a tranquil and golden scene. From every aspect, Copley Fielding's *An Italian Landscape* is a watercolour masterpiece.

Bacchanalian Feast

GIROLAMO PIERI NERLI (1863-1926)

GIROLAMO NERLI, Italian, traveller to Australia, traveller to New Zealand, traveller to Samoa, with a distant allegiance to places and periods of art, also painted in New Zealand. One of his paintings is now in the Art Gallery and Christchurch's collection is now more complete with this *Bacchanalian Feast*.

When he came to New Zealand he was a contemporary of Nairn and Van der Velden. He was as great a painter as they were. He taught Frances Hodgkins in Otago when he was a teacher at the Art School there. Then he tried to live by painting only. He worked in oils, not the waters of his predecessors or pupils; some portraits, some themes of Italian tradition too. His landscapes are

few in relation to other New Zealand artists. Instead of receiving the scenery as inspiration, he gave to New Zealand a flamboyant impatience in his painting.

Bacchanalian Feast is a gem of movement and emotion. It is no sober appraisal or geological dreaming. Nerli-like, it has associations with Italy and with the contemporary. Vaguely out of the Macchiaoli out of the Barbizon School, it is a wild sketch and splash of colour flinging itself against the solid background of solemn columns. The people in it have their own festivity; scarves and fur, garlands and an urn, gigantic, and pink with frivolity.

Girolamo Pieri Nerli, painter of academic delection, now has a small and beautiful work in the New Zealand section of the collection.

Mount Tarawera

FROM THE LANDING PLACE
NEAR ROTOMAHANA

JOHN KINDER

JOHN KINDER'S painting was a peripheral activity, not a product of New Zealand Art Societies. A learned man from Cambridge and the Camden Society of last century, he was a mathematician looking for new things, clinical views not tied to romantic mist, fresh paintings showing the land flowing without the grandeur of Gully. *Mount Tarawera* is a blue monolith with mathematical regularity in the foothills foreshadowing simple shapes in the foreground; soft brown, opaque and streaks of delicate paint.

In Auckland he associated with Hoyte, Auckland's most established watercolourist. He is typed as a topographical painter, a colonial watercolourist specializing in North Island scenery. The landscape for him was shape and weight, not romantic regionalism. He is an important painter, not through his professional attitude, but from his close application, careful construction and thoughtful dedication.

Robert McDougall Art Gallery

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Works accessioned into the collection during 1969 included a collection of 30 oils, watercolours and pastels by John Weeks, purchased from the Ballantyne Bequest, and with assistance from the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council.

A collection of prints including work by Nolan, Boyd, Blackman, Counihan, Baldessin, Williams,

Maddock, Clutterbuck, Jacks, Adams, and Ball were purchased in Australia.

Prints by Japanese artists, Saito, Hagiwara, Fukita and Shinohara, were also purchased.

Australian, Japanese and New Zealand potters were represented in examples by H. R. Hughan, Milton Moon (Aust.), Urugami (Japan), Len Castle and Michael Trumic (N.Z.).

Additions to the New Zealand section included oils by John Coley, Philip Trustturn, Quentin Macfarlane, Ralph Hotere; watercolours by D. K. Richmond and Michael Smither.

Sculpture: Last Supper VI, bronze, by Paul Beadle.

Donations consisted of watercolours by C. D. Barraud, Margaret Stoddart, H. Impey, Esther Hope, Thomas Cane, Alfred Walsh and Sydney Smith.

ACCESSIONS DURING 1970

Works include N.Z. contemporaries W. A. Sutton, R. W. Thorburn, Michael Smither, Trevor Moffitt, Don Binney. Prints by Stanley Palmer, Barry Cleavin, Mervyn Williams, Vivian Lynn, and a drawing by Tony Fomison.

Earlier works accessioned represent Anthony Van Dyke Copley Fielding (watercolour), John Kinder (watercolour), G. P. Nerli (oil), R. N. Field (oil), A. F. Nicoll (oil), and W. A. Sutton (watercolour).

Pottery: Patricia Perrin and David Brokenshire.

Sculpture: Rodney Newton-Broad (N.Z. contemporary).

Donations: 3 paintings by early Christchurch artist Edith Emma Strutton, presented by the Misses Munnings; Louise Henderson (oil), presented by Miss M. Raymond, and Sidney Nolan (print) presented by the Mayor of Christchurch, Mr A. R. Guthrey.

EXHIBITION CALENDAR

2 February — 2 March:

Van der Velden drawings.

4 March — 2 April:

Nine Printmakers.

4 April — 2 May:

Recent Painting in Canterbury.

2 May — 23 May:

Frederic Remington (Paintings of the American West).

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL CULTURAL COMMITTEE

The Mayor of Christchurch, Mr A. R. Guthrey, O.B.E., M.C.

Councillor H. G. Hay, Chairman.

Committee Members: Mrs H. L. Garrett, Messrs P. N. G. Blaxall, P. D. Dunbar, The Hon. R. M. MacFarlane, C.M.G., M.P., H. P. Smith, O.B.E., R. H. Stillwell.

Committee Clerk: H. G. Langley.

Staff:

B. D. Muir, B.A., Dip. Tchg., Director.

R. H. Marwick, Dip. F.A. (Hons.), Assistant to Director.

Mrs P. A. Cleave, Secretary.

T. N. Gordon, Male Custodian.

Miss M. C. O'Brien, Lady Custodian.

W. Cox, Assistant Custodian.

Location: Botanic Gardens, Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch.

Telephone: 40-754.

Postal Address: P.O. Box 237, Christchurch.

Gallery hours:

Monday to Saturday (inclusive)

10.00 a.m.—4.30 p.m.

Sunday

2.00—4.30 p.m.

Public holidays

10.00 a.m.—4.30 p.m.

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery Survey is published by the Christchurch City Council Cultural Committee and is concerned primarily with presenting information about the activities of the Gallery and works of art acquired by the Gallery.

Editor: B. D. Muir.

Printed by: The Caxton Press

113 Victoria Street, Christchurch.