



W. CUMMING, GARDEN 1976

# LIBRARY TREASURES

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NEW ZEALAND ART WORKS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE

CANTERBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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EXHIBITED AT THE C.S.A. GALLERY GLOUCESTER ST.

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9 FEBRUARY- 5 MARCH 1989.

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# *LIBRARY TREASURES*

NZ Art Works from the Canterbury Public Library  
C.S.A. Gallery 9th February - 5th March 1989

## Origins of the collection

The Canterbury Public Library's collection of original art works was started by Ron O'Reilly (1914-1982).

Ron O'Reilly was appointed as City Librarian in 1951 and during his period here made many innovative changes. He mechanised the circulation system, introduced a free lending service and instigated a lending collection of records and paintings.

He had a keen interest in philosophy, literature and New Zealand art and developed personal friendships with many artists including Doris Lusk, Olivia Spencer Bower, Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston. During his time in Christchurch Ron was deeply involved in the local art scene. He arranged many exhibitions in the library one such being McCahon's "The Wake" in 1959.

He liaised with other galleries in arranging the loans of paintings for other exhibitions, and for a period was art critic for the Press and picture buyer for the CSA Gallery.

In 1953 the Library started its hire service of framed art prints, a selection of 80 reproductions which was confined to works by artists of importance in the history of painting, both old and modern masters.

Shortly afterwards the Library's collection was augmented by two substantial gifts, one from the Redfern Gallery, London of 34 original lithographs by British artists and the other, 39 prints from French cultural funds.

In 1955 the City Council approved extension

of the picture loan service to include original art works by local artists. The maximum purchase price was to be 19 guineas and because of this limitation the artists were often persuaded to sell their work at reduced prices. The prospect of having one's work on such public display was also an inducement to the artist to sell at a reasonable price. By 1960, 50 originals had been acquired. The paintings were selected by Ron O'Reilly at exhibitions, galleries and by visiting the artists in their homes. The Group Shows at the Durham Street Art Gallery provided a useful opportunity for previewing selections along with Gallery 91. and the CSA .

By 1968 when Ron O'Reilly left for Wellington, the collection included 125 New Zealand original paintings. Barbara Collie, currently head cataloguer at the Library continued the tradition of attending exhibitions and visiting local artists to purchase works. In 1981 when purchasing ceased the collection consisted of 297 works.

Over the years many of the works have increased considerably in value and some are now housed at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery for reasons of security and preservation.

This exhibition is intended as a tribute to Ron O'Reilly whose insight and astuteness benefitted the New Zealand art community . It will also enable the people of Canterbury who are no longer able to borrow these works to see the collection.

## Some reminiscences about Ron O'Reilly from John Stringleman.

"A delightful experience occurred when Colin McCahon sent him a painting. I think from memory he gave it to him and Ron had it on the wall of his office. It was a little difficult to interpret but Ron interpreted it as a lake with reflection in the lake. He could explain it all quite clearly. Then he must have had second thoughts about this, because one day I went into his office and there was the painting up the other way, you see. I said to him, "Ron what's the story about this?" Oh, he said looking a bit shamefaced, I asked Colin and it's actually a kauri tree and it goes that way! Sure enough it was clearly what it was. We had a good laugh about that on plenty of occasions.

In the 60's Ron was given two years leave of absence to act as a visiting professor to a library school in Nigeria and at that stage he had never been out of New Zealand before. He had no sort of idea about what was entailed in air travel. The day came and he was leaving Christchurch to fly to Nigeria via Auckland. We took him out to the airport and as we got ready to go, he produced his luggage which apart from his hand luggage and a suitcase, consisted of two great paintings, one a McCahon and one a Woollaston. He couldn't bear to be parted from them and he dragged these all the way to Nigeria as cabin luggage. However he got them there and got them home."



Ron O'Reilly

## Exhibition catalogue

1. Angus, Rita 1908-1970  
Cape Kidnappers (ca. 1956)  
Watercolour 14½" x 22"
2. Banbury, Campbell Grant 1957-  
Window reflection 1979  
Mixed media 12" x 12"  
Shown: Brooke Gifford Gallery in own  
show 1979.
3. Bensemman, Leo Vernon 1912-1986  
Rain over Puponga 1978  
Oil on board 18" x 16"  
Shown: Brooke Gifford Gallery 1979.
4. Bracey, Edward Nicholas 1936-  
No. 1 Black May 63.  
PVA 47½" x 38½"  
Shown: Group show 1963.
5. Bracey, Edward Nicholas 1936-  
Waikato winter landscape  
PVA on paper 14½" x 20"
6. Brooke, Andre 1908-1988  
Harbour no. 2  
Oil 47" x 29½"  
Shown: Group show 1960
7. Brown, Nigel Roderick 1949  
Driveway painting no. 10. 1974  
Oil 24" x 19"  
Shown: Moller's Gallery, Auckland  
1975.
8. Chaytor, Susan  
Bush landscape, birds 1965  
Oil 35½" x 47½"  
Shown: Durham St. Art Gallery 1965.

9. Clairmont, Philip Anthony 1949-1984  
Interior of living room 1972.  
Coloured ink, dye and graphite  
21 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
10. Clark, Russell Stuart 1905-1966  
Head  
Bronze fibreglass sculpture 11" high  
Shown : Durham St. Art Gallery  
1964.
11. Coley, John 1935-  
View of Grafton Gully  
Oil 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Toured with NZ collection of paintings  
to USSR 1959.  
Shown: Group show 1961.
12. Cowan, Shona 1940-  
Still life with teapot 1963  
Oil 29" x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
13. Cumming, William Walter 1933-  
Garden 1976  
Acrylic 22" x 22"
14. Deans, Austen 1915-  
The Rangitata, sunny 1978  
Watercolour 10" x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Shown: "A family affair" C.S.A.  
1978.
15. Fife, Ivy Grace 1903-1976  
Porters Pass, West Canterbury 1965  
Watercolour 21" x 29"
16. Fleming, Rona Ngaio (Thompson)  
1901-1975  
The Drawbridge, Heathcote. 1957.  
Oil 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Shown: C.S.A. Autumn exhibition  
1958
17. Fomison, Anthony Leslie 1939-  
The Maori and the Pakeha 1963  
Diptych 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 29"
18. France, Patricia 1911-  
The Picnic 1977  
Watercolour 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
19. Geddes, Anthony Paul 1947-  
Group of trees 1971  
PVA 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Shown: C.S.A 1972
20. Gopas, Rudolph 1913- 1983  
Boat harbour 1961  
Watercolour 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 10"  
Shown: Gopas exhibition, Durham St.  
Art Gallery 1962
21. Gopas, Rudolph, 1913-1983  
Landscape  
Oil 27" x 35"  
Shown: Group show 1960
22. Gopas, Rudolph 1913-1983  
Sleeping woman 1959  
Oil 33" x 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ "  
Shown: Group show 1959
23. Gopas, Rudolph 1913-1983  
That light of the sun 1977  
Handtinted photocopy 15" x 11"
24. Graham, David Hubert 1928-1972  
Pegasus Bay 1961  
Watercolour 10" x 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
25. Hanly, Patrick 1932-  
New Order 23 Part II 1963  
Oil 43" x 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

26. Hanly, Patrick 1932-  
Showgirl and gentleman 1960  
Monotype 19" x 26"
27. Henderson, Louise 1912-  
Memory 1970  
PVA 15" x 22"  
Shown: C.S.A. at her own show.
28. Henderson, Louise 1912-  
Woman on sofa  
Coloured lithograph 13" x 18"  
Purchased: Group show
29. Hope, Esther 1885-1975  
Wintertime, Mt. Sefton  
Watercolour 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 22 $\frac{3}{8}$ "  
Shown: C.S.A. 1959
30. Lusk, Doris 1916-  
Hills from Springfield 1961  
Watercolour 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 22"  
Shown: Group show 1961
31. Lusk, Doris 1916-  
Late afternoon, Nelson Province  
Oil 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 29"
32. Lusk, Doris 1916-  
State Hydro, Tuai, Waikaremoana  
Oil 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ "
33. McCahon, Colin 1919-1987  
Kauri tree landscape  
Oil 30" x 22"
34. McCahon, Colin 1919-1987  
Red and black landscape 1959  
Solpah 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
35. MacFarlane, Quentin 1935-  
Last snow 1960  
Duco lacquer 30" x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ "  
Shown: Group show 1960
36. MacFarlane, Quentin 1935-  
Marine sketch  
PVA 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 34"  
Shown: C.S.A. 1966.
37. Mannir, Dorothy 1925-  
Interior no. 1  
Oil 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
38. Moffitt, Gilbert Trevor 1936-  
Embrace 1967  
Oil 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 14"  
Shown: Group show 1967
39. Paul, Joanna 1945-  
Bedstead 1975  
Oil 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 48"  
Shown: "Women's Art" Robert  
McDougall Art Gallery 1975.
40. Peebles, Donald 1922-  
Composition 1958  
Oil 36" x 32"  
Shown: Gallery 91 1959
41. Spencer-Bower, Olivia 1905-1982  
Beeches  
Watercolour 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 22"
42. Spencer-Bower, Olivia 1905-1982  
The dive 1958  
Watercolour 20 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 33"  
Shown: Group show 1959

43. Stoddart, Margaret 1865-1934  
Sugar Loaf, Cashmere  
Watercolour 17" x 18½"

44. Sutton, William Alexander 1917  
Three Chairs  
Oil 22¼" x 32¾"

45. Thompson, Sydney 1877-1973  
Autumn on the Avon  
Oil 8½" x 10"

46. Tole, John 1890-1967  
Landscape with eminence 1947  
Oil 14" x 16"

47. Trusttum, Philip Spencer 1940-  
Drawing  
Pen and ink with wash 9½" x 8½"

48. Trusttum, Philip Spencer 1940-  
Interior 1973  
Oil on hardboard 24" x 24½"

49. Warr, Malcolm 1939-  
Karaka 1965  
Oil 24" x 21"  
Shown: Group show 1965

50. Weeks, John 1888-1965  
Still Life 1956  
Oil 11½" x 9¾"

51. Woollaston, Mountford Toss will  
1910-  
Apparition of a man 1964  
Watercolour 15" x 12"

52. Woollaston, Mountford Toss will  
Hokitika River 1957  
Oil 17¼" x 22⅝"

53. Woollaston, Mountford Toss will  
Two white chairs  
Oil 22¾" x 17⅝"

Convenor: Jill Richardson

Research: Anne Drent

Paul Sutherland

Cover and poster design:

Simon Coley

Thanks to the staff of the Robert McDougall  
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in mounting this exhibition.



Woollaston, M. Apparition of a man, 1964.



Gopas, R. Boat harbour, 1961.