

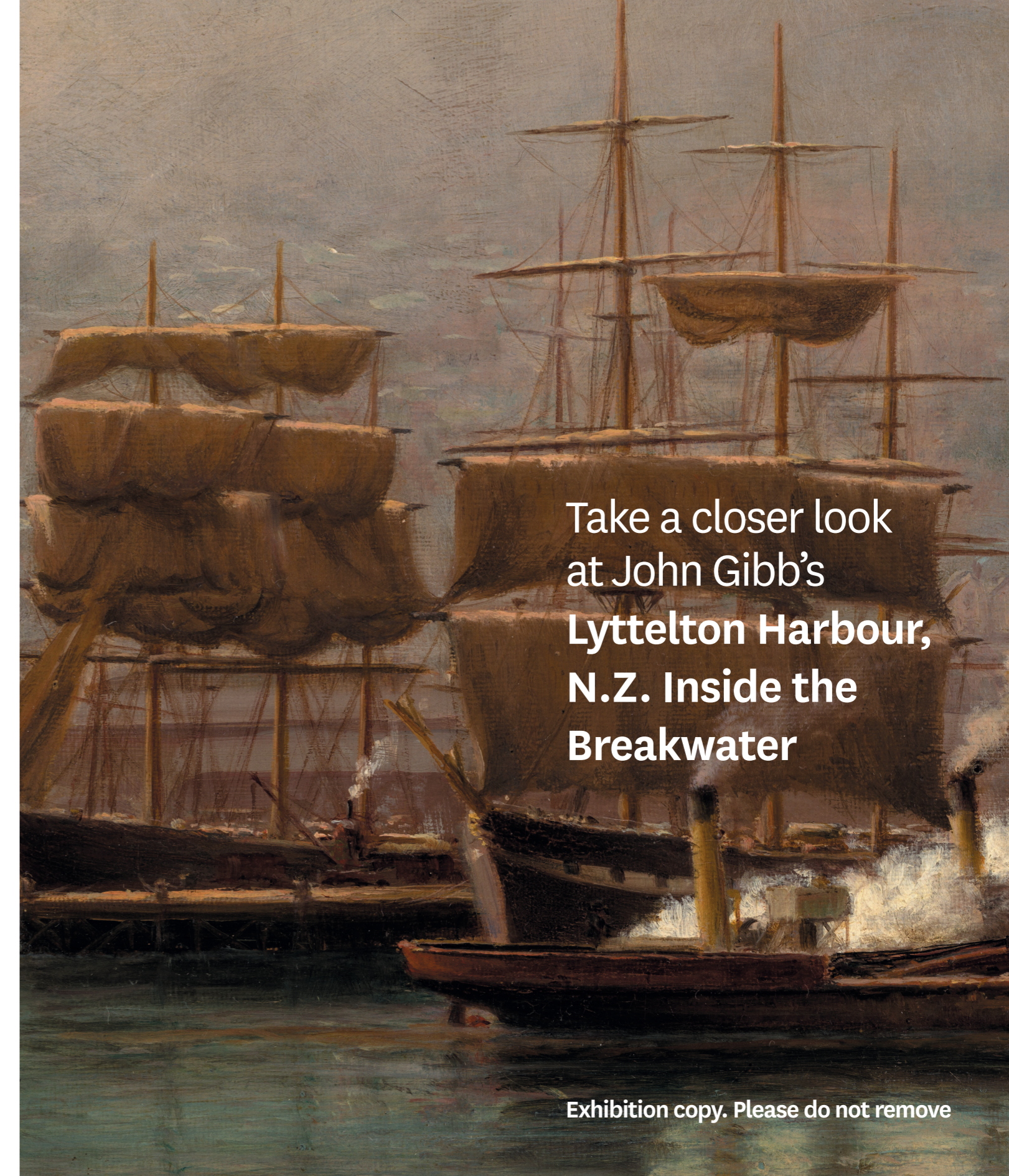


Cover:
John Gibb
*Lyttelton Harbour, N.Z.,
Inside the Breakwater*
(detail) 1886
Oil on canvas
Collection of Christchurch
Art Gallery Te Puna o
Waiwhetu, presented by
the Lyttelton Harbour
Board, 1989



Top: Lyttelton, from *Photographs of Nelson, Auckland, Thames County and Hokitika*.
Ref: 1/2-004777-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Bottom: The Strike in Lyttelton: reopening the port: thirty-nine trucks of general cargo
unloaded from the R M S. Rimutaka on Wednesday, *the Weekly Press*, 3 December 1913.
Christchurch City Libraries (CCL-PhotoCD02-IMG0030)



Take a closer look
at John Gibb's
**Lyttelton Harbour,
N.Z. Inside the
Breakwater**

**CHRISTCHURCH
ART GALLERY
TE PUNA O
WAIWHETU**

Exhibition copy. Please do not remove



Art as propaganda

Looking at John Gibb's sizeable painting of the Lyttelton Port it's clear just how quickly the area developed over the thirty-six years from when the first Canterbury Association settlers stepped ashore at this spot in 1850 to when Gibb completed this painting.

In Gibb's painting the township has grown from scattered settlers' barracks and tents clustered on tussock-covered hills to a sprawling suburban town with substantial two-storey commercial buildings lining the main streets.

William Moorhouse, the Canterbury Province Superintendent, pushed for the construction of a tunnel to connect Lyttelton with Christchurch on the other side of the Port Hills, and turned the first sod of the Canterbury Railway Tunnel on a rainy day in July 1861.

The opening of the tunnel finally occurred in 1867. It proved to be a game changer for the Canterbury Province – suddenly Christchurch and all the freight and produce of the Canterbury Plains were connected directly to the port.

In John Gibb's painting a hazy veil of smoke belches from the smokestacks of ships and drifts across the township – symbolic not only of a new era in shipping but of the wealth and industry of the province, and the central role the port played in this new prosperity. The port hums with activity; ships are loaded and unloaded with produce and goods on the docks, while trains ply their way back and forth along the foreshore.

Lyttelton Harbour, N.Z., Inside the Breakwater provides a fascinating insight into the workings of the bustling harbour, but it also served to popularise ideas of Canterbury as progressive, industrious and economically successful province. In this light, it's not surprising that the painting was first shown at the 1886 *Colonial and Indian Exhibition* at the Royal Albert Hall in London, where it was intended by the artist to promote the region to an international audience. Thanks to the generosity of the Lyttelton Harbour Board, who presented the work to the Gallery, contemporary audiences continue to enjoy one of John Gibb's finest paintings.

Peter Vangioni

Right, top to bottom:
William Fox *Lyttelton, N.Z. Immigration barracks etc.* 1851, watercolour on paper. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena, University of Otago

William Fox *Camping out, Lyttelton* 1851. Pencil and watercolour on paper. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena, University of Otago

William Fox *Port Lyttelton. Immigrants luggage disembarking* 1851. Watercolour on paper. Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena, University of Otago

far right, top to bottom:
Christchurch City Libraries (CCL-PhotoCD12-IMG0024)

Lyttelton portal of the rain tunnel, 1867. Christchurch City Libraries (CCL-PhotoCD02-IMG0023)

Christchurch City Libraries (CCL-PhotoCD14-IMG0001)

Burton Brothers *Lyttelton* undated. Christchurch City Libraries (CCL-PhotoCD02-IMG0009)

Who was John Gibb?

John Gibb (1831–1909) was one of the first professional artists to settle in Christchurch, establish a studio and make a living from painting. A Scottish immigrant, Gibb arrived in Christchurch in 1876 and became a central figure in the city's arts scene. By the mid-1880s, when this work was painted, he was at the top of his game, and having established a reputation throughout New Zealand as the country's leading marine painter, his work was eagerly sought by collectors.

John Gibb in his studio, *the Weekly Press*, 12 December 1900, p.62. Christchurch City Libraries (CCL-PhotoCD07-IMG0022)

