



DAVID GRAHAM

A Retrospective Exhibition

Prepared and Toured by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1974

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David Graham (1928-1972)

BORN 1928 in Christchurch, one of three children. Five years later the family moved to Levin where David went to school. He later attended Horowhenua College where he began to paint.

After leaving school David entered the Department of Industries and Commerce in Wellington as a cadet. At the same time he studied part time at Victoria University. This was during 1946-47. Units taken towards a B.A. degree included English, Geography and Economics. He left the Department and with friends attended the Teachers College in Christchurch. There he acquired his teaching certificate.

His first teaching position was at Otaki (one year) then to D'Urville Island in the Marlborough Sounds in sole charge. He married in 1951 and continued to teach on D'Urville Island.

The next move was into the Wairau Valley to an appointment at Wairau Pa School and not long after, owing to ill health, back to Christchurch and a number of relieving positions. That was followed by full-time positions at Kumara and later still as a sole charge at Kumara Junction where they remained for about four years.

It was at Kumara that he began painting again, as well as doing an intensive study of art. Through the Country Library Service it was possible (as he had done at D'Urville Island as well) to become immersed in the history of art and aesthetics. The impressionists particularly interested him along with the work of Mondrian, Kandinsky, and the whole field of 'abstraction'. In his spare time, he would return to the schoolroom to paint. David always remained an avid reader, and the free time he ever had apart from (and even during) helping to look after the children (there were seven) was taken up with reading or painting.

The Grahams spent a year in Greymouth between moving from Kumara to Kumara Junction. They were waiting for a school house to be built there, and the stay in Greymouth resulted in a most profitable friendship developing with Toss Woollaston. Toss was the first person to actively encourage David's interest in painting as a serious involvement rather than a hobby. David and

Toss were to become good and lasting friends and they spent time painting in each other's company.

Three years had been spent at Kumara. At Kumara Junction they remained for four years. By this time there were five children and a growing awareness of isolation. In 1961 they settled in Redcliffs, Christchurch, when David was appointed to Mt. Pleasant School.

On the West Coast David had worked in charcoal as well as with oils and palette knife. There was always difficulty, Enfys remembers, in getting and affording materials. All the same David did produce enough work to take part in a show in Greymouth.

As part of his self-training he did studies from other painters, and showed an interest especially in the structure of the works for example of Piero della Francesca. He was not an emotional painter, but was interested in the mathematical and geometrical construction of paintings, as well as their intellectual content. During this period he worked in association with a group of painters which included Toss Woollaston and Alan Holcroft and although their approach to painting differed widely David's interest in painting gained momentum through their encouragement. The move to Christchurch brought him into contact with a group of younger painters and with diverse materials.

David taught at Mount Pleasant for six or seven years, high above the Estuary and overlooking the broad sweep of Pegasus Bay. Here was an environment that greatly impressed itself upon the artist's eye. Its atmospheric effects made a profound impact as the series of works in water-colour that were done about this time so amply show. (They were done spontaneously at night on the kitchen table, often with a baby under one arm and rows of nappies overhead). He never stopped reading or painting in spite of the great amount of help that he put in with rearing the children.

Later David was to concentrate again on geometric structures—the essential construction

of a work of art, which had started to develop in charcoal at Kumara Junction.

The Set Series of 1965-67, of which there were about 200 produced altogether, belongs to this period. There was still the problem of affording materials. Consequently many of the Set Series have been painted over. Others were destroyed. There was never any feeling of preciousness attached to his paintings. David simply went on working and the painting went on developing, as he said in his notes on the theory of art—the aestheticising of unpalatable material, the providing of a new direction by reorganising things seen so that they command attention as an aesthetic experience.

The Set Series was based on grid structures and their development. It was a painting from this series that won the Hays Prize in 1966, and also represented his work in surveys of contemporary New Zealand painting organised by the City of Auckland Art Gallery in 1965 and 1966.

The more organic Black and White series emerged from the Set Series. All the Black and White paintings such as 'Woman in Canterbury' were done in 1969.

Essentially David's work falls into seven broad divisions (each merging into the next), as follows:

1. West Coast paintings. These include some fairly conventional paintings of landscapes and buildings. Very few examples of this period now remain.
2. Mount Pleasant-Pegasus Bay series. Watercolours of atmospheric studies.
3. Canterbury Norwester Series. Watercolours growing out of No 2, but becoming more geometrical in structure.
4. Set Series, 1965-67. Based on geometric grid structures.
5. Black and White Series, 1969.
6. 'Hard Edge' Canterbury landforms Series, 1969-70.
7. Images of reality and imagined reality. Complex but ordered studies in visual perception, vision and invention.

There is a dream quality in many of the works of David Graham that somewhat contradicts his denial of romanticism. All of his work, however, reflects the high sensitivity of his nature, and his highly developed visual perception. He was intensely interested in how sight operates, and how we perceive the world around us. He studied philosophy and music at Canterbury, as well as teaching himself to play the piano and clarinet. He also played in the Sumner Silver Band. While

he tested himself and extended himself constantly he had a great dislike of exams and of being tested by other people. He liked to make his own challenges and to test himself. (He wrote poetry too, as well as all the other interests he found time to do).

David's formal training in art was a correspondence course of about eighteen months taken from Australia while in Kumara, in the essentials of drawing and watercolour painting. These he considered give him the techniques he required. Everything he painted was carefully structured and planned, and grew out of the ordering acquired at that time.

In 1967 David was appointed to the staff of the Christchurch Teachers College. There he was able to advance the ideas he had been formulating as a teacher. He was a firm believer in the integration of art with all other subjects. To him education was a 'whole' thing, and he began to work towards more integrated studies in schools. He never stopped learning, reading, painting and exploring. He was intensely interested in science, but 'the value of the arts', he said speaking at Anderson Park Art Gallery, Invercargill on October 7, 1970, when he was guest artist at the opening of an exhibition, 'lies in their ability to establish something which is beyond the arena of scientific doubt'.

'Creativity has been defined as the production of unique associations of ideas and materials relevant to the context. Relevance to context in this definition,' he said 'Eliminated the bizarre and the irrational. Scientists operate by generating doubt . . . Doubting is the essence of science. The function of the arts is to establish a context of belief. The artist shows the world as he perceives it and he knows his perception to be true.

An artist is a person who is capable of perceiving things aesthetically—that is his distinctive gift. This certainty of perception applies to objective and non-objective art.

The Arts, he said, would become a stable force within our society because they embodied true statements of perception. They provided a way of establishing a touchstone for human beliefs. Their value in establishing something which could not be doubted made its own strong plea for the arts in an age of uncertainty . . . *

B.D.M.

**The Southland Times*, Thursday October 8, 1970.

An appreciation by Nelson Kenny

associate of David Graham and formerly art critic, Christchurch 'Press'.

I HAVE not seen David Graham's paintings since I left New Zealand nine years ago, but I feel at no great disadvantage in writing this because I have such vivid memories of the man who made them. I am not sure exactly when I first met David, but I do remember clearly that he struck me as a man with unusual intelligence and mental energy and an enormous enthusiasm for discovering the essentials of painting.

Painting was almost a process of scientific discovery for David. His approach, however, was not that of an anatomist, coldly dissecting the subject of his interest, but rather that of a zoologist studying the behaviour of an animal with enthusiasm and curiosity.

David was a truly experimental painter. He was fascinated by what happened when the elements of painting were combined. He was aware that every combination of form and colour evoked a particular emotional response and he set about investigating this process. He put form and colour together without being guided by preconceptions about the nature of the result—he did not set out to make a 'work of art'. He was nevertheless well aware of the need for technical fluency and he would make many versions of a painting, trying to strengthen the structure and testing variations of detail.

Another remarkable quality of David Graham was his unselfconsciously international outlook—

and when I met him again after I had been in Europe for seven years this struck me no less forcibly than before. He neither performed what Australians call the 'cultural cringe', nor adopted the opposite stance of aggressive nationalism. Feeling that there was no reason for a New Zealand painter to be ignorant of current developments, he took a keen interest in what was happening in America and Europe. As a result, he could be impatient with works or attitudes he thought were old-fashioned, but he was no trendy follower of art fashions.

Nor was he at ease in the, to him, peripheral worlds of art politics and exhibitions—indeed I fancy that had he been told he would be commemorated by an exhibition in the Robert McDougall Art Gallery he would have emitted a characteristic sharp laugh. Not that he was a recluse, or even one who worked on solitude. He loved to talk with other painters, and he himself painted in circumstances that sometimes resembled a three-ring circus. The characteristic image of David Graham in my memory is a tousled, ruffled figure cheerfully brushing aside a horde of small children as he crouched on the floor eagerly trying out some new combination of colours.

Sydney, July 1973

Catalogue

Measurements are given in inches, height before width and unless stated otherwise all works belong to Mrs Enfys Graham; details in the catalogue which have been supplied by Mrs Graham are marked*, and beneath each catalogue entry of a work known to have been shown previously a note of the exhibition and its date has been made, although this information is probably not complete for all works in the catalogue.

- 1 House in Dyers Pass Road*, c. 1956-7*
Pencil drawing
8in x 12in (dimensions within mount)
Unsigned (?)
Collection: Mr & Mrs E. T. Beardsley, Christchurch.
- 2 Transformers, Kumara Junction*, c. 1959*
Oil on board
13½in x 20½in
Unsigned
- 3 Untitled, c. 1959*
Watercolour
14in x 10in
Signed in pencil (by the artist's wife) on back, lower right: *D. Graham 1959*
- 4 Untitled, c. 1958-9*
Oil on mapping paper
19½in x 21½in (approx.)
Unsigned
- 5 Untitled, c. 1958-9*
Oil on mapping paper
19½in x 22in (approx.)
Unsigned
- 6 Untitled, c. 1959*
Oil on mapping paper
12in x 16in
Unsigned
- 7 Untitled, c. 1959*
Oils on mapping paper
20in x 22½in (approx.)
Unsigned
- 8 Untitled (Pegasus Bay Series, 1961)*
Watercolour
10½in x 14½in
Unsigned
- 9 Cloud over Canterbury, 1961
Watercolour
10½in x 14½in
Signed in pencil lower right: *D G 61*
Title inscribed on back.
Held in stock Eric Schole's Gallery, Rotorua, 1963-72.
- 10 Pegasus Bay, 1961
Watercolour
10½in x 14½in (dimensions within mount)
Unsigned
Title and date on back of frame.
Collection: Canterbury Public Library.
- 11 Untitled (Pegasus Bay 2nd Series*), 1962
Watercolour
10½in x 14½in (dimensions within mount)
Signed in pencil lower right: *D G 62*
Collection: Mrs I. R. Powell, Auckland
- 12 Cold Front Over Pegasus Bay (2nd Series), 1962
Watercolour
10½in x 15in
Signed in pencil lower right: *D G 62*
Title inscribed on back.
- 13 Untitled, 1962
Mixed media on paper
27in x 20½in
Signed lower right: *D G 62*
Collection: Mr & Mrs E. T. Beardsley, Christchurch.
- 14 Black and Yellow, 1962*
Watercolour and ink
15in x 11in
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
Title inscribed on back.
(?) Exhibited: 'New Zealand Painting and Sculpture, 1962'
- 15 Untitled (Pegasus Bay*), 1963
Watercolour
21½in x 29in
Signed in ink, lower right centre: *D G 63*
- 16 Port Hills from the Heathcote Valley,* c. 1963*
Gouache
21in x 29in (dimensions within mount)
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
Collection: Miss H. C. Hughes, Christchurch.
- 17 Untitled (Estuary from Mt. Pleasant*), c. 1963*
Gouache
16½in x 25½in (dimensions within mount)
Unsigned (?)
Collection: Dr D. J. Simpson, Christchurch.
- 18 Pegasus Bay No. 2 (Oct.) 1963
Gouache
29½in x 21½in (within frame)
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
Title and date on back of frame
Collection: Canterbury Public Library.
- 19 Untitled (Pegasus Bay Series*), 1963*
Gouache
29½in x 21½in
Unsigned
- 20 Untitled (Pegasus Bay Series*), 1963*
Gouache
16½in x 13½in (dimensions within frame)
Unsigned (?)
Collection: Mr and Mrs E. T. Beardsley, Christchurch.
- 21 (?) Mt. Grey from the Estuary, c. 1963*
Gouache
21½in x 29in (dimensions within frame)
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*

- Title on back of frame
Collection: Mr & Mrs John Summers, Christchurch.
Exhibited: The Group Show, 1963.
- 22 Nor'west Evening, c. 1963*
Gouache
21½in x 29½in
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
Title on back of frame
Collection: Mr & Mrs E. T. Beardsley, Christchurch.
Exhibited: '100 New Zealand Painters, 1965' (Christchurch Pan Pacific Arts Festival).
- 23 Untitled (Nor'wester Series*), c. 1963-64*
Gouache
18¾in x 26¾in
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
Collection: Mr and Mrs J. Stanley, Christchurch.
- 24 Sketches for Nor'wester Series, c. 1963-4*
Oil pastel on paper
10½in x 15in
Unsigned
- 25 Untitled (Nor'wester Series*), c. 1963-4*
Gouache
21¾in x 30in
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
- 26 Untitled (Nor'wester Series*), c. 1963-4*
Gouache
21¾in x 29½ (dimensions within frame)
Unsigned (?)
Collection: Mt. Pleasant School.
- 27 Untitled (Nor'wester Series*), c. 1963-4*
Gouache
22in x 29¾in
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
- 28 Untitled, c. 1963-4*
Gouache
27in x 17in
Unsigned
- 29 Untitled, c. 1964*
Gouache
22in x 29¾in
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
- 30 Untitled, c. 1963-4*
Oil on hardboard
36in x 48in
Unsigned
Collection: Mr and Mrs A. Boyce, Christchurch.
- 31 Untitled, c. 1964*
Gouache
30in x 22in
Unsigned
- 32 Untitled, c. 1964*
Gouache
29½in x 21½in
Signed lower right: *D. H. Graham*
Collection: Mr and Mrs R. Gandar, Wellington.
- 33 Set 1, 1965
P.V.A. on hardboard
30in x 30in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Mr A. Hesselin, Invercargill.
Exhibited: 'New Zealand Painting, 1965.' (Auck.).
- 34 Set 2, c. 1965*
P.V.A. on hardboard
36in x 30½in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; and title inscribed.
Collection: Christchurch Teachers' College, Primary Division.
- 35 Set 3, 1965
P.V.A. on hardboard
30in x 29½in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Christchurch Town Hall Board of Management.
Exhibited: 'New Zealand Painting, 1965' (Auck.).
- 36 Set 5, 1965
P.V.A. on hardboard
30in x 30in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Exhibited: 'New Zealand Painting, 1965' (Auck.).
- 37 Set 11, 1965
P.V.A. on hardboard
36in x 24in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Mr and Mrs E. T. Beardsley, Christchurch.
- 38 Study for Set 20, 1965
Ink and gouache
22in x 22in (image size)
Unsigned; title and date inscribed lower left.
- 39 Set 27, c. 1966*
Watercolour
29½in x 21¾in (within frame)
Signed in pencil lower right: *Graham*
Collection: University of Canterbury Staff Club.
Exhibited: Hays' Art Competition, 1966.
- 40 Set 28, 1966*
Gouache
30in x 22in
Unsigned
- 41 Set 30, 1966
P.V.A. on hardboard
27½ x 21½ (within frame)
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
- 42 Set 33, 1966
P.V.A. on hardboard
48in x 48in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Haywrights Limited.
Exhibited: Hays' Art Competition, 1966 (winning entry).
- 43 Set 39, 1966
P.V.A. on hardboard
36in x 36in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Mrs I. R. Powell, Auckland.



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- 44 Set 41, 1966
P.V.A. on hardboard
48in x 48in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Exhibited: 'New Zealand Painting, 1966' (Auck.); '10 Years of New Zealand Painting in Auckland', 1968.
- 45 Set 42, 1966
P.V.A. on hardboard
47½in x 48in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Exhibited: 'New Zealand Painting, 1966' (Auck.).
Collection: Auckland City Art Gallery.
- 46 Set 47, 1966
P.V.A. on hardboard
36in x 36in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Exhibited: 'Recent Paintings David Graham' (Barry Lett Galleries, Auck., 1967).
- 47 Set 53, (Dec), 1966
Oil on canvas 26½in x 20in
Signed lower right centre: *Graham*; and with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Mrs I. R. Powell, Auckland.
Exhibited: 'Recent Paintings David Graham' (Barry Lett Galleries, Auck., 1967).
- 48 Set 55, 1966
Liquitex on canvas
36in x 36in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Exhibited: 'Recent Paintings David Graham' (Barry Lett Galleries, Auck., 1967).
- 49 Set 61, 1967
P.V.A. and Liquitex on canvas
45in x 33in
Signed with brush on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Mrs N. E. Young, Christchurch.
Exhibited: 'Recent Paintings David Graham' (Barry Lett Galleries, Auck., 1967)
- 50 Set 71, 1967
Oil on canvas
29¼in x 29¼ (within frame);
title and date on back of frame.
- 51 Set 54, Euclid in Canterbury; (Jan.) 1968
Polymer on canvas
36in x 36in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Anderson Park Art Gallery, Invercargill.
Exhibited in 1967 at Barry Lett Galleries as Set 54; later repainted and exhibited: '100 New Zealand Painters, (1968 Pan Pacific Arts Festival, Christchurch).
- 52 Untitled, c. 1970
Acrylic on hardboard
36in x 36in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title (Set 52) and date (1966) inscribed, but this was painted over.
Collection: Mr and Mrs H. A. Binns, Christchurch.
- 53 The Evolution of Set 101, 1970
Liquitex on hardboard
48in x 48in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
- 54 Study for Black and White Series*, 1969*
Watercolour
14½in x 10½in
Unsigned
- 55 Woman in Canterbury, (Feb.), 1969
P.V.A. emulsion on canvas
24in x 17¾in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
- 56 Untitled, 1969
P.V.A. emulsion on canvas
36in x 30in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; date inscribed.
Exhibited: Northlands Shopping Centre, Christchurch, 1969.
- 57 Untitled, 1969
P.V.A. emulsion on canvas
36in x 30¼in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; date inscribed.
Exhibited: Northlands Shopping Centre, Christchurch, 1969.
- 58 Mothers Watches Telly on Monday, (April), 1969
P.V.A. emulsion on hardboard
22in x 30¼in
Signed on back with brush: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Art Appreciation Scheme, Department of Education, Christchurch.
- 59 Untitled, 1969
P.V.A. on canvas
24in x 30in
Unsigned
- 60 Why Garden on Saturday? (April) 1969
Polymer on canvas
24¼in x 29¾in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
- 61 Untitled, 1969
Liquitex on canvas
22in x 18in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; date inscribed.
Collection: Miss P. Jones, Christchurch.
- 62 Untitled, 1969*
P.V.A.-acrylic on canvas
36in x 30in
Unsigned
Collection: Mr T. Graham, Christchurch.
- 63 Untitled, 1969*
P.V.A.-acrylic on canvas
26½in x 23¼in
Unsigned

- 64 Untitled, 1969
Liquitex on canvas
42in x 42in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; date inscribed.
Collection: Mr and Mrs P. Hopkins, Christchurch.
- 65 Signal Winding, 1970
Liquitex on canvas
30in x 24in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Miss R. Graham, Christchurch.
Exhibited: 1970 Annual Exhibition of Invercargill Public Art Gallery Society.
- 66 Untitled, 1970*
P.V.A.-acrylic on canvas
36in x 29½in
Unsigned
- 67 Sinusoidal, 1970
Liquitex on canvas
36in x 30in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
Collection: Anderson Park Art Gallery, Invercargill.
Exhibited: 1970 Annual Exhibition of Invercargill Public Art Gallery Society.
- 68 Broken Landscape, 1970
P.V.A.-acrylic on canvas
41in x 32in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; title and date inscribed.
- 69 Untitled, 1970
P.V.A. (?) on canvas
25½in x 18in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; date inscribed.
Collection: Mr N. Beardsley, Christchurch.
- 70 Landscape, 1970 (?)
P.V.A. (?) on canvas
24in x 18in
Unsigned
Collection: Mrs M. Blain, Invercargill.
- 71 Interrupted Perception—August, 1970
P.V.A. (?) on canvas
30in x 24in
Signed on back: *David Graham*; date inscribed.
Collection: Mr and Mrs W. M. Graham, Wanganui.
Exhibited: Group Show, 1970 (Christchurch).
- 72 Untitled, 1972*
Acrylic on canvas
48in x 36in
Unsigned

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