



A bi-monthly publication containing news, views, and reviews of activities at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

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### McCahon Honoured and Imitated

Attention should be drawn to the significance of the Colin McCahon exhibition presented recently at the 5th Sydney Biennale.

McCahon's reputation in his own country has continued to grow as recognition of his achievement as an artist of extraordinary power has spread to a wider section of New Zealanders than the few who supported his talent in his early years.

The dismissive jokes which his paintings provoked from many who were uncomfortable with the disturbing originality of McCahon's imagery in the forties and fifties have diminished as those whose minds are more open to the particular experience he presents us with increase in numbers. McCahon today in New Zealand enjoys the status of a modern master.

That he is now a prophet with honour in his own country is evidenced by the price of \$51,000 recently paid at auction for his painting of 1953 "Kauri", an indication that McCahon's art is now perceived as gilt edged investments by those who acquire for this purpose. To those who discern the power and quality of his painting, the highest price paid for a work by a living New Zealand artist is an additional justification holding him to be the greatest painter this country has produced.

McCahon, a figure who casts a long shadow over the visual arts of the land he has celebrated in an amazing corpus of works, has been relatively unnoticed beyond Australasia. A few alert visiting curators and artists have experienced the unforgettable and indescribable impact of McCahon paintings.

John Walker, the British artist, considered to be among the leading ten European painters, travelled through New Zealand in 1981. The summer 1983 issue of *Art in America* reported on his current work, beginning with the observation that Walker's painting seemed based on an "ongoing dialogue with such major artists of the past as Velazquez and Goya as well as Braque, and Motherwell's 'de t'aime series'". It is also reported that Walker had been in Australia recently.



*Colin McCahon photographed during a summer school workshop several years ago.*

The story was accompanied by a reproduction of new Walker works. Here was the surprise because they incorporated painted script stating a phrase of familiar biblical cadence. "In truth, in truth I am the very door," and again, "In truth, in very truth I tell you I am the door." The painted cursive letters alternated dark upon a light ground, light upon dark. To one who had met John Walker while he was in the country and knew how impressed he had been by McCahon's work, the stylistic influence and references to 'The Gate' series were glaringly obvious. In another context they could have been taken for the George Balogh parodies, but John Walker was deadly earnest and the tone of the writing reverential. The author Paul Brach, a New York artist and critic did not know that John Walker had dipped his pail into McCahon's abundant well.

Thanks to the Sydney Biennale McCahon's potent art has a higher international profile. Reaction to the Biennale itself was mixed but McCahon's show was a critical success.

Terence Malone wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald in reference to the exhibition and the Australian National Gallery's magnificent 6.7 x 2.1m work "Victory over Death", "The National Gallery and the Australian Art World are well pleased by such a noble addition to our public collections. And now it is time for us to honour Colin McCahon."

The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council's 'Update' reported that a recent letter from Richard Demarco, organiser of the visual arts component of the 1984 Edinburgh Festival said "The very best of the 1984 Sydney Biennale is the Colin McCahon exhibition."

The Sydney McCahon exhibition will go on to the Edinburgh Festival where Demarco, who introduced Joseph Beuys in to the English speaking art world, expects McCahon's achievement as a painter to have an equally strong impact upon the art world within Britain and Europe. Then, in truth, in truth, the source of John Walker's recent influences will be revealed.

**Quentin MacFarlane**  
**August 3 – September 9**

A further exhibition in the Canterbury Review series will feature the work of the respected Canterbury painter, Quentin MacFarlane.

The artist states, "My current painting is less concerned about aspects of my immediate environment than has been the case with my earlier painting from the 1970s. During the past few years I have concentrated on structural compositions and smooth colour-field surfaces rendered by spraying and manipulating glazed areas. In some ways this was a deliberate move to leave my marine based paintings and less formal style of painting in the past. However, a large mural project for the University of Auckland recently completed has convinced me that the rather bland flat surfaces had begun to lose their impact and I have recognised a need to return to a fuller, less restricted approach to the act of painting. The images of the coast remain but I hope to combine the structure of my earlier paintings with a deliberate concern for the way paint looks and feels."

**"Someone's Backyard...?"**  
**– the work of Judith Rugg**  
**August 7 to September 23**

Judith Rugg is a London based printmaker. The 'Someone's Backyard...?' Series is based on Jenny Pearce's book 'Under the Eagle'; an account of U.S. intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. Some of the works have broader terms of reference and do not relate specifically to the book but to the way that certain images are used to encourage particular meaning. In some of the prints the artist has placed a reference to postage stamps which is a reference to images as carriers of information in the literal sense as well as an ideological tool.

Judith Rugg's work also conveys a much freer use of the medium of screenprinting with thin layers of colour built up in a similar fashion to a painting. She believes that the traditional association of screenprinting with flat colour has limited an understanding of the medium itself.

A number of these works were exhibited at the Pentonville Gallery before their dispatch to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

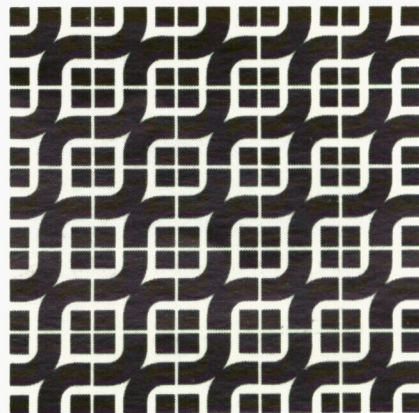
**The Robert McDougall Art Gallery**  
P.O. Box 237 Christchurch.  
Botanic Gardens, Rolleston Avenue,  
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**Gordon Walters**  
**August 1 – September 4**

Michael Dunn describes the artist as a painter of uncompromising honesty who defines each individual part of his works with an absolute clarity, none having precedence over another.

Unflinchingly his focus addresses the formal language of painting itself; surface, shape, tone and colour. Conscious of his European artistic background but also of his place in New Zealand, a country proud of its Polynesian heritage of visual art, Walters has drawn upon both European and indigenous sources in the evolution of his style. The 'koru' series brings the European and Maori cultural traditions into a harmonic unity. A perfectionist in his art, Walters has achieved a distinctive personal style in his mature paintings, work of rare quality and integrity.

The exhibition traces the artist's development from 1945 until 1982 and includes both painting and works on paper. The Auckland City Art Gallery was responsible for curating this exhibition which is toured by the New Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council with financial assistance from the QE II Arts Council.



*Untitled 1970 by Gordon Walters.*

**Christine Webster**  
**July 24 – September 4**

This exhibition uses large colour photographs as the medium to capture the energy of the moment rather than searching only for beauty. The photographic works are set in urban locations around Wellington using five models and successfully reveal interior psychic landscapes.

**The Grid**  
**August 23 – September 30**

Because of space problems a selection of works from this exhibition will be shown. The Grid is the second exhibition in the trilogy dealing with aspects of recent New Zealand art organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery and toured by the New

Zealand Art Gallery Directors Council. In his foreword to the catalogue Dr Rodney Wilson explains that each of the three presentations plans to identify a prevailing concern among a number of artists, certain shared themes or certain stylistic affinities, and explores them.

The Grid exhibition was curated by Andrew Bogle and represents artists as diverse as Maddox and Walters, Killeen and Thorburn. Apart from Gordon Walters, the exhibition also shows the work of two other Canterbury artists – Don Peebles and John Hurrell.

**Acquisitions:**

The following works have been recently purchased

**Tony Fomison**  
*Legend of Murihaka 1981-1983*  
Oil on Hessian

**Gordon Walters**  
*Then*

Screenprint  
*Rauponga*  
Screenprint

**James Ross**  
*Source 1983*  
Oil on Canvas

**Ralph Hotere/Roger Hickin**  
*1984 No 9*

Mixed Medium on Paper  
on Stainless Steel

**Denese Oates**  
*Bird Girl*

Cast paper and Turkey feathers

**Michael Reed**  
*Concertina Imposition 2*  
Pencil/Pastel on paper

**Alan Pearson**  
*Teatro Bella Figura I*  
*(Variations on the Theatre)*  
Oil on Cardboard

**John Kinder**  
*Keri Keri Falls 1858*

Watercolour

**Raymond F. McIntyre**  
*Meditation 1905*  
Oil on Canvas

**E. Mervyn Taylor**  
*Creation 1948*

Wood Engraving

**James Lawson Balfour**  
*Portrait of Samuel C. Farr*  
Oil on Canvas

**Paul Johns**  
*Portrait 1983*  
Acrylic on Canvas

The following works have been presented to the gallery

**Shona Cowan**  
*Two Girls in an Interior 1965*

Etching

Presented by Mrs Papprill,  
Christchurch

**Ezio Gribaudo**  
*Logogrifo 1982*

Buvar paper relief

Presented by the artist



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## Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery Inc

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### Past Coffee Mornings

On 18 April Thelma Strongman talked about the development of landscape gardening in Canterbury, particularly on the large country runs, and its origins in the British tradition. Beginning with the work of men like Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton and the ideas of the sublime and the picturesque as expressed in gardens such as Stourhead, Stowe and Hagley she showed the way in which the ideas of these men were adapted, in the early years of the settlement of the province, to an altogether different climate and natural landscape by men and women who were determined to "put down roots" and to establish around their houses, plants and trees which had been familiar to them in England. We saw slides of runs and estates such as Mt Peel, Glens of Tekoa, Montrose and Ilam and were amazed by the rapidity with which the flat plains and bleak hills assumed an air of settled permanence. None of the gardens have survived in the form in which they were created and most are now changed beyond recognition, but Mrs Strongman's slides and her descriptions vividly evoked their existence for a large audience.

Your Executive had received many requests for the coffee mornings to be repeated as coffee evenings and we were somewhat disappointed, therefore, when this talk was given again in the evening of 23 May to a group of only a dozen people. Perhaps a cold mid-winter evening was not the best time to initiate this experiment; we shall try again later in the year.

On 17th of June Ann Betts, the Gallery's Education Officer, spoke about her work. None of us were aware of just what this involves: preparing and conducting visits to the Gallery from school parties; taking works from the Gallery to outside groups; mounting the audio-visual displays and the educational panels which accompany and elucidate major exhibitions; arranging concerts, poetry readings and lectures; organising the work of the volunteer gallery guides; preparing teaching materials for use in schools. . . . We have all been aware how, in the last few years, the McDougall has become so much more vital and vigorous; those of us who heard Ann talk were left in no doubt as to her contribution to this lively resurgence of interest in its exhibitions and other activities.

### Coffee Mornings to Come

Stuart Page is a young photographer, at present employed by the Gallery. Not so long ago he spent a period of time in New York and, since his return, has been preparing an exhibition of photographs which will begin a national tour later in the year. On 18 July he will show us slides of his work which is original and exciting. This is the first occasion on which a photographer has shown us his work and it promises to be a most interesting morning.

The role of the dealer gallery is very different from that of a city gallery such as the McDougall. On 15 August Judith Gifford who, with Barbara Brooke, founded the Brooke-Gifford Gallery in 1975 will talk to us about the problems and rewards of her work. Judith would prefer not to speak formally but rather to discuss points and answer questions raised by her audience. So please come prepared!

### The Winter Party

You will remember that because of the Paul Klee exhibition occupying so much of the Gallery's space and resources during November and December last year, we were not able to have a Christmas party. To compensate and because we think it's a good thing for all the Friends to come together socially once in a while so that we may get to know each other better, we have arranged a mid-winter party on Friday 27 July in the Lower Common Room of the Students' Union at Ilam. The theme of the evening will be Bohemian and there will be a prize for the most original outfit. We will be providing some special entertainment and there will be dancing. A bar will be open and we can assure you of a splendid supper. There will be something for everyone, from our youngest to our oldest members, and you can all be assured of the warmest welcome, whether you come by yourself or in a party of twenty. Friends are encouraged to bring friends; the cost for the evening will be \$12.00. You will receive a special invitation very shortly but please make a note of the date in your diary now. We need your support in this venture and we look forward to your company.

### New Members

Kees Bruin  
Erica Capp  
Mrs K.F. Cochran  
Hana Harawira  
Kate Howard  
Mrs Pat Hunter  
Kathleen Kunac  
Ms Simone McKeeg  
Mrs John Moon  
Juliet Nicholas  
John Wilson

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P.O. Box 237, Christchurch  
Botanic Gardens, Rolleston Ave.,  
President — Robert Erwin, 558-675  
Secretary — Pat Unger, 487-482  
Treasurer — Anne Crighton,

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## Coming Events

## The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

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July/August

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- July 1** **Tribal Art of Papua New Guinea** Until July 24. D.J. McLeod Public & Private – until July 29.
- 3** **Christine Webster** – until July 12.
- 8** **Gallery Concert** – The Early Music Society of Canterbury presents a programme of music for recorders, voice, viol and clavichord.
- 12** **The Art 3 p.m. Group** – art club for young people 10 a.m.
- 18** **Friends Coffee Morning** Stuart Page photographer, with slides of New York 10.30 a.m.
- 24** **Christine Webster** – until September 4.
- 26** **Gallery Concert** – Jenny Abel visiting German violinist on tour from the Gerta Institute 8 p.m.
- 27** **Winter Party** – Bohemian Evening in Lower Common Room of Students' Union at Ilam – 8p.m.
- August 1** **Gordon Walters** Exhibition opening 7.45 p.m. Exhibition continues until September 9.
- 3** **Canterbury Review** – Quentin MacFarlane until September 9.
- 5** **Gallery Concert** – Strings Attached Puppet theatre present Rumpelstiltskin performance at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- 7** **Judith Rugg** – Someone's Backyard...? until September 23.
- 9** **The Art Group** – Art club for young people 10 a.m.
- 15** **Friends Coffee Morning** – Judith Gifford from the Brooke-Gifford Gallery 10.30 a.m.
- 19** **Gallery Concert** – Amici Orchestra 3 p.m.
- 23** **The Grid** exhibition opening 7.45 p.m. – exhibition continues until September 9.

*Exhibition dates could vary slightly.*