

Christchurch City Council



The Robert McDougall Art Gallery

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Robert McDougall Art Gallery
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Artist



Earthenware Market, Concarneau (c.1916) Oil on wood panel
Collection: Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Marjorie Bassett bequest, 1964

Sydney Lough Thompson - At Home and Abroad

December 15 1990 - February 3 1991

The history of New Zealand painting in the early part of this century was set against a broad background of expatriation. In the 1890's and early 1900's many young artists left these shores to develop their artistic horizons. For most, travel was a test: for some the experience bore little fruit, but for others like Sydney Lough Thompson the effect was profound.

Thompson was born in Oxford, North Canterbury, in 1877, and studied at Canterbury College School of Art and with Petrus van der Velden, before leaving in 1900 for further study in Europe. Over the next seventy years of his working life he spent more than half that time living and painting in France. Thompson had perhaps the unique distinction of being New Zealand's first long term resident artist in that country.

This exhibition explores not only his French painting but also his work as an artist in New Zealand. His first trip overseas lasted five years and by the time of his return in 1905 he had achieved some reputation as a figure and portrait painter. However, it was during the years between 1911 and his visit back to New Zealand in 1923 that he established his niche with paintings of life in the fishing village of Concarneau. Each time Thompson returned to New Zealand the public response to his work grew steadily more favourable, until by 1934 he had become a very popular artist. His particular form of Impressionism seemed to strike the right chord with the

New Zealand public, and apart from a brief fall from favour during the 1950's and 1960's this has remained constant. Thompson's long career as a New Zealand artist in France ended in 1973 with his death at the age of ninety-six. He was laid to rest in Concarneau.

This exhibition, prepared by guest curator, Julie King, Senior Lecturer in Art History, University of Canterbury, pays tribute to one of Canterbury's most notable sons. This is the most important review of Thompson's work and will examine his activity as a painter in both Brittany and Canterbury. It will also reveal something of what has made this artist so appealing for so long.

Following its showing in Christchurch, a slightly reduced exhibition of forty works will tour nationally during 1991 and 1992, a tour that has been made possible through the generous support of the Q E II Arts Council.

Cries and Whispers

New Works from the
British Council Collection
November 27 1990 - January 13 1991

From the permanent collection of the British Council come 20 paintings by contemporary British artists. 'Cries and Whispers' is mainly made up of figurative paintings containing symbolist references to contemporary British society. The works exemplify the painterly style of the 1980's. Some works hit home with their truthful depiction of Britain in that decade; for instance, Mark Wallinger's *The Bottom Line* depicts 'poverty and wealth, the exploitation of one class by another, and the use of powerful myths to conceal the true state of affairs and keep the status quo' (p.42, catalogue).

Bloodlines

November 9 1990 - January 13 1991

Jack Body, a Wellington composer, has been working with photography since the early eighties. Music and photography join together in 'Bloodlines', an installation in which Body explores racial origin and how a person of mixed blood is frequently considered a racial outcast.

The artist believes that 'genetic science teaches us that it is often the mixed strain which has greater strength and resilience. Aesthetic experience shows us that a mixed racial ancestry may produce the greatest beauty' (J. Body).

David Crossan is responsible for the electronic design of 'Bloodlines'.

Fish Out of Water

November 9 1990 - January 13 1991

A love of water and especially the sea is paramount to Wells' latest series of work entitled - 'Fish out of Water'. The theme for these tapestries is to connect the affinity of water with Wells' thoughts on Public and Private aspects of life. The land represents the public sphere, the water represents the private, the people public and the fish private. Wells believes that fish have more freedom of movement than humans do on land with the controls and restraints placed on them by society.

Wells likens herself on occasions to a 'fish out of water' and hence the title of this exhibition. Her work combines both figurative and abstract elements and displays patience and precision in this ancient craft form.

Footrot Flats in Focus A 1990 Perspective

From December 5 1990 until January 22 1991, the McDougall Art Annex will present **Footrot Flats in Focus - a 1990 Perspective**, billed as one of the most unusual museum and gallery exhibitions ever to be mounted in this country.

The impetus for the exhibition, which was prepared by the Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre, developed in the aftermath of Cyclone Bola which severely battered the Gisborne district in 1988. The Museum's Director, Dr Wayne Orchiston recalled:

'There was a depressing clean-up period after the cyclone. I wondered how the Museum and Arts Centre, once the district was on its feet again, could take Gisborne to the people of New Zealand in a way that everybody could relate to.'

Dr Orchiston's solution was a touring exhibition celebrating Footrot Flats, the popular cartoon creation of Gisborne's own graphic artist Murray Ball, which appears in 120 different newspapers world-wide, has sold more than six million copies in book form, and was the subject of an award-winning animated feature film.

The exhibition is an official New Zealand 1990 project, which Dr Orchiston sees as highly appropriate. "Footrot Flats is at the very heart of the New Zealand ethos," he says. "It is specifically about New Zealand and New Zealanders and, through The Dog's genius and Wal's obstinacy, touches on many of the issues that confront our nation."

"It is very much about our past, our present and our future, and as such mirrors the philosophy of the 1990 celebrations."

The exhibition includes a wealth of original cartoon material, various honours and awards, examples of fan mail, and a video of the Footrot Flats film.

There will be a small charge for entry to this popular exhibition, the proceeds of which will be used to help support the activities of the Annex, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery's venue for contemporary art.



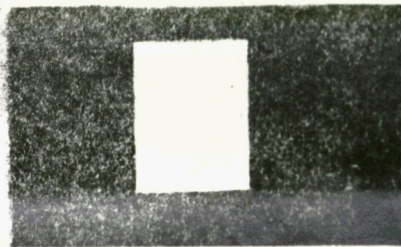
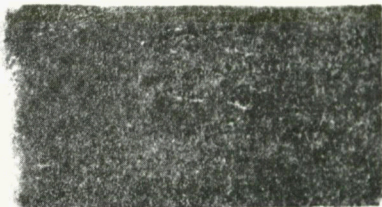
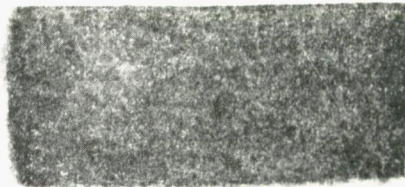
CHRISTMAS GREETINGS and GOOD WISHES for the NEW YEAR

To artists, Friends and supporters of the Gallery

From the Director and staff of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery



"COMPOSITION," by Julian Royds, of Christchurch.



"PAINTING," by Colin McCahon, of Auckland

Exhibition Shows Range Of N.Z. Art

Nothing stimulates artists like money, it seems. The Hay's, Ltd., Art Competition has attracted nearly every well-known painter in the country and many more.

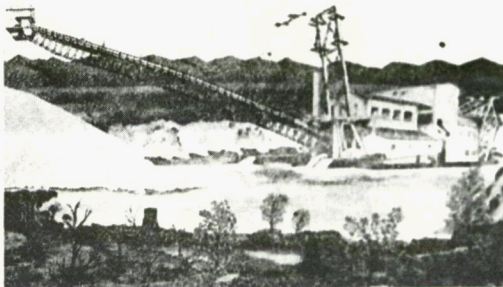
The competition has provided a splendid opportunity for serious artists to exhibit and sell their work and the prospect of winning a substantial prize has encouraged those who, because of apathy or antipathy towards ordinary exhibitions, might not otherwise have entered.

If the failure of the judges to give an objective winner is surprising, their choices are even more so. There will be a selection of the three a selection difficult to understand.

Colin McCahon's winning entry is not one of his best paintings, it is not nearly as moving as

his Northland Panels. "The Wake" panels or several other paintings shown in his annual show in Christchurch last year. Nevertheless, it is a good painting, possessing uncompromising strength and intensity. A newspaper reproduction cannot do any justice to the subtle tonal modulations and contrasts which are the source of its expressiveness. It is a painting which needs to be observed close up, only its general compositional scheme which is not particularly interesting or important, carries to any distance.

It needs to be looked at for a long time before it yields its secrets. It is a contemplative painting which needs contemplating upon. Above all, its title should be noted—"Painting." It is not a picture of anything. It



The joint winners of The 1960 - Hay's Art Competition, clockwise from left: Julian Royds, Colin McCahon and Francis J. Jones (Press 31/8/60)

SUPPLEMENT November/December 1990

THE HAY'S ART COMPETITION

Art awards like the Hay's Competition were a novelty thirty years ago. Compared to today, there was little corporate funding of the arts - few prizes, scholarships or sponsored shows.

Exhibition venues were also scarce. Dealer galleries were only just beginning to emerge in New Zealand and artists usually exhibited in group shows. Most of the established venues were controlled by art societies who tended to be sceptical about the merits of "modern art".

In this situation, art competitions could be a useful exhibiting forum. However, the only painting award of the late fifties - the Kelliher Prize - was limited to realistic landscape painting.

By 1960 the Kelliher Prize had become a target for art world criticism. After all, New Zealand artists were looking further afield, keen to catch up with international art trends. A prize for the "chocolate box" school of landscape painting seemed an anachronism.

In Christchurch the Hay's Art Competition was partly conceived as an alternative to the conservative Kelliher Prize. The impetus came from Andre Brooke, director of Gallery 91, the city's first - and shortlived - dealer gallery. Brooke secured the support of James Hay, manager of Hay's Departmental Store, who had already sponsored several philan-

thropic projects in Christchurch.

Brooke worked with other art administrators on the steering committee for the competition: John Simpson (lecturer at Canterbury University Art School), and Stewart MacLennan (director of the National Art Gallery).

Together, they established the aims and terms of the award. It was open to amateurs and professionals alike, with no restriction on entry. Its official aim was to encourage interest in contemporary New Zealand art and provide artists with a chance to show and sell their work.

To many artists the Hay's Competition was a rare opportunity. Incentives included substantial prizes, with a major award of 300 pounds. However, it also offered the possibility of national exposure, at a time when there was little dialogue between New Zealand's regional art centres.

The response to the competition was staggering - 406 entries from all over the country. Three "experts" were enlisted to adjudicate: Peter Tomory, the high-profile director of the Auckland City Art Gallery, and John Simpson and Russell Clark, lecturers at the Canterbury University Art School.

The judges selected 98 works to be exhibited at the Durham Street Gallery. Established artists were well represented, with entries by Milan Mrkusich, Toss Woollaston, Louise Henderson and Doris Lusk. The younger set included art students and graduates like Brent Wong, John Coley, and Trevor Moffitt.

When it came to selecting the prize winners, however, the judges reached an impasse. Eventually they agreed to differ, and divided the prize between three entries: Colin McCahon's *Painting*, Julian Royd's *Composition*, and Francis J. Jones *Kanieri Gold Dredge*.

Ironically, they could hardly have split the prize between three more diverse painters. McCahon was an established but controversial artist;

Royds, a young art school graduate working in a semi-abstract manner. By contrast Jones was a complete unknown - an elderly amateur, naive painter.

The judges' decision raised a rumpus. Their failure to agree on a single winner confirmed the suspicions of cynics: perhaps "modern art" was just a clever hoax after all.

Local newspapers provided a forum for debate, and correspondents like "Seeing Red" aired their views with gusto - "There is not a real work of art in the whole exhibition, just a load of tripe!" Hostility focused on McCahon's winning entry, *Painting*, one of the more uncompromising examples of modernism. At the same time, many artists defended the judges' decision, and Nelson Kenny, the local art critic, championed the much maligned *Painting*.

The fuss over the Hay's Competition represented a clash between two factions. One group defended modern art, while their adversaries dismissed it as a sham.

To most onlookers, however, modernism was simply baffling. Correspondents like "Anti-waffle" expressed a common query - "What do the judges look for in a painting? Simple language, please!"

The controversy over the competition was not confined to Christchurch. Newspapers from all over the country reported the verdict and the heated response of gallery goers. Charles Brasch, in *Landfall*, claimed the exhibition had been a "decided success one of the liveliest and most varied New Zealand shows to be seen anywhere for years." The editor of the 'New Zealand Listener' emphasised its importance in encouraging debate about the visual arts.

In Christchurch the fuss didn't end with the exhibition. Conflict was revived in 1961, when Hay's Ltd offered to gift one of the winning paintings to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

For the Art Gallery Committee (comprised mainly of local artists), McCahon's *Painting* was the pick of the three. However, the City Councillors balked at their recommendation. They sided with gallery director, William Baverstock, who maintained that none of the works was fit for the collection.

The decision to reject Hay's offer piqued local artists, and several members of the Art Gallery Committee resigned in protest. Many felt that the incident typified the McDougall Art Gallery's apathy towards contemporary art.

In 1962 a second Hay's Competition was organised, this time with awards both in oil and watercolour painting as well as sculpture and crafts.

The organisers, having learned a lesson from the first award, chose one judge to do the honours. This was Daryl Lindsay, a retired Australian gallery director, known for his conservative views on modern art.

Lindsay selected half of the 250 entries for exhibition and awarded the major prize to Peter McIntyre. His entry *Abandoned mine, St Bathans* was a landscape painting of the type usually associated with the Kelliher Prize.

Local artists and administrators took a dim view of the decision. Nelson Kenny scoffed at McIntyre's winning painting, describing it as "rich in the qualities which make a good calendar picture". He claimed the exhibition was a great disappointment: "these safe awards will not arouse anything like the public interest of the controversial 1960 prizes, which probably caused more New Zealanders to think about painting than any previous event".

In fact, Kenny's remarks provoked a local squabble. Newspaper correspondents chastised him for his outspokenness and defended Daryl Lindsay's decision. Others, in turn, supported his stance.

Later Hay's Competitions were less fraught affairs. In 1963 Gordon

Thompson, an Australian gallery director awarded to Andre Brooke, Selwyn Muru, Ross Ritchie and others.

Local artists took most of the prizes in 1966. Gil Docking, director of Auckland City Art Gallery, awarded first prize to David Graham (oils) and Doris Lusk (watercolour). David Graham's *Set* was a bold and colourful abstract painting; Doris Lusk's a naturalistic portrait. Christchurch artists Quentin McFarlane, Don Peebles and Michael Eaton were awarded merit prizes.

The Hay's Competition ended in 1966, having provided a shortlived boost to the Christchurch art scene. However, other art awards were gaining ground: the Manawatu Art Prize was initiated in 1965, the biennial Benson & Hedges Art Award three years later. These competitions took the form of touring exhibitions, helping to familiarise the public with contemporary art.

Recently, corporate funding of the visual arts has escalated, and there is a new range of competitions and scholarships. Art awards continue to be influential - promoting artists' careers and serving as an index to art world trends. But today they are just one component in the wider art establishment. Current awards attract little debate, compared with the fuss over the Hay's Competition in the sixties.

Jill Trevelyan

Coming Events

November

- 1 **Jubes on Toast**, sculptural installation by Philip Price, opens to the public at the Art Annex.
- 3 **Saturday Club**, 10:30 a.m.
Art Appreciation club for adults.
- 6 Friends **Tribute to Doris Lusk** 5:15 p.m.
- 7 **Wednesday Club**
10:30 a.m. Art Appreciation club for adults.
- 9 **Volunteers Club**, 10:30 a.m.
- 10 Jack Body '**Bloodlines**' and Kate Wells '**Fish out of Water**' opens to the public.
- 10 **Continuing Club**,
10:30 a.m. Art Appreciation club for adults.
- 21 **Speaker of the Month.**
Julie King will speak on the life and work of Sydney Lough Thompson. 10:30 a.m. at the McDougall Art Gallery.

December

- 5 **Footrot Flats in Focus - A 1990 Perspective**
Preview at the Art Annex. 5:00 p.m. All Welcome.
- 6 **Footrot Flats in Focus - A 1990 Perspective**
opens to the public at the Art Annex.
- 9 **Noël Night**
5:30 p.m. Friends Christmas Party.
- 14 '**Sydney Lough Thompson - At Home and Abroad**'
7.30 p.m. Opening of the exhibition.
- 15 '**Sydney Lough Thompson - At Home and Abroad**'
opens to the public.

Recent acquisitions

Works acquired for the collection:

Mark Lander
Pendulum and Ladder II
clay pigment on handmade paper

Quentin MacFarlane
Scarborough Breakwater II
acrylic on ragboard

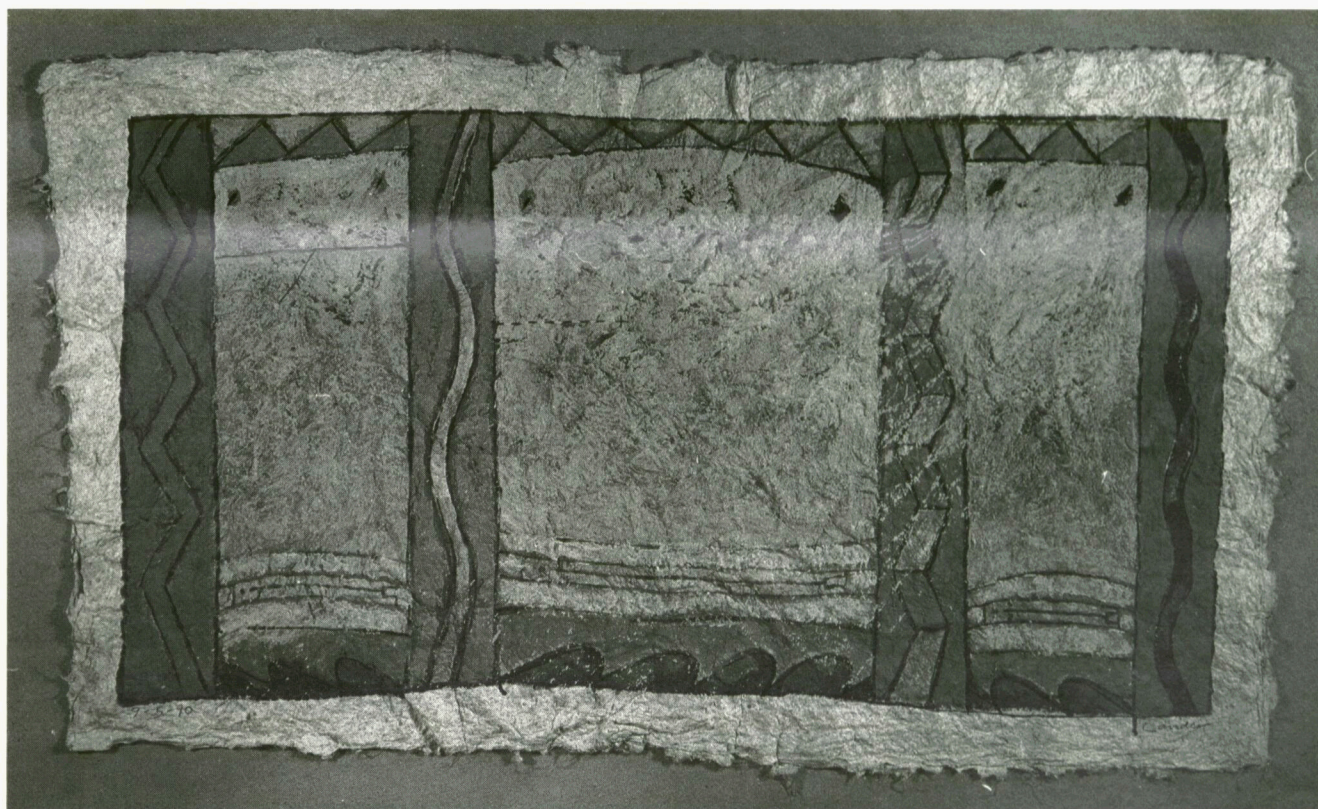
Allie Eagle
Facing Ourselves, 1990
watercolour

Darryl Robertson
The Storyteller and four Dimpletrees and the Listener and four Dimpletrees
ceramic

Clive Humphreys
The Recovery
serigraph

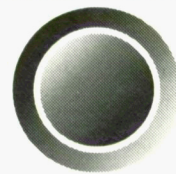
Imants Tillers
The Oracle Speaks: Take One Step
acrylic, gouache, oilstick
on 48 canvas boards

Mark Lander
Pendulum and Ladder II
Clay pigment on handmade paper



Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery Inc.

President Ian Miles 351 9955
Vice-President Hilary Langer 348 3982
Treasurer Chris Brocket 355 7133
Secretary Marie Lockey 885 075



September Speaker of the Month

Coinciding with the exhibition 'Roads to Rome' the Friends of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery are paying tribute to W.A. Sutton, and hence the theme of the September coffee morning was the life and work of this remarkable artist.

The speaker was John Coley, Director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, who, drawing liberally on personal experience and reminiscences, traced Sutton's evolution from early beginnings at Sydenham and Christchurch Boys' High School to the pre-eminent position he now occupies in New Zealand art.

The most important influence originally was without doubt the Canterbury School of Art which Sutton entered as a part-time pupil at the age of 12, where he stayed for a total of nine years, and subsequently became a tutor. The training he received there was extremely thorough and academic but did not encourage development of a personal style. Sutton's early work, mainly Canterbury landscapes and Christchurch scenes, showed these influences through a semi-impressionist style based on precise and accurate drawing.

However, Sutton's wartime experiences, but more particularly his visit to London in 1947 where he attended the School of Art at St. Johns Wood, greatly enriched his artistic life, and soon his work showed a more confident and adventurous approach, as in the painting of *Dry September* or *Nor'wester in a Cemetery*. Sutton became closely associated with 'The Group' and, as time went on, developed an absorbing interest in textures and surfaces. Paintings of grasses highlighted structure and movement, landscapes emphasised pattern set against vivid representations of the sky, and portraits showed character and purpose. In all this Sutton always remained close and true to Canterbury, not only as a great artist but also through his genuine warmth, humanity and public concern.

November Speaker of the Month

On November 21, Julie King, Senior Lecturer in Art History, University of Canterbury, will speak on the life and work of Sydney Lough Thompson. This talk is timely with a major exhibition of his work opening at the McDougall Art Gallery on December 15 1990.

Coffee will be served at 10.30am, \$1.50 at the McDougall Art Gallery.

Subscriptions

We were very pleased with the response we received to our letters about renewal of subscriptions. Thank you to the people who did reply and renewed subscriptions to the Friends. We would love to hear from the hundred or so people who have still not replied as we may have to remove them from our mailing list.

Remember that subscriptions for 1991 do not have to be paid until accounts are sent out after the AGM which is usually held in the month of February.


New Members

D.W. Dormer
Anna Lim
K.F. MacDonald
Dr Dugald and Mrs Shirley McDonald
Jane Mander
Susan Noble
Helen Thompson

New Cards

The latest series of cards to be printed by the Gallery includes W.A. Sutton's *Plantation Series No 2*, John Gibb's *Shades of Evening* and Henry La Thangue's *Making Ligurian Lace*. These are now available in the Gallery Shop and have been produced in response to the many requests we had for these images during "A Canterbury Perspective".

As a support for the Sydney Lough Thompson exhibition, the Friends are producing eight new cards which should be ready by late November. The catalogue for the exhibition is progressing well and should be available by mid-November - an ideal Christmas gift?



NOEL NIGHT

Sunday 9 December 5.30pm

**Exciting Entertainment
Festive Food
Delicious Drink**