



After Mass Majorca

C. N. Worsley

Robert McDougall Art Gallery

◆ INTRODUCTION

During the 1900s C N Worsley was one of the most popular artists in New Zealand.

This popularity arose from the fact that his European imagery stood out at that time in strong contrast to the constant appearance at exhibition of stilted views of remote parts of New Zealand. Even though he found some favour with the public he was only partially successful in achieving an identity as a New Zealand artist.

Worsley was perceived by many to be an English itinerant who returned regularly to Europe to refresh his imagery.

Unfortunately, even though he was elected a member of the Royal Society of British Artists, he was not regarded in Britain as a British artist, but an Australian.

As a result of this dichotomy his life and work has been poorly documented since his death.

Worsley's speciality of painting picturesque views of Spanish and Swiss towns and lakes drew favourable attention from art reviewers and by 1904 he was being given more space than other artists. This however was short lived and by the beginning of the second decade of this century several review notices were decidedly sour and critical.

On 9 October 1911 a reviewer for the 'New Zealand Times' writing about the Worsley work being shown in the New Zealand Academy of the Arts annual exhibition, Wellington, remarked in disapproval that the type of subject Worsley favoured had been 'done to death'. This was one indication that studio artists like Worsley were being marked as belonging to the 'old school' and did not have the vigour of younger emerging contemporaries.

In a sense Worsley's picture making devices were developed from an older academic tradition. He did his preparation through studies and watercolour sketches made as he travelled. These he later

recomposed in his studio with a romantic naturalistic vision to achieve maximum pictorial effect. Stylistically his origins in watercolour were taken from the early nineteenth century English watercolour school and he could be said to have absorbed much from the example of travelling artists like David Cox and Samuel Prout. This he modified as a result of the influence of constantly sketching out of doors, an attitude that was part of the spirit of the late nineteenth century.

In oil painting like many others he followed Victorian tendencies of naturalism executed with a slightly impressionistic brush treatment.

Another dominant tendency of the late nineteenth century, realism, did not escape Worsley's attention either. His depictions of continental town life with ordinary people going about daily tasks was representative of this, but figurative elements were often added for picturesque effect rather than social commentary.

Worsley's New Zealand landscape painting though often grandiose in scale never quite achieved the grandeur of his European subject pictures. This was possibly because the life of these was dependent on the figurative content and the colour and vigour that accompanied it. As this aspect was often diminished or totally lacking in many New Zealand works they were rarely as successful.

During the time he spent in New Zealand there were few contemporary artists who were so widely travelled as Worsley; or as professional. He is deserving of a more secure place in this country's art history.

This small exhibition has been prepared as an initial recognition of this.

Neil Roberts
Curator



C. N. Worsley

Charles Nathaniel Worsley was born at Sidmouth Devon. His formative education and art education is relatively obscure, although it is known that by 1882 he was living in London and attending art college.

In 1884 he continued his art studies in Europe and began travelling.

The following year he spent in Paris studying and made a visit to Portugal and Spain during the summer, sketching and painting. Spanish subjects in particular were to remain dominant in Worsley's work up until around 1908. In 1886 he began showing his work publicly and exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists annual exhibition, Birmingham.

At that time he was living back in London and had a studio in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. Worsley began exhibiting with the Royal Institute of British Artists in 1887 and furthered his travels in Europe.

By 1889 he had returned to Devon and was living in Sidmouth. In May of the

same year he exhibited for the first time, at the Royal Academy, London, showing a painting titled 'Drearily blows the chill east wind, Wearily plod the tired feet.'

In 1891, having recently married, Worsley moved to Bridgnorth, Shropshire to live. Over the next few years he appears to have made many visits to the continent particularly to Switzerland. The watercolour 'Berne Switzerland' (cat No 1), was the product of a visit he made following his summer travels of 1892. He also expanded his journeying to Germany and the Balearic Islands, especially the Island of Majorca. This became a favourite place and resulted in many successful works including 'After Mass Majorca' (cat No 3).

As well as submitting work for exhibition at the Royal Academy, London, in the 1890s, Worsley also exhibited with the Royal Institute of Oil Painters; The Walker Gallery, Liverpool; Manchester Art Gallery; The Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin; Walkers Gallery London and at the Paris Salon.

Around 1896 his wife who had an asthmatic condition was advised to seek a drier climate; and it was decided that a move to Australia might improve her health.

The time spent in Australia was relatively short but enough to mark Worsley in Britain as an Australian artist thereafter.

At some time in the latter part of 1897 he and his wife left Sydney for New Zealand and by the beginning of 1898 they were living in Gisborne. That year he began exhibiting at a number of art society annual exhibitions including the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZFA), Auckland Society of Arts (ASA), and the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA), where the watercolour 'Berne Switzerland' (cat No 1), was purchased for its collection.

By the beginning of 1899 he had left Gisborne and had moved to live in Wellington.

When he exhibited that year at the Otago Art Society he was described by a

reviewer in 'The Triad' magazine as an 'Australian artist'. Over the summer of 1899-1900 Worsley made a sketching visit to Marlborough Sounds and Nelson. In May 1900 he exhibited with the Bishopdale Sketching Club which held its exhibition at the newly opened Bishop Suter Art Gallery.

Later in the year he exhibited a number of works at the Canterbury Jubilee Industrial Exhibition including a large oil painting 'Alhambra Palace Spain'. This was chosen as first prize in the exhibition's Art Union.

Early in 1901 Worsley and his wife moved to Christchurch and soon after he began taking a few private pupils; one of them was Eleanor Waymouth (Hughes).

He was elected a working member of the CSA and also the Royal Art Society of NSW. A watercolour was purchased at the 1901 annual society exhibition for the National Art Gallery of NSW collection. During the summer of 1901-02 Worsley travelled in Otago and Southland sketching and painting. At some time during this visit he joined a vessel at Bluff that was making a trip to Macquarie and Auckland Islands. There he made numerous studies of the seal colony. Soon after returning to Christchurch in February 1902 he was

elected to the council of the CSA. The minutes of the Society meetings reveal that he quickly became a strong voice in the decision making of the council.

The following summer of 1902-03 Worsley spent time in the Mount Cook area making studies which he later worked up in his studio into major watercolours that included 'Mount Sefton' (cat No 7), and 'Mt Sefton from Foliage Hill' (cat No 6). He then revisited Southland, this time sketching and painting around Lakes Manapouri, Wakatipu and Te Anau before walking through the track to Milford.

On his return to Christchurch he set about painting a number of works of Milford including 'Manawanui Near Milford' (Cat No 5).

Among his social interests at this time was the Savage Club to which he was elected a member in July 1903.

Worsley exhibited widely at New Zealand Art Society exhibitions that year including the Wanganui Art Society. By the end of 1903 he was again contemplating yet another move. He resigned from the CSA council in December and by January 1904 he and his wife were living in Nelson.

Nelson was to be Worsley's home base for the following two years.



Berne Switzerland

During 1904 he set off, on a painting excursion to Westland. From Nelson he took a steamer to Westport where he painted at Cape Foulwind and Millerton. His painting 'On the track between Granity and Millerton' (cat No 8), was the result of this visit.

It seems that Worsley then journeyed by another steamer from Westport to Hokitika and travelled south as far as Franz Josef Glacier. He then travelled to Christchurch via the Otira Gorge, and from Lyttelton by sea back to Nelson.

Through much of the summer of 1904-05 he travelled a good deal in the North Island. He journeyed north by steamer up the east coast to the Bay of Islands and Russell then on to Auckland where he spent some weeks sketching and painting. He also visited Rotorua.

One of the highlights of 1906 for Worsley was to exhibit in November at the New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch where he was awarded gold medals for his watercolours 'Cape Foulwind' and 'Mt Cook from Hokitika'.

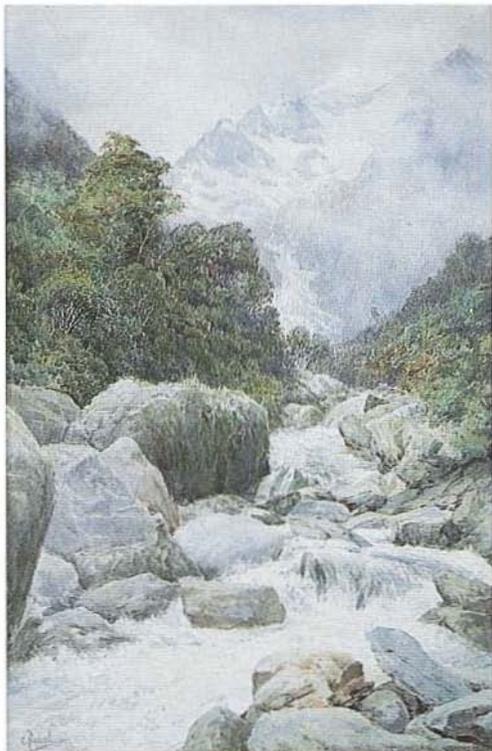
By January 1907 he and his wife had moved yet again, this time to Hawkes Bay where they lived for two years. During that time he went on several painting trips including one to Wanganui travelling up the Wanganui River as far as Pipiriki.

He continued to exhibit at local Art Society exhibitions and also sent works away for showing in Britain and Australia.

The National Art Gallery of New South Wales gave him further support and purchased watercolours for its collection in both 1907 and 1908.

Early in 1909 a decision was made to make an extended visit back to England and Europe and late in February Worsley and his wife sailed from New Zealand. They travelled first to Sydney then to Melbourne, Adelaide and Fremantle before crossing the Indian Ocean to Aden.

On the 23 March they passed through the Suez Canal and reached Port Said. From Port Said the ship sailed on through the Mediterranean and the Straits of Messina to Naples where the Worsley's embarked. At the time southern Italy was still recovering from the effects of severe earthquakes which had devastated a



Mt Sefton from Foliage Hill

number of towns including the port of Messina.

Worsley's 1909 sketchbook indicates that after arriving at Naples he made studies and sketches at Sorrento and Salerno before journeying north to Perugia, then on to Innsbruck, the Tyrol, Switzerland and eventually England.

During August 1909 he held a solo

exhibition of New Zealand views at the Modern Gallery, London.

The following month, prior to the opening of the prestigious Royal Society of British Artists 132nd exhibition, he was elected an RBA member. Over the next year or so Worsley was based at either Bridgnorth or London and seems to have made at least one visit back to Switzerland and Italy during autumn, painting around Lakes Garda and Maggiore.

He also spent several weeks painting in Cumberland, the Lake District and the South of England. Many of the studies he made provided the inspiration for the

issue of 'The Triad' was enthusiastic. He wrote

"Mr Worsley has come back to New Zealand with renewed vigour unspoiled by the titular distinction at the hands of British Society."

Over the next few years Worsley lived in Auckland and continued to show his work nationally at art society exhibitions. In 1916 he offered to gift, the watercolour 'Mt Sefton' (cat No 7), to the Canterbury Society of Arts if it could raise one hundred pounds for the war effort. They were successful and the work became part of their collection. Around 1919 Worsley

and his wife left New Zealand for Australia but within a year were on their way back to Britain travelling via Hobart and Capetown. During 1921 and 1922 Worsley often painted in the south west of England and visited Europe. He also sent work back to New Zealand and Australia for exhibition. In February 1923 the Sunderland Public Art Gallery held an exhibition of 25 Worsley watercolours.



Poole Harbour and Brownsea Island Dorset

paintings he exhibited after his return to New Zealand.

Worsley and his wife returned early in 1911. By 1911 most review comments about his work were more critical than they had been a decade earlier but there were exceptions. The reviewer of the NZAFA exhibition in the 10 October

This was well received and a purchase was made for the Royal collection by Queen Mary.

Shortly after the exhibition closed Worsley travelled to Northern Italy and while staying at Brescia he developed bronchial pneumonia which proved fatal. He died on 25 April.

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery would like to thank The Aigantighe Art Gallery, Timaru; Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson, and Mrs Best and Mr Fisher for making works available on loan.

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The Robert McDougall Art Gallery.
Art Gallery of the city of Christchurch,
New Zealand.

\$ 7.00

◆ CATALOGUE

- 1 Berne Switzerland 1892
watercolour 354 x 524mm
Robert McDougall Art Gallery
collection
Presented by the Canterbury Society
of Arts 1932
- 2 A Sunlit Street in Spain c1897
watercolour 762 x 560mm
Bishop Suter Art Gallery collection
Nelson
- 3 After Mass Majorca c1900
watercolour 1251 x 748mm
Presented by the family of James
Jamieson 1932
- 4 On the Dart River c1902
watercolour 762 x 533mm
Bishop Suter Art Gallery collection
Nelson
- 5 Manawanui Near Milford Sound
c1903
oil on canvas 800 x 1193mm
Bishop Suter Art Gallery collection
Nelson
- 6 Mt Sefton from Foliage Hill c1905
watercolour 992 x 665mm
Robert McDougall Art Gallery
collection
Presented by E M Menzies 1949
- 7 Mount Sefton c1905
watercolour 996 x 1105mm
Robert McDougall Art Gallery
collection
Presented by the Canterbury Society
of Arts 1932
- 8 On the Track from Granity to
Millerton c1905
watercolour 745 x 530mm
Aigantighe Art Gallery collection
Timaru
- 9 Poole Harbour and Brownsea Island
Dorset c1905
watercolour 725 x 1253mm
Robert McDougall Art Gallery
collection
Presented by H G & A H Anthony
1964
- 10 Lyttelton Harbour c1908
watercolour 292 x 492mm
Robert McDougall Art Gallery
collection
Presented by the Imperial Institute
1932
- 11 Riva Lago di Garda, Italy
watercolour 745 x 1240mm
Private collection Christchurch
- 12 Lago di Garda
watercolour 754 x 1260mm
Aigantighe Art Gallery collection
Timaru
- 13 Lake Maggiore
watercolour 245 x 753mm
Canterbury Society of Arts collection
Christchurch
- 14 1909 Sketchbook
Private Collection Christchurch

◆ CHRONOLOGY

- 1862 Charles Nathaniel Worsley is born
at Sidmouth, Devon.
- 1881-83 Begins studies in London 1881.
- 1884 Continues studies in Antwerp.
Begins travelling in Europe.
- 1885 Further studies in Paris. Travels to
Spain, Portugal and Majorca.
- 1886 Living in London - Fitzroy Square.
Begins exhibiting.
- 1887 Commences exhibiting at the Royal
Institute for British Artists.
- 1888 Further sketching and painting trips
in England and Europe.
- 1889-91 Begins exhibiting at the Royal
Academy London 1889. Moves to
Bridgnorth, Shropshire.
- 1892 Travels during the summer to
Switzerland, Spain and Portugal.
- 1893-95 Further travels in Europe exhibits
variously with the Royal Society of
Artists Birmingham; Walker Gallery
Liverpool; Manchester Art Gallery;
Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin;
Royal Institute of Painters in
watercolour Royal Institute of oil
painters and the Paris Salon.
- 1896-97 Leaves England with his wife for
Australia 1896.

- 1898 Early in the year moves to New Zealand. Settles at Gisborne and begins exhibiting with the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZAFA), Auckland Society of Arts (ASA) and Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) which purchases 'Berne Switzerland' (cat No 1), for its permanent collection.
- 1899 Moves to live in Wellington. Begins exhibiting with the Otago Art Society (OAS) where he is described as an 'Australian artist'.
- 1900 Visits Marlborough Sounds, Picton and Nelson. Exhibits with the Bishopdale Sketching Club. A work is purchased for the Suter Art Gallery. Exhibits oils and watercolours at the Canterbury Jubilee Industrial Exhibition.
- 1901 Moves to Christchurch to live. Becomes a working member of the CSA, also the Royal Art Society of New South Wales. A watercolour is purchased for the Art Gallery of New South Wales collection. Visits Otago and Southland on a sketching trip. Travels south from Bluff on an excursion to the sub antarctic Auckland and Macquarie Islands.
- 1902 Elected to the council of the CSA. During the summer visits Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau, walks through the Milford Track, Milford South. Also visits Mount Cook.
- 1903 Elected a member of the Christchurch Savage Club. Exhibits with the Wanganui Art Society.
- 1904 Moves to Nelson to live. Makes a sketching trip to Westland, visits Westport, Hokitika and Franz Josef. Journeys back to Nelson via Otira and Christchurch.
- 1905 Visits Auckland, the Bay of Islands and Rotorua.
- 1906 Moves to Hawkes Bay to live at Napier. Exhibits several works at the New Zealand International Exhibition, Christchurch, and is awarded two gold medals. Visits Wanganui. Travels up the Wanganui River to Pipiriki.
- 1907-08 Has further works purchased by the Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 1909 February leaves on an extended visit to Europe. April, embarks at Naples, journeys north through Italy to the

- Tyrol and Switzerland, then on to England. Over the summer Worsley visits the Lake District. Paints also in southern England. During August exhibits 'New Zealand Views' in a solo exhibition at The Modern Gallery, London. A selection of works is later published. October, Worsley is elected a member of the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA).
- 1910 Spends summer months painting in England and autumn in Switzerland. Leaves to return to New Zealand towards the end of the year.
- 1911 Arrives back in New Zealand.
- 1912-18 Living in Auckland. Continues to exhibit regularly in New Zealand, Australia and Britain.
- 1916 Worsley presents 'Mount Sefton' (cat No 7), to the CSA if £100 can be raised to aid the Red Cross.
- 1919 Moves to Australia.
- 1920-22 Returns to Britain 1920 via Hobart Capetown. Visits Italy and Switzerland.
- 1923 February an exhibition of 25 watercolours is held at Sunderland Public Art Gallery. A work is purchased for the Royal Collection by Queen Mary. Travels to Italy sketching and painting. April 25 dies of bronchial pneumonia at Brescia.



Mr. C. N. Worsley

(A Poet in Paint)

Here is Worsley, an artist soldier,
Who has painted in many a clime,
All folk know his name,
For he's won lots of fame,
With his pictures so clever and fine.