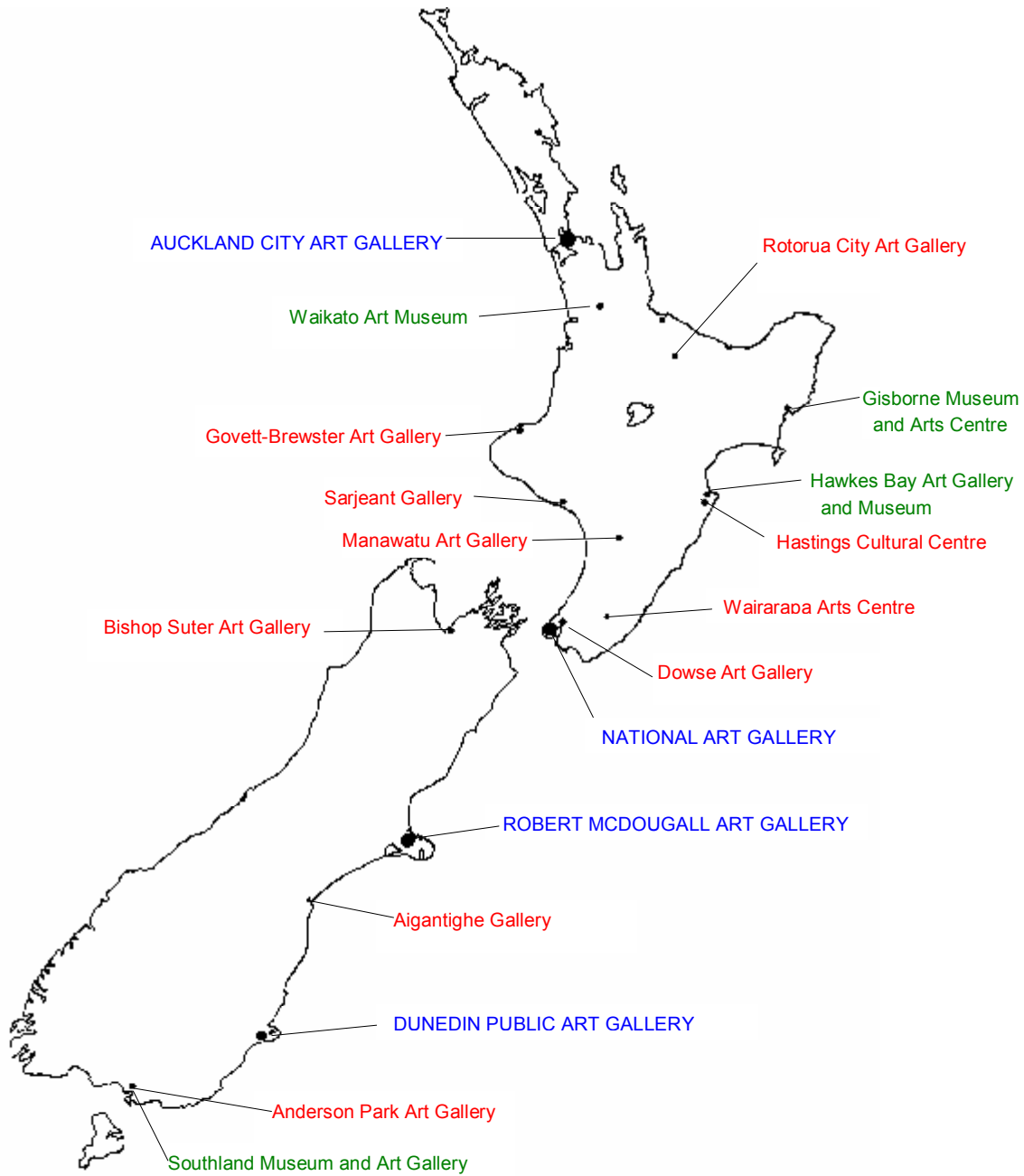


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New Zealand Public Galleries as at 1979



Blue = Metropolitan Galleries
Red = Provincial Art Galleries
Green = Combined Museums and Art Galleries

Going Public

**New Zealand Art Museums
in the 1970s**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Museum Studies at Massey University

Athol McCredie

1999

reprinted 2006 with corrections

Abstract

This thesis examines the reputation the 1970s have as a renaissance era for New Zealand public art galleries.

It does this by considering the formation and development of galleries in the period as well as their approaches. Public and community involvement, energy, innovation, activism, and engagement with contemporary New Zealand art are key areas of approach investigated since increases in each are associated with galleries in the seventies.

The notion of a renaissance is also particularly associated with provincial galleries. In order to examine this idea in detail three “provincial” galleries are taken as case studies. They are the (then named) Dowse Art Gallery, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and Manawatu Art Gallery.

The seventies are revealed as a “culture change” era for public art galleries in New Zealand. New ones were founded, many were rebuilt or substantially altered, and there was a shift from the rule of the amateur to that of the professional. The majority of existing galleries went from being static institutions with few staff, neglected collections, and unchanging exhibitions, to become much more publicly oriented and professionally run operations. Moreover, while change occurred across nearly all institutions, it tended to be led from the provinces.

Several reasons are suggested for the forward-looking nature of the three case study galleries. One is that they reflected the energy and flexibility that goes with new, small organisations. Another is that all three existed in cities with little appreciation of art and culture and so had to strenuously prove themselves to gain community acceptance and civic support.

Other galleries, particularly the metropolitans, are shown to have followed the lead of the progressive focus institutions. Influencing factors on changes in all New Zealand galleries are therefore also sought. They include the growth in new, well educated, sophisticated, and internationally-aware audiences; greater production and public awareness of New Zealand art; interest in exploring a New Zealand identity; world-wide revolutionary social changes in the ‘60s and ‘70s; and increased government funding for building projects.

The changes that took place in New Zealand art galleries in the 1970s are shown to sit within the wider contexts of increasing trends towards public orientation by museums internationally, both before and during the decade, and in New Zealand since the seventies. However, the very notion of public orientation is also suggested to be historically relative and, ultimately, politically driven.

Preface

This thesis is a project that grew beyond all expectation. One of the reasons for its length follows from the paucity of published information on art galleries and their contexts in the nineteen seventies. I had to start from scratch in uncovering information from many primary sources as well as pulling together scattered facts in published material. It seemed worthwhile to present a good deal of this material not only in order to argue my thesis but also to provide a record others could use.

Even the unpublished records were not always abundant and I would like to make a plea here for better record keeping by galleries and their archive repositories. Several times in during my research I found individuals with better records of institutions than they had themselves. It was not necessarily that records were not well kept in the first instance, but rather a case of poor subsequent care. If nothing else, care of archive material is a gesture of respect for the efforts of those who came before.

This printing of the thesis includes corrections for typographic errors, as well as occasional tidying up of wording for clarity. No updating of content has been made. However, given that the names of many institutions today have altered since the thesis was written, a table of name changes (*fig 10.1*) has been added for present-day readers new to the field.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those people who agreed to be interviewed or answer questions, as well as those who read over sections of the text and made suggestions. They include David Aitken, Jim Barr, Dick Bett, Luit Bieringa, Terry Boon, Don and Joyce Driver, Elisabeth Harper, Omer and Don Hooker, Tom Kreisler, Barbara Maré, John Matthews, Bob Maysmor, John Maynard, Bill Milbank, David Millar, Priscilla Pitts, Margaret and David Taylor, and Professor Keith Thomson. Special thanks must go to Gordon H. Brown, not only for his fact finding efforts which went far beyond what I hoped or expected, but also for his path-finding research and writing on the social history of New Zealand art in the decades preceding the seventies. I have followed his steps on numerous occasions.

There are many others who have answered questions here and there. Thank you too for your co-operation.

Further special thanks must go to my supervisor David Butts, and to Dame Cheryl Sotheran, who both gave me encouragement and undertook the daunting task of reading many pages of material and making numerous helpful suggestions.

Finally, thank you to Janet, Lillian and Elena, who suffered so much of my time away from family life while I researched and wrote this.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This thesis investigates the development of New Zealand public art galleries in the 1970s, focusing primarily on the formation and growth of provincial galleries. The 1970s and early '80s were a boom period in New Zealand art gallery (and museum)¹ development: of twenty-eight public galleries in New Zealand today, forty percent were either formed or underwent major changes between 1970 and 1979.² By taking the position as it was in 1980, and broadening the decade to include both this year and 1969, the case is even more striking: seventy percent of the galleries existing in that year were either formed or revitalised over the period. And most of this activity took place in the smaller centres.

These boom times were also a watershed, for they mark the beginning of the current period in public gallery outlook. Prior to this, most New Zealand art galleries followed the “temple on a hill” model where collections of generally mediocre paintings were more or less permanently displayed (*fig 1.1*). Wanganui’s Sarjeant Gallery, literally positioned in a neo-classical building on a hill overlooking the city, was the perfect example (*fig 3.9*). After the Second World War there was a gradual change, led mainly by the professionalising of the Auckland City Art Gallery, in which touring exhibitions began circulating, contemporary New Zealand art was more often seen, and a few new galleries were formed in smaller centres. But the 1970s were the time when this gradual revitalisation became an epidemic, and new art galleries began appearing everywhere while older ones physically rebuilt and/or reoriented their approach.

“Going public” was the signature tune of the new approach. This thesis asserts that public orientation was the defining quality characterising New Zealand galleries in the

¹ The term “art gallery” rather than “art museum” or just “museum” is generally used in this thesis in order to follow common New Zealand usage, especially that of the seventies, and also when an art gallery rather than another type of museum is specifically meant. However, for conciseness, the word “museum” is sometimes used to cover all types – the context should make it clear which is intended.

In the absence of better terms, “small gallery” or “provincial gallery” are used synonymously throughout to refer to non-metropolitan galleries, despite the fact that their size was not consistent and one of them, the Dowse, was not a provincial gallery.

Titles of art galleries given are those as used at the time under discussion.

² The numbers depend on how a public gallery is defined. Public art galleries are here taken to be organisations which are non-profit, have paid staff, serve the public, and have continuous displays of visual arts, as well as being of some substance either by virtue of longevity, number of staff, or level of funding. See *fig 1.2* for a table of these institutions and their founding dates.

Evolutionary Phases of NZ Public Galleries

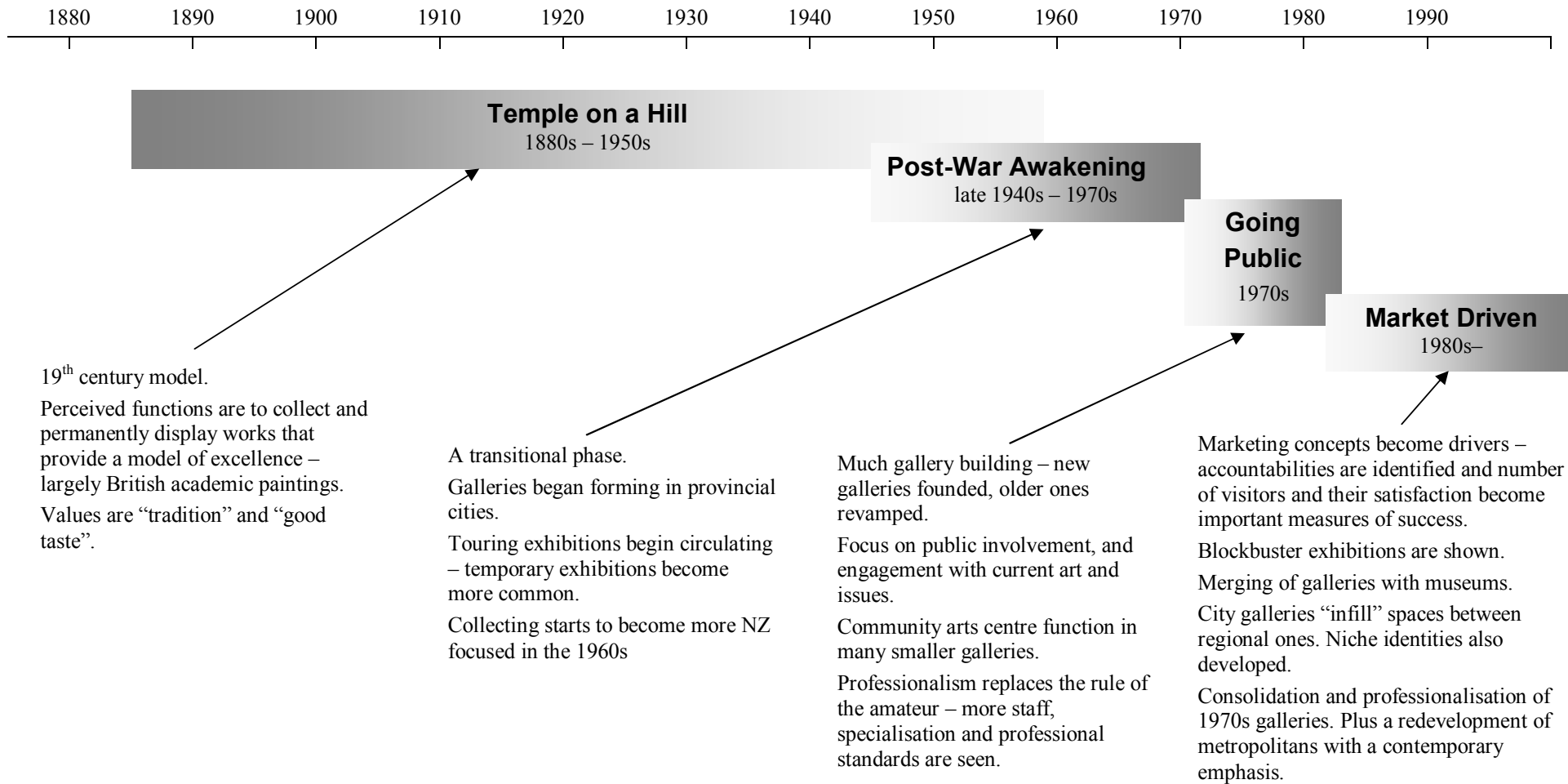


Fig 1.1

seventies and which marked them off from earlier times, placing them in the current era of museum development. A shift from the rule of the amateur to that of the professional, as art and gallery societies, honorary curators, and city council committees yielded control to the first paid directors and staff, also makes this period pivotal. Accompanying these developments was a greatly increased interest in contemporary New Zealand art by galleries, and (especially in provincial institutions), a high degree of activism and energy in pursuit of the public.

The source of these claims is partly personal observation in the 1970s but mainly comes from received opinion. Such opinion is widespread amongst older members of the New Zealand art and museum communities. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to test long-standing perceptions, to see how well the reputations for energy, activism, public involvement, and engagement with contemporary art were founded.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to pin down these perceptions to particular utterances by particular people, making it harder to compare opinion against “what really happened”. But then it is also in the nature of reputations to be diffuse, to form themselves into mythologies. Nevertheless, there are a handful of illustrations in print which, while not substantial enough to use as a starting point in themselves, still provide some evidence of widely held views.

David Millar, for example, said in 1972 that “The art gallery movement of this country is going through an unparalleled renaissance. Public support is snowballing, morale is high and professionalism has become its hallmark”.³ Writing a year later, Michael Dunn located this new energy in the provinces with an article headlined “Smaller Centres Show the Way” in which he described the high quality of exhibitions he had seen in the regions.⁴ Tony Fomison echoed this view in 1979 when he stated, “Once it was the four main centres, they were the main patrons. But now it’s the new centres, their galleries building up from scratch, who are often taking the initiative”.⁵ In 1981, in his book on New Zealand museums, Keith Thomson offered the best summary when he referred to “the younger, dynamic provincial galleries like those in New Plymouth, Palmerston North and Lower Hutt, whose policies have earned them the reputation of being *enfants terribles* of the museum world”.⁶ Schulz defined this further when he said that the new art galleries confronted a “troubled and uncomprehending public...with the uncompromising experience of contemporary art”.⁷

On individual galleries, Peter Cape wrote in 1974 that the Dowse had established a reputation for drive and imagination in a very short time.⁸ Five years later, art critic

³ Millar, “Director of Dowse Art Gallery”, p. 12.

⁴ Michael Dunn, “Art with Michael Dunn: Smaller Centres Show the Way”, *The Sunday Herald*, 2 September, 1973.

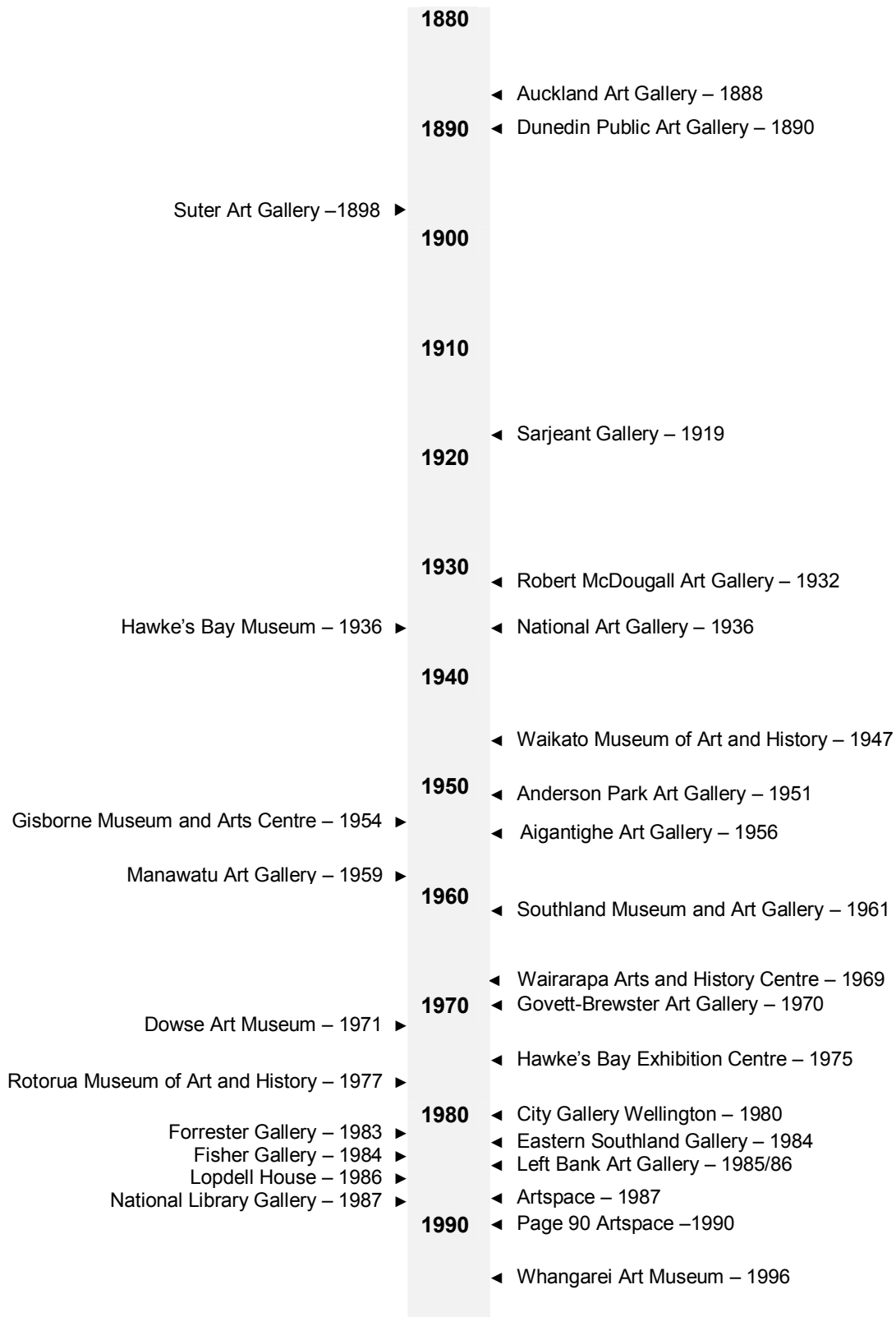
⁵ Tony Fomison, *Tony Fomison: a Survey of his Paintings and Drawings from 1961 to 1979*, (Lower Hutt, Dowse Art Gallery, 1972), p. 1.

⁶ Thomson. *Art Galleries and Museums of New Zealand*, p. 8.

⁷ Schulz, “The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery”, p. 51.

⁸ Peter Cape, “Gallery Profile”, *Arts and Community* 11, no. 1 (1974): p. 1.

Timeline of Gallery Formation



Note: Galleries listed by current names (except for the National Art Gallery, which became absorbed into Te Papa). Where gallery merged with a museum, dates are for the gallery founding.

Fig 1.2

Timeline of 1970s Gallery Development

New Institutions	Year	Re-Vitalisation
Wairarapa Arts Centre	1969	
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery	1970	First paid director Gisborne Museum & Arts Centre First paid director Waikato Art Gallery
Dowse Art Gallery	1971	
	1972	
Waikato Art Museum (created from merger of gallery & museum)	1973	
	1974	First paid director Sarjeant Gallery
Hastings Cultural Centre	1975	First paid director Bishop Suter Art Gallery
	1976	
Rotorua City Art Gallery	1977	New building Gisborne Museum & Arts Centre New building Manawatu Art Gallery
	1978	
	1979	New building Bishop Suter Art Gallery
Wellington City Art Gallery	1980	

Fig 1.3

Neil Rowe claimed it as the “country’s most energetic and successful civic art gallery.”⁹ Of the Govett-Brewster, Rowe wrote in 1979 that “Other galleries, not least the major ones, could well take a leaf from the Govett-Brewster’s book”.¹⁰ Thomson summarised its status as “clearly a powerful force in the mainstream of the nation’s art galleries” and described the Manawatu Art Gallery as “one of the six or seven most important galleries in New Zealand”.¹¹

The thesis seeks, then, to establish the extent and nature of:

1. The 1970s as a quantum leap period for founding, development, renewal and professionalising of New Zealand art galleries.
2. The trend towards public orientation and community involvement in New Zealand galleries in the 1970s, especially at the smaller galleries.
3. The related energy, innovation, activism and controversy in the smaller galleries.
4. The increased engagement with contemporary art by New Zealand galleries.

To explore these hypotheses the Dowse, Manawatu, and Govett-Brewster art galleries are taken as case studies, since they were the institutions that probably built the strongest reputations for small galleries in the 1970s.¹²

While the core of this thesis concentrates on exploring the above points, a good deal of space is also applied to the changed contexts and expectations of the period – the causes, in other words, of these developments.¹³ These causes will be sought in:

- Overseas developments in museums.
- Growth of potential audiences – especially as a result of higher levels of education, greater sophistication and a heightened interest in New Zealand identity post-1945.
- Art trends in the 1960s – new forms of art, as well as a growth in NZ art infrastructure, such as dealer galleries and NZ art publications.
- Social, political, cultural trends in general in the 1970s, especially social and political activism.

⁹ Jim knows how to draw crowds, *Evening Post*, 23 June 1979.

¹⁰ Neil Rowe, “Arts: Ten Turbulent Years”, *Listener* (17 February 1979).

¹¹ *Art Galleries and Museums in New Zealand*, p. 27, 37.

¹² Other institutions might reasonably have been substituted for, or added to, the three. Both the Sarjeant Gallery and the Waikato Art Museum are possible candidates, but as chapter four will make clear, both were encumbered in ways which prevented them being quite as activist. Other galleries were either smaller and more locally focused (Wairarapa Arts Centre) or were founded/revitalised later in the seventies (Hastings Cultural Centre, Suter Art Gallery, and Rotorua City Art Gallery). Also, while the Manawatu Art Gallery had begun creating a reputation in the 1960s it was really during the seventies when this became fully established.

¹³ Tracing causality in historical enterprises is fraught with difficulties: how far back do you go? How wide do you cast the net? What sort of causal explanations (theoretical frameworks) are acceptable? How much do causes exist contemporaneously versus historically? (Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, pp. 116–7.) Ultimately it comes down to speculation, but hopefully speculation that is compelling and coherent – that is, convincing – within its narrative construct.

- Civic environments – civic willingness to support galleries/museums in “growth” cities, and community support.
- Central government support environment – the QEII Arts Council and Department of Internal Affairs.
- Professional infrastructure – growth of mutual support amongst galleries via AGMANZ and NZAGDC in particular, and the effects of this support.
- The entrepreneurial nature of the new galleries being a function of their newness, drive to establish themselves, lack of precedent and controls, and small size.

Outlining these influences will show how each gallery in New Zealand had similar contexts in common but developed according to its own particular history and local situation.

Key Concepts

The meaning of some of the descriptions (such as energy and innovation) applied to art galleries in the above four points will become clearer as the thesis unfolds. Other terms used, like activism, community, and public orientation, are worth expanding on here, however.

Activism

Activism means taking direct action to achieve a political or social end. In the context of this thesis it is considered as actively seeking to change people’s views about art, their experience, and thereby the world. The notion that art could be “improving” for viewers has long been a driver for public galleries but it implies a passive “viewing” experience. Thinking of art as transformatory implies instead an active engagement with art. This might occur by visitors actually creating work, perhaps in a workshop situation, or by stepping into an installation requiring an audience presence or involvement to give it meaning. It might also happen through a gallery showing provocative or confrontational work, or work with direct relevance to the lives of visitors. Audience involvement and engagement, then, are closely associated with activism.

The Public and the Community

Other ways of describing this drive to become more actively engaged with the public is to talk about being outwardly focused and publicly or community oriented. What is, then, “the public”, or “the community”? The public is usually defined as the broadest possible group of people, the people as a whole. A community is *a* public, a group of people bound together by locality, culture, religion, or other common interest. Marketing theory today conceives of publics, segments of the general public who can be

targeted on the basis of common interests and attributes, but these are not necessarily the same as communities, people who perceive themselves as a group.

Community orientation often implies a two-way interaction, a responsiveness to the wishes and needs of the community. Such interaction and involvement is naturally easier for museums in smaller towns where communities are smaller and fewer in number. Indeed the public and the community can be equivalent. It is therefore unfair to condemn larger museums for not being community oriented, though such institutions may well, as Bennett points out, fashion the public into communities (like friends organisations) which they can then deal with and serve.¹⁴ Bennett also cautions against the commonplace valorisation of community involvement. He suggests that it is entirely more natural and appropriate for the large museum, like the state, to operate in the “realm of formal, abstract and instrumental relationships,” to deal with the “more abstracted and alienated entities of audiences, publics or citizens,” than to be deeply involved with communities.¹⁵

Public Orientation

To be more outwardly oriented means putting the wider public ahead of smaller groups, the more private interests. A 1970s example is the difference between an art society gallery, where exhibitions primarily served the needs of its members, and a public gallery, where work was chosen on the basis of quality for the benefit of the general public.

A public orientation also implies actively reaching out to engage the widest range of people. The commonplace view that galleries and museums were less outwardly oriented in earlier times is expressed by Harris when he says that (U.S.) museums up until the 1960s simply put on exhibitions and, while perhaps publicising them, largely waited passively for people to come and see what was offered.¹⁶ It was a case of “this is what we produce, take it or leave it”, Harris claims, rather than going out and finding what different audiences wanted and giving it to them.¹⁷

Contemporary Art

The claim of increased engagement with contemporary art is made as the fourth hypothesis. Engagement here means exhibiting, collecting, and commissioning it more.

¹⁴ Bennett, “Museums and their Constituencies”, pp. 15–23.

¹⁵ “Museums and their Constituencies”, p. 15.

¹⁶ Harris, “Polling for Opinions”, pp. 46–53.

¹⁷ Suggestions of changed audiences throughout this thesis are based only on the well-recognised changes in New Zealand society and the evidence of changed audience address in many galleries. There appears to be no useful information on actual visitation in the 1970s. Keith Thomson mentions carrying out a survey in 1978 but currently, at least, the whereabouts of the raw data or detailed interpretation, if it still exists, is unknown (*Art Galleries and Museums of New Zealand*, p. 13). A survey of Govett-Brewster Art Gallery audiences was carried out by student Diana Wynyard in 1971 but its usefulness is fairly limited.

It also implies an active relationship of encouraging artists and promoting contemporary art to the public. Some of the larger galleries showed touring exhibitions of contemporary art in the 1950s and sixties, particularly of overseas work, but this was a more passive relationship compared with the activities of provincial directors in the 1970s who often visited artists' studios, battled city councillors and governing bodies to acquire contemporary work, and wrote publications about it. Contemporary art here includes crafts, other media like photography and fibre arts which had rarely been seen before in public galleries, the new post-object art, and novel forms of expression in all media, both New Zealand and overseas. It also is taken to mean art which reflects or addresses the issues of its time, rather than simply art made in the present, for the latter can include work made in the style of an earlier period.

Professionalising

Another term used in the four hypotheses is the “professionalising” of art galleries. The word professional can have many meanings. It can describe a person who does something as a full-time paid job; an occupation requiring an advanced education or training; and the activity of maintaining appropriate standards. All of these senses are intended here. For some galleries the 1970s represented a time when paid staff were employed for the first time. For others it marked increased specialisation in positions. Many galleries developed written policies where before there had been only vague assumptions and understandings, and probably most established or increased standards of practice in such areas as collection management.

Interpretive Framework

Sitting behind much of the writing in this thesis are two schemas, or interpretive frameworks. One, the evolutionary phases of New Zealand public galleries (*fig 1.1*), has already been presented and represents the basic proposition of the thesis. But to explore this proposition requires an understanding of how art galleries are structured and how they work. That is, not only how they operate on a day-to-day basis but also how they function – in the sense of the influences on them and the effects galleries in turn have. An attempt has been made to articulate these functional dimensions in *fig 1.4*.

This schema is not explicitly worked through in the text but nevertheless stands behind the topics explored in each of the case studies and elsewhere. Each of the case studies, for example, is generally arranged first by inputs (origins, structure, relationships) and then outputs (exhibitions, events, collecting), with particular focus on the emphases and approaches to these outputs. Outcomes are touched on but are a lesser area of concern. The schema is based on the now well-familiar economic model of inputs, outputs and outcomes. However, it is expanded from the version typically used by New Zealand local and central government which tends to be inputs and outputs

oriented, with outcomes not always well developed, quality subsumed to quantity, and the whole often limited to a short term (annual) perspective. In the schema here the inputs are not just funding level, and the assets of staff, building and plant, but also include the nature of the funder, the qualities the staff bring to the institution, its history, governance structure, and networks of support. (The latter are less often acknowledged as making significant contributions yet directors today are selected as much for their ability to create support networks as for management ability.) The outputs listed are the familiar ones of exhibitions, public programmes, collection and sometimes research¹⁸ but it is the quality and approaches to these which give an institution its real flavour and characterise its nature and reputation. They are listed here as opposing pairs to suggest a spectrum of possibilities.

These emphases and approaches in turn produce the outcomes, the sort of contributions to a community often used as arguments for the founding of art galleries. Some of these may sit on a spectrum also, including those not listed together. The type of gallery mainly valued as a recreational and community facility, for example, is not so likely to offer prestige value to a city (though it may do). This particular contrast reflects the difference between a museum serving as a symbol and as a facility. As a symbol it can add to the sense of identity and prestige for the area it serves. As a place that is used it can create a community informed about its own cultural heritage and that of the wider world – a community that is culturally enriched.

Another pair, “Sense of social identity” and “Reinforced social distinction”, are listed one after the other. People may gain a sense of social identity from a museum by mixing with like-minded individuals. But group identity is exclusive as well as inclusive and so a museum may also function to support social distinctions.

There is a geographic dimension to the outcomes, following from the question of “Focus” (Emphasis and Approaches box). This may be civic, regional, national, or international. Ongoing relationships formed with artists, collectors, donors, teachers, sponsors, other institutions, etc. may operate at any of these levels.

There is a basic causal progression from top to bottom in the schema, but ultimately it is a feedback system since perceived (present and potential) outcomes enable the inputs. More direct loops also occur: “New Relationships”, in the Outcomes box, which include community and other constituency relationships, are also an input (as “Support networks”). Likewise with the “Collection” – it is an entity created in the Outputs box, but is also a resource to draw on for exhibitions, say, under Inputs. And positively perceived outcomes will increase the chance of a good funding level, an input.

Thesis Structure

The remainder of this introduction outlines some historiographic issues in writing the thesis as well as its rationale. Chapter two then reviews the museological context

¹⁸ Usually manifested as exhibition catalogues in New Zealand art galleries.

The Dimensions of an Art Museum

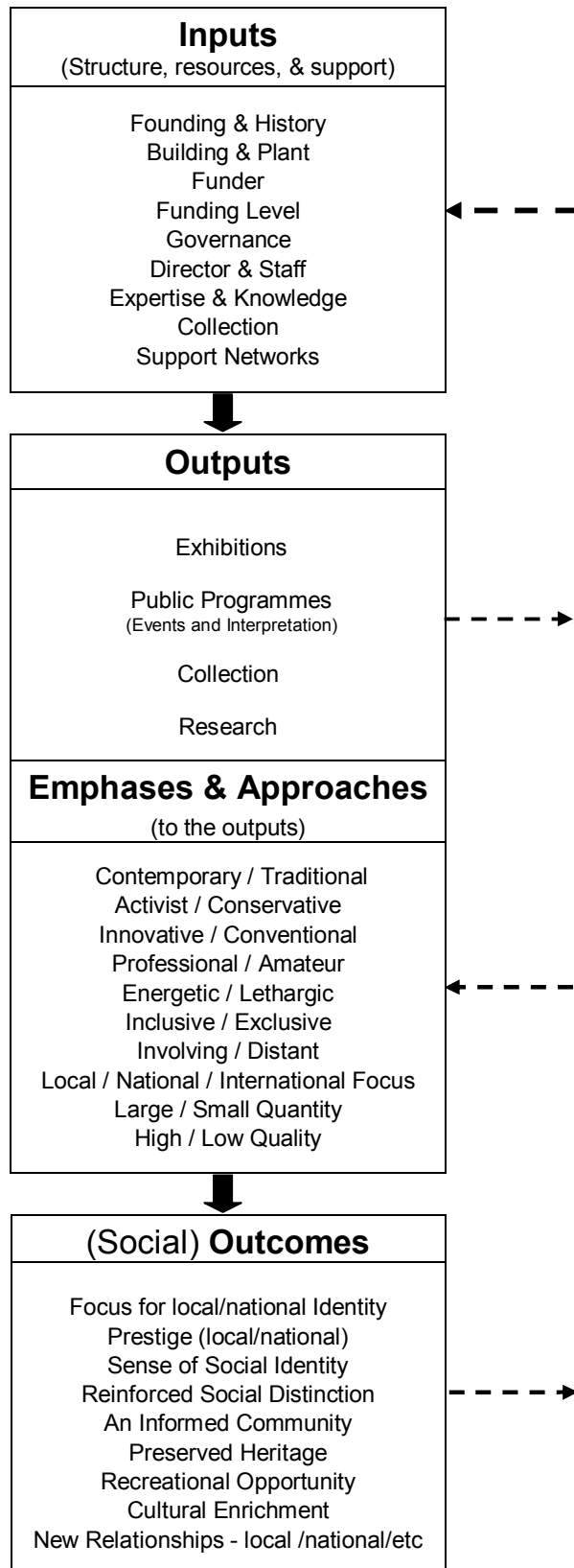


Fig 1.4

internationally. Chapter three deals with the New Zealand historical context for galleries in the seventies. It looks at relevant social and cultural trends, the growing arts infrastructure, artistic concerns, and the state of development in public galleries – all prior to the 1970s. Chapter four covers similar ground, only shifting to the seventies and outlines the changes which occurred in response to the previous decades. The following three chapters (five, six, seven) move from this contextualising discussion to explore the thesis issues in relation to the Dowse, Govett-Brewster and Manawatu art galleries. Chapter eight then provides an analysis, pulling together the foregoing in order to both judge whether the hypotheses outlined above can be sustained and to develop some explanations for public gallery developments in the seventies. This is followed by the brief summarising and broadly contextualising conclusion of chapter nine.

Writing History

This thesis is essentially an historical enterprise. As such, there are both practical and theoretical historiographic issues worth making explicit here since they impact on its nature.

Limitations of Scope and Sources

The thesis naturally has bounds to its coverage. The needs of narrative are one influence on its shape. For example, we tend to divide the past up into arbitrary periods delimited by round numbers – the 19th century, the 1920s, and . . . the 1970s. The thesis could have taken 1965–1980 as its period of study, as this would have included a few more developments in the late sixties as well as the founding of the Wellington City Art Gallery in 1980. But sacrificing the notion of the 1970s as a convenient and tidy narrative device just to include more of the same did not seem productive, especially when the years either side were not unequivocally uniform with the seventies.

Another issue with time is that of comparison. One way of highlighting the characteristics of a period is to compare it with another. However, such an approach seemed simply too ambitious for this thesis, especially given that so few secondary sources exist. The formative 1950s and ‘60s have been examined but the 1980s and ‘90s that followed are only lightly sketched and must remain largely implicit comparisons.

Gallery collecting and back-of-house matters have been deliberately played down in favour of public activities. This has demanded a conscious effort, as collecting, building projects, and finances are the areas of museum operation where there are usually ample records. Also resisted has been the tradition that historical accounts of museums are written as histories of their collections and buildings. Where these things are covered it is to show the public response to gallery activities (such as the controversies sparked by certain acquisitions, or the level of support for building projects).

Given the lack of any significant visitor surveys, indications of public response and support have also been sought in such places as friends organisations, art societies, governing boards, city councils, and the press. While the support of these organisations was essential for the founding and continued operation of the galleries, it is difficult to say to what extent they represented the view of the population in general – most people, as today, were probably simply indifferent.

The thesis is inevitably limited by the availability and nature of its sources. For example, there is a surprising paucity of interpretive writing of any sort on the 1970s. That which exists is almost entirely limited to politics. New Zealand coverage is found only in very brief chapters in general histories of this country.¹⁹ Where the market is well supplied with books on popular culture and style of the fifties and sixties, there is very little on the seventies²⁰ and certainly nothing on New Zealand during the decade. New Zealand art writing also has very little to say about the 1970s as a period²¹ and there are few gallery histories.

The primary sources do not always fill the gap. Archival records held by museums themselves are often incomplete. No public gallery in New Zealand would appear to have anything approaching an accurate list of its own exhibitions in the 1970s, for example. Of the three focus galleries, archival material was plentiful for the Manawatu and Govett-Brewster art galleries but sparse for the Dowse and not very accessible for the Govett-Brewster. (Though prior research had already been undertaken for this gallery both by the former registrar Barbara Maré and former director Dick Bett, particularly on its earliest years.)

The records drawn on are also all shaped by their purposes at the time. Director's reports, for example, are conditioned by what the directors wanted their controlling authorities to hear – or not hear, as the case may be. The minutes of these committee and board meetings in turn are written with an eye to their status as public or semi-public records. Decisions taken are carefully recorded, the discussion or disagreements behind them less often so. In a similar fashion, newspaper reporting is determined by the need to sell newspapers. The stories published are those thought to be of (often prurient) interest to the public and so the cumulative history of a gallery as told by a newspaper often has a recurring theme of trouble and strife.

Interviews with former gallery directors have been used as one way of filling the gaps in the record but the time-consuming nature of this process meant only a handful of people were interviewed (and even then two Govett-Brewster directors were not included: Bob Ballard was uncontactable and Ron O'Reilly is no longer alive).

¹⁹ Such chapters are found in Barber, *New Zealand: A Short History*; Brooking and Enright, *Milestones*; King, *After the War*; Rice, *The Oxford History of New Zealand*; Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*.

²⁰ An exception is Kennedy's rather droll and personal analysis of American culture in the 1970s (*Platforms: A Microwaved Cultural Chronicle of the 1970s*).

²¹ Barton's thesis on post-object art in New Zealand is the major contribution to understanding art developments in the 1970s here, if only one aspect of them (Barton, *Post-object Art in New Zealand 1969–1979*).

Directors were chosen mainly because they had the broadest overview of what was going on. However, different perspectives could have been gained by interviewing staff, artists, dealers, critics, and city councillors, as well as directors or staff from the four main galleries, and gallery visitors. Undoubtedly this would have enriched the thesis and diminished the risk of it being another example of history as the story of the winners, but it would also have made it into a much larger project.

Oral histories are not a complete answer however, for they carry their own limitations. They are not raw recollection but created with the advantages of hindsight. Memory is something constructed; we compose our memories to make sense of both our past and present lives. Life stories typically recall the past as “the good old days”, a sort of reverse of the present, when everyone was on closer terms, and difficulties are either forgotten or enlarged as heroic issues (“young guns” versus “old fogies”, for example).²² Great play is also often made of larger than life “characters” and of challenging authority. These are all devices of narrative, or for that matter, qualities of myths. Readers may wish to consider these issues in relation to the interview extracts in this thesis.

Theoretical Issues

*The historic work is a verbal artifact, a narrative prose discourse, the content of which is as much invented – or as much imagined – as found.*²³

Most historians today accept that “there is not just one story and one [historical] truth; but countless stories and their truths cannot be assessed in terms of their correspondence to what actually happened, for the simple reason that nothing identifiable happened, over and above the stories that are and were told”.²⁴ That is, although we can reasonably assume the past did exist, our only knowledge of it is through its traces, the fragmentary “accounts” that are left. These traces are already histories (i.e. texts), for they are authored and hence tendentious (serve a purpose). In writing history, then, all one has to go on are other histories, a whole web of existing interpretations. One might describe a hierarchy of primary and secondary source material, but the former is still never raw, uninterpreted, neutral fact. “There is nothing outside of the text”.²⁵

This exposes history as simply a literary form – an “inscription on the past rather than a reflection of it”.²⁶ As such, histories can be either analysis or narrative (and are usually a bit of both) but in some sense and at some level they can all be seen as narratives. Stories are a natural way of making sense of inchoate facts – witness the way museum exhibitions so often use stories. The problems with narratives, however, are

²² Samuel and Thompson, *The Myths We Live By*, p. 1–21.

²³ Hayden White, paraphrased by Jenkins (*On “What is History?”*, p. 19).

²⁴ Munz, “The Two Worlds of Anne Salmond in Postmodern Fancy-Dress”, p. 60.

²⁵ Derrida quoted in Keith Jenkins, *On “What is History?”*, p. 18.

²⁶ Samuel in Jenkins, *On “What is History?”*, p. 36 .

those of closure and the logic of the text. Events may be singled out for attention to give order and progression to the plot, time may be divided into tidy but otherwise arbitrary periods, and literary form (romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire in classical terms) can dominate.²⁷

If the past lacks an independent reality awaiting discovery and description but is already written in various versions according to the needs of their moments then where does the “truth value” of history lie? According to Stanford, the measure of good histories is their consistency or coherence, both internally and externally.²⁸ So while it may not be possible to know “what happened” in the past, to absolutely prove or disprove the assertions of this thesis, it is possible to construct evidence for them which is internally coherent and which coheres with other histories, such as the reader’s knowledge and other accounts on related subjects (recent museum histories, New Zealand history, museological trends). This can be done by comparing the stories in the media, the official records, the writings by personnel at the time, and their recollections today; and from the pictures so built up of particular galleries to then compare between these institutions, both within and across time periods. In doing so, a broader coherence can be synthesised than currently exists. This may involve the closures that tend to accompany narrative literary constructions. But it can also make for a convincing story of a period in the recent past which might appeal to the interests and needs of this point in time and which could illuminate the New Zealand museological present with a broader perspective. Judgements of worth on this enterprise may be passed on whether it is helpful (has a use as a guide to action), interesting (appears to explain some things), or convincing (in its analysis, arguments and narratives).

Use Value

Whether this work is interesting or convincing is for the reader to decide. Some of the ways it could be helpful or have a use value are worth pointing to, however, if for no other reason than that they have been motivating (and hence shaping) forces in its creation.

²⁷ Samuel in Jenkins, *On “What is History?”*, p. 36.

Though whether this is a “distortion” of the past is open to debate. The common sense view, expressed by Hayden White, is that narratives stand apart from their subject (Stanford, *A Companion to the Study of History*, pp. 97–8). White says they derive their plausibility from consensus agreement about the real events of the past but that they still remain verbal fictions, since there is no story in the past itself. However, David Carr claims we think about and experience life in general as stories (Stanford pp. 100–1). Telling ourselves the stories of our lives is what constitutes our sense of self, both as individuals and as groups. Carr is not just talking about recollecting the past, but about how we order and make sense of our experience on a daily basis. From this point of view then, experience itself has the qualities of a text.

²⁸ *A Companion to the Study of History*, pp. 131, 279.

An often-stated use of history is as a guide for action.²⁹ Before making decisions we frequently need to ask: Where are we now? How did we get here? Where are we going? What factors are relevant to our chances of getting there? A work of history can help answer questions like these.

Such questions might be asked about the public focus of galleries and museums – a pressing issue today. This thesis may help by clarifying what the notion of public orientation meant in the recent past. The issue is not a new one, though each generation may think it is. What differs subtly for each period is how it is understood and the solutions practised. Understanding these differences could lead to more focused thinking in the present and future.

Knowing about past practices helps save reinventing the wheel. It is easy to forget that previous generations grappled with some of the same questions present today. By reclaiming something of the past, this thesis may serve both to give credit to those active in galleries of the 1970s and to show that what seems innovative today was often thought of 20 or more years ago. Comments about art practice by Rodney Kirk Smith, director for many years of the Auckland dealer gallery RKS Art, seem equally pertinent to a range of areas in public galleries:

I think there's a lot of forgetting done. One hears comments from the more recent generation which show either sublime ignorance or astounding memory loss. I guess it's the old saying that the only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. I think of what happened twenty or thirty years ago, the kind of exhibitions we had here – environmental works, installations, electronic works, neon pieces, the whole thing – back in the sixties. When it happens now, people think it's amazing, and ask why haven't they seen this before!³⁰

Staff turnover has meant that New Zealand museums also seem to have forgotten a good deal of their individual, and more particularly, collective pasts. Without a clear picture of the past it can be difficult to form a clear vision of the future.

Understanding the past as a guide to action is also relevant when considering the forces driving art museums. Some of these influences may have changed since the 1970s but many also remain the same and the benefits of hindsight can produce a clearer picture of them, helping to unravel the relationships that exist within the dimensions of an art museum – the smaller art museum in particular. There is remarkably little writing in the museological literature on smaller art museums, despite the fact that both here and in many other countries they greatly overwhelm in number

²⁹ *A Companion to the Study of History*, p. 38.

³⁰ Dart, "Rodney Kirk Smith: 25 Years With Art", p. 50.

Tony Green makes a similar point when he says "There is widespread ignorance or forgetfulness about how we have got to where we are in installational and performance activity" ("Making Space", *Log Illustrated* 4, [winter 1998]: p. 5). He lays the blame for this state of affairs on the lack of publications in the area.

the large, well known institutions.³¹ There seems an assumption that smaller museums are just scaled down versions of larger ones, but this is not always true.

Just as this thesis contributes to the literature on the nature of small museums in general, it also adds to the scant body of knowledge on the history of New Zealand museums. There are few published or unpublished histories on our museums, and certainly no in-depth coverage of recent histories of art galleries. Histories of the Auckland, Dunedin Public and Robert McDougall Art Gallery each concentrate mainly on collecting, though the recently published history of the Hawke's Bay Museum is more balanced.³² Keith Thomson's 1981 *Art Galleries and Museums in New Zealand*, while containing much useful historical information, was mainly intended to promote all New Zealand museums. It is consequently aimed at a broad audience and is necessarily generalised in its statements, judgements and summaries. What this thesis offers is a high level of detail drawn from diverse sources. As noted in the preface, such a volume of information is required as a foundation in order to make observations on seventies art galleries in this country. It is also presented as a resource others can use for their own analyses (the exhibition lists in the appendix being a particular example).

Finally, moving to the very widest view, the thesis may make a small contribution to the understanding of New Zealand's history, for aside from the documents of the time, there is at present very little written on New Zealand culture in the 1970s.

³¹ Two books on small museums are Sherman, *Worthy Monuments* and Hendon, *Analyzing an Art Museum*, but the art museums they discuss are still large by New Zealand standards.

³² Gamble and Shaw, *Auckland City Art Gallery: A Centennial History*; Entwisle, *Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery*; *The Robert McDougall Art Gallery: A Profile of the Art Gallery of the City of Christchurch*; Fea and Pischief, *Culture of Collecting: 60 Years of the Hawke's Bay Museum*.

CHAPTER 2

International Museological Context

This chapter outlines the historical development of museums internationally, with particular emphasis on their evolving conception of what it means to be a public institution. It provides both an explanatory and evaluative context for considering developments in New Zealand art galleries in the 1970s.

The very notion of a public art gallery in 1970s New Zealand had to come from somewhere. In provincial cities there may have been no direct linkage with developments overseas, the four metropolitan art galleries providing instead the dominant conceptual model of an art gallery, but this in turn ultimately came from overseas (principally Britain), even if the influence was delayed by distance.

Tracing influences is often difficult and frequently there are no direct paths, developments occurring in a parallel fashion in response to shared social and cultural environments. This is where information on evolutionary patterns in overseas museums provides an evaluative context, for it allows one to ask if New Zealand art galleries responded in similar ways and moved in similar directions to those in Europe and North America.

By means of an historical narrative this chapter also expands on the suggested dimensions of an art museum in the *Introduction* by considering the tension between elitism and democracy that has developed in museums over the last 200 or more years. This legacy has meant that so long as our art galleries were considered to sit within the traditions of the museum there was the potential to move in one of two ways – to be a temple of high art or a democratic and publicly oriented facility.¹

¹ Though some question the very concept of an enduring entity known as the museum. Following Foucault, Hooper-Greenhill says that while museum histories tend to take the museum form as it is and trace it back to find its first occurrence there is in fact “no essential identity for museums” (Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, pp. 7–8, 191). However, this challenging notion seems less applicable to the shorter time spans mostly covered by this thesis than those considered by Hooper-Greenhill.

The idea of the *public* museum

Western art, argues Einreinhofer, is not by nature democratic.² It has often been created for those of refined taste amongst the wealthy, powerful, and well-educated by individuals of acute sensibility and high intelligence. In addition, such art has been based primarily on the artist's personal vision and the expression of that vision. In modern times the artist has been highly trained and educated and their intention has correspondingly "been to communicate on this level, not necessarily to enlighten the masses".

A place to house such art is inherently designed for an elite. Certainly this was the case with early art museums. The galleries of Italian merchant princes of the Renaissance, such as the Medicis, are one example, the palaces of northern European royalty another. In each case these were displays intended to impress, to speak of wealth, power, and what could not be bought but only inherited, the taste and sensibility of what Pierre Bourdieu has called "cultural capital".

However, the notion of what it means to be a public museum, of who the public are, and how they should be served, has progressively broadened over the two and a half centuries since royal and other private museums in Europe first cautiously admitted "the public".

Public art museums in Europe were formed from the collections of the church and nobility as power shifted away from these traditional authorities to elected assemblies. Prestige remained with their collections however, and now accrued to the new owners. The new museums could serve as symbols of democratisation and/or expressions of national or civic pride, places to "celebrate and make manifest...that what had once belonged to the King now belonged to the people".³ The Louvre is the archetypal example. By drawing the collections of Europe into one museum Napoleon could equally state to the world both the glory of his empire and the democratic truths of the Revolution.

These early public museums defined "the public" very narrowly, typically restricting access to the upper classes. The Hermitage, for example, required male visitors to wear either regimental uniform or a coat and tails and gaining entry to the British Museum from first opening in 1759 until 1810 was an involved process, requiring a written application, vetting of the applicant, and issuing a ticket for a visit the following day. The whole process took at least two weeks and two to three prior visits. But such restrictions are less surprising when one considers the gulf which then existed between social classes, Hudson considering that when the vast majority were illiterate it "would

² Einreinhofer, *The American Art Museum: Elitism and Democracy*, p. 32.

³ Weil, *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Inquiries into Museums and their Prospects*, p. 88.

have been absurd to expect educated and uneducated to mingle easily or happily in the same room”.⁴

By the mid-nineteenth century attitudes towards the “rabble” had changed somewhat. Social problems spawned by the Industrial Revolution created a strong education movement in Europe. Social improvement and developing technical knowledge for advancing industry were its aims. Self-help educational organisations such as mechanics institutes were formed which were often the catalyst in turn for the creation of museums as educational facilities. Related pressures developed for public libraries and free education, and the state (in Europe) increasingly took on moral responsibilities and educative roles for the population as a whole. In the UK the 1845 Museums Act allowed local authorities to allocate rates to museums. The intention of the act was to promote “the instruction and entertainment” of the public, and Lewis notes that it had an easy passage through parliament because “museums were seen as a moral benefit to society and...a means of contributing to better industrial design”.⁵

From the middle of the nineteenth century, world fairs were held on both sides of the Atlantic. In displaying the material products of progress with showmanship they demonstrated a growing belief that the arts and sciences were the proper concern of the whole community, not just the specialists.

The South Kensington Museum (which grew out of the first world’s fair, the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition) was an example of both the educational and world fair influence, becoming a leader in worker education in the arts and crafts. As part of its self-perceived role in public education it circulated exhibitions, lent books and lecture materials, and provided for public comfort with a restaurant. Henry Cole, the primary force behind the museum, believed that it had a powerful role to play in reforming and improving society, stating that “The museum will certainly lead [the working man] to wisdom and gentleness, and to heaven, whilst the [public house and gin palace] will lead him to brutality and perdition”.⁶

American museums were more publicly oriented than those of Europe from the beginning, following the typically American belief in democratic ideals and the value of education for human advancement. Some of the first originated in historical societies, lycea (mechanics institutes), and art institutes, as well as privately owned, commercially operated museums such as those owned by Peale (founded 1768) and Barnum (1841–68). It was not completely one-sided however, and Orosz outlines a swinging back and forth between egalitarianism and exclusivity amongst American museums from the earliest times, until a reconciliation he calls the “American compromise” was reached in the late 19th century in museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the

⁴ Hudson, *A Social History of Museums*, p. 26.

⁵ Lewis, “Collections, Collectors and Museums in Britain to 1920”, p. 29.

⁶ Alexander, *Museum Masters*, p. 163.

Boston Museum of Fine Arts.⁷ An “elitist/democratic paradox” is what Einreinhofer less positively calls it, pointing out how the founders of these two museums borrowed the Medici principle.⁸ As men of great wealth, the founders and donors were able to install brilliant collections in these museums and be rewarded by the status this brought, not only to themselves but also to their cities, and ultimately to the nation. This created a tension between promoting the prestige values of high art and exclusivity on the one hand and encouraging public access on the other, for the latter was required in order to gain additional public funding and for such museums to be widely acclaimed in a democratic culture (in this respect the Louvre stood as a model too). However much, then, American museums espoused the Enlightenment ideals of the nation’s founding, they were also driven by the needs of donors for accrued prestige.

As in England, there were also attempts by American museums to “improve the masses”. American society was less affected by the Industrial Revolution than Europe, but the flood of immigration in the late 19th century had an almost equal impact. Some came to see museums as social agencies that could improve the attitudes, standards and tastes of the working classes. John Cotton Dana, director of Newark Museum 1909–1929, was a notable leader in this field, dismissing traditional museums as “awesome to a few, tiresome to many, and helpful to almost none”.⁹ Dana’s approach was to organise temporary exhibitions (such as *Inexpensive Articles of Good Design* and *New Jersey Clay Products*) to attract adult visitors inside the museum where they would find conducted tours, lectures and plentiful explanatory text material. For children there were also group tours, instructors who visited schools, and a lending department making as many as 9,000 shipments a year of museum exhibits to schools.¹⁰

Carol Duncan considers that there was a hidden agenda behind efforts to improve the working classes, believing that the new museums (she is thinking of the large northern art museums such as the Met) were an element in a “larger agenda to make American cities more civilised, sanitary, moral and peaceful”, the philanthropic desire to educate and Americanise the immigrants being born as much of fear as of goodwill and the art museums, intentionally or not, structured to advance the cause of WASP supremacy.¹¹ The museums marked the gulf between “Americans of education” and foreign immigrants, yet at the same time strove to “appear inclusive and democratic in order to effectively symbolise community and define national identity”. They catered to the elite, because they needed their money and their art, but they also had to appear, “at least to the middle class and their press, as credible public spaces, above politics and class interests and accessible to all.”¹²

⁷ Orosz, *Curators and Culture*.

⁸ *The American Art Museum: Elitism and Democracy*, pp. 1–12.

⁹ Weil, *Rethinking the Museum and other Meditations*, p. 53.

¹⁰ Alexander, *Museum Masters*, p. 397.

¹¹ Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, pp. 48–71.

¹² Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, p. 6.

With some degree of social homogenisation achieved, the focus of American museums towards mid-century was directed to the well-educated middle classes. Theodore L. Low wrote in his *Museums as a Social Instrument* that museums should make education their primary goal, superior to but including acquisitions, preservation, and scholarly study. He urged that they vigorously seek to serve “an intellectual middle class”.¹³ American museums began to hold more temporary, thematic, and contemporary exhibitions, increased their gallery spaces at the expense of storage, and expanded programmes of events at about this time.¹⁴ The difficulty the general public had with abstract modernist art also encouraged art museums to become more education oriented and people-friendly, according to Einreinhofer.¹⁵ New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) took the lead and became the inspiration for many other art museums by setting itself up in downtown New York and including such comforts as good toilets, cloakrooms, shops, and a restaurant.

New developments in consumer capitalism in the 1920s also became an influence, as advertising began to drive product development. In a parallel manner, according to Harris, museums shifted out of a “producer culture” stage of passively displaying objects to more actively designing exhibits to audience needs or wants as they began to use the new marketing and social research technique of surveying.¹⁶ The first crude museum visitor studies were carried out in the 1920s and caused museums to begin to change the way they looked at their audience.¹⁷ Surveying was seriously under way by the 1960s, particularly in the USA, but also to an extent in the UK.¹⁸ According to Harris this was associated in the US both with a huge growth in art museum formation¹⁹ and with massive federal funding available from the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts, founded 1965). NEA funding was linked to ideals of service and broad constituencies. Surveys were a powerful form of evidence in funding applications that museums were serving the whole community. Demands from civil rights groups, feminists and other consciousness raising movements for better representation in decision making and audiences also stimulated surveying in order to make visible the social composition of visitors. Other requirements for audience information came from potential private and civic funders as well as further potential income sources such as

¹³ Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, p. 221.

¹⁴ Tonelli, “The Art Museum”, p. 86.

¹⁵ *The American Art Museum*, p. 86.

¹⁶ Neil Harris, “Polling for Opinions”.

¹⁷ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, p. 8; Harris, “Polling for Opinions”; Hooper-Greenhill, “Museums and Communication: An Introductory Essay”, pp. 3–5.

¹⁸ Hooper-Greenhill, “Museums and Communication”, p. 3–5.

¹⁹ Since WWII there has been a fervour of museum building in general. Weil notes that more than half the museums in the USA by about 1980 were founded after 1950 (*Rethinking the Museum*, p. 3). Between 1950 and 1980 there were 2,500 new museums built, an equivalent of more than one a week. In the UK the growth rate was one per fortnight in the 1970s (ibid), a time of particularly strong museum growth there according to Bricknell (Sandra Bricknell, “Here to Help: Evaluation and Effectiveness,” *Museums, Media, Message* [London: Routledge, 1995]: p. 292.)

museum shops and membership drives that also required market research. As in other areas of the economy it was no longer sufficient simply to have a good product: now “investors” (i.e. funders, private or public) wanted to know who the museum would appeal to and what the public response was.

A New Museology

Moving into the 1970s, pleas for museums to be more public seemed to become especially insistent, reflecting the social upheavals and revolutionary talk of the 1960s. This can be seen in the museological journals, where writings shifted from subject specialisms (“how to do it”) to museology (museum philosophy) from around 1970. This heightened concern for audience and reflective practice was a particular context for a movement towards greater public participation in New Zealand galleries. While admittedly few New Zealand art gallery directors may have read such writings, the thinking behind them was nevertheless reflected here.²⁰

Earlier reformist talk concerning museums and the public tended to focus on education. And indeed some museums had well established educational services from an early point: in addition to the South Kensington Museum already mentioned, Liverpool, Sheffield and Manchester museums were operating education services for schools pre-1900. Education boomed in museums this century, Weil noting that only 15% of American museums had formally established education departments in 1931, while by 1971 over 80% possessed them.²¹

But education tended to be in the sense of an additional service, an add-on, rather than as an active engagement with casual visitors and other users on all fronts. Low made this point in the 1940s when he said that since most museums were organised on a departmental structure long before education became a strong interest, when education did arrive it was often placed in a similar category, a department amongst other departments, rather than as an attitude permeating all museum activities.²² He went on to say that such a department has tended to be placed in a moral quarantine by the rest of the staff and that directors have continued to favour the attitudes of curators, from whose ranks they themselves are drawn.

²⁰ Though in our own museums journal, *AGMANZ News*, a bare three articles were published in the 1970s that called for increased public responsiveness by museums: two by Rodney Wilson and one by Luit Bieringa. (And Bieringa’s article was essentially an admonishment of readers for their lack of response to Wilson’s exhortations.) It is perhaps significant that both these directors had spent time in the Netherlands, where programmes to bring museums to the community were widespread. (Bieringa, “Some Reasons for Existence”, pp. 3–4; Wilson, “Modern Art Museums and their Public in the Netherlands”, pp. 25–29; Wilson, “Some Thoughts on Programmed Information Provision”, pp. 2–7.)

²¹ Weil, *Beauty and the Beasts*, p. 20.

²² Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, p. 221.

By the 1970s, however, a weight of opinion developed that saw public interaction as more than simply structured education services. Singleton, for example, claimed that "More curators are taking time off from poring over their collections in order to peer at the visitors to the museum and at those who are still only potential users of the museum, and to consider their needs... [suggesting a change in attitude in which] museums have become outward-looking as well as inward-looking and have become more concerned with people than with things".²³ His examples in Britain included art galleries that showed work by living artists, had exhibitions by local organisations, lent out their collection, and included music, drama and poetry readings amongst their exhibitions so as to "prevent the segregation of art from other forms of everyday pleasure and experience".²⁴

Talk of a "new museology" emerged in the 1970s according to Harrison, especially in England and Europe where there already was a stronger sense of museological theory.²⁵ The rationale for this new term was that community needs as well as social subjects and concerns generally were replacing objects as a focus in museums. The growing numbers of museums (eco-museums) not necessarily confined to a building was another reason for thinking museum practice had changed.

Added to an interest and involvement with "the community", rather than just visitors, was an expectation that museums could be agents for social change. This interest in community was left-wing inspired, quite different from the previous mid-century humanist oriented wish to gradually improve society by education. Weil writes of the "bitterness and rage of the war [Vietnam] years" in this light and how artists invaded the American Association of Museums (AAM) meeting in 1970, and insisted that museums become dedicated to wiping out racism, sexism, war and repression.²⁶ Little short of a revolution was demanded, for when asked how museums could achieve the above the artists replied with a slogan of the times: "the time for talking is past, the time for action is now".

In the same year, New York artists forced most museums of that city to close for at least one day by staging demonstrations that called for artists to replace trustees in art museums. Also in 1970 militant women demanded that 50% of sculptors in the Whitney Museum's annual exhibition be women. This call was joined by demands for 50% black representation as well. A picket line was formed and museum staff and visitors harassed.

Weil noted many of the delegates to the 1970 AAM meeting were astonished by the hijacking of their meeting and had no inkling of the strength of opposition to museums by radicals. However, the following year he wrote of a dominant feeling at the 1971

²³ H. Raymond Singleton, "Interactions: The Museum at Work in the Community", pp. 108–112.

²⁴ "Interactions", p. 111.

²⁵ Harrison, "Museums in the 1990s", pp. 165–6.

²⁶ *Beauty and the Beasts*, p. xi.

AAM conference that museums had to decide whether they were to be object or people oriented. This was in the context of his well known article *The Multiple Crises in Our Museums*, the first in a series of writings in which he questioned the focus museums had put on objects in themselves rather than the ideas and human stories associated with them.²⁷

In the same year Duncan Cameron discussed the identity issue in slightly different terms in his often quoted article, *The Museum, a Temple or the Forum*.²⁸ He said there had been much talk since the end of WWII about museum reform in order to democratise culture. While he doubted that many in the museum world would wish to join art radicals in Europe in their desire to burn down the Louvre for the way it symbolised bourgeois and aristocratic domination of society, he also felt that radical steps were necessary. The solution, according to Cameron, was to retain the traditional museums as temples but also to institute new museums as forums for confrontation, experimentation and debate.

Cameron quoted examples where radical departures were being taken. Plans for the Art Gallery of Ontario included large open spaces where anything could be tried or made to happen; an exhibition on rats, a topical social issue, at the Anacosta museum in the black neighbourhood of Washington; and the Robertson Centre for Arts and Sciences in Birmingham, NY which described itself as “an art museum, a science museum, and historical museum, an arts council, an activity centre for art, music, dance, drama – an education centre for all”.²⁹

Cameron said that the establishment had to finance the revolution, as society would “no longer tolerate institutions that...serve a minority audience of the elite” and that museums must reform or perish.³⁰ These were strong words, and as Harrison notes, society has in fact proven rather more tolerant than Cameron predicted.³¹ In fact, Cameron seems to have had in mind a contained revolution, for he believed that there had to remain museums of authority: “the forum is where the battles are fought, the temple is where the victors rest” – those who have stood the test of time.³²

Other voices in the later 1970s echoed the calls of Weil and Cameron. Finlay followed Weil in 1977 proposing that museums must present ideas and not just collections³³ and Hudson wanted museums be more human, tackle risky subjects and to continually question the nature of museum work.³⁴

²⁷ *Beauty and the Beasts*, pp. 3–29.

²⁸ Cameron, “The Museum, a Temple or the Forum”.

²⁹ Cameron, “The Museum, a Temple or the Forum”, p. 13.

³⁰ Cameron, “The Museum, a Temple or the Forum”, p. 23.

³¹ Harrison, “Museums in the 1990s”, p. 163.

³² Cameron, “The Museum, A Temple of the Forum”, p. 21.

³³ Finlay, *Priceless Heritage: The Future of Museums*, p. 175.

³⁴ *A Social History of Museums*, pp. 90–91,151.

Of course these voices did not necessarily represent the majority view in the 1970s but are quoted here as expressions of a new thinking that eventually became widely accepted. There were also opposing voices from commentators like Noble who preached a “back to basics” approach based on a museum’s functions of acquisition, conservation, study, interpretation and exhibition.³⁵

This was how art museums sat by the 1970s. Their history had given them both elitist and democratic ingredients. Their origins included churches, with their displays of relics, paintings, and statuary; royal palaces containing treasures testifying to their owner’s legitimacy and taste and intended to impress courtiers and foreign dignitaries; collections of the nobility and wealthy, as emulations of palace displays, including art, antiques, treasures, and curiosities; popular shows and fairs exhibiting curiosities and freaks for the sake of entertainment and operated as commercial ventures; and more serious, large-scale, international fairs.

To varying degrees, and in differing proportions, each of the above aimed to provide prestige displays, moral uplift, education, scholarship, and entertainment. Over the last two centuries or so the balance appears to have shifted increasingly in the direction of democracy – to greater degrees of public orientation – particularly in the 1960s and ‘70s. (At least this is how it looks in the USA where there is far more writing on museum history, especially 20th century history, than there is in the UK, for example.) However, as Duncan suggested in relation to American art museums around the turn of the century, “appears” is the operative word, a democratic appearance can be constructed to hide an essentially elite nature that functions ideologically to reinforce social distinctions.

Here we have the museological background against which New Zealand art galleries in the 1970s developed. Whether or not influences came directly from the UK or the USA, and with what speed, the fact remains that galleries here also knew of both elitist and democratic forces and equally experienced increasing pressure to become more “open” to the public.

³⁵ Before Noble other commentators had also cautioned against too much democracy in the museum. In 1923 Benjamin Ives Gilman, secretary of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, set out a comprehensive philosophy of art museums in his *Museum Ideals of Purpose and Method*, arguing that art museums were not primarily educational institutions, places where art was to be interpreted before it could be enjoyed (Tonelli, “The Art Museum”, p. 41). And, according to Tonelli, most commentators in the 1950s said that museums needed to establish aesthetic standards and avoid compromising the visitor’s experience with popularisation (“The Art Museum”, p. 43). Kenneth Clark, for example, suggested that the art museum itself could be viewed as an artwork, so maintaining aesthetic quality, and Herbert Read pointed out that in the rush to be popular museums had neglected the needs of living artists.

CHAPTER 3

The Demand for New Galleries 1945–1969

This chapter is about the preconditions for new and revitalised art galleries in the 1970s. Where the previous chapter considered influences from within the museum profession, this looks at the external pressures which, taken together, make it seem almost inevitable New Zealand public galleries would become revitalised in the seventies. These pressures include a social context of a better educated, more affluent and sophisticated potential audience than existed at the end of the Second World War. This was an internationally aware generation keen to explore a unique identity for New Zealand in the wider world. It increasingly gained access to New Zealand (and international) contemporary art in publications, touring exhibitions and at the newly forming dealer galleries, especially as the number of practising artists mushroomed and an infrastructure expanded to support them and provide outlets for their work.

An outline of this growing demand for contemporary New Zealand art comprises the first part of this chapter. The second section shows how the demand was not well met before the 1970s. Lagging behind public expectation was the inertia and conservatism of many public and art society galleries. These venues tended to be locked into a notion of art that identified it with tradition and the art of the “home country”, rather than with this place and this time. It was the poor ability of these venues to deliver in the face of greatly increased public interest in new art that prompted some radical developments in public galleries in the 1970s.

The Social Context

The familiar story of post-war New Zealand society through to the mid-1960s is one of prosperity and conservatism, involving a gradual but ever increasing openness to outside influences. The later sixties are characterised by an end to insularity and unquestioning attitudes. By 1970 New Zealanders were more affluent, urbanised, educated and aware of the outside world than they had been in 1945. As such they were also far more receptive to and interested in having public galleries with active programmes of showing and interpreting contemporary art.

The 25 years from 1945 were an economic boom period in which unemployment numbered only a few hundred and a labour shortage demanded substantial immigration. It was the most sustained period of economic prosperity New Zealand had experienced in the twentieth century.¹ This prosperity created a comfortable and secure time that made New Zealand, in the words of Austin Mitchell, “the world’s most stable and, probably, most conservative society”.² Yet the period was also marked by great changes which “may be broadly summed up by saying that New Zealand society became more complex and much more sophisticated. Most of them were a function of size – population growth and urbanisation – or products of prosperity.”³

This prosperity was initially led by an agrarian revolution created by the use of much greater mechanisation in farming. Paradoxically, however, at the same time as the pastoral sector paid for this country’s prosperity (to the tune of 90% of export earnings in the mid-1960s) New Zealand became more urbanised due to farm technology shrinking the rural population. And a very gradual but significant change in our economy occurred in the 1950s as industries developed in the fields of timber processing, electronics, glass, carpet making, and by the 1970s, iron and aluminium smelting. The proportion of the workforce employed in primary industry more than halved from 1945 to 1971, while those in secondary and service industries rose significantly.

Disposable income grew correspondingly over the period and New Zealand increasingly became a white-collar society in which the state was a major employer. The growth of both the state and manufacturing brought ever increasing numbers into blue and white collar occupations from farming, pushing New Zealand more into line with the social structure of North America and north-west Europe. By the 1970s, “New Zealand showed signs of becoming a post-industrial society, characterised by a service economy, by the pre-eminence of a professional and technical class, and by ‘the centrality of theoretical knowledge as the source of innovation and of policy formation for the society’”.⁴ It became increasingly true that the surest way for an individual to attain a good income, status, and economic security was as a member of the salariat.⁵

These new professionals were most likely to belong to the post-war baby boomer generation who came of age around 1970 following one of the highest population growth rates in the “developed” world. Cities grew especially rapidly, so that where 67% of the population were classified as urban in 1936, by 1971 this had risen to 82% and the biggest city, Auckland, exceeded half a million people.

¹ Dunstall, “The Social Pattern”, p. 452.

² Written in 1972 (Brooking and Enright, *Milestones*, p. 188).

³ Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p. 299.

⁴ Dunstall, “The Social Pattern”, p. 460.

⁵ Dunstall, “The Social Pattern”, p. 465.

The baby boomers were highly educated compared with their parents. The growth of a service economy particularly required training and expertise and the growth in education is one of the most striking changes that took place during the post-war period. In the 1930s most New Zealanders left the education system before ever attending secondary school but after the leaving age was raised to 15 in 1944 a secondary school education became almost universal. Numbers of both secondary and tertiary students quadrupled from the late 1940s to 1970 while primary school pupils doubled.⁶ By 1971 one in three of the population was in the education system.⁷

New Zealanders became better informed by travel and reading as well. The number of international air passengers carried to and from New Zealand approximately doubled every five years from 1950 to 1975.⁸ And not only were New Zealanders a country of readers, buying and borrowing books more frequently than in most other countries, 83% of homes had also had television by 1972. Moreover, according to Sinclair, the country's brief history meant that these various forms of education were particularly directed towards the history and literature of the outside world⁹ although the interest of New Zealanders also increasingly switched to their own history. New Zealand history courses boomed in universities and history books became best sellers.¹⁰

The beginnings of a change in New Zealand's relationship with the rest of the world was marked by the Second World War. The war itself broadened the horizons of many New Zealanders and a wave of European immigrants from the late 1930s through to the 1950s brought with them new and sophisticated tastes. After the war, the US replaced Great Britain as our major ally and our sphere of military interest moved from Europe and the Middle-East to Asia and the Pacific.¹¹

Echoing the country's shift in international alignment was our increasing awareness of overseas trends. While the 1940s and '50s were moulds of conformity for most New Zealanders (an emerging and imported youth culture in the '50s being an exception), the sixties saw New Zealand become part of the global village with the introduction of television in 1962 and international jet travel in 1964.¹²

Social habits became more sophisticated. In the early fifties there were only a handful of licenced restaurants in the country aside from hotels but by the end of the sixties the new generation of baby boomers ensured that dining out became a rapidly growing custom, the six-o'clock swill had gone (in 1967), and New Zealand had a growing wine industry. Sophisticated coffee bars sprung up with exotic-sounding names like Ca d'Oro, Casa Fontana, and El Paso.

⁶ Bloomfield, *New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*, pp. 133–4.

⁷ Dunstall, "The Social Pattern", p. 467.

⁸ Bloomfield, *New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*, p. 256.

⁹ Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p. 301.

¹⁰ Brooking and Enright, *Milestones*, p. 184.

¹¹ Philips, *Royal Summer*, p. 87.

¹² King, *After the War*, p. 91.

The sixties also brought the contraceptive pill, rock music, drug use (especially marijuana), and a whole new dress scene for the young: long hair, flares, mini skirts. Overseas travel and television sped up the dissemination of these trends in a way never possible previously. To the young, anything seemed possible. The 60s were the watershed years when technological innovations (such as jet travel, television, and the pill) gave momentum to changes in attitudes on a scale that came close to revolution.¹³

Indeed, revolution became a catch-cry as the post-war baby boom generation reacted against their parent's values, especially those of material security. The protest movement grew rapidly in the 1960s and spawned radical groups like the Progressive Youth Movement (PYM) and launched the careers of high profile radicals like Tim Shadbolt and Alister Taylor. The American civil rights movement influenced Maori here, as they adopted its style, rhetoric and tactics. The protest mentality was initially propelled by opposition to New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam war (in turn stimulated by the way television brought war into the living room) but moved on to cover such issues as the American Omega navigation beacon, conservation concerns over the proposed raising of Lake Manapouri, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, sporting contacts with South Africa, and the Treaty of Waitangi. Further on, it led to marches for Maori, women's, and homosexual rights in the 1970s.

Artistic Contexts

The general social context sketched above suggests that by the end of the sixties New Zealanders were unlikely to be satisfied with the same old static displays of academic British art so often the staple diet in our public galleries. The young, in particular, wanted to see the latest thing, and art had the potential to be a measure of modernity.

New Zealand art did in fact move with the times. It became more relevant to contemporary cultural issues. In doing so it became an increasingly popular form of cultural expression – both in terms of numbers choosing to become artists and in audience. An outwardly expanding spiral of influences developed which included new artistic concerns, growing infrastructural support for artists (awards and competitions, art education, dealer galleries and other new venues, and arts council funding), and new opportunities for audiences to see contemporary New Zealand art (more frequent touring exhibitions, new publications, and dealer galleries). This was very much a mutually reinforcing, interlocking spiral. For example, artists were also audiences and, as suggested, dealers benefited both artists and audiences. This makes it difficult to separate out influences, and the grouping of material under the following headings is a convenience only.

¹³ King, *After the War*, p. 8.

New Artistic Concerns

The years following the Second World War were marked by a turn away from provincialism (the third-hand imitation of art long passé elsewhere) in New Zealand art to the themes of internationalism and nationalism. These themes or threads have been characterised by Francis Pound as opposing ones,¹⁴ and certainly the practitioners and critics may have seen it that way, but what they had in common was a desire to engage with the present. For the internationalists (abstract artists such as Milan Mrkusich, Gordon Walters, Don Peebles and Ralph Hotere) this present was the latest thinking in international art. For nationalist painters, though they may have used nostalgic subject matter (Eric Lee-Johnson's derelict farmhouses, for instance) their interest was still also a pressing post-war issue for many, that of New Zealand identity. Both internationalism and nationalism reflected a critical concern for New Zealanders of the 1950s and '60s – of being able, for the first time, to plug into global culture and, simultaneously, the opportunity to devise an identity no longer intimately tied with Britain. These gave local art a renewed relevance, making art galleries places where, potentially at least, New Zealanders could see some of the latest expressions and explorations of these issues.

In the 1950s internationally oriented work was not the dominant form of New Zealand art. As Gordon Brown comments, abstract art was like an underground movement and any work shown was likely to be vitriolically attacked, accused of being a bad joke forced upon an unsuspecting public.¹⁵ European immigrants brought with them International Style taste and talents in the fields of architecture and design, and while their influence encouraged a more sympathetic audience for abstract art, there still remained barriers of relative lack of awareness of what was going on in the wider world, as well as resistance from the literary-dominated intelligentsia who were more interested in defining a New Zealand identity. Those artists like Walters, Mrkusich, Peebles, Louise Henderson and later Hotere who ignored local imagery to follow paths of international abstraction received little critical acknowledgement in the '50s and into the '60s.¹⁶

Sculpture in New Zealand was also influenced by the trend to abstraction from the 1950s, but its real break with convention came in the mid-late 1960s with the influence of minimalist work overseas. Ilam graduates such as Matt Pine and Carl Sydow created sculptures that used industrial materials and finishes and did not stand upon the traditional pedestal.

¹⁴ Pound, "The Words and the Art", pp. 185–199.

¹⁵ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 84.

¹⁶ Such at least is Pound's often expressed view (e.g. "The Words and the Art") but it seems a little overstated. Local versions of international abstraction appeared frequently in the annual Auckland City Art Gallery series of exhibitions on contemporary New Zealand art (1957–1966) and while admittedly not receiving the same treatment as Hanly, McCahon and Woollaston by Brown and Keith (*An Introduction to New Zealand Painting*), Peebles, Mrkusich and Walters are well illustrated in the book.

The most critically acclaimed New Zealand art from the 1930s to the beginning of the '70s was nationalist in concern. As Cape puts it, "Painters and illustrators like Peter McIntyre, Russell Clark, Eric Lee-Johnson, Mervyn Taylor and James Turkington; painter-writers like A.R.D. Fairburn and Leo Bensemann; and painter-innovators like Rita Angus, Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston...began to gain acceptance as artists who were making statements about New Zealand and New Zealanders in their own terms". Some took "unaccustomed subjects (unaccustomed, that is for art) painted in unaccustomed ways...[bringing] viewers to feel that there might be something in the country worth talking about in its own right". Aiding this realisation was the craft revival that occurred at the same time. Craftspeople "created works which not only stood up to the standards of overseas imports, but which also carried an undefinable but recognisable feeling of the country. ...Both the craftsman and the artist were learning how to make those things which spoke of their own culture, not of one which derived from somewhere else".¹⁷

Pound has pointed out how this expression of locality went through two phases.¹⁸ The first was driven by the literary community, the source of most critical writing in the 1940s and '50s. Critics like A.R.D. Fairburn and Charles Brasch valued work that was essentially illustrative, especially of the landscape, reflecting literary interest in such things as the roughness and rawness of New Zealand. In Peter Tomory's words, "subject painters" were valued over "image makers".¹⁹

It was Tomory, director of the Auckland City Art Gallery 1956–1965, and two who worked for him, Gordon Brown and Hamish Keith, who upgraded these earlier "amateur" (Tomory's term) attempts at seeking a New Zealand identity in art by adding the formal interests suggested in the "image makers" phrase. Eric Lee-Johnson, Russell Clark and T.A. McCormack were dropped in favour of Christopher Perkins, Rita Angus, Pat Hanly and of course McCahon and Woollaston (who had also been praised by many of the literati). The new critics still strongly valued expressions of a national identity via "hard, clear light" depictions of the New Zealand landscape, often with semi-abstractness, but gone was the heavy-handed literary emphasis. With the power of the best-resourced art gallery in the country behind him Tomory was quickly able to establish a convincing canon for New Zealand art that applied a new sophistication to explorations of a New Zealand identity.

Work by Maori artists who were looking for a synthesis of customary Maori forms and international Western art could have helped comprise a national identity expressed in art. However, neither Tomory nor Brown and Keith seem to have found this work relevant to their conception of a uniquely New Zealand style of art. Tomory, for example, selected an exhibition *Contemporary Painting in New Zealand* for the

¹⁷ Cape, *New Zealand Painting Since 1960*, pp. 9–10.

¹⁸ Pound, "The Words and the Art."

¹⁹ Pound, "The Words and the Art", p. 192.

Commonwealth Institute in 1964 that supposedly reflected a New Zealand quality but no Maori artists were included and its critical reception both in London and in Christchurch was precisely that it lacked cultural distinctiveness.²⁰ This *was* the era of the first generation of contemporary Maori artists known as the Tovey generation but it was also one in which racial assimilation was government policy and their work was not often seen.²¹

New Support for Art and Artists

Though there are probably no figures to prove such a statement, it may be fairly safely said that the number of New Zealand artists mushroomed during the two decades up to the 1970s. Certainly Keith Sinclair considers that “in the nineteen-sixties painting seems to have replaced writing as the form of expression preferred by a new generation”;²² Brooking speaks also of the craft boom of the sixties which saw thousands take up pottery, weaving and other crafts;²³ and Cape makes the subject a major theme of his Introduction to *New Zealand Painting since 1960*.²⁴ Artists (and their friends and acquaintances) would have been a strong force pushing for new galleries, not only as a place to show their own work but as somewhere to view the work of others.

Factors encouraging a growth in both art and artists included a new sympathy to art and creativity in the education system, new awards and grants, and self-help activities, such as organising alternative exhibition venues.

Art education in schools and teachers colleges changed significantly from the 1940s. The beginnings of new thinking can be traced back to the 1937 New Education Fellowship conference and the influence of Herbert Read’s writings on art as a central tool for child education and development.²⁵ Experiments in arts and crafts activities during wartime in the Manawatu and Lower Hutt, as well as a little later in Northland under Gordon Tovey, played an important part in reinforcing the message of the Thomas

²⁰ Mané-Wheoki, “Buck Nin and the Origins of Contemporary Maori Art”, p. 62.

²¹ These artists included Sandy Adsett, Clive Arlidge, John Bevan Ford, Fred Graham, Ralph Hotere, Paratene Matchitt, Selwyn Muru, Arnold Wilson, Cliff Whiting, and Muru Walters. They are sometimes known as the Tovey generation because they were all appointed by education administrator Gordon Tovey as arts and crafts specialists in schools, especially in Northland. Early exhibitions of their work were seen at the Waikato Art Gallery in particular during the 1960s, at a Canterbury Museum exhibition *New Zealand Maori Culture and the Contemporary Scene* (1966), and in the first major public gallery exhibition of contemporary Maori art at the National Art Gallery in 1969 (organised by the NZ Maori Council).

²² Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, pp. 302.

²³ Brooking and Enright, *Milestones*, p. 184.

²⁴ Cape, *New Zealand Painting Since 1960*.

²⁵ Read himself visited New Zealand in 1963, encouraging the building of art galleries and defending abstraction. Other influential overseas visitors who undertook lecture tours or workshops in the 1960s were critic Clement Greenberg (1968), architectural commentator Nicholas Pevsner, and potters Shoji Hamada and Bernard Leach (Brown, “Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand”, p. 329).

report of the mid-1940s that there should be more art taught in schools.²⁶ Doreen Blumhardt, Jim Coe, and particularly both Clarence Beeby, Director of Education, and Gordon Tovey, National Supervisor of Arts and Crafts, were all influential figures in the move away from the traditional emphasis on technical ability towards psychological development, personal experimentation and individual aesthetic experience.

Community education in the arts also received a strong impetus in the late 1940s from the National Council of Adult Education. It channelled funds through universities to set up regional university extension departments in many cities, towns and rural areas with tutors giving lectures, demonstrations and workshops.²⁷ Victoria University, for example, operated an extension service which included pottery facilities in Palmerston North up until the late 1960s.

Education at higher levels lagged behind these developments at first but came to shift from the inculcation of tradition to radical experimentalism. The two main schools of fine art in New Zealand, Elam and Ilam, are legendary for their conservatism in the decades running up to the 1960s and artists often seemed to follow graduation with study in the UK to gain a real grounding in contemporary art. Both art schools came under the wing of respective Auckland and Canterbury universities in 1950 and that eventually had flow-on effects as new staff were appointed. Auckland's Elam saw Robert Ellis from Britain appointed in 1957, and in 1961 Paul Beadle as professor and dean. Beadle in turn made drastic staff changes, appointing young lecturers like Greer Twiss and the radical Jim Allen as well as creating the first art history positions (in 1962). A diploma of fine arts was created when Elam joined the university, but a bachelors degree had to wait until 1967. The 1960s and early '70s were a time of turmoil at Elam, with political infighting, curriculum review and the introduction of new art practices and thinking the order of the day, such upheavals especially stimulated by Kurt von Meier (art history) and Jim Allen (sculpture).²⁸

The Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch had a highly structured, traditional course in the '50s. But from that decade it was also enlivened by immigrant lecturers, especially Rudi Gopas, who stressed emotional and intuitive response over technical skill.²⁹ From the late '60s Tom Taylor was an influential sculptor there, as were Eric Doudney and the outspoken Laurence Karasek. Ilam retained strong links with ex-students studying overseas, such as John Panting and Carl Sydow, helping to feed new influences back to New Zealand.

There was no hope of earning a living from art-making once artists had graduated from art school, but several significant awards initiated in the 1950s, and especially 1960s, did offer further training or other forms of support, thereby stimulating artistic

²⁶ Cape, *Please Touch*; Henderson, *A Blaze of Colour*, p. 76–152; Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 36; *Art in Schools*, pp. 13–46.

²⁷ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 41.

²⁸ Dunn, "The Elam School of Fine Arts", pp. 46–47.

²⁹ Trevelyan, "Since the Sixties", [unpaginated].

activity. The Association of New Zealand Art Societies, for example, administered a fellowship with government funding from 1947 to 1961 which supported artists to study or work for one to two years.³⁰ Ralph Hotere was one who travelled to the UK on this award. Other artists who also gained overseas experience did so under the National Art Gallery's Travelling Scholarship for artists, 1951–1962. Recipients included John Drawbridge, Bill Culbert and Barrie Bates (a.k.a Billy Apple).³¹

Many additional artists studied overseas in the early 1960s, including Coley, Bracey, Bullmore, Fomison, Furlonger, Hanly, Pearson, Panting, Pine, and Sydow, and their return to New Zealand brought new ideas back to this country and helped create on-going connections with overseas art schools, artists and organisations.

The *Hays Art Award*, Christchurch, running from 1960 to 1966, was one of the most important early art competitions, and was won by Colin McCahon in a storm of controversy in its inaugural year. The *Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art* (1965–1972), organised by the Manawatu Society of Arts and held at the Palmerston North Art Gallery became a significant annual event during the mid-late 1960s, being won by Hanly, Mrkusich, and Kindleysides (1966–69). But it was the *Benson & Hedges Art Award* (1968–1980) which followed that became the high-profile art competition of its era, offering a sizeable level of prize money for a single painting and representing a new interest in arts sponsorship.³²

The arts council was also a source of grants of course. It began as the Arts Advisory Council in 1960 before being formally constituted as the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand in 1964. It seems to have concentrated on setting up structures in the 1960s, such as the national schools for ballet and drama. Spending on visual arts was very low compared with drama, music and theatre, a sore point in the art community as suggested by a 1969 article in *Arts and Community* in which Gil Docking listed a who's who of gallery directors, curators, artists, academics concerned about the small allocation to the visual arts.³³

³⁰ More well-known recipients included E. Mervyn Taylor (1952), Eric Lee-Johnson (1954, '55), Len Castle (1955, '56), Rita Angus (1958), Toss Woollaston (1958, '60), Don Peebles (1960) and Ralph Hotere (1961) (MacLennan, "Art Galleries", p. 91).

³¹ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 41.

³² Other art competitions were the Kelliher Art Prize (1956–83) for oil paintings of New Zealand landscape in a "realistic or natural representation," and the National Bank of New Zealand Art Awards (1958–?), also relatively conservative, though closer to the Manawatu Prize than the Kelliher.

³³ Gil Docking, "The Arts Council and the Visual Arts", *Arts & Community* 5, no. 9 (1969), p. 1–2. The arts council's reply, published in the same article, was that the low percentage to visual arts was misleading, as local authorities provided far more support to the visual arts (presumably by supporting art galleries) than they did to performing arts.

The percentage of arts council funding given specifically to the visual arts was only 12% in 1965, dropping even lower to 5.5% in 1966 and 4.3% in 1967, and rising back a little in 1968 to 7.8%. The 1965 spending on visual arts was allocated as £10,700 on touring exhibitions, £3,400 on purchase subsidies, £4,800 on grants and guarantees, £2,700 on overseas exhibitions (presumably the *Contemporary Painting in New Zealand* exhibition toured to the UK). (*New Zealand Official Yearbook* vols 1966–1969.

In the late sixties the council's areas of visual arts support were: travel grants to artists, teachers, and museum staff; grants for major overseas shows; sponsorship of New Zealand exhibitions overseas; purchase of work for its own collection; commissions of work for public spaces; subsidies of gallery purchases (through a scheme administered by AGMANZ); and subsidies of non-profit organisations like the Federation of Art Societies.³⁴ The amount of direct grants to artists was minimal, but one area where the arts council made a real contribution to the development of art and audiences in this country was in supporting touring exhibitions of overseas work. That the arts council did not see fit to support touring exhibitions of New Zealand work suggests it was perhaps out of touch with local developments, but also represents thinking common in the 1950s and '60s that what New Zealand artists and audiences most needed was to be brought up to date with international work and to witness overseas models of excellence.

Some arts council funds were channelled through the Art Galleries and Museums Association of New Zealand (AGMANZ) but given the domination of this organisation by museum, rather than gallery, personnel it made little perceptible contribution itself to the development of art, audiences or art galleries in the 1960s, though Gordon Brown believes it did help generate an awareness of the need for professional standards in galleries.³⁵

One of the funding programmes administered by AGMANZ which did come to attain some significance was the small purchases subsidy scheme. This seems to have started in 1960 when £250 was received from government for this purpose. The Arts Advisory Council and the arts council continued to grant AGMANZ funds to administer 50% collection purchase subsidies. Initially the scheme was to allow galleries to purchase works by overseas artists that would be otherwise unaffordable, and which would provide a "stimulus of high international standard" (reflecting again the thinking mentioned above), though this didn't necessarily exclude New Zealand works.³⁶ The scheme became well established, with the overseas emphasis dropped, and continued in various forms into the 1980s.³⁷

While AGMANZ may not have achieved much for art galleries, it was not entirely for lack of trying, and efforts of the sixties may have born fruit in the seventies. In particular, the organisation vigorously lobbied government for capital subsidies for museums and galleries. It pointed out that government grants were made in the 1950s but applications by museums in the 1960s to the Golden Kiwi Board of Control (the predecessor of today's Lotteries Board), or direct to the Department of Internal Affairs, were passed on to the arts council. The arts council in turn had a policy of not funding

³⁴ Tomory, "Art", p. 207.

³⁵ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 33.

³⁶ *Subsidies for the Purchase of Works of Art by Art Galleries* (Arts Advisory Council, n.d. [c.1964], typewritten information sheet, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive).

³⁷ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 33.

museum and gallery capital projects due to lack of money. The prime minister's response to AGMANZ' observation was that as the arts council now existed it was the proper funder, and it had the authority to determine its priorities.³⁸

With little support from both the arts council and public galleries, and with art societies bywords for conservatism, artists often banded together to create their own support and lobby groups, particularly organising to create exhibition outlets or to set-up national organisations. Advocacy, promotion of various art forms, communication amongst members, as well as mutual support, seemed to be the motivations for the latter, suggesting that artists were seeing themselves as professional actors upon a national stage, no longer restricted to operating at a local, amateur level. New organisations included the NZ Society of Sculptors and Associates (1961),³⁹ a New Zealand chapter of the World Crafts Council (early 1960s, becoming an independent local organisation in 1977), the NZ Society of Potters (1965), and the Print Council (1967–77).

The national organisations were a 1960s development. In the forties and fifties there seemed a greater sense of embattlement as more progressive artists commonly created small break-away groups from the art societies for the purposes of mutual support and joint exhibition. Most well known was Christchurch's The Group, formed in 1927 but which most strongly made its mark in the late 1940s.⁴⁰ The trend continued into the sixties as a new generation of artists who felt a common allegiance often banded together. John Coley, for example, formed the 20-20 Vision Group in Christchurch in 1964 on his return from the USA. It consisted mostly of ex-Ilam students and Ilam lecturers. The group's first exhibition was in 1965 at the Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) Gallery and aimed to make art accessible and enjoyable, utilising kinetic art, electronic music, and Op-Art prints.⁴¹ Sometimes artist groupings were for a one-off purpose, the 1956 exhibition of eight young painters including Peebles, Drawbridge, and Fahey on the lawn of the Wellington Public Library being a well-known example (*plate 3.1*).⁴²

Art supporters as well as artists also organised or provided alternative venues. An important venue in Wellington before dealer galleries became established was the Architectural Centre Gallery (1953–1969), later known simply as the Centre Gallery. It was mainly a volunteer run campaign centre for good design, especially in architecture and town planning, but as part of its holistic approach to design it also exhibited contemporary art.

³⁸ *AGMANZ Newsletter* 39 (March 1968).

³⁹ Later becoming the NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters and, currently, the Artists' Alliance.

⁴⁰ Other groups were the Rutland Group (to 1958), the New Group, and the Thornhill Group in Auckland; the Wellington Group (founded 1949) and the Thursday Group (1953) in Wellington; and the Independent Group (1951) in Dunedin.

⁴¹ Trevelyan, "Since the Sixties" [unpaginated].

⁴² Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, pp. 54–5.



Plate 3.1 Artist-organised open air exhibition outside the Wellington Public Library, Don Peebles in foreground, 1955.

In Christchurch, Hays department store responded to the growing demand for exhibition space by offering part of its shop in 1958, and Ron O'Reilly, head of the Christchurch Public Library, provided exhibition space in the library. (While acting head of Lower Hutt Public Library O'Reilly had earlier given McCahon an exhibition there and McCahon exhibited at the Wellington and Dunedin public libraries as well.)⁴³

In Dunedin the Visual Arts Association, formed in 1952, was active in combating the Dunedin Public Art Gallery's unwillingness to show the Auckland City Art Gallery's touring contemporary art exhibitions, and organised showings of these at the public library and Otago Museum.⁴⁴

Greater Dissemination of Art

The opportunities to see and understand the outlines of New Zealand art, though limited by the standards of the seventies, greatly increased during the period from 1945 to 1970. Dealer galleries emerged, adding to the alternative venues discussed above, touring exhibitions of contemporary art, both overseas and especially New Zealand, began to be seen, and the beginnings of a publication boom on New Zealand art occurred.

Dealers helped make up for the lack of activity in public galleries, though such outlets did not become firmly established until the mid-1960s. In Auckland and Wellington in particular they increased the opportunity to see current New Zealand art; they encouraged the public to make a commitment to art by purchasing it on an ongoing basis; and they helped artists gain confidence in their work by providing the financial support of sales.

Some dealers, like John Leech and McGregor Wright galleries had begun decades previously, but did not show contemporary art in the sense of work that engaged with

⁴³ O'Reilly was to become director of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in the 1970s.

⁴⁴ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 45.



Plate 3.2 The Gallery of Helen Hitchings.

the present. They were also of the type that made the greater part of their income from picture framing and selling reproductions. (Art society exhibitions were the other outlet for the public to buy art before dedicated dealer galleries existed.)

The earliest galleries dealing in contemporary were mostly short lived. The legendary Helen Hitchings Gallery in Bond St, Wellington, running from 1949 to 1951, is recognised as New Zealand's first dealer gallery of contemporary art (*plate 3.2*).⁴⁵ Hitchings showed artists such as McCahon, Woollaston, MacDiarmid, Eric Lee-Johnston, Angus, Doris Lusk, The Group, and the Thornhill Group (Louise Henderson, T.A. McCormack, Charles Tole, John Weeks). The gallery was very modern-looking in design and furnishings and its promotion of modernity was similar to that of its spiritual successor, the Architectural Centre Gallery, as was its related role as a centre for creative activities and discussion in Wellington.

Auckland was the main location for dealer gallery activity during the period, due no doubt to the large population base, the strength of the art scene in that city, and in particular, to the interest in contemporary art aroused by developments at the Auckland City Art Gallery. The Argus Gallery was the first here, running briefly during 1957 and 1958, initially on a weekends and after-5pm basis by Auckland City Art Gallery staff member Peter Webb. Following in 1960 was The Gallery, later named the Ikon Gallery (1964–5), an important venue in its showing of contemporary New Zealand painting and some sculpture. Barry Lett Galleries took on the Ikon stable of artists such as McCahon, Woollaston, Binney, Ellis, Twiss, and Hanly when it opened in 1965, and was *the* place to see contemporary New Zealand art in the late 1960s and into the 70s. Also in 1965 was the New Vision Craft Centre run by Kees and Tina Hos. It was craft oriented and was later known simply as New Vision Gallery, running until 1986.

The strength of the Auckland dealer scene was such that Hamish Keith could comment in 1970 that there was an overkill of contemporary art on show in Auckland,

⁴⁵ Sources for further information on the various dealer galleries mentioned under this heading are too numerous to footnote separately and may be found in the bibliography section on art galleries.

with four exhibitions in May of that year, three in dealers and one at the Auckland City Art Gallery. By contrast, he said, the same month in 1960 yielded only a single very small three-person exhibition of contemporary New Zealand art in Auckland, at the city art gallery.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, in Wellington, the real beginnings of today's dealer gallery scene was marked by the 1968 openings of the Bett-Duncan Gallery (renamed Elva Bett Gallery 1976) and the Peter McLeavey Gallery in Cuba Street. In the 1960s Bett-Duncan showed artists such as Angus, Binney, Moffitt, Helen Stewart and Robin White.

Christchurch and Dunedin were less well served by dealers, although the CSA Gallery partially fulfilled the role in Christchurch. The first contemporary dealer gallery in Christchurch was Gallery 91, opening in 1959 and operating for only one year. It was run by André and Barbara Brooke and they showed artists such as McCahon, Woollaston, Coley, McFarlane, Gopas and Mrkusich. After the gallery's closure there was really nothing in this city aside from craft shops and the CSA until Barbara Brooke tried again with Judith Gifford, opening the still-running Brooke-Gifford Gallery in 1975.

Dealer activity in Dunedin is less well documented. The Roslyn Gallery operated at some point during the 1960s and showed Mrkusich, McCahon, Woollaston, Kees Hos, Keith Paterson, Drawbridge, and Quentin McFarlane. Dawsons ran briefly in the late 1960s/ early '70s, showing Smither, Szirmay, Harris, McCahon, and Hotere.

On the public gallery front, one of the most significant developments of the period in creating a greater awareness of contemporary art was the increase in the number of touring exhibitions, especially of New Zealand work, but also of international art. Such exhibitions provided points of reference for local artists and, with the general public, a chance to both broaden their awareness of the visual arts and define the dimensions of New Zealand art.

Before the war the touring Empire Art Loan exhibitions had been the major means by which New Zealanders had kept up with overseas (i.e. British) art developments. After the war the conservatism of these exhibitions became apparent and by the late 1950s other agencies, such as the British Council, were taking over the function of touring art abroad. In New Zealand, the Auckland City Art Gallery, and to a lesser extent the National Art Gallery, also began taking the initiative to tour overseas exhibitions nationally.⁴⁷

Significant touring shows were (for the general public) the 1956 Henry Moore exhibition (*plate 3.3*) and (for artists) the 1958 *British Abstract Art*. In 1967 *The Photographer's Eye* toured, the first major exhibition from New York's Museum of

⁴⁶ Keith, "Dealer Galleries: Tin Anniversary", p. 11.

⁴⁷ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 35.

Dealer Gallery Timeline

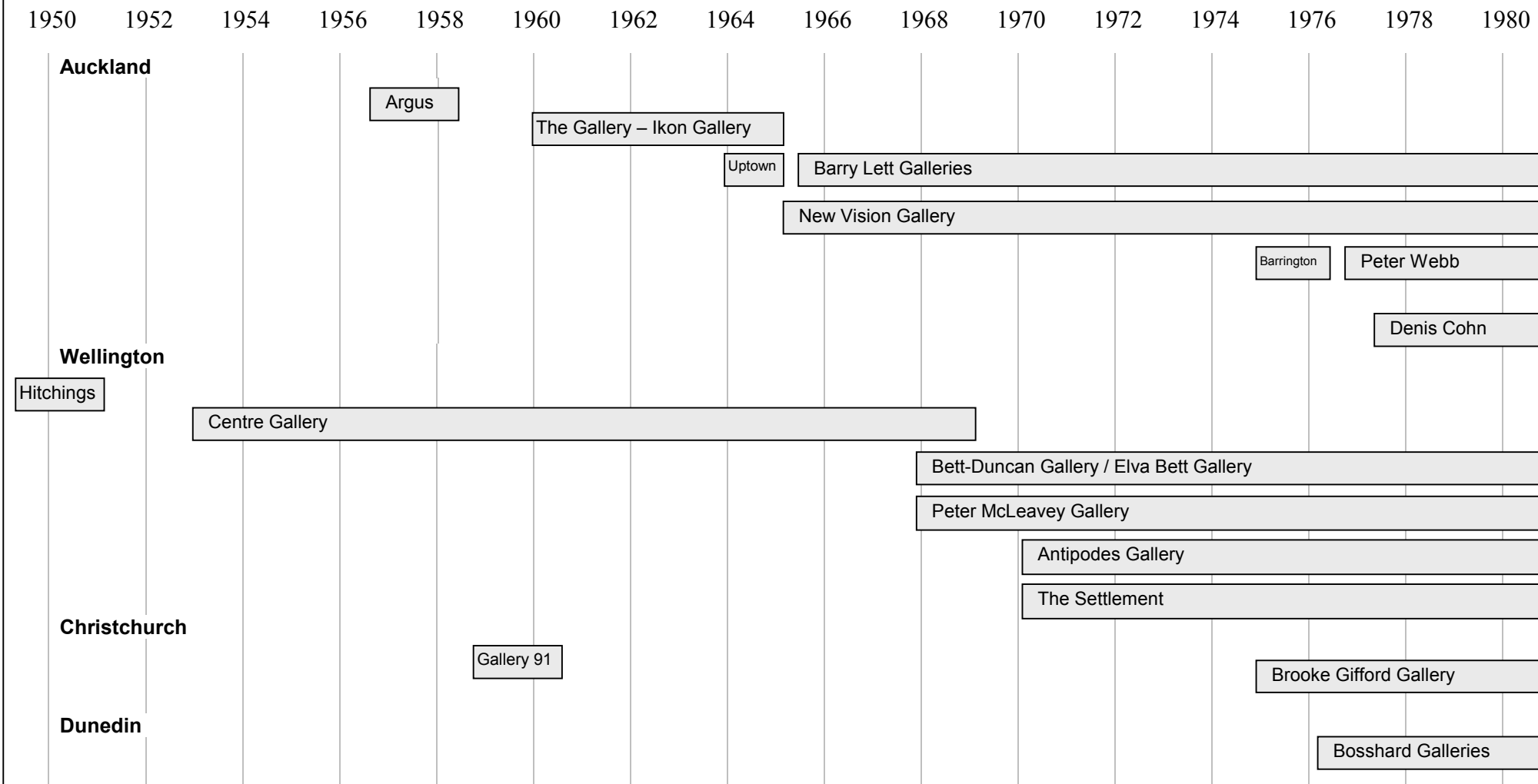


Fig 3.1



Plate 3.3 Crowds visiting the Henry Moore exhibition, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1956.

Modern Art, followed in the early '70s by *Brassai*, both influential in stimulating the beginnings of contemporary photography in New Zealand.

As for New Zealand art, the New Zealand Association of Art Societies had been touring "Rota" exhibitions amongst member societies but internal conflicts saw the number drop in the late 1940s and first the Community Arts Service and then the National Council of Adult Education (formed in 1947) took on a role of touring exhibitions, especially to smaller centres.⁴⁸ Exhibitions included the regionally toured *New Zealand Artists 1954: Harry Millar, Colin McCahon, Toss Woollaston* exhibition that caused an uproar when shown at Hawera, Stratford and Wanganui, and the nationally toured *30 Paintings by NZ Artists* (1959–60).

Perhaps the most significant touring exhibitions of New Zealand art were the Auckland City Art Gallery's contemporary series, beginning in 1957 as *Eight New Zealand Painters* (run for three years as versions I, II, and III) and continuing as *Contemporary New Zealand Painting* (and other variant titles) 1960–1966. Hamish Keith says in his catalogue introduction to the 1965 version that the aim of the exhibitions was "to contribute something towards lessening the isolation of one centre from another, and to attempt a definition of current directions and standards".⁴⁹ The importance of these exhibitions in a period when people travelled less was indeed that they were widely circulated and backed up by illustrated catalogues. In this they helped create a public with a growing interest in contemporary New Zealand art and encouraged other galleries to get used to the idea of exhibiting such work. They also, especially in the second series, provided artists around the country with a rare occasion to have their work seen nationally.⁵⁰ This opportunity continued after the exhibition

⁴⁸ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, pp. 20, 41–42. Fieldwork of the National Council of Adult Education, such as organising regional tours, tended to be channelled through the universities.

⁴⁹ Keith, *New Zealand Painting 1965*, p. 3 [unpaginated].

⁵⁰ As an indication of the type of artists seen in these shows, the *New Zealand Painting 1965* exhibition included Binney, Gordon Brown, Coley, Coolahan, Garrity, Ellis, Drawbridge, Hanly, Henderson, Gopas, Hotere, Illingworth, Mrkusich, McCahon, John Perry, Ritchie, Schoon, Smither, Trusttun, and Woollaston. Almost all the work was abstract or semi-abstract.

series ended in 1966 for their role was taken up by the widely toured *Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art* and the *Benson & Hedges Award* exhibitions.

Publications had the potential to play one of the same roles of touring exhibitions – allowing work to be seen throughout the country – but had the added advantage of providing an opportunity for criticism and commentary that could place work within a context. However, there was really no substantial publishing on New Zealand art until just before 1970, though what did occur in the 1950s and ‘60s was an improvement on previous decades and perhaps gave tantalising glimpses to contemporary audiences of what was going on in New Zealand art.

Early periodicals included the annual *Arts Yearbook* (descended from the quarterly *Art in New Zealand*) covering all the arts, but ceasing after 7 issues in 1951. Much later the highbrow *Ascent* briefly filled the gap for a dedicated visual arts magazine, with five issues between 1967 and 1969, but otherwise the only arts magazine until the mid-1970s was *Arts and Community* magazine (1965–c.1974) (plate 3.4). Edited and published by Harland Barker, this was a monthly newsprint tabloid with few illustrations and covering the performing arts quite heavily, but there were also regular columns for certain periods by Tony Green and Hamish Keith on the visual arts. Regional reviews were contributed by writers like Peter Cape, Gordon Brown, and Tony Simpson. The magazine took a very critical stance towards government funding, and featured a good deal of combative writing about the arts council in the early 1970s. Finally, there was sporadic coverage of the visual arts in the *Listener*, *Landfall*, *Design Review* (1948–1954 and associated with the Architectural Centre) and *Home and Building*. Very approximately, the first two magazines focused on work which could be placed within a nationalist agenda, while the second pair were more interested in art which echoed the image of modernity (i.e. internationalism) these magazines wished to project.

Art gallery catalogues and periodicals add slightly to this picture. Most were produced by the Auckland City Art Gallery: its periodical *Quarterly*, which sometimes featured articles on New Zealand art; catalogues for the contemporary exhibitions series 1957–66; and catalogues on earlier artists (including Hoyte, Kinder, Gully, J.C. Richmond, van der Velden, Nairn, and Fristrom). Completing the picture would be the

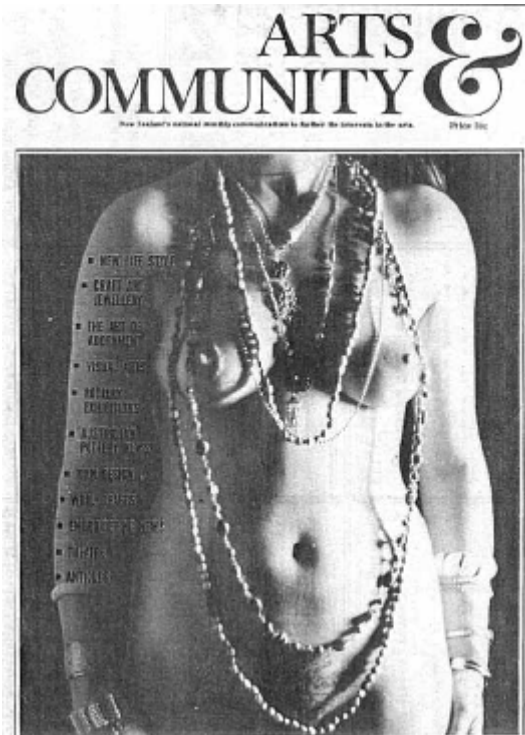


Plate 3.4 Cover of *Arts and Community*, July 1971 with a typically ‘60s/early 70s image.

arts council exhibition catalogues *Contemporary Painting in New Zealand* (1964) and *New Zealand Art of the Sixties* (1970).

The number of books published on New Zealand art during the period can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The first was E.H. McCormick's 1956 *Eric Lee-Johnson*, probably the first monograph on a living New Zealand artist.⁵¹ It was not until 1968 that the first overview of New Zealand painting was published. A slim affair, it was edited by Tomory and comprised three historical sections, each also available as separate publications.⁵² One section (or booklet), *Painting 1950–1967*, covered contemporary New Zealand art. The following year saw Peter Cape's *Artists and Craftsmen* printed. Essentially a series of biographical pieces on craftspeople, with a few sculptors included, it no doubt rode on the boom in crafts activity during that decade. But the fourth book of the post-war period was by far the most significant. It was Hamish Keith and Gordon Brown's 1969 *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting, 1839–1967*, a landmark publication that is without doubt the most widely read and influential book on New Zealand art (despite covering only painting). It not only offered the first comprehensive outline of New Zealand's art history, it was authoritative and readable and could be found in any bookstore. It was the perfect expression of a country which had come of age in the post-war years and which wanted to know more about itself in order to define its own identity – an identity no longer bound entirely to British traditions.⁵³

The Grip of Conservatism

One would expect public galleries to be an important element in the expanding spiral of influences outlined above. With the exception of the Auckland City Art Gallery and one or two provincial galleries they were not. They had become bastions of tradition and symbols of enduring values for whom change was not going to come easily. The following section looks at the state of play amongst public galleries before 1970. It begins with art societies, as they often operated semi or fully public galleries and in nearly all cases had a strong influence on public art galleries.

⁵¹ The qualification is on "living". McCormick's previous, celebrated, 1954 book *The Expatriate* was on Frances Hodgkins.

⁵² Tomory, *New Zealand Art*. The three parts were *Painting 1867–1890* by Hamish Keith, *Painting 1890–1950* by P.A. Tomory, and *Painting 1950–1967* by Mark Young.

⁵³ The publication has been severely criticised from the 1980s by Francis Pound for its nationalist agenda in proposing that certain artists captured a NZ essence and had expressed a uniquely NZ style, an idea already promoted by Tomory and earlier writers (Pound, *Forty Modern New Zealand Paintings*; "Walters and the Canon", pp. 51–70; "The Words and the Art"; are some instances of Pound's criticism.)

Art Societies

Art societies made an important contribution to New Zealand art in the late 19th century when the presence of immigrant contemporary painters such as Nairn, Nerli, Fristrom, and van der Velden vitalised the local art scene. At this time the societies provided almost the only focus for artistic effort and venue for exhibitions (although break-away groups associated with some of the above artists did also form). But after WWI the societies gradually became a conservative, powerfully inhibiting force on New Zealand art. This was partly due to their large sphere of influence: until roughly the 1950s or 60s in the larger centres, and until the 1970s in provincial towns, the art societies were “the only game in town”. They were seen as the voice of art (being consulted by city councils on art matters, for example) and provided the only venues for artists to exhibit at a time when public gallery exhibitions generally consisted of semi-permanent displays of works by dead (or nearly so) artists from their collections. In the 1940s even artists who were not in full support of art society policies exhibited with them because there was little other choice.⁵⁴ The presence of these artists and their sympathisers created tensions within art societies and calls for modernisation but against these forces for change was always the inertia of lay (non-artist) members, with reference to whom artist Cedric Savage wrote in 1948 that painting would remain the most backward of the arts while it remained under “rule by the dilettante”, with their “suburban taste”.⁵⁵ When art societies did begin to liberalise it was generally too late, as contemporary-minded artists found other exhibition venues in the late 1950s and into the 60s.

In most New Zealand cities and towns, art societies had a hand in founding public art galleries and remained intimately associated with them for many years. Exceptions were cities like Christchurch and Wanganui (and later, New Plymouth), where public galleries were founded by benefactors. But while the formal connection with art societies was not strong here, the indirect influence was still very heavily felt, especially in Wanganui until the mid-1970s (and in all three cities society members served on gallery management committees at various times). And where two of the earliest societies were formed, in Auckland (1869) and Dunedin (1876), their links had faded by the 1950s – although the Otago Art Society only severed its formal connection with the Dunedin Public Art Gallery as late as 1930 and the Auckland Society of Arts (ASA) still had its annual exhibition at the Auckland City Art Gallery up until 1956.

The ASA was probably the most progressive and active art society in the country in the 1940s to 1960s. It toured exhibitions to small North Island towns in the early 1940s; displayed independent exhibitions (i.e. by non-members) from 1945; allowed members

⁵⁴ Gordon Walters and Don Peebles exhibited at the NZ Academy of Fine Arts in the 1940s for example. At the same time, however, a lot of progressive work was also rejected for art society exhibitions. A notable case is that of McCahon for an Otago Art Society exhibition in 1940 which resulted in a walk-out by other artists (Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 21).

⁵⁵ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 22.

to hang one work of their own choice alongside others chosen by the selection committee; and had an active programme of talks and slide lectures (as in fact did many societies). However, its clubrooms were not adequate for larger exhibitions and when growing friction with the Auckland City Art Gallery reached the point that the gallery decided not to continue with the society's annual exhibitions the society found new premises in Eden Terrace.

In Wellington the art society, the grandiosely named New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts (NZAFA), was much more inextricably connected with the public gallery, the National Art Gallery, and despite tensions and attempts to separate them, remained so up until the 1970s. This situation had arisen because the academy had lobbied long and hard for a National Art Gallery, and when one was finally established, gifted funds it had raised for the purpose, as well as its collection and proceeds from the sale of its building to the new institution (opened in 1936). But these gifts were on condition the academy gallery also be housed in perpetuity in the same building. The result was constant public confusion over the identity of two art galleries situated adjacently on the same floor, especially when the National Art Gallery used the academy space once or twice a year for touring exhibitions in order to avoid disturbing its own permanent displays. There was lack of separation behind the scenes too, for both organisations shared administrative staff and facilities and the National Gallery's management committee was dominated by academy nominees.⁵⁶ The collection of the National Art Gallery was essentially that of the NZAFA also, for besides providing a foundation for the gallery's collection, the academy continued to regularly purchase work to gift to the national collection. Even the Association of Art Societies complained in 1952 that "there has been a concern for a number of years that the control of the National Gallery is vested in what is, virtually, a Wellington society of fine arts".⁵⁷

The Department of Internal Affairs (which operated the National Art Gallery) responded to such criticisms from the early 1960s and began a long battle with the academy that eventually resulted in separation of staff, reconsideration by the academy of its art work gifting programme and, with the passing of a new Act in 1972, a reduction in the number of NZAFA nominees to the board.

The quality of the academy's exhibition space and its intimate proximity to the National Art Gallery possibly encouraged the academy to serve a public gallery function to some extent by showing exhibitions the National Gallery may have considered outside the role of a national institution. It showed, for example, the annual Kelliher, National Bank, and Benson & Hedges awards. Contemporary New Zealand exhibitions

⁵⁶ The 1930 National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum Act provided for two nominees from the academy to the Board of Trustees of the National Art Gallery, Dominion Museum and National War Memorial, as well as seven to the gallery's nine member management committee. While curator and director at the National Art Gallery, Stewart Maclellan was also on the council of the academy (1943–58).

⁵⁷ Eden and Kay, *Portrait of a Century*, p. 143.

shown at the academy included the 1969 *Five Guest Artists* (Melvin Day, John Drawbridge, Pat Hanly, Ralph Hotere, and Don Peebles); the 1970 *Five Sculptors* (Jim Allen, Laurence Karasek, Terry Powell, Greer Twiss and Warren Viscoe) and a number of contemporary art exhibitions from the Auckland City and Govett-Brewster art galleries in the early 1970s.

The Canterbury Society of Arts shared some characteristics with the Academy of Fine Arts. It formed in 1880 and constructed a purpose built gallery on the corner of Durham and Armagh Streets around 1890. It too gifted its art collection and continued making gifts over the years when a public gallery (the Robert McDougall Art Gallery) was founded in Christchurch. It also had administrative connections with the McDougall by virtue of the secretary/treasurer of the CSA, W.S. Baverstock, also serving as honorary curator of the McDougall for an approximately concurrent ten years, and by having members represented on the McDougall's committee. The CSA sometimes served as a venue for exhibitions that could not be held at the McDougall Art Gallery because they were too contemporary. These include the Henry Moore exhibition in 1956, the *Young New Zealand Artists* exhibition of 1957 organised by the artists themselves (Hanly, Coley, Culbert, MacFarlane, Hamish Keith, Ted Bracey and others), ceramics exhibitions from the late 1950s, a 1963 McCahon/Woollaston retrospective, an early solo show by Maori artist Buck Nin in 1965, and the 1966 *Contemporary Italian Sculpture*.

Like the ASA, the CSA tried to respond to criticisms of conservatism by allowing member artists to hang works of their own selection in the annual Spring Exhibition from 1956, as well as a scheme where artists could rent a small space to show works of their choice. This latter space began in 1964 and until the McDougall created its contemporary-oriented Art Annexe in 1989 provided an important venue for young and up-and-coming artists in Christchurch. A measure of the perceived artistic relevance and popular support of the CSA is that it could build a large new gallery in central city Gloucester St in 1968, supported by a 1964 Golden Kiwi Lottery grant of £20,000.

In provincial towns, art societies were still commonly operating public galleries in the post-war to 1970 period – largely because they formed later than in the main centres (aside from those in Nelson and Wanganui). The Hawke's Bay Art Society, for example, opened the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery & Museum in 1936 and operated it with membership funds and local authority contributions right up until the Hawke's Bay Cultural Trust was formed in 1989.⁵⁸ Similar stories were repeated somewhat later in Hamilton, Gisborne and Palmerston North. The Waikato Society of Arts was formed in 1934 and from 1947 administered a public art gallery on behalf of the Hamilton

⁵⁸ The society was originally called the Napier Society of Arts and Crafts, and changed its name to the Hawke's Bay Art Society in the year that the museum and gallery was opened. The name later became Hawke's Bay and East Coast Art Society to include Gisborne and then, around 1967/68, changed to Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum Inc. to indicate its true function, that of running a museum/gallery.

Borough Council in a very small building gifted to the city for art gallery purposes in 1941. A modest exhibition programme was operated, including two members' exhibitions a year, and a collection developed (split into the council-funded city collection and the society collection). The Gisborne Art Society was founded in 1948 as a branch of the Hawke's Bay society. It purchased an old homestead for a gallery and museum and presented it to the city, with maintenance costs shared between itself and the city council. At least 3 society exhibitions were held per year in the 1960s. And in Palmerston North the Manawatu Society of Arts was incorporated in 1956. It opened the Palmerston North Art Gallery in 1959 with assistance from the city council and public fundraising. It held annual exhibitions through the sixties, as well as touring and other usual public gallery exhibitions, and was financially supported by memberships, artwork sales and annual city council grants.⁵⁹

Art societies were also involved in the formation of public galleries in Rotorua, New Plymouth and Lower Hutt in the 1970s, though the involvement was minimal in New Plymouth and both there and in Lower Hutt the foundation directors strenuously attempted to exclude them from any further involvement.⁶⁰

There were functional tensions trying to run a public art gallery and be a society dedicated to members' interests in towns like Palmerston North and Hamilton, to the point where the Waikato Society of Arts eventually decided it wanted to concentrate on exhibiting only members work, running drawing classes, and providing studio space and so handed over the running of a public gallery to the city council.⁶¹ In both Palmerston North and Napier, however, artistic functions of the society became submerged in running an institution, though there certainly was some strain between artist members and those more interested in supporting a public gallery at Palmerston North in the 1960s. Gisborne may have been the one place to achieve a balance between studio oriented activities and the operation a public institution.

This question of conflicting purposes also raises the issue of when art society galleries qualify as public galleries. It comes down to a question of who the beneficiaries are. When an art society gallery is intended to serve an educational function by presenting the best work from whatever source to the public then it may be described as a public gallery – but not when its purpose and main activity is to show, primarily for their own benefit, members' work.

Public Galleries

New Zealand public galleries prior to the 1970s were generally static places, with long-term displays of mostly British academic works from their collections, broken only now

⁵⁹ See chapter five for further details on the Manawatu Society of Arts and its gallery.

⁶⁰ See chapters six and seven for further details.

⁶¹ "Hamilton Art Gallery", *AGMANZ Newsletter* 42 (January 1969): p. 10.

and then by touring exhibitions of an uninspiring nature, and rarely showing work by living New Zealand artists. Such at least is the dreary stereotype of our metropolitan galleries, and it does seem broadly true, although some of the touring exhibitions, especially in the 1960s, were more interesting and had a greater impact than might be thought and several galleries gradually instigated a more lively exhibitions programme.

The view that our galleries were moribund is not simply a case of the standards of the present imposed on the past. At a time when museums tended to be judged by their collections, some harsh words were cast in the direction of public galleries. As early as 1936, just after the National Art Gallery opened, artist Roland Hipkins wrote, "A National Art Gallery which cannot permanently show a collection truly representative of the art of this Dominion is without the status its name implies".⁶² In 1948 A.R.D. Fairburn expressed the view that some of the pictures in public galleries were so dull and old that they "should be presented in bottles of methylated spirit".⁶³ Peter Tomory (director of the Auckland City Art Gallery 1956–65) expanded on the point in 1968: "The lack of or rather non-appointment of professional staff has preserved many of the country's galleries as unwitting museums of their nineteenth century prototypes. Contemporary attitudes to the visual arts are today almost entirely conditioned by temporary exhibitions and commercial galleries. Until the 1950s neither of these resources [were] available in any effective way. ...Of the galleries in the four main cities only those in Dunedin, Wellington (the National Gallery), and Auckland merit discussion, for the McDougall Gallery in Christchurch has the poorest collection in both sense of the word." While Dunedin had the "benefit of donations of quality, and in its purchasing the aid of overseas advice...its policy toward New Zealand painting has not been so informed: its holding of earlier artists is inadequate, and its attitude to contemporary artists has been timid. Timidity has been the keynote in this respect of all the galleries except that in Auckland, which is the only one where painting of the last twenty years has been collected seriously."⁶⁴

Part of the reason for poor collections can be laid at the door of the art societies. In most instances (the Auckland City Art Gallery being an exception) public gallery collections had their beginnings in those of art societies, and often the societies continued to contribute to the public collections. While this did mean worthwhile contemporary New Zealand work (by artists such as van der Velden, Nairn, and Fristrom) from art society exhibitions in the early part of this century ended up in public collections, society purchasing of academic British work and (from around the mid-1920s) mediocre New Zealand painting also strongly weighed upon our public galleries.⁶⁵

⁶² Brown, "Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand", p. 6.

⁶³ Brown, "Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand", p. 7.

⁶⁴ Tomory, "Art", p. 203.

⁶⁵ Brown, "Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand", p. 3.

Public Art Galleries Operating in the 1960s

Gallery	City	Open date	Type	Administered by	Major funding source/s	Name today
Auckland City Art Gallery	Auckland	1888	art gallery	city council	city council	Auckland Art Gallery
Waikato Art Gallery	Hamilton	1947	art gallery	art society	city council plus self-generated	Waikato Museum of Art and History [#]
Gisborne Art Gallery and Museum	Gisborne	1955	gallery & museum	art society	?	Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre
Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum	Napier	1936	gallery & museum	art society	local councils plus self-generated	Hawke's Bay Museum
Sarjeant Gallery	Wanganui	1919	art gallery	city council	city council	unchanged
Palmerston North Art Gallery	Palmerston North	1959	art gallery	art society	city council plus self-generated	Manawatu Art Gallery
National Art Gallery	Wellington	1936	art gallery	government	government	Museum of NZ Te Papa Tongarewa [#]
Bishop Suter Art Gallery	Nelson	1898	art gallery	trust board	self-generated?	Suter Art Gallery
Robert McDougall Art Gallery	Christchurch	1932	art gallery	city council	city council	unchanged
Aigantighe Art Gallery	Timaru	1956	art gallery	city council	city council	unchanged
Dunedin Public Art Gallery	Dunedin	1890 [*]	art gallery	gallery society	city council	unchanged
Invercargill Public Art Gallery	Invercargill	1951	art gallery	gallery society	?	Anderson Park Art Gallery
Southland Centennial Museum and Art Gallery	Invercargill	1961 ⁺	gallery & museum	trust board	city and regional borough councils	Southland Museum and Art Gallery

Fig 3.2

* date from when exhibitions were operated but founded in 1884

+ date of gallery wing addition

these galleries merged with museums to become new organisations

The lack of professionals pointed to by Tomory was another reason for the poor state of galleries in general. The National Art Gallery did not gain a paid director until 1948, making the appointee, Stewart Maclennan, the first professional art gallery director in New Zealand.⁶⁶ The Dunedin Public Art Gallery and Auckland City Art Gallery followed shortly after, in 1951 and 1952 respectively. The Robert McDougall Art Gallery had to wait until 1960, when long-time volunteer curator W.S. Baverstock was appointed director. Of the provincial centres, Hawke's Bay gained a paid director in 1959 and Palmerston North had a rapid succession of three short duration directors in the early 1960s until James Mack stayed two years from 1966. Other galleries had to wait until the late 1960s (Hamilton and New Plymouth) or the 1970s, and only the Auckland City Art Gallery seems to have gained a respectable number of paid staff before the seventies.

The presence of professional staff and their quality appears to have been a greater influence than administrative structure on the liveliness of galleries. Both the most progressive (Auckland) and the most conservative and static (the Sarjeant and Robert McDougall art galleries) were directly operated by their city councils. The rest were run by art or gallery societies, with some financial contribution from councils but strong income also coming from membership subscriptions, sales and donations.⁶⁷ Again these galleries ranged from the more active (Hawke's Bay and Palmerston North) to the torpid (Nelson and Dunedin).

METROPOLITAN GALLERIES

As suggested above, the Auckland City Art Gallery was an exception to the general level of insularity and inactivity which characterised New Zealand public galleries to 1970.⁶⁸ It was not only the first public art gallery built in New Zealand, opening in 1888, but also the first to change after many years of stagnation. This came about when the city librarian, who had acted as gallery curator, retired. The Auckland City Council decided to create the post of gallery director and appointed Eric Westbrook in 1952. The new director was frank about the collection's deficiencies and enthusiastic about promoting the gallery. He wanted to make it a lively community cultural centre. He established a friends group, the Gallery Associates, in 1954; he instigated regular art

⁶⁶ According to the 1969 annual report of the gallery committee of management Maclennan was appointed in 1947. However, his own account gives his appointment as 1948 (Maclennan, "Art Galleries", p. 93). This is an example of how sources are often imprecise in describing when an individual was appointed to a position, frequently confusing year of appointment with year of taking up duties, which can differ (e.g. Westbrook was appointed in 1951, but started work in 1952). Throughout this thesis the year of taking up duties rather than appointment is given, unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁷ None of the public galleries listed in Cooper and Gamble charged admission (except for special exhibitions in some cases) (Cooper and Gamble, *Art Galleries and Museums of New Zealand*).

⁶⁸ Where not otherwise referenced, sources of information are derived either from publications listed by gallery in the Bibliography, or from personal communications and interviews, as listed under Sources: Interviews and Archives.

lectures and classes that proved very popular; the Mackelvie gallery was transformed into a modern space (*plates* 3.5, 3.6); and an education post, the gallery's first, was created as a staff position in the Education Department's arts and crafts section in 1954. Attendances soared.⁶⁹ Though Westbrook acquired large numbers of British works he also believed that the gallery had to focus more strongly on New Zealand artists and he began by building up an important collection of Frances Hodgkins' work.

Peter Tomory succeeded Westbrook, arriving from a position with the British Arts Council in 1956 to find a staff of eleven at the gallery, including Colin McCahon as keeper. Though agreeing with Westbrook that the gallery should buy present generation New Zealand artists from time to time, he also believed money was best spent on high quality overseas work that would stimulate both local artists and the public. Despite this stated preference there was a slow but steady purchasing of works by New Zealand artists like Kase Jackson, McCahon, Mrkusich, Michael Nicholson, Peebles, and Woollaston. Again, while he publicly urged the formation of small dealer galleries as the proper venue for contemporary New Zealand art, and had an arrangement with the ASA that one-person shows of such art were their sole prerogative, from 1957 to 1960 he also offered a small space to any artists who could get together to provide a three-person exhibition. (Westbrook had previously hosted two, one-person exhibitions at the Auckland City Art Gallery of living New Zealand artists, as well as the contemporary group exhibitions *Object and Image* and *Unit Two*.)⁷⁰ However, neither Tomory's offer nor the ASA option satisfied the demand from many artists for one-person exhibitions, increasing the pressure for a dealer gallery in Auckland.⁷¹

Perhaps the most significant development at the Auckland City Art Gallery was its taking on a national role from the late 1950s. It achieved this by publishing a series of catalogues on pioneer New Zealand artists; touring the series of exhibitions on contemporary New Zealand art from 1958; and touring overseas exhibitions. All these activities brought New Zealand art and recent developments in international art to New Zealanders throughout the country in a way that had never occurred before.

Compared with the Auckland City Art Gallery, the National Art Gallery's level of activity during the 1950s and 60s was minimal (*plate* 3.7), Tomory quite reasonably claiming in 1968 that "its collection can hardly be termed a national one. Inadequately staffed and financed by successive governments, its activity is barely measurable."⁷²

⁶⁹ Attendances at Auckland City Art Gallery were 50,288 in 1951 and 99,455 in 1965 (Draft letter from Govett-Brewster Art Gallery committee to the Department of Industry and Commerce [c.1967], Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive). There was a similar rise at the Auckland Museum however, so the increase may simply have been due to greater interest in museums and galleries.

⁷⁰ *Object and Image* (1954) was the first major exhibition of abstract work by New Zealand artists shown in the country. Curated by Colin McCahon, it included Louise Henderson, Mrkusich, Weeks, McCahon, Kase Jackson and Ross Fraser

⁷¹ Green, "Peter Webb's Gallery", pp. 12–21.

⁷² Tomory, "Art", p. 204.



Plate 3.5 Mackelvie Gallery in 1952, Auckland City Art Gallery



Plate 3.6 New Sculpture Court, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1950s. This area was created by inserting a mezzanine into the Mackelvie Gallery. The contrast between this photograph and that above is an indication of the changes introduced by Westbrook.

Such activity as there was did increase in the 1960s, however. More staff were appointed, adding to the director and secretary. In 1959 an education officer position was created, and despite gaps of two or more years between appointments, this continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s. In 1963 further staff of an assistant curator (upgraded to curator in 1966/67), clerk, carpenter and assistant carpenter were listed in the annual report.

The national collection was added to by the Academy of Fine Arts up until the late 1960s, though, as Brown notes, the works “could not be called, in the strictest sense, contemporary paintings”.⁷³ Acquisitions were overwhelmingly of British work, including the few actively purchased by the gallery (most acquisitions were gifts and bequests). However, as the 1960s progressed more works by living New Zealand artists were acquired, even if most were of a type likely to be shown at the academy (with its Wellington artists, and somewhat conservative bias): Austin Deans, Juliet Peter, Stewart Maclellan, James Cook, Helen Stewart, Roy Cowan, Cedric Savage, and Eric Lee-Johnston are examples. In its 1966 annual report the trustees noted that the committee of management had vigorously pursued a policy to include all aspects of New Zealand art.⁷⁴ There is little evidence of this in the area of acquisitions but the following year there were a somewhat greater number of New Zealand artists represented and in the 1970 report (following the appointment of Melvin Day as director in 1968) works by Mrkusich, McCahon, Hanly, Sutton, Drawbridge and Jan Nigro are all listed as acquisitions. The gallery exhibited little New Zealand art in the 1960s, and what was shown was mostly historical and drawn from the collection. A count through annual reports from 1960 to 1969 reveals only three exhibitions explicitly of contemporary New Zealand art, two of which were prints and the other was the Auckland City Art Gallery’s 1964 *Contemporary Painting in New Zealand*. None of the 1957–66 touring exhibitions of contemporary New Zealand art organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery appear to have been exhibited and the 1958 *British Abstract Painting* touring exhibition was notoriously turned down by the National Art Gallery as “not worthy” of the gallery,⁷⁵ and shown at the small Architecture Centre Gallery in two parts instead. (It was also turned down by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery and exhibited independently in that city as well.)

The following list taken from the 1967 annual report gives a fair impression of typical 1960s National Art Gallery exhibitions:

⁷³ Brown, “Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand”, p. 6.

For a list of the works initially gifted by the academy and of gifts after 1936 see Eden and Kay, *Portrait of a Century*, pp. 184–192. Figuring prominently amongst the NZ works in the 1936 gift were C. Barraud, Gully, Nairn, A.F. Nicholl, H. Linley Richardson, Stoddart, and van der Velden.

⁷⁴ Brown, “Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand”, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Keith and Main, *New Zealand Yesterdays*, p. 164.



Plate 3.7 Sculpture Hall, National Art Gallery, 1960s

Recent Acquisitions

Paintings by Japanese Children (sponsored by NZ Meat Producers Board)

Mexican Paintings by Clifton Pugh

Woodcuts by H.A.P. Grieshaber (toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery)

Scroll Paintings by Gibon Sengai (touring exhibition from Japan)

Sir John Illott and Harold Wright Collections (permanent collection prints)

British Painting 1966 (sponsored by the arts council)

Dutch Drawings of the 16, 17, and 18th Centuries (reproductions)

Nativity Paintings by Old Masters (reproductions)

Kenneth Armitage – photographs and small bronzes (from the British Council)

Plus “small exhibitions...held regularly in the print and education rooms”.

Surprising to today’s eyes, but quite typical for the National Art Gallery in this period, are the exhibitions of reproductions. Also typical are the “foreign relations” exhibitions organised by governments or their agencies, such as *Paintings by Japanese Children* and *Kenneth Armitage*. Exhibition toured in New Zealand by the National Gallery were usually of this type also (such as *Czechoslovak Graphic Art* (1961), *Contemporary Soviet Graphic Arts*, *Recent British Prints* (both 1964), and *Japanese Decorative Arts* (1966).)

Conservative and slow moving as the National Art Gallery was in comparison with the Auckland City Art Gallery, the Robert McDougall Art Gallery (*plate 3.8*) probably led the field in this regard. Opened in Christchurch in 1932 and built with funds provided by local businessman Robert McDougall, it was administered and financed by the Christchurch City Council. An Art Gallery Committee, set up as a committee of



Plate 3.8 Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1970s. The gallery was set in Christchurch's botanic garden.

council with councillors and co-opted members, oversaw its operation and made recommendations to council on such things as acquisitions.⁷⁶

W.S. Baverstock, honorary curator since 1948 (and secretary/treasurer of the CSA for many years), was appointed first director in 1960. His charge was essentially a collection based on a foundation of around 100 mostly British academic works donated by the CSA when the Robert McDougall Art Gallery opened. The combination of this collection, Baverstock's own conservatism, poor funding, and strong city councillor control all added to provoke some harsh judgements of the McDougall, both at the time and later. R.S. Lonsdale, a CSA council member, described the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1948 as, aside from a few works by 3 or 4 contemporary painters, consisting of "a badly arranged museum of Victorian art" that had "died when photography came in".⁷⁷ In 1967 painter and lecturer Rudi Gopas described the gallery as "that graveyard of paintings", one of the most neglected and dowdy art galleries in New Zealand.⁷⁸ And in describing New Zealand art galleries of the period, Gordon Brown said that for physical condition and administrative indifference in the 1940s and '50s the Robert McDougall Art Gallery was amongst the most neglected, and like all New Zealand public galleries of the era, hampered by "amateurish managerial methods". Brown's further remark that "reliance on voluntary assistance, amateur curators or staff of the handyman type adversely affected most galleries throughout the period,...such

⁷⁶ This took different forms through its history. It was the Art Gallery Committee from inception to 1941, then variants of the Baths, Entertainments, Library and Art Gallery committee until 1960, when it became simply the Art Gallery Committee again.

⁷⁷ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 25.

⁷⁸ Trevelyan, "Since the Sixties" [unpaginated].

personnel [tending] to blunder along, frequently creating havoc” seems particularly pertinent to the McDougall.⁷⁹

For Baverstock such comments were simply “habitual criticism” that took no account of all the things he had striven for. He made this remark on retiring, and pointed to 88 major exhibitions shown since 1950, to many touring exhibitions “taken at the cost of disrupting the permanent collection exhibitions”, and reframing and general improvements, all with inadequate funding from council.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, there had been a continuing history of dissatisfaction with the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. The *Pleasure garden* incident of the late 1940s/early ‘50s was a well-known instance of the gallery’s (and the CSA’s) conservatism.⁸¹ The affair ran over two years and began when the CSA planned to purchase and gift a Frances Hodgkins painting to the McDougall. However, it got cold feet when it discovered that the works imported for the purpose were all “modern” Hodgkins’. In protest, 39 members of the public subscribed enough to buy the work and gift it to the McDougall. However the city council’s Art Advisory Committee recommended to council that this gift be rejected. Eventually, after a great deal of hotly argued dispute, mainly about the merits of modern art, the advisory committee was enlarged to five and the painting accepted in 1951. This controversy, like the Henry Moore exhibition in Auckland, brought the issue of contemporary art to public attention and demonstrated that there was a group of people willing to support it.

The *Pleasure garden* affair and another refusal of works by the gallery committee in 1959 highlighted the need for a professional curator in the minds of many. Baverstock, however, was not the man to change the conservative approach of the gallery. When Hays, the department store that operated the Hays Art Prize, offered to gift one of the winning paintings to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery in 1961, Baverstock replied that none were fit for the collection, despite the Art Advisory Committee recommending a McCahon, and advised the city council not to accept the recommendation. CSA and Ilam representatives responded by withdrawing their membership of the committee and supporters of contemporary art once again got together to purchase the painting and present it to the gallery. Despite the reservations of Baverstock and some councillors it was accepted.

⁷⁹ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 28.

⁸⁰ W. S. Baverstock, “Our McDougall Gallery”, pp. 6–7.

Despite some potentially controversial exhibitions like the 1956 Henry Moore exhibition being shown at the CSA’s Durham St Art Gallery the McDougall’s touring exhibitions did include other international contemporary art shows like *Contemporary Russian Art* (1957) and *British Abstract Painting* (1958). These may well have been taken reluctantly, however, given Baverstock’s comment on the 1967 MoMA touring exhibition *Abstract American Watercolours* that “it was expensively mounted but of little cultural value” (Brown, “Contemporary Painting and Public Collections in New Zealand”, p. 5.)

⁸¹ The affair is chronicled in, amongst other places, Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, pp. 23–27.

Frustration amongst some sectors of the public with the gallery came to a head in 1968 when a petition titled *A Desirable Public Gallery for Christchurch* was circulated. Baverstock resigned the following year and Eric Westbrook was invited by council to advise on the needs and potentials of the McDougall. He also assisted in appointing Brian Muir as the next director in 1969. Muir (ex-director Palmerston North Art Gallery) set about acquiring contemporary work and creating a brisk programme of exhibitions.

Dunedin may have been an even more conservative city than Christchurch, but it also had origins as a city of some wealth. Before the Auckland City Art Gallery was revitalised in the 1950s the Dunedin Public Art Gallery was possibly the most professionally run and well staffed gallery in the country and certainly possessed the best collection of European painting, with an ambitious purchasing programme supported by generous donors.

The Dunedin Public Art Gallery began with a resolve of the Otago Art Society in 1884 to run an art gallery. A Dunedin Art Gallery Society was formed in 1890 to actually operate a gallery (jointly with the art society until 1930), and in 1924 the city council agreed to provide annual funding, with the society being the administering body. The gallery was housed in several different locations until 1927 when it shifted to Logan Park. Shortly after, the first professional fine arts curator in this country, Robert Neilson, was appointed. He was succeeded by Annette Pearse and she was made director in 1958.

Up until the 1970s the gallery's focus was fixed firmly on the art of Europe. Criticism of this attitude was voiced as early as 1939 by John McIndoe and then several years later by A.H. McLintock at a time when Dunedin was a centre for a developing New Zealand modernism with resident artists such as R. N. Field, Doris Lusk, Colin McCahon and Toss Woollaston.⁸² A belated response was made by the art gallery society in 1963 by commissioning a report from Dr de Beer on the collection, though this was also prompted by the increasing difficulty of purchasing good overseas work due to rising prices. De Beer was critical of the overall mediocrity of the collection (while acknowledging its bright patches), the lack of professional staff, and the gallery's poor location. He suggested bolder collecting of overseas work and working collaboratively with the Hocken Library on contemporary New Zealand art. His report was not acted upon, nor was a following one by David Solomon that recommended, among other things, developing an acquisition policy and addressing the lack of New Zealand work.

Annette Pearse retired in 1964 and was replaced by J.D. Charlton Edgar. Edgar had an interest in New Zealand (and Australian) painting and began more purchasing of contemporary New Zealand work – a Woollaston in 1966, a McCahon in 1967 and Hotere as well. While Edgar actively worked to break the gallery's image as a conservative institution with no interest in current New Zealand art, his tastes were still

⁸² Entwisle, *Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery*, pp. 23–25.

fairly traditional and the major concentration in acquisitions continued to be of old European work.⁸³ Edgar's term saw the gallery become slightly better resourced, with an assistant director and receptionist appointed in 1966, adding to the existing staff of three plus a part-time cleaner.

One result of poor collecting of contemporary New Zealand art by the two main South Island public galleries was that a handful of individuals worked to build up alternative public collections. In Christchurch Ron O'Reilly created a collection with funds generated from picture hire at the public library.⁸⁴ In Dunedin, Charles Brash was instrumental in creating at the Hocken Library what, for a time, was the best public collection of contemporary New Zealand art. Brash was on the library's collection committee and in the absence of interest from the Dunedin Public Art Gallery both he and Rodney Kennedy gifted many New Zealand works to the Hocken, and inspired others to do so. Kennedy also gave to the Dunedin Public Library.

PROVINCIAL GALLERIES

Wanganui's Sarjeant Gallery (*plate 3.9*) was a greatly scaled down version of the McDougall or Dunedin Public Art Gallery, both physically, as a neo-classical building set in park-like surroundings on a hill, and operationally. Built with a bequest from local farmer Henry Sarjeant and opened in 1919, it was claimed in a Carnegie Corporation report of c.1932 to be "one of the finest art galleries for a town its size anywhere in the British Empire".⁸⁵ It was operated by the city council with a gallery advisory committee but when the early driving personalities of honorary curator Louis Cohen and Sarjeant's widow Ellen died (in 1933 and 1939 respectively) the council decided to scrap the committee and gain greater control with an administrative sub-committee of council. The combination of council administration, the increasing conservatism of the honorary curator from 1933 to 1974 (Dr. Robertson), and the presence of traditionally-minded art society members on the gallery committee yielded an institution that was one of the most static and conservative in the country from the 1950s until the mid-1970s.

There were a few notable exhibitions in the 1950s and '60s at the gallery. Auckland City Art Gallery's John Weeks and John Kinder exhibitions, and the previously mentioned 1954 Community Arts Service exhibition on McCahon, Woollaston and Henry Miller were shown and the gallery initiated an exhibition on early twentieth century artist Edith Collier. But these were exceptions to the usual diet of the permanent collection. As for collecting, Robertson focused on academic British art, explicitly

⁸³ An indication of his attitude is a comment he made on the final selection of work from the regions by the Auckland City Art Gallery for *New Zealand Painting 1966*: "If requirements of experiment and innovation are a little relaxed there will be more interest and support for this annual anthology." (*New Zealand Painting 1966* [Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1966].)

⁸⁴ Some of this work has since been given to Robert McDougall Art Gallery.

⁸⁵ Markham and Oliver, *A Report on the Museums and Art Galleries of New Zealand*, p. 74.



Plate 3.9 The Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, 1926. This gallery takes the classic “temple-on-a-hill” form.

instructing the gallery’s UK dealer in 1956 to purchase conservative rural landscape painting.⁸⁶

If the Sarjeant Gallery ranked with the McDougall for conservatism and inactivity, this was not the case with a handful of other provincial galleries. Those art societies that developed relatively late and which quickly took on the task of running an art gallery produced some of the livelier institutions, of which those at Napier, Palmerston North, and Hamilton are the most obvious examples.

The Hawke’s Bay Art Gallery and Museum opened in Napier in 1936, with major building extensions in 1937, 1953 and 1958. It was founded and administered by the Hawke’s Bay and East Coast Art Society and run with voluntary labour drawn from its large membership.⁸⁷ Leo Bestall was the honorary director from inception until his death in 1959, when J. B. (Jim) Munro was appointed paid director (1959–1979). Although a conservative by some standards, particularly those of the seventies, Munro had a passion for art and shifted the institution from a museum to an art orientation during his term. Like Palmerston North, the gallery and museum made good use of touring exhibitions, presenting a programme during the 1960s that was every bit as interesting, if not more so, than those shown in the public galleries of Wellington, Christchurch or Dunedin. The 1966 annual report, for example, lists the following temporary art exhibitions:

Oriental Rugs – from the V&A, toured by Auckland City Art Gallery

Australian 19th and 20th Century Painting – arranged by Auckland City Art Gallery

Gothic Art – Auckland City Art Gallery toured

⁸⁶ Schulz, *A Short History of the Sarjeant Gallery*, p. 30.

⁸⁷ The society changed its name to the Hawke’s Bay Art Gallery & Museum Society Inc in 1967.

German Film Posters

Annual Exhibition – by artist members of the HB&EC Art Society.

Painting and Craft – by student members of the above.

NZ Contemporary Painting – exhibition for the UK, arts council organised

Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art

English Artist Potters – Auckland City Art Gallery

Painting and Drawing by William Jones – arranged by the HB&EC Art Society.

This year had a higher number of Auckland City Art Gallery exhibitions than usual but the content is still fairly representative. In the preceding year a number of solo exhibitions toured by the Adult Education Department of Victoria University were hosted. Artists included Elva Bett, Don Driver, Raymond Boyce (stage set designs), Nan Turbott, and Lou Theakstone. A National Art Gallery exhibition, *Contemporary Graphic Art*, was also shown.

The Palmerston North Art Gallery gained a strong reputation in the 1960s for its liveliness. It appointed a part-time paid director in 1963, and after passing through a succession of short lived directors had by 1966 a full-time, highly active director in the person of James Mack, though progressive minded gallery society members comprising academics and young professionals were as much in the driving seat as the director. The gallery gained national attention when it founded the *Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art* in 1965, the only contemporary art competition at that time and, as an exhibition, toured very extensively. (Chapter five covers the Palmerston North Art Gallery – later known as the Manawatu Art Gallery – in full detail.)

The Waikato Art Gallery was similar in nature to the Palmerston North Art Gallery, being an art society run, council-supported public gallery showing 15 or so exhibitions a year from a variety of sources. It was operated by the Waikato Society of Arts and from 1955 the Hamilton City Council made an annual grant for operation, including money allocated for acquisitions. James Mack was employed as a paid secretary/custodian 1963–65 but the gallery was not as well funded as that at Palmerston North, and its programme severely restricted by the gallery's small physical size. Exhibitions included annual art society exhibitions, the *Manawatu Prize*, the *Benson and Hedges Art Award* and solo or group exhibitions by Robert Ellis, Michael Smither, Louise Henderson, Kees Hos and Para Matchitt.

The art society pressured the Hamilton City Council throughout most of the sixties to put the gallery on a professional footing and in mid-1969 the council finally relented. The society wanted to relinquish involvement with the gallery in order to concentrate on member's needs and in late 1969 was given a large house by the city council which it converted to galleries, meeting space, storage, etc and used for members exhibitions. The situation was similar for the museum society who had operated a museum in a

small and inadequate building and found such a responsibility beyond their resources. The result was both societies handed over their respective charges at the same time.⁸⁸

Of the remaining provincial galleries there is very little published information on their activities and it is most likely these were minimal. The oldest was the Bishop Suter Art Gallery (today known the Suter Art Gallery), founded in 1898 as a memorial to Bishop Suter and supported for many years by the Suter Art Society. In the 1960s and '70s it was operated by a trust board with income from city council grants, investments, rentals, etc. It was voluntarily run by members of the board and the art society in an old, inadequately designed building. The art society held its annual exhibitions at the gallery twice a year and made purchases for the gallery. Exhibitions listed in the trust board's report for 1963 are probably representative of the type of exhibition held at the Suter:

Recent Artists' Prints

Suter Art Society Autumn Show

Maori Rock Drawings (from Victoria University)

Children's Art (British Council touring exhibition)

Suter Art Society Spring Show

Art in Schools (Christchurch Star exhibition)

Dutch Landscape Prints

The Gisborne Art Gallery and Museum and the Aigantighe Gallery, Timaru, had their beginnings in the fifties, the former when the Gisborne Art Society acquired an old homestead and opened it as a museum and gallery in 1955 and the Aigantighe when a large house and extensive grounds was given to the Timaru City Council in 1956 by J.W. Grant. The Aigantighe Gallery was administered and financed as a public art gallery by the city council and a small collection was established from a nucleus created by the local art society.

In Invercargill a rather confusing situation arose which saw that city gain two art galleries. The Invercargill Public Art Gallery (renamed the Anderson Park Art Gallery in 1971) was founded in 1951 when the Anderson family gifted a large, two-storey house and grounds situated six kilometres out of Invercargill to the city for an art gallery. The Invercargill Public Art Gallery Society ran the gallery while the city council maintained the grounds. A civic collection of New Zealand artists was slowly established and exhibiting this work seems to have been the sole activity of the gallery.

Meanwhile, a civic art gallery and museum for Invercargill had been proposed as part of a 1940 New Zealand Centennial project. The museum was built and opened in 1942 but the art gallery wing was deferred at that time due to lack of funds. It was added in 1961, leaving the city council with a quandary over how to justify supporting two art galleries. The problem was considered solved when it was decided that the Southland

⁸⁸ Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960*, p. 28; Skudder, *The First Fifty Years: Waikato Society of Arts*, pp. 39–40.

Centennial Museum and Art Gallery would avoid competing with the Invercargill Public Art Gallery by collecting only reproductions and having these on permanent exhibition in its single gallery space. In practice, however, one or two temporary art exhibitions appear to have been held in each of the 1963, '64 and '65 financial years and by 1966 the annual report listed the following exhibitions which were representative of the type and number show annually for the remainder of the sixties:

Oriental Rugs

Gothic Art

Southland Art Society

Czechoslovakian Art

Paintings by Charles MacKenzie

NZ Paintings 1965

Five Southland Potters

Here, then, we have the situation as it was by 1970. A very large head of steam was building up amongst artists and their mostly younger audiences. But the one valve where a lot of this could be released – public galleries – was mostly closed. Other outlets, such as dealers, libraries, and occasional venues were being found but naturally there was an expectation that publicly funded galleries had a leading role to play as places to experience and understand art. Some institutions like the Auckland City Art Gallery, Palmerston North Art Gallery, Hamilton Art Gallery and Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum did take a lead in offering a good variety of changing exhibitions, but aside perhaps from Auckland, their efforts were modest. As the next chapter will show, as the seventies unfolded the talk and demands of the sixties began to be put into action in a wide variety of fields. Art galleries would not be exceptions.

CHAPTER 4

Response – The 1970s

The nineteen seventies have been described as the forgettable decade, a time when it seems like nothing very much happened.¹ In fact a great deal happened. But where there had been a lot of talk, visible protest and noise in the sixties, the seventies were the decade where much of this talk was quietly put into action. So much so, that Pagan Kennedy, speaking of America, claims “the quiet revolution had far more effect on the way we live now than did the riots of the sixties”.² The seventies were also notable as times of doubt, disquiet and even conflict – of concern at the price of progress, especially as the economic boom times of the 1950s and ‘60s ended and social issues began rising to the surface. In these ways the seventies were a response to the sixties.

The decade has a special significance as the beginning of the era we live in today. It marks the point when a monolithic, monocultural (in the widest sense) society in which differences were submerged in order to first, win the war, and then, recover from it, finally dissolved. Life became more complex as we entered the current postmodern era of co-existing multiple narratives and simulacra. Reality became less certain as that offered by television took over and nostalgia became the standard experience on a scale not witnessed before. Lifestyle replaced class as a marker of social distinction as people tried to cope with an overwhelming barrage of often ambiguous information, Alvin Toffler noting as early as 1970 that Western society was breaking into endless cliques in a sub-culture explosion of “low-rider cars, wine-making, or macramé” groupings.³

Art galleries were very much influenced by these wider societal trends. While the linkages are harder to make for being less direct, they are arguably stronger than those of specific institutional or local histories and contexts. As a way of suggesting reasons why art galleries blossomed in the 1970s, as well as indicating something of their nature (since galleries were a reflection of their social and cultural milieu) this chapter begins by outlining the political and social contexts. It then moves into the cultural context of art in particular. It suggests here that the emerging artistic infrastructure and variety of disseminatory forms came to a full flowering in the seventies, driving ever more

¹ Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, p. ix; Kennedy, *Platforms*, pp. 1–3.

² *Platforms*, p. 2.

³ *Platforms*, p. 26.

strongly a public interest in art. Also under this heading is a section on artistic imperatives or concerns which both flowed on from those of the '60s but also expanded on them, once again undoubtedly driving an increased interest in New Zealand art amongst the public. The final reflection of the structure of chapter three gives an overview of New Zealand public galleries in the seventies, only here we see a far greater response to many of the forces covered to date than was noted in the last chapter.

Political and Social contexts

The Revolution Entered the Mainstream

The early seventies were a time when the revolution became institutionalised as baby boomers or their older sympathisers entered positions of power (including positions running art galleries). The excitement that flowed into the '70s from the previous decade was particularly expressed in New Zealand by the landslide election of a Labour government under Norman Kirk in 1972. Kirk was the first overtly nationalist prime minister New Zealand had seen.⁴ He claimed that New Zealand had come of age and needed to stand on its own two feet by rejecting dependency on the UK and seizing initiatives at every opportunity.⁵ And so Labour withdrew troops from Vietnam, cancelled the planned 1973 Springbok rugby tour, sent a frigate to Mururoa to protest French nuclear testing, sponsored communes (Ohu), and injected money into the arts. New Zealand's new-found maturity was such that the 1974 Commonwealth Games in Christchurch seemed, in Michael King's view, like a celebration of the country's self-confidence and optimism.⁶

It was not simply a case of Labour politics either. As Britain entered the European Common Market in 1974 New Zealand had little choice but to take the initiative of seeking new markets and alliances both in Asia and elsewhere. And it was a new breed of technocrat in the public service, not party politics, driving the social security legislation which was amongst the most innovative and humanising the country had seen, comparable to that of the 1900s and late '30s.⁷ The legislation included the Equal Pay Act (1972), a statutory domestic purposes benefit (1973), the Accident Compensation Act (1972), a family benefit introduced as part of the 1976 budget, as well as new superannuation schemes (Labour's in 1975, followed by National

⁴ King, *After the War*, p. 135.

⁵ King, *After the War*, p. 135.

⁶ King, *After the War*, p. 135.

⁷ Easton, *Pragmatism and Progress*, p. 108.

Superannuation in 1977). Themes within these and other pieces of legislation were improvements for the elderly, the family and women.⁸

Labour was not the sole political party with a new vision. The Values Party was launched in 1972, declaring in its manifesto that the country was in the grip of a new depression, one which arose not from “a lack of affluence but almost from too much of it”.⁹ Values partly rode on a new wave of environmental consciousness as, after years of damming rivers and turning wilderness to farmland, people began to have doubts about economic progress – reflected in the campaign that successfully prevented the raising of Lake Manapouri for a hydro scheme.

The Values party essentially wanted to humanise the economy. The word “humanise” is perhaps a key one for the seventies, as concerns in general moved inwards to the personal and private, to smaller worlds, self-expression, alternatives, and community. It was Tom Wolfe’s *Me Decade*. A protest movement that had looked outwards and globally in the 1960s focused on more specific and often more personal issues in the seventies.¹⁰ The ban-the-bomb movement was overtaken by a campaign for a nuclear-free Pacific. The traditional left wing view that one should selflessly champion the cause of others less fortunate (the homeless, the unemployed, starvation in the third world) was transformed into more self-oriented protest under the feminist rubric of “the personal is political”. Where the most prominent protest of the late 1960s/early ‘70s focused on Vietnam and American imperialism in general, the hot issue of the 1970s was abortion law, both in New Zealand and elsewhere.¹¹ “Domesticity...was central to many acute current issues – abortion, censorship, sexual education, women’s rights, and (in a renewed stress upon hapu and marae) Maori identity”.¹² Each of these issues included a preoccupation with the family.

Feminism, the environment, and Maori rights were *the* political issues of 1970s New Zealand. Feminism slowly gained momentum in the sixties, initially amongst well-educated professional women who set up such groups as the Society for Research on Women (1965) which promoted the idea that women’s discontent was often the result of structural problems in society, not a question of individual situations. The first “women’s liberation” organisations formed in Auckland in 1970 and further groups quickly followed in the other main centres. *Up From Under* (1970) was the first magazine to promote the new ideology and it was soon accompanied by the more radical *Broadsheet* in 1972. National Women’s Conventions were held from 1973, Germaine Greer was invited to visit the country and promptly arrested for saying “bullshit” at a public meeting, and former beauty queen Sue Kedgley gave issues a high profile, working for the National Organisation for Women and featuring regularly in the

⁸ The superannuation scheme benefited women, for example, by allowing each half of a couple to be paid separately, where previously it had been paid to the head of a household.

⁹ Dunstall, *The Social Pattern*, p. 452.

¹⁰ Oliver, “The Awakening Imagination”, p. 566.

¹¹ Kennedy, *Platforms*, p. 89.

¹² Oliver, “The Awakening Imagination”, p. 566.

media. Dunstall claims that aside from the inspiration of '60s activism, feminism was encouraged by a social climate that began favouring a greater personal freedom to “do your own thing”.¹³ The movement sought greater freedom of choice and opportunity for women. Questioning everything was another imperative of the sixties and seventies and feminism developed a variety of critiques of society, these often being studied in small, informal “consciousness-raising” groups.

The abortion debate consumed a large amount of the women’s movement’s energy and the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act of 1977 ended up a compromise that satisfied neither pro- nor anti-abortionists. However, a new consciousness about women’s rights did result in such things as equal pay legislation (1972) and entry of women into such male bastions as the medical and legal professions, as well as moves towards better childcare facilities, more sympathetic healthcare for women and protection from violence.

Maori demands for recognition assumed a higher profile and greater urgency in the late 1960s and into the '70s.¹⁴ Inspired by Black American tactics, urban radicals organised and sought a revitalisation of Maori identity. The effects of Maori activism were to convince government that the assimilationist policies proposed by the 1961 Hunn Report and subsequently followed in official policy were no longer tenable. A race relations conciliator was appointed in 1972 to deal with infringements of the Race Relations Act (1971) and the Waitangi Tribunal was created in 1975 to hear claims of redress related to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Maori language and culture was also given increased recognition in the 1970s. The radical group Nga Tamatoa presented a petition to parliament in 1971 seeking courses in Maori language in all schools and the following year Maori Language Day was instigated (later becoming a week). In 1974 the Maori Affairs Amendment Act gave official recognition to the language. And in 1978 government signalled it was prepared to specially fund Maori arts by creating the Council for Maori and South Pacific Arts (MASPAC) as a constituent of the arts council.

Maori began organising behind the scenes at iwi level to strengthen their culture and improve their economic position, but more significant to mainstream New Zealand society was that they became more visible, both through attempts to explain Maori to Pakeha (and to Maori) and via news media focus on protests. *Contemporary Maori Writing*, an anthology, was published in 1970 and writers such as Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera gave a new sort of voice to Maori. The *Tangata Whenua* series by Barry Barclay and Michael King on television in 1974 brought an exploration of Maori culture to every living room. An awareness, though not necessarily an understanding, of Maori grievances was also brought to every home with a television via news coverage of the 1975 Maori Land March led by Whina Cooper, the Ngati Whatua occupation and eviction at Bastion Point in 1977/8, and the Raglan Golf Course dispute (1978).

¹³ “The Social Pattern”, p. 481.

¹⁴ Walker, “Maori People Since 1950”, pp. 498–519.

The upshot was, Barber reports, that New Zealanders returning to the country in 1980 after a prolonged absence were “stunned by the contrast” between the Pakeha dominated society they had left in which Maori were largely invisible, regarded as curiosities, or treated as the butt of jokes, and the new profile Maori now had in New Zealand society.¹⁵ The country had moved away from a monocultural consciousness.

Pakeha society itself generally diversified, as alternative views and lifestyles were pursued in the seventies. There was the back-to-nature phenomena, manifested in concern for the environment and an interest in healthy, natural foods rarely seen here before. Health food shops and cafe/restaurants sprang up. Natural-looking, Japanese-inspired pottery with its brown, earthy glazes, and chance effects was popular. So too were handcrafts in general, such as chunky leatherware, tie-dyed and batik fabrics, and wood-turned bowls. These were sold at stalls in a new shopping phenomenon of alternative culture markets such as Victoria Market in Wellington and Paddy’s Market and The Mill in Auckland. The pre-industrial look was much sought after. “Old fashioned became fashionable”.¹⁶ The architecture of Ian Athfield and Roger Walker well reflected the spirit of the seventies, Athfield with his natural-look moulded concrete and Walker with colonial references, and both with interior spaces that were personal and intimate. Back-to-the-land moves in the setting up of communes or the shift of townspeople to lifestyle blocks also reflected the interest in nature, simpler times, intimate environments and smaller production units.¹⁷ Small and niche enterprises such as dealer art galleries, small publishers, film-making, and professional theatre and dance companies allowed lifestyle employment.

Much of this activity was pursued by the baby boomer generation. The seventies were a time when there were more singles than ever before, a culture of people not in family relationships, since they married later or not at all.¹⁸ Being single came to be seen not as a prelude to being married but a valid state in its own right. This generation had money and time to spend, and defined themselves through peer subcultures, such as an involvement with art, rather than traditional family roles.

The existence of the baby boomers also allowed the revolution to become commercialised and fashionable, spreading watered-down (even imitation) counterculture values throughout society. Denim became respectable, males under 40 grew their hair longer than it had been any time this century, and for women granny dresses, shawls, and denim overalls were popular.

Television cashed in on youth culture and anti-establishment values with “relevant” series. There were the *Young Lawyers*, the *Mod Squad*, *Charlie’s Angels* (“a male fantasy coated in a veneer of women’s liberation”),¹⁹ and the *Partridge Family* (a

¹⁵ Barber, *New Zealand: A Short History*, p. 227.

¹⁶ Kennedy, *Platforms*, p4.

¹⁷ Oliver, “The Awakening Imagination”, p. 566.

¹⁸ *Yearbook* 1993, pp. 71–4

¹⁹ Edelstein and McDonough, *The Seventies*, p. 207.

sanitised rock group family who lived in a bus). *All in the Family* and its British counterpart *Till Death do us Part* traded on the way '70s liberalism and its right-wing response was pulling families (and by extension, society) apart.

Cinema more seriously questioned mainstream values with a series of anti-hero, anti-establishment films from the late '60s that caused Hollywood to temporarily lose its confidence. Beginning approximately with *Easy Rider* and going on to Robert Altman's *MASH*, an "irreverent send-up of army buddy films [that] mocked God, country and anyone not hip enough to think it was funny to do so",²⁰ it included *Taxi Driver*, *Dirty Harry*, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* and other Jack Nicholson films, *The Godfather*, Woody Allen films, and soul-searching Vietnam movies such as *Hearts and Minds* and *The Deer Hunter*.

Conservativism, Conflict and Complexity

The picture of the seventies sketched thus far is one of a liberal environment in which the radical ideas of the sixties began to find commonplace acceptance and often enactment. But there was another side to the decade, one that began around the middle of the 1970s. The country began to enter its worst recession since the depression, following from Britain's EEC entry and the oil shocks of 1973/74. As the economic good times that had papered over the cracks in New Zealand society disintegrated, social problems became evident: unemployment, poor housing, large gaps between rich and poor, violent crime, alcoholism. At the same time the demands of Maori, women, conservationists, and aid organisations became more strident as their rising expectations came up against obstacles to social change. There had also been rising expectations of prosperity fuelled in the 1950s and '60s which were now frustrated, and the smugness of these periods was succeeded by instability, uncertainty and apprehension.

The electorate suddenly lost faith in liberalism, and in another landslide election voted in National under Robert Muldoon in 1975. Prime minister Muldoon dealt out stiff and desperate medicine as "the biggest interventionist in New Zealand history".²¹ He controlled wages and prices by freezes, and forced down interest rates. The gambles of "think big" industrial projects, heavy overseas borrowing, and several devaluations of the New Zealand dollar did not solve the country's economic woes. New Zealand's per capita income fell from one of the world's highest to below 20th place in the mid-1970s. Inflation rose to 18% in 1976. Unemployment also increased from virtually nil in 1973 to reach 25,000 in 1979, with another 31,000 on job creation schemes (though these figures were still low by world standards). Many New Zealanders simply left the country for better opportunities overseas, resulting in a massive brain drain of skilled young people.²²

²⁰ Edelstein & McDonough, *The Seventies*, p. 8.

²¹ Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p. 319.

²² The population actually dropped in 1978, the first time this had occurred in the 20th century, aside from WWII.

The political atmosphere changed to one of negativity, conflict and confrontation. Muldoon himself “seemed to regard politics as a version of ‘Gunfight at the OK Corral’”²³ and held in “contempt...the educated, the liberal, and defenders of consensus”.²⁴ He believed his constituency to be the “ordinary decent bloke”, the New Zealand equivalent of Richard Nixon’s Silent Majority, and was explicitly backed up by the Rob’s Mob group.

Examples of the Muldoon government’s heavy-handed negativity were the infamous dancing Cossacks 1975 television election advertisement which implied Labour would bring in communism through the back door; the dawn raids and street checks of Polynesians believed to be “overstayers”; and the forced removal of Maori occupiers of vacant land at Bastion Point.

Where opinion was suppressed in the fifties and often the sixties in favour of social harmony, conflicting views were now out in the open. It seemed as though everyone decided they had to have a say. Conservatives took to the streets as readily as the radicals had in the ‘60s. New Zealand became a sea of opposing groups trying to convince others of their point of view – pro- and anti-abortion; anti-apartheid and sport kept out of politics; liberal education and back-to-basics; pro-development and pro- the environment. Protestors such as anti-pornography campaigner Patricia Bartlett exhibited “the passionate need of alarmed people to convert others to their convictions”.²⁵ As we will see in succeeding chapters, even art galleries became the focus of fierce debate.

Art Contexts

A Maturing Infrastructure and Greater Accessibility of Art

Several trends characterise the development of an arts infrastructure in the seventies. The most significant, which occurred across all the arts, were a much greater community orientation and, for a time, hugely increased government funding. In addition, the nascent dealer galleries and handful of publications which gave New Zealanders increasing knowledge of and access to the art of their own country through the ‘50s and ‘60s now boomed in the 1970s.

The seventies kicked off with Arts Conference 70, organised by the arts council to debate the arts. A good deal of flak was fired in the direction of the arts council at the conference for what attendees saw as a paternalistic and centralised structure.²⁶ Whether

²³ Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, p. 316.

²⁴ Barber, *New Zealand: A Short History*, p. 192.

²⁵ Oliver, “The Awakening Imagination”, p. 567.

²⁶ Hamish Keith, “Arts Conference ’70 Report”, *Arts and Community* 6, no.6 (1970): p. 18–19.

it was a direct response to this conference is unclear²⁷ but an arts council bill was soon introduced to parliament which engendered further heated debate²⁸ and in 1974 a new QEII Arts Council Act was passed, setting up an explicit structure for funding community arts on a local basis. Three regional arts councils, which in turn had oversight of community arts councils, were created. The latter were to be formed at public meetings called on the initiative of citizens and given administrative support by local authorities. Their job was to make recommendations for the distribution of funds to the relevant regional arts council. This system replaced the previous, less formal, but more centralised structure of channelling funds to community arts through the national bodies for amateur theatre, operatic and musical comedy companies and art societies.²⁹ It was a typical reflection of the '70s leftist concern with community empowerment and the "doing your own thing" philosophy of self-expression for all.

Another government initiative in democratising the arts was to set up the Council for Recreation and Sport in 1973/74. This body held the National Seminar on Leisure 1977, and the following recommendation of the seminar in the arts area is a good illustration of thinking of the time: "Galleries, museums, department stores and hotels [should] promote plays, ballet and music...Theatres should display paintings, sculpture, pottery, weaving. Libraries should have craft demonstrations, plays, book and poetry readings....Wherever we move we should be in contact with art, so that we accept its universality."³⁰ Mike Nicolaidi, director of the arts council, had also already gone on

²⁷ Resolution 84 (out of 120!) of the conference was that a community arts service be re-established (*Arts Conference 70: Policy into Action*). A report of the National Development Conference of 1968/69 commented that the Community Arts Service of the 1940s and '50s should not have been allowed to die (Smythe, *The Role of Culture in Leisure Time in New Zealand*, p. 84). The new Labour government was keen on regional development in general, having presented this as an election policy.

²⁸ David P. Millar, *Arts and Community* 10, no.7 (October 1973); Bute Hewes, "The Three Arts Council Bills", *Arts and Community* 11, no.1 (1974): pp. 5–6; David P. Millar, "The Impossible Document" *Arts and Community* 11, no.1 (1974): pp. 7–8; "Queen Elizabeth the Second Arts Council of New Zealand Bill", *AGMANZ News* 5, no.1 (February 1974). There were many other instances of arts council bashing in *Arts and Community*, often focusing on the regionalism issue and a perception that the arts council was out of touch, though the latter seems a perennial criticism (see the 1998 report *New Vision: A Critical View of the Visual Arts Infrastructure* published by Creative New Zealand for a current example).

²⁹ *Yearbook*, 1976, p. 1013.

This is an interesting example of history repeating itself, for, as seen in chapter three, there had been government funded community arts programmes in the 1940s and '50s under the guise of the Council for Adult Education. It seems that the push for funding in the sixties then went to developing professionalism before this return to community. (Though perhaps the push for regionalism was only partly for more community arts support. It also seems to have been motivated by dissatisfaction with the Wellington-centred nature of the arts council (Hamish Keith, "The Chairman Speaks", *Action* 6 [September/October 1978]: p. 14).

³⁰ *Leisure: National Seminar – Summary of Proceedings* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Recreation and Sport, 1978), p. 9.

The arts council took up this plea by sponsoring an art exhibition in an Auckland department store. The exercise backfired when the scheme was strongly attacked by those who felt the arts council should be supporting rather than undermining existing venues (Brown, "The Visual Arts", pp. 331–2; "Report on the Formation of the New Zealand National Arts Federation", *Arts and Community* 5, no.10 [October 1969]: p. 19).

record claiming that the arts council “quite seriously, is considering...it a condition of making available travelling exhibitions to galleries that no person be allowed in wearing a black tie.”³¹

Similar rhetoric about community is recorded in the 1979 AGMANZ conference titled *Art Galleries and Museums in the Community*. The discussion was about the need for multi-purpose arts centres or museum facilities and the need for museums to emerge from the shelter of their buildings. The previous year’s conference was on communication, about reaching out to the public rather than blaming it for being poorly informed.

The artistic populism now being promoted may have helped turn on the taps of arts funding in the 1970s. Certainly the Labour government was very sympathetic to the arts and radically increased budget allocations. Concern with national identity may also have encouraged higher funding levels. In Australia the new Labour government under prime minister Gough Whitlam poured very large sums of money into the arts, quite clearly seeing it as a question of supporting Australian identity.³² With Norman Kirk’s new-dawn nationalist agenda the New Zealand equivalent was most likely a parallel response with a competitive edge.³³

Government support for the arts in general rose a staggering eight-fold from \$272,000 in 1970/71 to \$2,179,000 by 1974/75 (before a static lotteries funding of \$260,000 was added).³⁴ Of great significance to the museum community was that money again became available for building projects via the Department of Internal Affairs’ 1973 Art Galleries and Museums Scheme.³⁵ It was this that allowed rebuilding of places like the Manawatu Art Gallery, the Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre and the Bishop Suter Art Gallery.

Despite the poor economy, National maintained relatively high levels of government spending in the second half of the seventies, though annual increases for the arts fell below the rate of inflation and the art galleries and museums scheme was cut back. But perhaps government’s biggest contributions to the sector were not envisaged as such.

³¹ Mike Nicolaidi, “The Role of the Art Galleries and Museums Association: From an Arts Council Perspective”, *AGMANZ News* 3, no.1 (May 1972): p. 6.

³² Mike Nicolaidi, “Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. The Arts: A Cause for Action”, *Arts and Community* 10, no.3 (April 1973): p. 9.

³³ Margaret Taylor, who worked as an arts advisor to Whitlam, certainly holds the view that the Kirk government was playing a competitive game with Australia in the arts (interview with the author, March 1997).

³⁴ The money went to the arts council, the National Museum and National Art Gallery, the NZ Historic Places Trust, NZ Literary Fund, the Art Galleries and Museums Scheme, and the NZ Authors’ Fund. The arts council was a particular beneficiary during this period, its allocation rising from \$180,000 to \$1.5 million. Additional money from government lotteries supported the arts council as well as theatres, auditoria, and arts centres (*New Zealand Official Yearbooks* 1971–76).

³⁵ The scheme had an advisory committee of 5 members elected by AGMANZ in addition to the Secretary of the Department of Internal Affairs. It was capital projects oriented, with funds mainly directed to new buildings, refurbishment and equipment. In 1973/74, \$250,000 was allocated to the scheme, increasing to \$300,000 the following two years, though cut to \$150,000 in 1976 and maintained at \$175,000 for the rest of the decade (*New Zealand Official Yearbooks* 1974–80).

These were the various employment schemes of the late seventies and early eighties which saw large numbers of people working in museums and on community cultural projects such as mural painting or street theatre.³⁶ These SCSP, TEP and PEP schemes were very loosely operated and it was little trouble for an art gallery director to find someone who was qualified for a job, have them register as unemployed, propose a new position to the Department of Labour, and then suggest a certain unemployed person who would be very suitable.

As for the museum sector's own infrastructure organisation, AGMANZ, this does not seem of major significance for art galleries in the 1970s. There was rising dissatisfaction amongst art galleries over their lack of representation in AGMANZ, and a 1974 chart compiled in response confirmed this, showing that while there was a steady rise in gallery staff on the organisation's council since the 10–15% representation of the 1950s, in 1974 it still stood at 35% art gallery staff, 50% museum, and 15% of combined allegiance.³⁷ There remained a weighting on the museum side for the rest of the decade and while the conference themes and writing in *AGMANZ News* show concerns of museums were not all that different from those of galleries, it is probably fair to say that they lagged behind in development. (That spending on museums by local authorities was far below their allocations to art galleries is another indicator suggesting museums were operating at a lower level of activity than galleries.)³⁸

Art gallery directors came to feel they required another organisation besides AGMANZ to serve their needs, especially their growing requirement for better co-ordination and support of touring exhibitions. There was an exhibitions committee created by the arts council consisting of the four metropolitan directors, and at the insistence of the smaller galleries, the director of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, but provincial galleries continued to feel they were not well served by this structure. Art gallery directors therefore held a conference in Auckland in 1975 to discuss issues of interest such as standardising condition reporting procedures, transporting and packing touring exhibitions, an art bank, art forgeries, and government indemnification of high value exhibitions.³⁹ The meeting also decided to form the New Zealand Art Gallery Director's Council (NZAGDC). This began handling the touring of exhibitions (a

³⁶ The Temporary Employment Programme (TEP) began in February 1977, and the Student Community Service Programme (SCSP) about the same time. The Project Employment Programme (PEP) replaced TEP as a shorter term, more project oriented scheme around 1980.

³⁷ "Councils New and Old", p. 30.

³⁸ For example 1976/77 figures are as follows. New Plymouth: \$67,000 art gallery, \$18,000 museum; Palmerston North: \$23,000 art gallery, \$11,000 museum; Wanganui: \$39,000 art gallery, \$11,000 museum (Capital amounts not counted, except for the Manawatu Museum in Palmerston North for which itemised figures are not given.) However, these figures only applied in the provincial centres. The museums in Christchurch and Dunedin, with their large exhibition areas, collections, and staff numbers, received twice that given to art galleries. (Neave, *A Survey of Municipal Authority Cultural Spending*, pp. 15, 19, 23.)

³⁹ *New Zealand Art Gallery Directors' Conference, 10–11 July*, minutes of meeting (Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive).

function that seems to have been previously carried out by the arts council on occasion) from about 1979, employing an executive officer for this purpose from 1980.

Meanwhile, outside the art museum a new arts infrastructure in the form of the dealer gallery had firmly established itself. The number of dealers had simply mushroomed by the mid-70s, Peter Cape estimating a fourfold increase over a decade and suggesting there were around 50 such operations making the majority of their income from art sales in 1975.⁴⁰ The implications were threefold: rather than reproductions of old masters people were now buying original New Zealand art in sufficient quantities to keep these galleries going; the possibility for artists to earn a full-time living from selling their art had greatly increased (Cape suggesting around 60 artists in 1975, as against two or three 10 years earlier),⁴¹ stimulating the number of practising artists in the country; and contemporary New Zealand art was being much more widely seen.

The high profile Auckland dealers included two who continued from the 1960s, the Barry Lett Galleries (becoming RKS Art in 1981) and the New Vision Gallery. Added to these two were Barrington Galleries briefly in 1975/76, Peter Webb Galleries from 1976, and from 1977 Denis Cohn Gallery (see *Fig 3.1*).

The Peter McLeavey and Bett-Duncan galleries continued as mainstays of the dealer scene in Wellington through the 1970s, generally showing the higher profile artists. Two galleries joining them were the Antipodes Gallery, opening in 1970, and generally showing craft, and the Wellington Settlement Trading Company in 1973 (known usually as The Settlement), a quintessentially seventies operation combining a café, a pottery, weaving and leatherware workshop and sales area, a women's boutique (Memsahib), and an art gallery. It also held theatre performances, poetry readings and regular jazz or classical concerts.

Long-running dealers also opened in Christchurch and Dunedin. The former gained the Brooke-Gifford Gallery in 1975 and Bosshard Galleries opened in Dunedin in 1976.

With dealers strongly showing contemporary art and a new responsiveness to such work arising from public galleries there was generally little need for artists to create their own spaces or to band together for mutual support in the '70s as they had in earlier decades. Exceptions included photographers, who had not yet been admitted to any significant extent to either dealer or public gallery and so created venues of their own. PhotoForum/Wellington began exhibiting in various spaces from 1976 and the privately run operations Snaps Gallery and Real Pictures Gallery began in Auckland in 1975 and 1978 respectively.

Maori artists also did not feel part of the mainstream art world, and formed the Maori Artists and Writers Society (now known as Nga Puna Waihangā) in 1973 at Te Kaha. The society held their first major exhibition at the 1976 South Pacific Festival of the Arts in Rotorua. Post-object artists were another group who created their own venues, both because of frequent lack of interest in their work from public galleries and dealers,

⁴⁰ *New Zealand Painting Since 1960*, p. 11. Many of these would have been craft outlets, however.

⁴¹ *New Zealand Painting Since 1960*, p. 11.

as well as out of ideological preference against showing in established art institutions. Their venues included the Artists Co-op in a disused wool store in Wellington in 1978 and the 100m² gallery in Auckland 1979–81.

The new crop of publications in or just before the seventies, beginning with Brown and Keith's scene-setting 1969 *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting*, complemented the dealer gallery explosion, allowing prospective buyers to purchase in confidence and be far more knowledgeable about what they were looking at on public gallery walls than ever previously. More than any other factor these new publications created the first truly informed audience for New Zealand art.

Brown and Keith's book was matched by an equally authoritative volume on New Zealand art in 1971, Gil Docking's *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting*. This was essentially a book on artists, with far less interpretive framework than Brown and Keith's work, Docking writing that he "held no theory about what New Zealand painting should look like – whether or not there was a characteristic style in painting which could be clearly recognised as belonging distinctively to New Zealand. ...I wanted the evidence, the facts, to speak for themselves."⁴²

Gordon Brown also wrote important texts on the history of New Zealand art in the catalogues accompanying his *New Zealand Painting* series of three touring exhibitions.⁴³ These covered 1900 to 1960 in 20 year bites and their social history rather than artist-centred approach, densely informative texts, small size, and low budget appearance meant these publications did not gain the same popular profile as the aforementioned publications.

The *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History*, launched in 1972, also did not achieve a high profile but was significant as a reflection of the belief that New Zealand art was now worthy of academic study. Its circulation was mainly limited to academia.

The magazine that was read by nearly everyone in the art scene was *Art New Zealand*. Its founding in 1976 was perhaps the arts publishing landmark of the decade, as it created a topical voice for New Zealand art, the one news source for the whole country (albeit with an Auckland bias). Appearing in *Art New Zealand* was akin to being written about by *Rolling Stone* or *Time* magazine. The editorial stance of publisher Peter Webb and editor Ross Fraser to address the "educated public", in the belief that it was "not necessary to 'write down' to New Zealanders" reflected the new maturity in New Zealand art audiences.⁴⁴

There were, though, still those who were curious about art but knew little or nothing of the subject, and the ever prolific Peter Cape gained perhaps the greatest market share of this audience with *New Zealand Painting Since 1960* (1979), as well as his *Prints*

⁴² Docking, *Two Hundred Years of New Zealand Painting*, p. 12.

⁴³ Gordon H. Brown, *New Zealand Painting 1900–1920: Traditions and Departures* (Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1972); *New Zealand Painting 1920–1940: Adaptation and Nationalism* (Wellington: Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand, 1975); *New Zealand Painting 1940–1960: Conformity and Dissension*.

⁴⁴ Fraser, "The First Year of *Art New Zealand*", p. 37.

and *Printmakers in New Zealand* (1974) and 1980 book on sculpture and craft, *Please Touch*. These were not books that extended the critical interpretation of New Zealand art in any serious way, though they usefully reproduced a large number of works. Their real contribution was to proselytise New Zealand art to a wide audience.

Other publications included public gallery monographs, which although still few by today's standards were a vast increase on the previous decade, especially as provincial galleries entered the fray;⁴⁵ *PhotoForum* magazine (1974–), which was enormously influential on the development of New Zealand photography; and Allen and Curnow's *New Art: Some Recent New Zealand Sculpture and Post-object Art* (1976).

New Zealanders also learnt about New Zealand art through the education system for the first time in the '70s. A new School Certificate syllabus was introduced in 1974 with a section on contemporary New Zealand art, including Maori art. Art became a University Entrance subject in 1969 too, the previous senior level qualification being the Preliminary Diploma of Fine Arts examination which applicants to the Elam and Ilam schools of fine arts were compelled to take.⁴⁶

Artistic Imperatives

Part of the heightened interest in art, and consequently art galleries, in the seventies must have been derived from the societal concerns of New Zealand art of the period. To borrow a seventies term, New Zealand art became "relevant". It also became multifarious, so it could express the variety of concerns different New Zealanders had. And new forms became accessible, so that anyone could have a go, leading to a more personally driven interest in the work of others.

The twin themes of nationalism and internationalism in the visual arts have already been mentioned in the previous chapter. Mutually exclusive on the surface, they served the not unrelated needs of New Zealanders for an expression of identity on the one hand, and a sense of maturity in being part of the wider world on the other. Brown and Keith's *An Introduction to New Zealand Painting* popularised the nationalist view that New Zealand artists should be judged in local terms, particularly in the way they captured something unique about this country.

In combination, the *Introduction to New Zealand Painting*, Docking's *Two Hundred Years*, and to some extent *Art New Zealand*, reinforced and developed the canon of New Zealand art that Tomory had begun to develop in the 1960s. This was yet another reason for the interest in public galleries – with the canon now well established, the public wanted a closer look at its members. Public galleries obliged, giving artists like

⁴⁵ Examples include Milan Mrkusich, Auckland City Art Gallery (1972); Colin McCahon, Auckland City Art Gallery (1972); M.T. Woollaston, Manawatu Art Gallery (1973); Ralph Hotere, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (1974); David Armitage, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (1974); Colin McCahon, Manawatu Art Gallery (1975); McCahon's *Necessary Protection*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (1977); Tony Fomison, Dowse (1979); Don Driver, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (1979); plus Peebles, Lusk and Sutton at the Dowse.

⁴⁶ *Art in Schools: The New Zealand Experience*, pp. 42–3.

McCahon and Woollaston their first major survey exhibitions, and often accompanying these with catalogues (the monographs mentioned above).

However, at the very moment galleries were catching up with the past – the earlier “heroic era” in which artists battled against the odds to create *The Great New Zealand Landscape* – many younger artists followed the spirit of the ‘70s and turned to more intimate, domestic concerns. There were Michael Smither, Jacqueline Fahey, David Armitage and Jeffrey Harris’s disturbing domestic or family scenes, Illingworth’s alienated couples, often in a suburban setting, Clairmont’s wild interiors, quiet domestic scenes by Glenda Randerson, Robin White and Joanna Harris (now Paul), and Ian Scott and Richard Killeen’s deadpan depictions of bland and anonymous suburbia (followed by Nigel Brown’s more emotive versions at the end of the decade).

Also in keeping with the ‘70s, many artists of the period expressed disturb and disquiet. These include most in the above list (excepting perhaps the women artists Randerson, White and Harris) as well as Brent Wong and Alvin Pankhurst. Wong’s vacant landscapes with abandoned-looking buildings and often towering, portentous structures in the sky were hugely popular. Illingworth’s strange, schematic figures also suggested that something was wrong with our society, but unlike McCahon, offered no solution. Killeen and Scott’s flat, hard-edged depictions of suburbia were equally disturbing and ambiguous, making no overt comment, but being “too clean for comfort”.⁴⁷

A small number of artists did speak with passion, living out the romantic stereotype of the driven, obsessed, visionary artist. They included Clairmont, Fomison and Maddox, the former two particularly attracting a cult following amongst bohemian youth as the perfect embodiment of 1960s and ‘70s anti-establishment values. These were artists who gave substance to the popular notion of art as strongly emotional self-expression.

At the other end of the spectrum were a group of abstract artists who fulfilled New Zealanders’ interest in being part of an international scene. Their work was generally cool and formalist (in contrast to McCahon’s impassioned and narrative semi-abstract). They included Walters, Mrkusich, Peebles, Driver, and Albrecht as well as a young group of Auckland artists such as Ron Left, Ian Scott, Geoff Thornley, Philip O’Sullivan, Richard Killeen, and Stephen Bambury who were centred around Petar Vuletic, a dealer who strenuously pushed abstraction.

The democratisation of media was another feature of New Zealand art in the seventies which both reflected and created greater popular interest in art. Aside from Cape’s *Prints and Printmakers*, all the major publications on New Zealand art in the seventies were restricted to painting, yet printmaking, photography, and the crafts all enjoyed a boom in popularity during this decade of high participation in the arts. They were the democratic arts, art that anyone could do. While practising such media may have involved the learning of techniques, it did not necessarily require several years of

⁴⁷ Leonard, “Mod Cons”, p. 164.

learning about art history and aesthetics as did painting and sculpture. Photography, pottery, jewellery and textile arts (though less so printmaking) had their own histories and aesthetics lying outside the academy.

Printmaking took off in the late 1960s/early 70s, undoubtedly aided by the Print Council. This organisation widely toured an exhibition of prints almost annually during its lifespan from 1967 to 1976.⁴⁸ Cape's *Prints and Printmakers in New Zealand* probably helped cement the recognition given to contemporary prints. Featured in his book are the sort of artists commonly shown in public galleries at the time, including Barry Cleavin, Kate Coolahan, John Drawbridge, Pat Hanly, Gary Tricker, Mervyn Williams, and (not in the book) Robin White.⁴⁹ Prints were especially popular in provincial galleries because of their affordability for the collection,⁵⁰ a feature which also helped them fill a market need of the newly art literate audiences no longer satisfied with Brueghel or Impressionist reproductions to decorate their homes.⁵¹

Photography as an art form also gained rapid interest and support in the seventies, both in New Zealand and elsewhere. The organisation PhotoForum was a strong force in this growth, operating first from Auckland in 1974 and then Wellington. Its magazine of the same name was distributed nationally and inspired a generation of individuals, many of whom had no art training, to take up a camera and exhibit or publish their work. Both private and collectively run photography galleries sprung up (as noted above) to meet the demand amongst photographers to exhibit and to promote the medium, especially while public galleries declined to accept photography as art.

There is very little documentation on the development of ceramics, jewellery and fabric art in New Zealand.⁵² Pottery grew as a popular art form after the war, especially in association with adult and tertiary education. The New Zealand Society of Potters was created in 1965 and potters' societies formed in towns such as Palmerston North in the 1960s. *New Zealand Potter* was published from 1958 and annual *Studio Potters* exhibitions were organised by potters from 1957. These were held in venues such as museums, community halls, the CSA and Academy of Fine Arts, as well as some public galleries, including the Auckland City Art Gallery (1960) and Palmerston North Art

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Grierson, *New Zealand Women Printmakers: Zonta International Touring Exhibition Celebrating Suffrage Centennial 1993* (Auckland: Fisher Gallery, 1993), pp. 8–9.

⁴⁹ Cape was slightly too early to represent a new generation of sophisticated Auckland artists who may not have seen themselves as printmakers as such but who used its processes to create funky and witty images from the early to mid-seventies on. They include Wong Sing Tai, Denys Watkins, Paul Hartigan, and later Dick Frizzell and Gavin Chilcott (Pound, *New Image*).

⁵⁰ Though even the Auckland City Art Gallery became interested, touring a survey exhibition of contemporary New Zealand printmaking *New Zealand Prints 1977*. A catalogue accompanied the exhibition.

⁵¹ Oddly, it wasn't until around 1980 before the dedicated print galleries and print workshops for artists were founded. Ginko was started in 1981 and Portfolio Gallery in 1979.

⁵² Perhaps the best, if narrowly focused, sources are Mason, *Ten Years of Potting in New Zealand*; Beatson and Beatson, *The Crane and the Kotuku*; Cape (*Artists and Craftsmen in New Zealand*; *Please Touch*) offers little historical information but his books are moments in history themselves and give a picture of artists working at the time.

Gallery (1964).⁵³ Peter Bland commented in 1966 on the reasons for pottery's popularity: "New Zealand potters are largely good, solid, middle-class people with plenty of time, leisure, and – by overseas standards – money. ...Pottery is a social activity. It cuts across the boredom and isolation of New Zealand suburban living. It offers – thank goodness – a creative communal sharing. This is the reason why it's taken such a big hold in New Zealand. It's a small scale social revolution that's grown out of a sensible resentment against the human and aesthetic sterility of the quarter acre."⁵⁴

Potting in the 1970s became both more commercial and entered the public art gallery more consistently, as we will see in the focus gallery chapters. The two trends were probably linked, for Cape believes that had the public not been prepared to buy pottery it would never have gained the popularity it did.⁵⁵ He estimates that in 1978 there were as many as 2,000 full-time potters in the country to cater to the craze for hand-made domestic ware.⁵⁶

Textile arts such as weaving and embroidery certainly boomed in the seventies, to the point where they are almost synonymous with the decade. Their development is also poorly documented but from the evidence of exhibition listings they appear to have emerged later than ceramics. Both ceramics and fabric art are perfect '70s media – reflecting an interest in "domestic arts", democratic self-expression, and a past era of simpler technology.

The seventies interest in participation, community, and the everyday also found its reflection in the more intellectual work known as conceptual or post-object art.⁵⁷ Centred mainly around Auckland and Canterbury universities,⁵⁸ post-object art asserted a new role for the viewer as active participant in constructing meaning. Viewers were often involved in the making of work, or were at least implicated in its activation or performance in some way. Post-object artists sought to redefine art as activity rather than object, to bring art into life and life into art. Their work typically involved performance because it brought the artist and viewer into the same experience. Similarly it often used environments or installations where viewers could physically interact and move around within an artwork. Process frequently became the work of art, any objects created being expendable and photographic or video documentation the only tangible record. As the name suggests, post-object art was opposed to the notion of art as commodity and as an aesthetic object that stood outside everyday life. Such work neatly

⁵³ Mason, *Ten Years of Potting*.

⁵⁴ Mason, *Ten Years of Potting*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Peter Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 78.

⁵⁶ Cape, *Please Touch*, p. 81.

⁵⁷ Barton, *Post-object Art in New Zealand*.

⁵⁸ Post-object art in New Zealand grew from high levels of international awareness at Elam and Ilam in the late 1960s/early '70s (Green, "Modernism and Modernization", pp. 156–8) and with visiting lecturers, cross-Tasman art events like ANZART, and involvement in global art works or events, the movement allowed New Zealand to genuinely participate as equals in the international art scene for the first time.

mirrored what many directors in provincial galleries were trying to do in involving viewers and in their interest in process rather than finished object, though whether it was an influence on them, or just a case of shared influences, is difficult to say.

Given the political protests of the 'seventies, a hunger to see feminist and contemporary Maori art might have been expected. However, neither were much in evidence during the decade, especially not in mainstream venues or publications, though it is very probable that women were shown more often in dealers and public galleries than in the '60s. A quick scan of exhibition lists and publications yields the following women artists whose work was seen most often in the period: Evelyn Page, Rita Angus, Doris Lusk, Olivia Spencer Bower, and Louise Henderson (all older generation artists) as well as Vivian Lynn, Joanna Harris, Jacqueline Fahey, Kate Coolahan, Susan Chaytor, Jan Nigro, Glenda Randerson, and Robin White. Nevertheless, one indication of the invisibility of women artists is that even at 1980 in the Jim Barr and Mary Barr publication *Contemporary New Zealand Painters, vol.1, A–M*, of the 22 artists only 3 were women, and two of these, Angus and Lusk, belonged to a prior generation.

As for Maori artists, they tended to work behind the scenes, rarely exhibiting in public galleries in this decade. Many were deeply involved in teaching, art commissions (Fred Graham), or working on innovative marae projects (Cliff Whiting and Para Matchitt).⁵⁹

The Galleries

The art gallery response to the seventies was to belatedly throw off a conservative outlook in order to meet the demand from new audiences for art and activities that engaged with the present. They shifted from a passive relationship with audiences to an active one as they rapidly stepped up their programmes and offered new services. The new government funding for capital projects also allowed many to radically upgrade their premises so that physical renewal coincided with this renewal of spirit.

The Four Metropolitan Galleries

The Auckland City Art Gallery continued in a league of its own for this decade, consolidating, enlarging and placing itself on the world stage by presenting a string of blockbuster exhibitions from overseas.⁶⁰ The National Art Gallery and Robert McDougall Art Gallery finally stirred out of their torpor, and incremental change occurred at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. All four demonstrated a realisation that their collections were in poor shape by giving high priority to professional conservation and (at the National Art Gallery and McDougall at least) improving collection records.

⁵⁹ Adsett, Whiting and Ihimaera, *Mataora: The Living Face*, pp. 32–3.

⁶⁰ Some information on galleries in this section is sourced from the author's personal knowledge.

At the other end of the back-of-house / public interface spectrum, all became interested in “outreach” activities.

The Auckland City Art Gallery’s enlargements were the opening of the Edmiston Wing and associated renovations in 1971 to yield a doubling of exhibitions space as well as creating a sculpture garden outside the entrance, air-conditioning for the galleries, new administration areas, conservation studios, print room, new reference library, and book and coffee shops. The result was, in Tony Green’s view, an art gallery “which must rank, as plant, as one of the best in the southern hemisphere”.⁶¹

The superlatives were also rolled out for the programme of international blockbusters seen at the gallery in the 1970s, many engineered by director Richard Hirsch (1972–1974) who came with extensive overseas contacts. Hamish Keith described the 1971 *Recent British Painting* from the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation, as “the most important national exhibition to come to this country”⁶² and Bute Hewes spoke of exhibitions⁶³ such as *Morris Louis* (1970), *100 Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum* (1971, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery toured); *French Medieval Art* (1973); and *John Constable* (1973) as “the like of which had never been seen in New Zealand before”.⁶³ Attendance records were broken first by *Medieval French Art*, then by *Constable*, and exceeded again by *Vincent Van Gogh* (1975). Other large overseas exhibitions were *Some Recent American Art* (1974) and *Fernand Leger* (1976). *Recent British Painting*, *100 Master Drawings* and *French Medieval Art* toured New Zealand but the others were restricted to Auckland only.

These international exhibitions were controversial with local artists who felt that the gallery should function more as a showcase for contemporary New Zealand art,⁶⁴ a perennial complaint with the institution. Hirsch’s response was that he was quite deliberately “stressing world art” and “running a non-coercive educational institution”.⁶⁵

The gallery did continue to fulfil a national role both by touring some of the international exhibitions and producing major surveys of New Zealand work.⁶⁶ The latter include *New Zealand Art of the Sixties: A Royal Visit Exhibition* (1970), *New Zealand Drawing 1976*, and a series of major retrospectives on McCahon (1972), Mrkusich (1972) and Woollaston (1973) as well as historical figures like Alfred Sharpe (1973).

⁶¹ Anthony S.G. Green, “Thoughts at the End of 1971”. *Arts and Community* 8, no.1 (January 1972): p. 10.

⁶² Gamble and Shaw, *Auckland City Art Gallery*, p. 55.

⁶³ Bute Hewes, “Mr Hirsch Meets the Clobbering Machine”, p. 12.

⁶⁴ Hewes, “Mr Hirsch Meets the Clobbering Machine”, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Hewes, “Mr Hirsch Meets the Clobbering Machine”, p. 12.

⁶⁶ The touring exhibitions included *Art of the Space Age* (1970), *Contemporary French Tapestries*, *Brassai*, *Recent British Painting*, *Contemporary Australian Prints* (all 1971), *Scultura Italiana* (1972), *Bill Brandt* (1972), *French Medieval Tapestries*, *New Photography USA*, *Luc Peire*, *Hundertwasser* (all 1973), *David Moore Retrospective* (1977), *Diane Arbus* (1977). Most of these seem to have occurred in the first half of the decade.

The New Zealand exhibitions may not have satisfied the complaint of local artists, for they were mostly retrospectives, but there was on average at least one exhibition a year featuring young New Zealand artists as well as the *Project Programme* series running from 1975 to 1978 which featured short slots of a who's who of post-object artists, including David Mealing (*plate 4.1*), Nicholas Spill, Frank Womble, Bruce Barber, Jim Allen, Andrew Drummond, and Philip Dadson. Despite the importance of the series in the development of this strand of New Zealand art it was not perceived by the institution as a significant part of its programme and goes unmentioned in its 1988 centennial history.⁶⁷

Also downplayed was Outreach, a community arts centre set up in 1975 in Ponsonby Rd under the wing of the gallery.⁶⁸ Workshops, events, lectures and an extensive tuition programme were run at this venue entirely separately from the gallery operation. It may be that Outreach was a city council initiative placed for convenience sake under gallery administration but whatever the case it suggests that the Auckland City Art Gallery managed to have it both ways by creating community arts programmes but not letting them “contaminate” the high modernist, prestigious art museum it perhaps aspired to be.

The mid-to-late seventies under the directorship of Ernest Smith (1974–1979) seems to be marked more by consolidation and research than by the crowd pulling blockbusters and major retrospectives of the earlier part of the decade. Art conservation became a priority and the department was expanded, with a national conservator position established at the gallery in 1976. Several research-intensive exhibitions were



Plate 4.1 David Mealing, *A jumble sale*, 1976. Auckland City Art Gallery *Project Programme 6*.

⁶⁷ Gamble and Shaw, *Auckland City Art Gallery*.

⁶⁸ This does gain a mention in Gamble and Shaw's *Auckland City Art Gallery*, but only a brief one (p. 57).

Changes to Art Galleries in the 1970s

Gallery	New institution?	New Building or Extensions?	Name today
Auckland City Art Gallery	no	major expansion	Auckland Art Gallery
Waikato Art Gallery	merged	new	Waikato Museum of Art and History *
Rotorua Art Gallery	yes	no	Rotorua Museum of Art and History*
Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre	no	new	unchanged
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery	yes	new	unchanged
Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum	no	extensions	Hawke's Bay Museum ⁺
Hastings Cultural Centre	yes	new	Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre ⁺
Sarjeant Gallery	no	no	unchanged
Palmerston North Art Gallery	no	new	Manawatu Art Gallery
Wairarapa Arts Centre	yes	new	Wairarapa Arts and History Centre*
Dowse Art Gallery	yes	new	Dowse Art Museum
National Art Gallery	no	alterations	Museum of NZ Te Papa Tongarewa*
Bishop Suter Art Gallery	no	new	Suter Art Gallery
Robert McDougall Art Gallery	no	no	unchanged
Aigantighe Art Gallery	no	extensions	unchanged
Dunedin Public Art Gallery	no	extensions	unchanged
Invercargill Public Art Gallery	no	no	Anderson Park Art Gallery
Southland Centennial Museum and Art Gallery	no	no	Southland Museum and Art Gallery
TOTALS (18 institutions)	5 new, 1 merged	8 new buildings, 4 major extensions	

Fig 4.1

* name of institution gallery evolved or merged into

⁺ both parts of the Hawkes Bay Cultural Trust

also organised, including the *New Zealand Drawing 1977*, *The Genius of Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, and *The Two World of Omai*.

The Auckland City Art Gallery's taking on a defacto national gallery role from the 1950s was not difficult to do with the real National Art Gallery's resourcing at a pathetic level. By the 1970s it had become clear to all that funding, staffing levels and a building which might have been satisfactory for a national gallery in the 1930s, or at least tolerable, were no longer so. In its annual reports to parliament the National Art Gallery director and board chairman repeated each year from 1969 that funding was inadequate. In particular, that the building was substandard and staffing was far too low for a national gallery.⁶⁹ The 1969 report went so far as to suggest that a new building was required, and this became the ultimate aim of the board.

Government did begin to listen to the complaints, for acquisition funding was increased by virtue of a special purchase grant made available jointly to the National Art Gallery and National Museum from 1972. (Before this the amount was so low that the gallery had to save up to three years worth of allocation before it had a useful sum for purchases.) Money to refurbish the "Blue Room" as a temporary exhibitions gallery came in 1977/78 and air-conditioning for two small galleries was made possible with a Frank Canaday grant.

Staffing at the National Gallery increased too, and became more professional in the sense of greater specialisation of roles. The gallery began the decade with a director, curator, assistant curator, clerk, part time typist, carpenter, assistant carpenter and six attendants. The director was Melvin (Pat) Day, appointed in 1968 to replace retiring director Stewart MacLennan. With the curator attending largely to conservation and exhibition installation, Day seems to have taken on the intellectual role of curator, selecting work for exhibitions and writing catalogues. Day complained of poor funding and of being severely hamstrung by an Academy of Fine Arts-dominated gallery council.⁷⁰ His belief that the main function of a public gallery was to show the collection, and that temporary exhibitions were a nuisance since they required "unproductive" removing and then re-hanging of the collection,⁷¹ suggest there was also an issue of vision for the institution.

The addition of Ian Hunter as education officer in 1972 was a significant appointment.⁷² Hunter brought a very high level of energy to the position, establishing an education gallery in which to both show children's work and use for didactic purposes. He also ran seminars, weekend and monthly film screenings, holiday art classes, artists workshops for secondary school students, and instigated volunteer

⁶⁹ Complaints about the building were the lack of air-conditioning, the high levels of unfiltered daylight, poor storage space, lack of conservation area and a lack of exhibition space for temporary exhibitions.

⁷⁰ To David Millar (letter from David Millar to the writer, September 1996).

⁷¹ *Report of the Board of Trustees, National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum, for the Year Ended 31 March 1972* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1972), p. 9.

⁷² This was an established position at the gallery but appears to have been unfilled for some years before Hunter arrived.

helpers for special exhibitions (later established as docents). Although Hunter took a two year study break, Andrew Drummond continued in his absence with a similar level of energy, and then as the education officer who replaced Hunter when he was appointed curator in 1978.

Towards the end of the decade new positions were created at the gallery, including exhibitions officer, registrar, curator of works on paper, conservator (unfilled for some years), and gallery assistant. Nick Spill was exhibitions officer and the combination of three post-object artists on staff in the form of Spill, Drummond and Hunter meant that a particular passion and excitement about art, especially for contemporary forms, began emanating from the National Art Gallery in the late seventies.⁷³

By the close of the seventies the gallery had moved from the “barely measurable” level of activity described by Tomory⁷⁴ to a frenetic level, installing, for example, 50 exhibitions in the 1979/80 year, compared to 9 in 1970. Day left in late 1978 for a specially created position of government art historian and Hunter took over as acting director until Luit Bieringa arrived as director at the end of 1979.

Hunter turned the same energy he displayed as education officer to running the gallery as a whole, employing large numbers of TEP and PEP workers in 1979 to fill positions of designer, photographer, curatorial assistants, photography curator, women’s art archivist, registration assistants, exhibition assistants, and others. These enabled him to carry out building refurbishment, produce a gallery newsletter (in common with many other galleries at about this time) and run the ambitious exhibition programme. Hunter was deeply interested in public art and community participation and employed a small army of community arts workers, including 12 art students who taught art classes in community centres, a team of dancers who were used to liven up school visits by interpreting art works in dance, and musicians in parks. In a very short space of time an institution which risked becoming an historical curiosity was transformed into something approaching an activist arts centre. This new phase was, however, a brief and not very tenable one for a national art gallery. With the appointment of a permanent director and the loss of the employment schemes the focus under Bieringa switched to gaining the prestige and reputation an institution such as the Auckland City Art Gallery enjoyed, albeit with a more contemporary emphasis.

The Robert McDougall Art Gallery ran a roughly parallel course to the National Art Gallery, though starting its programme of change earlier with the appointment of Brian Muir as director in 1969. Muir made up for lost time at the gallery during his term to 1978. He had artificial lighting installed to replace the largely natural light system, and air conditioning introduced to some of the gallery spaces. He concentrated on

⁷³ Their presence did not result in any great number of post-object exhibitions however, Barton noting the *Videostore*, a downtown shop installation, and the *Word in Art* exhibition, both in 1977, while Spill organised *Art in the Mail* at the Manawatu Art Gallery (*Post-object Art in New Zealand*, p. 31). All three men expressed frustration about working at the National Art Gallery, Drummond resigning twice and Spill making his resignation into an artwork, *Leaving the National Art Gallery of New Zealand forever* (1978).

⁷⁴ op. cit., chapter three.

developing a collection policy and adding to the collection, especially of New Zealand works. The acquisitions budget increased from \$2,000 in 1968/69 to \$30,000 in 1974, and the collection grew from 610 items in 1969 to 1,791 in 1976. Attendances also rose three-fold from 1968 to 1972 according to figures published in the gallery's *Surveys*.⁷⁵ For the first time the gallery managed to organise a touring exhibition, the 1975 Russell Clark retrospective, and from then on became active in touring its own exhibitions.

Muir managed with a very small staff of an assistant (essentially curatorial), secretary, several custodians and, for a time, an exhibitions officer. It was only in 1979 when Rodney Wilson had become director that positions of curator, education officer, exhibitions officer and conservator were approved by the city council. At about the same time a large number of TEP scheme staff were also employed, with 131 listed between 1978 and 1982.⁷⁶ Many were employed on collection management backlog tasks as Wilson worked on getting the gallery up to professional standards, including further building upgrading.

As for community activities, a friends organisation was formed in 1971 and some members seem to have acted as exhibition guides. Structured education programmes were begun in the early 1970s using teachers college students “on section” for periods of four weeks. Where the gallery really stepped out though was in operating an OutReach scheme in the early ‘70s. This included the fairly conventional concept of regular concerts and readings in the gallery but also involved taking small exhibitions of work from the permanent collection and displaying them at business and industrial locations in the city. A gallery van was purchased to enable staff to travel to remote areas of Canterbury to deliver OutReach programmes. Within Christchurch, activities recorded in 1979 were similar to those operated by the National Art Gallery. They included: taking artworks to community centres, hospitals and old people’s homes and involving audiences there with discussion, poetry and song; presenting musical and theatrical groups to venues such as schools and kindergartens; organising visits and performances around the city by out-of-town performers like poet Gary McCormick; and painting murals at the hospital.⁷⁷

The Dunedin Public Art Gallery also had an outreach programme and much ambition in the area of community involvement, but not a great deal came to fruition. In fact the gallery did not have a particularly good decade, with attendances dropping by half from 1972 to 1979 and chronically poor resourcing. (The latter began with a funding crisis in 1970 when acquisition reserves had to be used for operations. The problem was only overcome with city council assistance, improved revenue and a donation by local citizens.)

⁷⁵ Such a leap, from 35,600 in 1968 to 101,700 in 1972 seems too large to be true, particularly given that visitor counting is such a notoriously unreliable practice. However, the evenly stepped increase for each of the intervening years does give the figures a measure of credibility.

⁷⁶ *The Robert McDougall Art Gallery: A Profile of the Art Gallery of the City of Christchurch*, p. 43.

⁷⁷ (Robert McDougall Art Gallery) *Bulletin* 7 (January/February 1980): p. 1–2.

L. Charles Lloyd was director from 1971 to 1980. He was formerly a conservator and his two main ambitions were to run a conservation facility and training course at the gallery and to expand the gallery into a national arts centre. He was successful in the first area, though not without many difficulties. These were mainly to do with money as it could only be run on a self-funding basis, with the result that by the end of the decade the course was still operated on a shoestring, though it was also offering a national conservation service.

The arts centre concept involved a theatre, conference hall, new galleries and a coffee shop. Unfortunately the city council would not support an application for government funding for such a project in 1971. When the new Labour government began offering more for capital projects a successful application was made, but only for limited extensions to house education services (which were subsequently built).

An education officer was appointed in 1972 who ran art classes which were very successful in generating income. By 1975 two full-time, self-funding art tutors were employed, though not for long, as the education section foundered by 1976/77.⁷⁸ The Outreach service consisted of a van and driver/lecturer who took exhibitions throughout Otago and Canterbury, mainly to schools.

Lloyd followed Dr de Beer's earlier attempt to have a collection policy formalised.⁷⁹ He pointed out that the large volume of decorative arts made the institution as much a museum as an art gallery and the institution should decide which of the two it was. He also suggested that collecting of historical European works should halt due to lack of funds, and historical and contemporary New Zealand and Australian works be the area of concentration. However, Lloyd never stuck to his own recommendations, though he acquired some historical and contemporary New Zealand work. His sympathy for the contemporary was not whole-hearted either, Entwisle writing that the gallery's anti-modernist reputation was only reinforced when Lloyd created a crude paint-your-own McCahon display⁸⁰ and there were few contemporary exhibitions organised by the gallery, though touring ones were taken.

The decade ended on a "lull" in Entwisle's words.⁸¹ The 1980/81 director's report noted that some staff positions were under threat due to lack of funds and presented a table showing the gallery's funding to be pathetic compared with the other metropolitan galleries. While Dunedin had a lower population than the other four main centres, the proportion of rates revenue allocated per capita was half that of Christchurch and only just over a third of Auckland's.

⁷⁸ *Dunedin Public Art Gallery Society Annual Report 1976/77*.

⁷⁹ q.v. chapter three.

⁸⁰ Entwisle, *Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery*, p. 39; Jim Barr and Mary Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 31.

⁸¹ Entwisle, *Treasures of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery*, p. 39.

Ambitious Provincial Galleries

The Dowse Art Gallery, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Sarjeant Gallery, Manawatu Art Gallery, and Waikato Art Museum may be counted as the five smaller institutions making a name for themselves at a national level during the seventies. Of these the Dowse and Govett-Brewster were entirely new galleries (opened 1971 and 1970 respectively), Manawatu built on a reputation it had already established in the sixties as well as gaining a new building, the Sarjeant underwent radical change, and Waikato was restructured as a combined gallery/museum.

The Dowse, Govett-Brewster and Manawatu art galleries are covered in detail in the following chapters so only brief comments are made here. The three all formed in rapidly growing “new” cities where there was little tradition of culture. Though founded in quite different ways, they were all created out of a desire to plant the seeds of art in a cultural desert. Lower Hutt, home of the Dowse Art Gallery, was a case in point. Not a provincial city in the strict sense, it was nevertheless a centre that had to play second fiddle as a dormitory town to its close neighbour, Wellington. Yet while the capital city had far greater cultural amenities than Lower Hutt, it did not have an up-to-date art gallery, as we have seen. In response to these circumstances the Dowse played a multiple game. On the one hand it functioned as something of a community arts centre, with a strong programme of cultural events such as concerts and performances unrelated to its exhibition programme. To serve a local audience largely unknowledgeable about art there were also numerous talks, workshops, and other participatory events designed to get people involved with the exhibitions. The exhibitions themselves included easy-to-relate-to work, especially craft, and themed fun exhibitions. But the gallery also had a more sophisticated Wellington audience and held many exhibitions – mainly solo shows – of contemporary New Zealand artists. These were significant exhibitions in terms of the country’s growing sense of art history and filled a gap in this respect, for they were exhibitions largely unattempted by the metropolitan galleries. In local terms they served a purpose of giving the gallery a national reputation in the visual arts and thereby brought kudos to the city.

The Manawatu and Govett-Brewster art galleries shared some of the characteristics of the Dowse. Manawatu, for example, also took on a community arts centre role and was known for its popular art events, such as kite days and children’s holiday workshops. These became particularly frenetic in the year-long fundraising campaign for the new building (opened in 1977). Like the Dowse and Govett-Brewster, the Manawatu Art Gallery seemed constantly in the news with some controversy or other and here these mainly related to disagreements with city councillors over the need for and cost of a new building. All three institutions also had regular, highly public, run-ins with city councillors over contemporary art, for while these galleries found support with new audiences there remained another generation who found the art shown an anathema. It wasn’t only councillors who felt a proprietary connection either. Both the Dowse and Govett-Brewster had headline-making conflicts with their local art societies

in their first years of formation as they fought to break the hold of conservatism. But in Manawatu's case the art society that created it was different. In a city with a university and teacher's college the society was populated by young professionals who wanted to see good quality art rather than by an older generation mainly interested in painting as a Sunday afternoon hobby. Here it was very much a case of a gallery being formed and sustained in response to new, well-educated audiences. In New Plymouth and Lower Hutt those audiences were, to some extent, elsewhere.

Manawatu also showed a strong programme of contemporary art and produced a number of significant touring exhibitions and catalogues, including *Colin McCahon: "Religious" Works 1946–1972*, *M.T. Woollaston, The Active Eye* and *Art in the Mail*. But of the three galleries, the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery took the strongest line in showing contemporary work. It wasn't that there was necessarily a greater audience for it in New Plymouth, but locals did come to appreciate that the gallery was held in high regard in the art world and how this added prestige to their city. Probably more important in this respect though was the ability of the Govett-Brewster to bring in overseas exhibitions (*100 Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum*, for example) and show others imported by the Auckland City Art Gallery which normally only went to the four main centres (*Art of the Space Age* and *Recent British Painting*).

The Sarjeant Gallery shared many similarities with the above galleries. Where it differed was in being a late developer and in having the burden of a neglected collection. It had remained largely unchanged since its 1919 opening and several local citizens concerned at its static nature and aware of gallery developments going on elsewhere pressured the city council to make changes. Council responded by inviting them to act in an advisory role to the library and gallery committee and in 1974 Gordon Brown was subsequently appointed as the first professional director. Brown came to the position as one of the most knowledgeable people in the country about the history of New Zealand art and with work experience under Peter Tomory at the Auckland City Art Gallery and a term as director at Waikato. Brown's vision was clear – to establish professional standards of practice at the gallery. To begin there was next-to-no money available but this was mainly due to the city's unfamiliarity with the level of resourcing required to run a professional gallery. Brown soon found it responsive to well-presented arguments⁸² and had the skylights treated with uv inhibitor, the basement fumigated, a goods lift and heating ducts installed, and two new staff members appointed – a technician to mount and conserve work, and a registrar, probably the first in the country. Given the decades of neglect, cataloguing and caring for the collection was a major priority. Writing a collection policy and training staff were also part of Brown's solution.

The exhibitions programme was quickly stepped up, with 25 exhibitions held in 1975 as against half that number annually earlier in the decade. The exhibitions were mainly touring or created from the collection, Brown seeing many of the latter as training

⁸² Brown, interview by the author, March 1997.

exercises for his staff. In addition there were annual exhibitions by the Wanganui Arts Society and the Wanganui Camera Club, as well as from 1975 the Wanganui Pottery Group and the Robertson Children's Art Award (for local children).

There was some resentment at Brown's appointment (as an outsider, highly knowledgeable about art, and determined to impose professional standards). It was partly the classic art society conflict, seen at the Govett-Brewster and Dowse, but overlaid with issues of personality compounded by behind-the-scenes manoeuvring and lack of open discussion ("A type of schoolgirl whispering campaign was constantly promoted against Mr Brown at many art-oriented functions" noted a letter to a local newspaper).⁸³ Cr Phyllis Brown, chair of the library and art gallery committee, art society member, and president of the gallery friends was the major protagonist.⁸⁴ She had seen the gallery as her baby before Brown arrived and was more interested in its social than professional side, perceiving issues to do with openings as more consequential than quality of work exhibited. But for Gordon Brown artistic quality was of supreme importance. He found himself increasingly stymied by the committee and council in his efforts to have policy approved or even matters discussed, and despite gaining written support for his position from the NZAGDC, eventually resigned in frustration in early June 1977.

Brown recommended gallery technician Bill Milbank as his successor. Milbank had the advantage of being a "local boy" who had already spent seven years working for council, and with council's wish to avoid further conflict as well as Milbank's willingness to accommodate, the problems Brown experienced diminished.

The gallery programmes continued much under Milbank as they had with Brown. Community events seem fewer than at the three focus galleries, and the exhibitions programme remained relatively low-key also. The sort of touring shows seen at other provincial galleries were exhibited, while the gallery toured only a handful of its own exhibitions, these mainly to only one or two other venues. *The Wanganui Lions AA Travel Art Award 1976 for Young New Zealand Painters* was probably the most widely toured. Others include *LP Cover Art* (1976, to two venues), *Philip Clairmont: Selected Works* (1977, toured to Manawatu), and *Aspects of New Zealand Sculpture* (1978, shown at Manawatu and jointly organised with that gallery). The gallery organised a number of its own theme exhibitions, but aside from the above-mentioned Clairmont exhibition, the gallery did not make quite the same contribution to the development of New Zealand art in the seventies as the three focus galleries.

As we have seen in the last chapter the art gallery in Hamilton bore some similarities to that in Palmerston North. Again this was a fast-growing "new" city with a recently formed university and an art society which operated a semi-professional public gallery.⁸⁵ When the city council took over from the society in 1970 the name was

⁸³ May 1977, unidentified source, quoted in Gordon Brown letter to Celia Thompson, 18 April 1997.

⁸⁴ Ironically, the friends were set-up by Gordon Brown.

⁸⁵ Hamilton became a city in 1945 and by 1941 its population exceeded Dunedin to become the fourth largest city in New Zealand. In 1964 construction began on Waikato University.

changed from Hamilton Art Gallery to Waikato Art Gallery, Gordon Brown was appointed director, and there was an expectation that a new gallery would be built. However, things took an unexpected and unpopular turn early in 1971 when the director of the museum, which was in a similar situation, proposed a money-saving solution to council that the museum and gallery be merged.⁸⁶ Brown had already announced his resignation in frustration at the lack of progress on a new building, and Campbell Smith became the new director of the art gallery while the museum and gallery continued separately until 1973. At this point space became available in the PSIS office building some distance from the main city thoroughfare and the museum and gallery were moved in as a combined organisation with Ken Gorbey as co-ordinator, and later director. The new institution was named the Waikato Art Museum (and a decade later the Waikato Museum of Art and History).

In this unpromising location Gorbey gained a healthy number of staff (eight plus 4 part-timers)⁸⁷ and created one of the most progressive museums in the country, particularly in exhibiting and interpreting history material, such as the well promoted von Tempsky exhibition. It seems the conjuncture of art and history may have been beneficial here, for Gorbey was quoted in 1973 as saying there was a need at Waikato “for museum sections to think beyond the static display and parallel the activity of the fine arts section by offering a number of exciting, temporary exhibitions”.⁸⁸ Art perhaps came to play second fiddle to history exhibitions and activities at Waikato, but was nevertheless well supported, with about 15 to 25 exhibitions a year. These included some early photography and, as mentioned earlier, contemporary Maori art exhibitions. There were also a handful of exhibitions of contemporary New Zealand artists organised by the museum, including Ralph Hotere, Matt Pine, and Robin White. And at least two exhibitions were toured, the widely seen, semi-museum *Bewick Tailpieces*, and *Frank Martin: the Movies*.

Smaller Institutions and the “Arts Centre” Concept

A group of smaller institutions than the “ambitious provincials” formed or radically renewed in the seventies, and tended to have an arts centre ethos. They include Rotorua City Art Gallery, Wairarapa Arts Centre, Hastings Cultural Centre, Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre, and the Bishop Suter Art Gallery.

Rotorua belongs half with the ambitious provincials, for it was a straight-forward art gallery rather than an arts centre, but differs from others in this group in being smaller and really only having a profile at the very end of the seventies. It began as a small

⁸⁶ Noel Roe, *Waikato Art Museum – Museums and Galleries: One or Two* [Auckland Art Gallery archives, n.d.].

⁸⁷ As at 1973. Part-time staff included a 3 day/week education officer seconded from the Education Board and 4 attendants.

⁸⁸ “Ken Gorbey, Director and Co-ordinator Waikato Museum and Art Gallery, Hamilton”, *AGMANZ News* 4, no.2: p. 34.

space in the late 1960s run by the local art society alongside the museum. Around ten exhibitions a year were held in the Rotorua Society of Arts Gallery, including an annual members exhibition, touring shows, exhibitions by artists from the region, and work from the society collection. The society eventually convinced the city council to set up a proper gallery, and with the help of Rotary clubs raised enough to open the new Rotorua City Art Gallery in the Tudor Towers wing opposite the museum in October 1977. A year later a director, John Perry, was appointed.

The number of exhibitions stepped up to fifteen in 1978 and then to eighteen in 1979. Perry showed relatively fewer touring exhibitions than the other provincial galleries, relying more on historical work, the collection, local artists or artists with a connection to the area, and further exhibitions he curated himself. His programme came to have a non-European, historical and local flavour to it.

The remaining institutions in this group were self-styled cultural centres. An art gallery was a core function in each case and was often the only expression of the institution a casual visitor might see, but each offered something extra in terms of events. They were all housed in smaller cities with few amenities and a public art gallery offered a convenient facility in which to hold a variety of cultural activities. Where the metropolitan galleries were unable to act as community centres (because there was no single community in a large city) and perforce engaged in outreach activities, here the community could come to the gallery.

At the Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre community arts groups such as potters, photographers, woodcarvers, painters and printmakers all had studios located in an old home, Lysnar House, located at the back of the gallery/museum building. While physically independent, they were also represented on the administering body for the complex, the Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre Inc. (formerly the Gisborne Art Society). This community group approach meant there were around 1,300 members of the centre itself at the end of the decade, about one in twenty of the population, creating a strong pool of volunteers to help out the paid staff.⁸⁹ It was only in 1970 that the centre ceased being 100% reliant on volunteers with the appointment of Elizabeth Shaw as its first paid director. She was followed by Warner Haldane in 1975 and by 1979 there were 3 full-time and seven part-time staff. The new building opened in 1977 comprised dedicated art and museum spaces and showed around 18 exhibitions a year of mainly local artists and groups, with a few touring exhibitions added.

The Bishop Suter Art Gallery⁹⁰ bore some similarities to the Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre, though with a fashionable restaurant and shop (and lacking a museum) it had perhaps more of an up-market, semi-commercial image. It too gained a director and new building in the seventies, only somewhat later than Gisborne: at around 1976 for the appointment of director Austin Davies, and June 1979 for a redeveloped building.

⁸⁹ Thomson, *New Zealand Art Galleries and Museums*, p. 94.

⁹⁰ With the passage of time the gallery has become known as simply the Suter Art Gallery or even Suter Gallery (Suter Art Gallery appears in its newsletter title in the late 1970s), but the full name was, and still is, officially the Bishop Suter Art Gallery.

The original building was run-down and unattractive, with poor exhibition and storage spaces and a deteriorating collection as a result. Davies focused attention on the sad physical state of the John Gully collection and the ensuing furore “enabled the board to move on a tide of interest and indignation towards a programme of modernisation”.⁹¹

Aside from improvements for the collection, the new building was specifically designed for multi-functional use, with a centre gallery adaptable for film screenings, lectures and seminars and two large galleries for intimate performances. There was also a studio at the back of the gallery where painting and drawing classes organised in conjunction with Nelson Polytechnic were held.

Davies’ philosophy reflected the new thinking about art galleries being made more people-friendly. The imaginary conversation he wrote in the gallery’s newsletter illustrates his views:

People? Well, really. Oh bother, they’re only here for a short while anyway – they don’t need to sit down. Gallery fatigue? Never heard of it. Good food? Look mate, this is an art gallery, not a Bacchanalian bistro. Films and lectures in exhibition spaces? Are you crazy, think of the risks! Business conferences and seminars? You have to be out of your mind, these people aren’t interested in art, they have no right to be in an art gallery...

The upmarket multi-functional approach was reminiscent of the privately-run Settlement Trading Co. in Wellington and entirely appropriate given a new and attractive building (designed by Miles Warren) possessing a high quality restaurant (*plates 4.2, 4.3*). That the city had few other cultural facilities and that the region was developing as a tourist, lifestyle and arts centre only helped.

However, it might be added that a static “take it or leave it” gallery was not an option for Davies, for public funding was low, the lowest on a per capita basis in New Zealand.⁹² The gallery was not run by the city council but by a trust board which had evolved out of the Suter Art Society. There was no regular income from civic rates, and only a relatively small amount from the Nelson Provincial Arts Council. The rest came from admissions (charged even to eat in the restaurant), memberships, sales, and rentals. With only a paid director and secretary the gallery was indeed run as a lean ship and reliant on volunteers to attend the counter and carry out other tasks.

Suter exhibitions in the early seventies seemed to consist of a steady diet of art society autumn and spring shows, plus three or four low-cost touring exhibitions such as those from foreign embassies. Once Davies started, the number of exhibitions shot up to 20 for the 1976/77 year, reaching 38 for 1979/80. These included the annual art society exhibitions, as well as the usual touring exhibitions seen at smaller provincial galleries.

The Hastings City Cultural Centre (*plate 4.4*) was also designed very much as a multi-functional centre but in this case it was a civic project which intended to compress

⁹¹ Nunns, “The Bishop Suter Memorial Art Gallery”, p. 52.

⁹² *Suter Art Gallery News* 4 [1979]: p. 1.



Plate 4.2 Suter Art Gallery, restaurant, c.1979

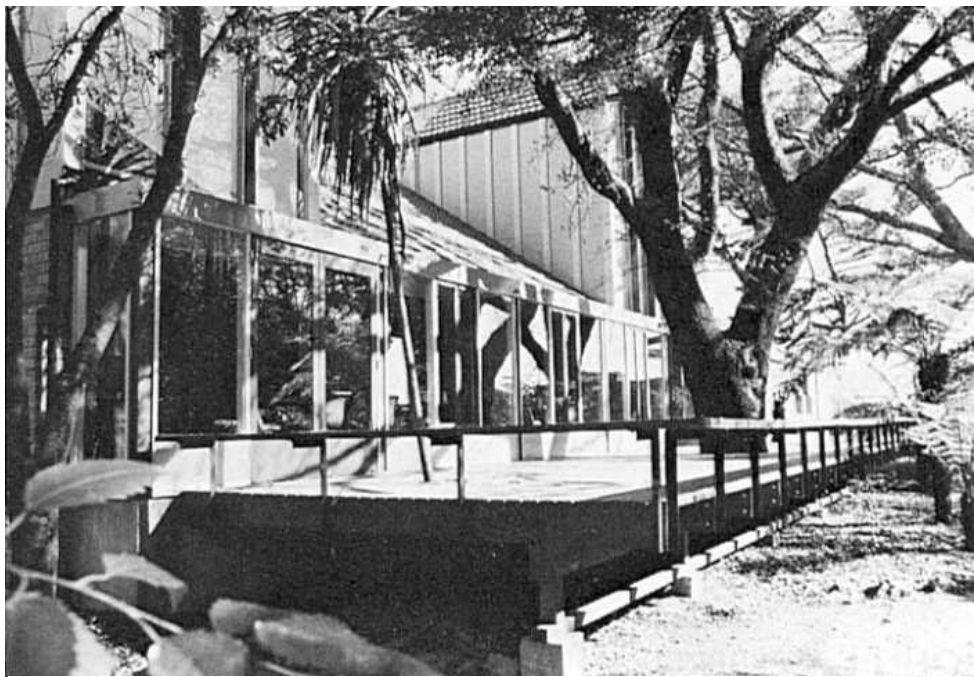


Plate 4.3 Suter Art Gallery, exterior along restaurant balcony



Plate 4.4 Hastings City Cultural Centre.

several facilities into one, so that the gallery had relatively less status than the above institutions (it was without a collection, for instance). Raymond Dixon, director of the centre, wrote, “If you took a museum, art gallery, concert hall, ‘little theatre’, movie house and village hall and threw them all together you would finish up with something approaching the cultural centre. The centre is meant for people of all ages – youth activities, group meetings, exhibitions, clubs, organisations – and what the director and city council want more than anything is involvement of the people in what is going on in their centre and in their city.”⁹³

The centre had its beginnings in the late sixties when the mayor called a public meeting and a committee was formed to plan the facility. It was built in stages, the first a small museum opened in 1970 to house the city’s collection of Maori taonga (later given to the Hawke’s Bay Cultural Trust). Stage two was opened in 1975 and included a lecture facility and rooms that could be used for meetings and conferences or workshops. In practice, the main exhibition space was used between exhibitions for events such as horticultural society exhibitions, Red Cross fundraisers, national conferences and concerts. Around 13 exhibitions were held in 1977, being a mix of touring and curated exhibitions with one local inclusion, the *Havelock North Spinners and Weavers Display*.

The Wairarapa Arts Centre is the other institution using the word “centre” in its name rather than “gallery”. It was first mooted in 1962, though not opened until October 1969, and a justification given in the first annual report for its formation was that the region had a young population but few attractions to keep them there. Whether the arts centre assisted in this way is not known but it could report in October 1972 that 20

⁹³ “Centre for the Arts in Hastings”, p. 11.

exhibitions, 61 meetings, 38 university extension classes/lectures, 21 programmes for schools, 14 concerts, 10 film evenings, and numerous meetings by local groups had been held in the year to date.⁹⁴

The Wairarapa Arts Centre's new building included a kitchen for functions and a converted cottage made into a studio, with the later addition of a disused church building creating a large meeting space. The centre was created by the Masterton Trust Lands Trust with ongoing funding provided by the trust, the licensing trust and local authorities. The arts centre board on which these bodies were represented created in turn a membership organisation, the Wairarapa Arts Foundation, to which they also devolved the role of administration.⁹⁵

The exhibition programme ran to about 20 exhibitions per year and included a good smattering of both national and local crafts, the latter including the annual *Golden Shears Art, Craft and Hobbies* exhibition, spring and autumn Masterton Art Club exhibitions, work from the permanent collection, and touring exhibitions. This was a very locally focused programme but there were two regular exhibitions by which the centre gained a national profile. The first was in widely touring the Print Council's annual exhibition, and the second, far more artistically significant, was the *Hansell's Sculpture Exhibition*. Begun in 1971 and run annually until 1976 when it became biennial, this was a competition sponsored by local firm Hansells NZ Ltd. The exhibition was an important place to see New Zealand sculpture during the seventies though arguably it came into its own more from 1980, when it was restructured to accommodate site-specific and multi-media approaches.⁹⁶

Consolidation and Insulation

Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum and Southland Museum and Art Gallery essentially consolidated in the seventies. As noted in the previous chapter, Hawke's Bay already was a progressive museum/gallery in previous decades so there was little demand for greater liberalism at this institution. If anything, the programme stayed much the same as it had in the sixties, though the number of exhibitions gradually doubled to about 25 per year by the end of the seventies, signalling a respectable increase in activity. (In its solid level of activity the institution belongs partly with the ambitious provincials, but where it differs is in lack of any sense of director-driven ambition.)

⁹⁴ "Wairarapa Arts Centre", p. 11.

⁹⁵ The first director was Peter Tulloch to January 1970. He was followed by Rodney Wilson who was succeeded in turn by David Peters, former director of the arts council, in January 1972. When Peters retired in May 1978 the centre experimented with not having a director, and then appointed Wellington art critic Neil Rowe director in March 1979.

⁹⁶ Then, instead of selecting from submitted works, the exhibition was selected from proposals and each selected artist invited to present or install their work. This created a more satisfying interaction with the public, as work was created on-site. No award was offered in 1980 either, for the money was divided amongst all participants.

Community involvement continued at a high level, with many groups being associated with the museum, including pottery, collectors, chamber music, recorded music, local history and the local branch of the Royal Society. Membership increased during the seventies to finish the decade at 1,600, possibly the highest museum membership in the country. The director of Leicester University's Department of Museum Studies visited in 1972 and commented that "Museums are beginning to be outward looking and the Hawke's Bay Museum is setting the example with its music and cultural groups and involvement with the community," fitting in with the world trend "away from being passive repositories to what I call a public service, organised with the needs of the community in mind".⁹⁷

The museum also caught the "multi-functional" bug and engaged on an ambitious project to build a professional standard theatre, known as the Century Theatre, opened in 1977. This was an air-conditioned, acoustically designed facility intended for concerts, dance, drama, cinema, meetings and conferences and came with a kitchen and supper room. Stage II of the project involved refurbishments to the museum entrance on Marine Parade in what is now a very period work of 1970s architectural embellishment.

Fea and Pischief note that from the sixties to the seventies the museum changed from being an "institution run relatively economically by enthusiastic amateurs to a professional and consequently, more expensive organisation" driven by visitor expectation of higher standards of exhibition presentation and service as well as by the rise in museological standards in general.⁹⁸ This was seen in staffing arrangements, the way the exhibitions were displayed, collection management and the demands of running the new theatre. A part-time education officer was gained in 1971 for instance, and the number of paid staff increased (though were still only 3 full-time at 1979). Concomitantly, the contribution from volunteers faded during the seventies. Given that the local authorities contributed only a portion of the museum's income (60% in 1979), an admission charge had to be imposed in 1971 to help fund the increase in service.

In the South Island, the Southland Museum and Art Gallery changed incrementally through the seventies. It began the decade with a staff of 4 and ended with 7 plus part-time custodians. It averaged 11 art exhibitions a year in the early seventies rising to 13 or 14 at the end. Attendances rose marginally from 53,000 to 59,000.

There seems no published information on the Aigantighe Art Gallery and Anderson Park Art Gallery during the seventies, aside from a mention that Ainslie Manson was appointed director (presumably the first) of the Aigantighe in 1971.⁹⁹ Anderson Park probably changed little due to its format: a stately home set in park-like grounds some distance from town that permanently displayed a fairly unremarkable art collection.

⁹⁷ Fea and Pischief, *Culture of Collecting*, p. 75.

⁹⁸ *Culture of Collecting*, p. 74.

⁹⁹ "Who you Should Know: Ainslie G. Manson", pp. 6–7.

This chapter began by setting out some of the social, cultural and artistic forces operating in New Zealand in the 1970s. It then gave an outline of the sort of changes that occurred across most public art galleries in response to both these forces and those of the 1960s. The following chapters examine in far more depth and detail three galleries that were at the forefront of change, the Manawatu, Dowse, and Govett-Brewster art galleries. Where this chapter has set a broad, contextualising overview, the next three concentrate on particular responses.

CHAPTER 5

The Manawatu Art Gallery

[Luit Bieringa] can even envisage a future when the whole idea of art galleries as we know them won't exist. "Buildings and institutions are built to serve people" he says "and not the other way around. That's why we are planning not just a gallery, but a community centre, one that can appeal to a wide range of interests in everyone; one that can, above all, be flexible enough to meet any changes that the future might bring."

– c.1974¹

Like most public galleries in New Zealand, the Manawatu Art Gallery had its beginnings in an art society. What is unusual about the Manawatu is both that it continued to be operated by its society until the early 1990s and that this arrangement did not prevent it being one of the country's liveliest, most progressive, and best regarded small galleries in the 1960s and '70s.

The art society that ran the Manawatu Art Gallery (known as the Palmerston North Art Gallery until late 1970) differed from other art societies. The Manawatu Society of Arts² saw its primary role as the operation of a gallery. Art classes and opportunities for artist members to exhibit became increasingly secondary through the 1960s and withered entirely in the 1970s as artist members became outnumbered by public spirited academics and professionals in the society. These latter members were progressive in their thinking, and their perspective went beyond the parochial. They in turn appointed a series of professional directors, James Mack (1966–68) and Luit Bieringa (1971–79) being the most energetic and publicly oriented of these. The directors had few conflicts with the society of arts, unlike the experience of other provincial galleries, for the vision of each party was generally the same. With the society behind the institution there were also willing hands to put up exhibitions, mind the reception desk, and generally support the gallery, particularly in its earliest days.

This chapter begins by touching on the 1960s at the Manawatu Art Gallery because there was no strong division between this decade and the next at the gallery. The 1970s

¹ "A Place for Entertainment and Self Development – and an Art Gallery", unsourced press clipping, [c.1974], Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

² Renamed the Manawatu Art Gallery Society in 1973.

were certainly characterised by Luit Bieringa's directorship and the drive for a new gallery, but otherwise the difference between the two periods, in the way the gallery was run and the types of exhibitions held, was more one of degree than of nature. Many developments in the 1960s – the *Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art*, especially – also established the gallery's reputation, and both laid the groundwork for and influenced the type of programme operated there in the 1970s. In summary, the Manawatu Art Gallery of the seventies built on the foundation it had established in the mid-to-late sixties.

Beginnings

Interest in creating a public art gallery in Palmerston North goes back to at least 1935 when the Palmerston North City Council gave the Manawatu Society of Arts £250 towards a gallery. The society considered sites, made deputations to the council and formed a committee to prepare a building plan in the 1930s. The war intervened, however, and the society went into recess. By 1948 city councillor Frank Opie provided fresh stimulus and building sites were again investigated and the building fund revived. In 1956 the society formally reconstituted itself and became an incorporated society.

A sympathetic council, led by mayor W.B. Tennant, made a house on the corner of Grey and Carroll Streets available to the society for an art gallery in the late 1950s. The society's building funds and a whirlwind fundraising campaign by local Jaycees paid for refurbishing the house and adding a gallery extension to it (*plates 5.1, 5.2, 5.3*).³

The Palmerston North Art Gallery was opened on 30 September 1959. Clearly the 1960s were a time when things were moving in Palmerston North, for a local weekly newspaper *The Times* responded to the opening by saying, "The opening of the railway deviation [the rail line had been shifted from the centre of town to its outskirts] and the extension of Viscount air services to Milson [airport] are events that marked the growing material stature of the city...Now, this third great event of 1959 proves that the

city is growing up as a centre of culture too."⁴

Six months later the *Times* continued with: "Cultural change has swept over Palmerston North like a tidal wave. This city, which emerged from the war period a very

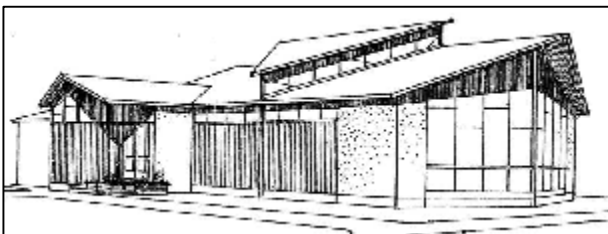


Plate 5.1 Palmerston North Art Gallery, as seen from cnr Grey and Carroll Sts.

³ The extension, a hall-like addition, resulted in a gallery "regarded as the most modern in NZ" claimed early society stalwart Frank Opie (*The Manawatu Society of Arts*, manuscript [1960s], Manawatu Art Gallery archive.)

⁴ "A Great Day for Art", editorial, *The Times*, 30 September 1959.



Plate 5.2 Palmerston North Art Gallery interior, 1960. Note the picture rails and low wall height, conditions unsympathetic for hanging contemporary art.



Plate 5.3 Palmerston North Art Gallery interior, c.1960

provincial, very stodgy minor centre, has quickly acquired a new character, and its progress towards the status of a cultural centre has been marked by such milestones as the establishment here of New Zealand's fifth training college [in 1956], and, more recently, the new University College and the art gallery. Currently, yet another important cultural development is in the offing, in the form of a regional library proposal [opened 1965]."⁵

Palmerston North was proclaimed a city in 1930, the fifth largest in New Zealand.⁶ It has always grown steadily, from a rural service centre to increasingly a manufacturing, transport, research and education centre. Unlike Wanganui and Napier, Palmerston North was not a city with an affluent past and a network of old, well-to-do families. It was not a city of rich Pakeha history either – suggested by its lack of older buildings and absence of a museum until 1971. With the growth of industry, research and the education sector, the city has become increasingly a temporary career stopping-off point. Thus the founding of the art gallery was driven less by the wealthy wanting to establish a temple to high culture than by go-ahead academics and business people who wanted the amenities of a big city and to see current art themselves.

Statements made around the time of opening are significant as an indication of the thinking behind the gallery throughout the 1960s and into the '70s. One was the announced intention by Tom Johnston, society president and lecturer in art at Palmerston North Teachers College, that acquisitions and exhibitions would place an emphasis on quality, not quantity, for the society had taken on a "public trust and responsibility".⁷ Art society exhibitions generally were (as today) associated with quantity – their aims focused on providing an opportunity for all members to exhibit. But here was an art society beginning to operate a little differently, for it was reported of the opening exhibition at the Palmerston North Art Gallery how "many pictures that would readily have gained inclusion in the society's earlier shows were rejected by this year's selection committee".⁸

Other indicative statements were the view expressed by a local newspaper that "The culture of art will seep right into the community. Children, far from being barred, will be welcome. ...Gone will be the tip-toe sanctum atmosphere of the past."⁹ Tom Johnston

⁵ "The art gallery impasse", editorial, *The Times*, 7 June 1960.

Palmerston North University College was founded as a branch of Wellington's Victoria University in 1959 mainly to service Victoria's extramural students and to offer university papers to teacher's college students. Massey Agricultural College was established in 1926 and came under the umbrella of the University of New Zealand. With the dissolution of the University of NZ in 1961 the college merged with PNUC in 1963 and the combined organisation became the fully autonomous Massey University in 1964.

⁶ It has since been eclipsed in size by Waitakere, North Shore, Manukau and Hamilton.

⁷ "Art Gallery Fund Grows", *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 12 June 1959; "City's New Art Gallery Opens Today", unsourced press clipping, 30 September 1959, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

⁸ "City's New Art Gallery Opens Today".

⁹ "At Long Last City is to Have an Art Gallery: Jaycee Drive Will Add to Funds", unsourced [1959], press clipping, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

was reported again as saying, “An art gallery was not a place where paintings and sculptures were on view for a few hours each day and the rest of the time appearing as a graveyard, but a...community centre in terms of art”.¹⁰ And from Joe Walding, president of the Jaycees and later cabinet minister: “The Palmerston North Art Gallery will...be a community centre for art, where people can view pictures, can have courses in the appreciation of art, and can actually take lessons in painting and sculpture.”¹¹ Remarks like these about the gallery in Palmerston North were repeated with the regularity of a mantra by directors, society spokespersons, newspaper editors and local politicians throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

The society very quickly realised that setting up an art gallery was one thing, operating it another. Both a director and funds were required. An application was made to the city council for operational funding and although this was turned down the first year, creating a period of crisis for the gallery, an annual grant was made from 1961.

A succession of relatively short-term directors served at the Palmerston North Art Gallery through the 1960s. The first were Reg Longden (August–December 1963), Maurice (Lee) Fremaux (August 1964–September 1965), and Professor Martin Roestenburg (for several months after Fremaux). According to Keith Thomson, none of these directors had a strong public orientation and during this early phase it was the enthusiastic amateurs of the society who were driving the gallery rather than the directors.¹² Things changed on both counts with the appointment of the next director, James Mack, in March 1966.

Mack had been secretary-custodian of Waikato Society of Arts’ Hamilton Art Gallery since 1963, was a qualified teacher with art education experience, and was studying for the British Museum diploma in museum studies.

It was from Mack’s time that things began to get under way and the Palmerston North Art Gallery operated in a more professional manner. Mack also raised the enthusiasm level in general amongst members and enlivened the gallery, organising a series of spectacular arts balls, and running many art classes.

Mack left in May 1968 and was replaced by Brian Muir, who in turn departed after a year for the position of director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. The last director for the nineteen sixties, and running into the early seventies, was 24 year old Ian North (c.July 1969–April/May 1971). He came from a position as a tutor for the Visual Arts Society at Victoria University. North was more theoretically driven than previous

¹⁰ “Proposal for Art Gallery in City”, unsourced press clipping, 13 February 1959, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

¹¹ “Proposal for Art Gallery in City”.

¹² All remarks or quotes sourced to Professor Keith Thomson, prime mover in Manawatu Art Gallery affairs from the early 1960s, are from an interview made by the author on 24 April 1996.

directors according to Luit Bieringa,¹³ and this is conveyed in his lengthy articles in the newspapers on philosophical questions about art.¹⁴

The exhibitions shown by the Palmerston North Art Gallery in the 1960s were not greatly different from those it later showed in the 1970s, although some characteristic qualities, reflective of New Zealand public gallery programmes in general then, marked the 1960s. These were the greater number of touring exhibitions from embassies or other overseas agencies; the exhibitions of reproductions; and the fact that almost the only touring exhibitions were coming from the Auckland City Art Gallery or the National Art Gallery.¹⁵



Plate 5.4 Pat Hanly, *Bather bending*, oil on canvas, 1965.

The *Manawatu Prize* exhibition really made the gallery's name on the national scene. It began in 1965 and was claimed to be the first contemporary art competition in the country.¹⁶ As a widely seen touring exhibition, the prize became one of the best vehicles for contemporary New Zealand art, and certainly New Zealand's best painters were entering the competition at that time. First and second prize-winners in 1965 were Pat Hanly and Toss Woollaston respectively and in 1967 Milan Mrkusich and Gordon Walters took the honours. The modernity of the artists' work and of the exhibition itself is suggested in a review in the *Waikato Times* when the exhibition was seen in Hamilton. The writer referred to Hanly's prize winning *Bather bending* (plate 5.4) being "as absolutely 'with it' as the latest fab, mod, pop gear from Carnaby Street".¹⁷

The judges were of no less calibre than the artists. In 1965 noted Australian art historian and critic Bernard Smith was flown across the Tasman by the QEII Arts Council to judge the exhibition. Judges in following years included Peter Tomory, Robert Ellis, Gordon Brown, Rodney Kennedy, and Peter McLeavey. Given the quality

¹³ Unsourced opinions or quotes by Luit Bieringa in this and further chapters are taken from an interview made by the author on 21 May 1996.

¹⁴ For example, "Art For the Sake of It", *Evening Standard*, 10 June 1970; and a painstakingly argued report to the Society Council: "Aims of a Public Art Gallery: Special Report", February 1971.

¹⁵ 1966 is an indicative year for the types of exhibitions held in the '60s. There were the annual exhibitions of the Manawatu Society of Arts and the Manawatu Pottery Society; an exhibition of reproductions and two print exhibitions from the National Art Gallery; a John Kinder show from the Auckland City Art Gallery; a number of permanent collection exhibitions; a kindergarten and high school art exhibition; a nationally invited potters exhibition; three individual artist shows; and, most significantly in terms of the gallery's reputation, the *Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art* and the Douglas MacDiarmid survey exhibition, both toured by the gallery.

¹⁶ "Showing the Way in NZ Art", editorial, *The Tribune*, 31 January 1965; and "Chosen as Judge", *The Dominion* 22 May 1965.

¹⁷ "Art Review" by G.E.F, *The Waikato Times*, 22 November 1966.

of the artists and of the judging, compulsory acquisition of the first and second prizes made the competition a very effective way to add some quality work to the Manawatu Art Gallery collection.

However, the Palmerston North Art Gallery was not necessarily a thorough-going hotbed of contemporary art. When a Pat Hanly exhibition was proposed in 1963 some gallery council members expressed concern that because the work was abstract it could be controversial. A constant refrain in comments by directors and invited speakers in the Manawatu press concerned the difficulty of contemporary art and how it just needed time and effort to appreciate.

The most popular exhibition during the 1960s was doubtless the touring *Rodin and His Contemporaries* of 1968. In a year in which total attendance was 19,600, approximately 7,400 people saw this exhibition in the 12 days it was open.

Events held at the gallery in the nineteen sixties were concerts, art classes (including those for children) and lectures. The speakers for both the lectures and openings were often nationally notable figures – perhaps not surprising given the society’s university members. They include Hamish Keith, then curator at Auckland City Art Gallery, Professor Pierson, a US art historian, Dr William Sutch, W.H. Oliver, and Eric McCormick as well as artists MacDiarmid and Woollaston talking about their exhibitions.

By the end of the 1960s the society of arts could stand back and feel satisfied that it had an established gallery. The 1969 president’s report noted there had been 24 exhibitions in the past year and donations of money or works from individuals and businesses were at the highest levels since the gallery started. Now that there was a full time director, an acquisitions policy, and acceptance for some responsibility of funding by Palmerston North City Council, the society could look more long-term – in particular at a future gallery on land south of the Square.

Nineteen seventies director Luit Bieringa considers that art societies “kept the hearth warm” in a number of towns until a professional gallery could be established. Palmerston North had gone further than most towns towards this, and when Bieringa started in 1971 he felt that “all the omens were right” for further development: “You were very much aware that you could do some quite radical things – [the sort] that were perceived as important in the wider world – but at the same time there was a need to balance this out by being in touch with the community.”

The 1970s: Support and Structure

The Society

The society council met regularly once a month throughout the 1960s and '70s, with the director in attendance and providing written monthly reports in the 1970s. Other society work was divided amongst committees. In 1972, for example, there were the trustees, acquisitions, social and publicity, equipment and maintenance, and Pahiatua committees.

According to Professor Keith Thomson, the society council became more of a “powerhouse” in the 1970s, particularly with the triumvirate of himself, Hugh Williams (solicitor) and Bieringa, and with the dropping away of artist members. Other council members were nearly all professionals. Thomson was a particularly strong force in the society, being on the society council every year from 1962 as president or a vice-president through the 1970s (except 1974) and beyond into the 1980s.¹⁸ He was also important to the gallery in his high-level contacts, especially in being able to give the gallery a profile on committees of which he was a member, such as AGMANZ and, more especially, the Art Galleries and Museums Scheme panel.

The society's income came principally from the annual council grant and from membership subscriptions, with the council contribution increasingly the main source, especially once the new gallery was built in 1977. Typical figures for the seventies were those of 1975, when the annual grant made up 71% of income and membership subscriptions 13%. The balance came from donations, catalogue sales, commissions on artworks sold, interest, and miscellaneous grants, such as arts council purchase subsidies.¹⁹ There were no substantial bequests.

Membership levels were healthy, running to one person in a hundred in Palmerston North in 1967 and providing the base level financial support in the sixties. Numbers rose from 115 in 1959/60 to 600 in 1967 and reached only slightly higher figures in the 1970s.

The membership was added to by the formation of the Young Art Gallery Associates in early 1968. Members of the YAGA, as it was known, were mostly teachers college students. Another group, Massey University's Visual Arts Society, affiliated to them in November 1969. One of the main activities provided for the group was painting classes.

While conflicts between the directors and the society appeared non-existent, the views of Brian Muir as reported in the newspaper upon his resignation suggest that there were nevertheless some tensions: “Mr Muir claims that interference by the arts society is a contributing factor to the high turnover of directors, plus low wages and limited scope

¹⁸ For a short biographical article see “Who you Should Know: Professor K.W. Thomson, President AGMANZ”, p. 51.

¹⁹ In the 1970s at least, commissions were only earned on sales from the society of arts and the pottery society exhibitions. A stringent policy was developed not to sell works from other exhibitions says Bieringa.

in the gallery itself.” The article went on to say Muir favoured the concept of city administration, though he felt there was no reason why the present set-up couldn’t work, “provided the society is prepared to give the director more freedom and responsibility”.²⁰

Luit Bieringa says he never really had conflicts with the society: “The freedom you have depends on the strength of your arguments. I had a tremendous amount because I produced the goodies. The structure invested a lot of authority in the director, and it was at one remove from the city council.

“For the shows I knew would create problems I would tend to sell by making the society feel they were part of an exciting, quite radical institution that had a balanced programme – where balance meant diversity. Some exhibitions had problems I hadn’t foreseen and then the society were usually very supportive – like *Active Eye* on its tour.”

Council Support

There seems to have been little debate about the gallery amongst city councillors in the 1960s, or at least none that reached the newspapers. On the other hand, the amounts granted to the gallery annually were not large, so that while council support was vital for the continued existence of the gallery, it was probably not a lot of money in council terms.

Annual funding meant the council wanted some control over the running of the gallery so it set up the art gallery trustees from at least 1960. They comprised, in 1960, three councillors, the mayor, the town clerk, the president of the society and one member of the society executive. The trustee structure existed right through the 1960s and ‘70s but its function seems to have been little more than a minor formality for there is very little record of its activities.

The society and the gallery’s directors certainly felt council could be doing a lot more to support them given that the gallery was a civic amenity largely run by private citizens and the issue of council finance for public galleries was much discussed in relation to the Palmerston North Art Gallery.

As the Palmerston North City Council was not willing to provide 100% financial support, the society approached all 17 surrounding borough and county councils in Manawatu, Horowhenua, Northern Wairarapa and Southern Hawkes Bay in 1969. However, there was a complete absence of interest in contributions except from the Feilding Borough Council.

Brian Elwood, mayor from 1971 to 1985, was a supporter of the gallery during the 1970s and a great believer in taking a hands-off approach to its operation. As chairman of the Civic Centre Association,²¹ Elwood noted in 1969 that “I think we are all

²⁰ “Claims for Art Gallery”, *The Dominion*, 28 May 1969.

²¹ qv under following heading ‘Art and Museums Infrastructure’

concerned that culture has not had the emphasis placed on it that it should have, taking into account the growth of the community".²²

As early as 1973 Luit Bieringa added his voice to that of the previous directors in suggesting that the gallery should work towards a take-over by Palmerston North City Council. Today Bieringa says this suggestion may have upset some society members but he felt the society was slightly amateurish, didn't have the right to make major decisions on behalf of the public, and the gallery should have had stable funding like the public library. The trade-off would have been giving up the benefit of an arms length relationship. "Brian Elwood didn't agree – he felt it would cut off community energy – and so it didn't happen. I hadn't worked through in my own mind the benefits and drawbacks but I felt it definitely had to be looked at."

Such thoughts were not often voiced publicly, but when the new building was opened in 1977 some city councillors felt the council should be running the gallery, given the large amount of money it had invested in the facility and was now granting the society for its operation. Ownership of the building and land already lay with the council, and when the Kelliher controversy (q.v.) blew up, views were expressed in council that the society was a small group with a big say in the gallery and yet were not accountable to the public. It was conceded, though, that the gallery would probably cost more to run if council operated.²³

The mayor was still against strong council involvement and the council's Finance Committee also preferred that the society run the gallery, at least for the next few years. But by March 1978 the city council decided a (new) board of trustees would oversee the running of the gallery. The society was in favour of this option, as was the *Evening Standard* which said it was the best compromise between the council running the gallery and the consequent risk of artistic compromise on the one hand, and a lack of financial security under the status quo on the other.²⁴ Some councillors felt control would be too much at arms length, others saw it as allowing voices aside from the society to have a say in the gallery.

The board met for the first time in October 1979. It had nine members, including four appointed by the society, three by the Palmerston North City Council and two by the Palmerston North Community Arts Council. The functions of the board were to: determine broad gallery policy; present the annual budget to the city council; appoint the director; and preserve city assets (building and equipment). The society was to continue to administer the gallery and its budgets. Annually it was to prepare a submission to council on the budget, which was then examined by the board and passed with a recommendation by them to the city council. The board in turn was to receive the annual grant, and hand it to the society with an indication of the purposes for which it was to be

²² "Critical Stage for Culture in Palmerston North: More Facilities Needed." *Evening Standard*, 5 March 1969.

²³ "Gallery Control Tussle Looming after the Kelliher Affair", *The Tribune*, 22 January 1978.

²⁴ 11 May 1978.

used. This cumbersome system, in which responsibilities were not always clear, continued until the early 1990s, when the council took full control of running the gallery, forming a new trust board and leaving the society simply in the role of a friends organisation.

Staffing

The Manawatu Art Gallery began the 1970s with staff positions of director and part-time secretary/custodian. It ended the decade with the additional positions of exhibitions officer and two exhibition assistants as well as a weekend custodian, and some temporary, ad hoc staff.

Ian North has already been mentioned. His replacement, Luit Bieringa (*plate 5.5*) had a degree in German and art history and had completed New Zealand's first masters thesis in art history at the University of Auckland. His academic qualifications, community orientation and his artistic contacts (his thesis was on McCahon and Woollaston and he had been involved in the contemporary art scene in Auckland) made him the interview panel's preferred candidate.

Bieringa says that with next-to-no budget, having the contacts he could draw on was essential. An example was one of the very first exhibitions he organised, *Young Auckland Painters Plus One* (1971), a selection of young contemporary artists selected from the stable of Auckland dealer Barry Lett.

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When asked about his influences, Bieringa says that one thing that made the sort of programme he ran at the gallery possible "was a very broad academic background mixed with highly practical experience – teaching [for a year at a high school], working on the wharves, concreting, and overseas study. So I was very aware of community thinking. This probably influenced the programme as much as anything. It wasn't anybody who taught me, saying this was how museums were run. Nobody knew how museums were run. There were no museum diplomas in New Zealand. You fell into it."

Overseas experience was an important part in informing Bieringa's approach to operating a gallery. He studied languages in Europe for six months part way through his degree and also took the opportunity to visit both traditional and contemporary galleries. Then, in 1973, he spent time in Australia inspecting other galleries in preparation for designing the new Manawatu Art Gallery. His most important overseas sojourn, however, was a year's leave to study and work in Europe from August 1975. His aim

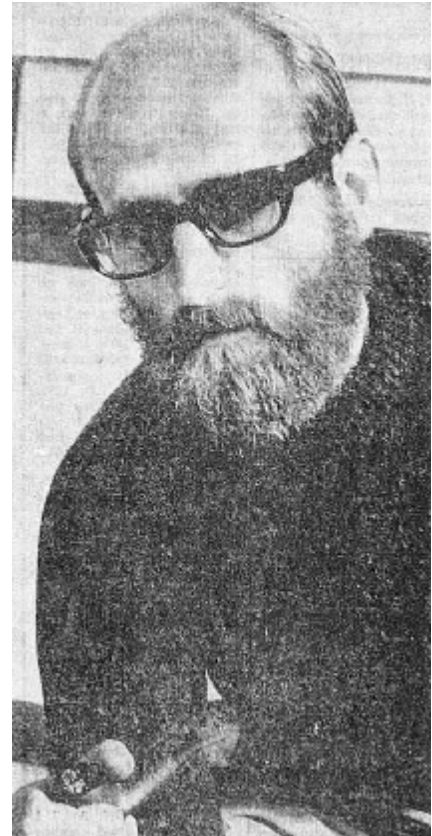


Plate 5.5 Luit Bieringa, 1971.

was to study how British and European institutions handled art education both within their galleries and museums and in their communities. He visited community centres, neighbourhood social service centres and arts centres and was impressed by Dutch museums that took exhibitions dealing with social issues out into the suburbs.²⁵

The very active programme of the early 1970s was sustained by the high energy of the director and the contributions of volunteers. Today Bieringa concedes that his youth meant he never stopped to consider how practical some projects were and by 1973 he was telling the society that an assistant was essential and if one was not forthcoming he and part-time secretary/custodian Esme Robinson would have to consider their positions.²⁶

A part-time assistant director was employed for less than a year in 1973 so long as the society could afford to pay an extra salary. Bieringa then complained in the *Evening Standard* that with 23 exhibitions to September that year and no assistance he was working seven day weeks as well as evenings. "I just can't cope. I'll have to cut some of [the activities]", he said.²⁷

Paul Hansen was eventually appointed as exhibitions officer in January 1975. Hansen was made acting director while Bieringa spent his year in Europe and a part-time assistant was taken on over the same period. Hansen was thrown into the challenging position of being front-person for the fundraising drive for the new building.

Hansen resigned in March 1977. His replacement was Margaret Taylor, a future director (1983–1987) of the Manawatu Art Gallery. Taylor was highly qualified and experienced in art and gallery work and Keith Thomson describes her as a good balance to Bieringa in her solid behind-the-scenes ability.

In the late 1970s staff numbers were significantly boosted with the addition of a number of TEP scheme workers. Two TEP gallery assistants were employed in 1977 and '78, as well as two summer assistants in 1977 and four in 1978. Further TEPs were employed during the year in 1979. These workers undertook such tasks as organising exhibitions and summer holiday activities for children, photographing the collection, cataloguing the gallery library, and running a silk screen workshop.

Bieringa left the Manawatu Art Gallery in October 1979 to take up the directorship of the National Art Gallery. Dr Peter Purdue was appointed the new director.

In summary, the gallery operated with little more than a director and part-time secretary/custodian in the first half of the seventies, and then only with the addition of an exhibitions officer until the saviour of government employment schemes arrived late in the decade. Gallery society members helped out to some extent, especially in the role of volunteer custodians in the weekends. The gallery was keen to employ an education

²⁵ For some accounts of his experience see: "Gallery Director's Back in Town...", unsourced press clipping, 15 September 1976, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook; "Some Reason for Existence", pp. 3–4; "A Year's Study Leave in the Netherlands and Great Britain", AGMANZ News 7, no. 4 (November 1976).

²⁶ Director's report, April 1973.

²⁷ "No Money, so Gallery Dismisses Assistant", *Evening Standard*, 7 September 1973.

officer, but funding was never available. A pilot Ministry of Education scheme was proposed in 1975 and the Manawatu Art Gallery applied for a position, but the scheme did not proceed.

Bieringa feels that there was no trend towards increased professionalism at Manawatu in the 1970s – in the sense of structured staff responsibilities and formalised staff interactions. He says it was enthusiasm and having people who were keen on art, who didn't just treat it as a job, that drove the gallery.

Art and Museums Infrastructure

As mentioned above, the gallery had a voice on AGMANZ and the Museums and Art Galleries Scheme of Internal Affairs early on through the appointments of Keith Thomson. Bieringa was also elected to the AGMANZ council from 1975 to 1986 and was vice-president in 1978. While the gallery did well out of the AGMANZ (and later arts council) administered collection purchase subsidy scheme, provincial art galleries were nevertheless generally on the periphery of interest of AGMANZ.

Bieringa recalls the problems with AGMANZ and the metropolitan gallery dominance of arts council funding: “The gallery world was at a disadvantage to the museum sector within AGMANZ. In addition, with typical youthful arrogance, some of us perceived the metropolitan gallery directors as being out of touch and us young turks in the provinces as doing the real thing. So there was a very co-operative attitude amongst the Govett-Brewster, Sarjeant, Manawatu, and later the Dowse. We did a number of exhibitions jointly and said ‘to hell with the others’. Part of it was to gradually undermine the power of the metropolitan galleries, to show national bodies like the arts council that ‘hey, we’re doing the exciting stuff, we’re doing the big shows. Why are they privileged to make all the decisions on funding?’ It was pretty young turk stuff but it was also true, we were a new generation coming through. So this vociferous self-promotion meant a balance came to AGMANZ and the Roger Duff-type museum dominated organisation was undermined.”

In the same way that similar provincial galleries evolved together and co-operated regionally, at a local level the gallery was both paralleled by the growth of other cultural organisations and worked in mutually supportive ways with them. The Civic Centre Association, for example, was formed in the 1940s for the purpose of organising musical and other cultural events in the city with the assistance of city council grants.²⁸ The 1971 centenary raised the level of the association's activity considerably and it transformed itself into the Palmerston North Arts Council in 1972, again funded primarily by the city. When the QEII Arts Council restructured in 1974 to set up regional and community arts councils, the PNAC became the Palmerston North Community Arts Council under the new system.

²⁸ The title did not refer to a physical civic centre but a cultural and spiritual one.

The growth of theatre also paralleled and intersected with the Manawatu Art Gallery. Palmerston North gained the only professional theatre company outside the four main centres when Centrepoint Theatre formed in early 1974. It operated out of various venues, including the art gallery, until it finally acquired permanent premises in 1978.

Teachers college has already been mentioned in several contexts. Lecturers Frank Davis, Ray Thorburn and David Aitken were all strong supporters of the gallery and involved themselves in some of its educational activities. Victoria University Extension's art studio was located on the college campus. The facility was originally run by well-known potter Jack Laird and pottery was a strong point until the studio closed in 1967. No doubt the studio helped create the strong interest in ceramics existing up until the 1990s in Palmerston North.

Bieringa says the gallery had a close working relationship with the Manawatu Museum (shifted to the close-by Pierard building in 1973) and used museum collection items in some thematic exhibitions. However, he did not want a merger with the museum (as had been suggested in the late 1960s) because he felt that a diversity of institutions was more desirable. Also, he was "not interested in looking backwards, because we were trying to deal with breaking down traditional perceptions of what art was about, so to go back unnecessarily to historical items didn't fit in with that programme".

New Building

Planning and lobbying for a new gallery building occupied a great deal of gallery and society time in the 1970s. The controversy and community involvement that accompanied this effort defines the public profile of the Manawatu Art Gallery in the seventies perhaps as much as its exhibitions. The rhetoric associated with the new building also provides a useful expression of the philosophical underpinnings of the Manawatu Art Gallery.

The gallery in Grey Street was never ideal. Hot in summer and cold in winter, it suffered constant leaks in the roof, frequent burglaries, and was not well located for casual visitation. Both its small size and poor environmental conditions meant it could not accommodate some touring exhibitions.²⁹ As early as 1963 director Maurice Fremaux was proposing a futuristic civic centre development plan for the Square at the centre of Palmerston North, incorporating an art gallery, concert chamber, civic hall, cultural centre, and restaurants.³⁰ Society spokespersons and subsequent directors repeated the call for a new gallery throughout the 1960s.

²⁹ Exhibitions that couldn't be shown due to the small size were *Recent British Painting* and *Art of the Space Age*, while environmental conditions precluded *Van Gogh Drawings*, *Scultura Italiana* and *Portrait of Mexico*.

³⁰ "Art Gallery Director's Vision of the Square", *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 22 August 1964.

Around 1968 the council decided land south of the Square formerly occupied by the railway station and shunting yards would be used for civic purposes. The *Evening Standard* asked, “What better than a cultural centre?...The concept immediately suggests a centennial court – with art gallery, museum, theatre and conference facilities, landscaped and with fountains and statuary, of course.”³¹ A proposal known as the Reynolds Plan was suggested by council to design a comprehensive group of civic amenities on the land but public opinion, as recorded by the *Tribune*, favoured a covered swimming pool rather than a museum/gallery as a 1970/71 centenary project for the city.³²

Lack of progress on a new building by the early 1970s gave rise to a more serious determination on the part of the gallery society and some strong statements to the media from Bieringa. In November 1970 the society decided to set up a building fund and in 1973 increased membership subscriptions for this purpose while reducing spending on acquisitions and other activities in order to build up the fund.

The issue heated up in May 1973 when the headline “Art Gallery Director Revolts over Conditions” appeared (*plate 5.6*). Luit Bieringa was reported as having had “a gutsfull” of the city gallery. He said it was the fifth leak in two years and threatened to cancel major exhibitions because of the risk of leaks, fires and climate fluctuations.³³ Mayor Brian Elwood replied that he was not prepared to commit city money at this point, as he was waiting to see what the new government budget would say about assistance to cultural projects.³⁴

Indications that council would support a new gallery must have become firmer over the following months, for in September AGMANZ awarded Bieringa a travel grant to visit Australia to look at gallery buildings. Society council member and architect David Taylor accompanied Bieringa and they both also viewed New Zealand galleries.³⁵

By November the Palmerston North City Council had decided there was a need for a new gallery and that it would make railway land available for a site but said it would not contribute any more than match the maximum government subsidy available through the Art Galleries and Museums Scheme, a sum of \$100,000. However, the society had received a cost estimate for the new building of \$315,000. Bieringa fired a salvo in the *Evening Standard* headlined “\$200,000 for New Gallery Would be a ‘Waste of Money’”, adding that the current annual grant was completely inadequate.³⁶ Elwood’s quoted reply was that “Mr Bieringa’s views are well known to council”.

³¹ “An Art Gallery and a Museum, not *or* Museum”, editorial, *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 4 July 1968.

³² “The Survey: This is What You Think”, *The Tribune*, 17 May 1970.

³³ “Gallery Director Revolts over Conditions: Major Cause of Trouble in Palmerston North Art World”, unsourced press clipping, 31 May 1973, Manawatu Art Gallery clipping book.

³⁴ “No Council Cash to Repair Art Gallery”, *Evening Standard* 1 June 1973.

³⁵ For an account of Bieringa’s Australian impressions see “A Report on a 10-day Study Tour of Australian Galleries”, *AGMANZ News* 5, no.1 (February 1974).

³⁶ 20 December 1973.

The Department of Internal Affairs did grant the \$100,000 in February 1974, but council refused to budge on the amount of its contribution. It was the view of some city councillors that the society could do more and a heated debate raged through the newspapers: Cr Wynks and Brown said art gallery members “should get off their backsides” and raise money – like sports groups.³⁷ Bieringa retorted, “The council won’t catch me pushing a pig [in a barrow] to raise funds for the Palmerston North Art Gallery. ...If we are going to be compared with sports bodies then let us share the finance, the thousands, put into the maintenance of sports grounds.”³⁸ Cr Brown responded with: “Outdoor sports are a New Zealand way of life, being indulged in by countless thousands, and are not to be compared to the art hobby of a small minority.”³⁹ He also challenged the figure of 25,000 for annual gallery visitation.

The argument went to-and-fro for some months, with editorials in the *Evening Standard* fully behind the gallery, quoting the “hive of activity it has become under tireless direction of Luit Bieringa”.⁴⁰

This community orientation was how the idea of the gallery was sold. Bieringa said in the *Guardian* that a building commissioned with public money must be able to be used “seven days and seven nights a week so the community can get full advantage of it. ...The gallery is to have many functions, involving the community as much as possible.”⁴¹ The *Evening Standard* followed with the headline “New Art Gallery: Place for People”, saying that the gallery “is designed almost as much as a community meeting place as an art gallery”.⁴²

The brief for the new gallery continued in this vein, stating: “An art gallery should not be built as an imposing monumental structure designed to defy the ages, nor overawe the material it is built to house. [It]...should intimate a place where people feel at home and want to come; a human scale with no large halls [or] grand staircases...It should be free from any institutional feeling and be warm and welcoming to visitors. ...An art gallery should be a place where people can freely talk, laugh, and be

³⁷ “Wynks Lashes Art Grant”, unsourced press clipping, 26 March 1974, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

³⁸ “Thumbs Down on Pig Pushing”, unsourced press clipping, 27 March 1974, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

³⁹ “Gallery Finance Plea ‘Art Crafty Audacity’ Says City Councillor”, *Evening Standard*, 27 June 1974.

⁴⁰ “They’re Swinging at the Old Gallery Now”, editorial, *Evening Standard*, 12 August 1974.

⁴¹ “Community Project Aims at \$225,000 to Finance Gallery”, unsourced press clipping, 14 May 1975, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

⁴² *Evening Standard*, 1 September 1973.

Art Gallery Director Revolts Over Conditions

By and for the BAKERY LEADER

Manawatu Art Gallery director Luit Bieringa has had "a quiet fit" of the city's gallery. He threatened today to cancel scheduled major exhibitions, and warned he was not prepared to continue working under conditions which could damage valuable paintings.

The gallery opened a leak in the roof this week, the fifth major leak in two years. Water ran inside the gallery between two French-mastler drawings valued at \$50,000.

The drawings, water damaged, including the present motor show, were taken down at 11 p.m. last night. The water had been dripping for weeks.

Mr. Bieringa said the number of antiquarians would have to be doubled, or at least tripled, in the gallery to maintain the value of the art.

Mr. Bieringa said the cost of the gallery is \$100,000 and 40 to 100 per cent of the art collection is \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Mr. Bieringa said he would like to see the gallery repaired by the city. He said the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

Mr. Bieringa said the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

Reputation

Mr. Bieringa said the gallery has a "good reputation" and he would like to see the gallery repaired by the city. He said the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

Mr. Bieringa said the gallery has a "good reputation" and he would like to see the gallery repaired by the city.

Inadequate

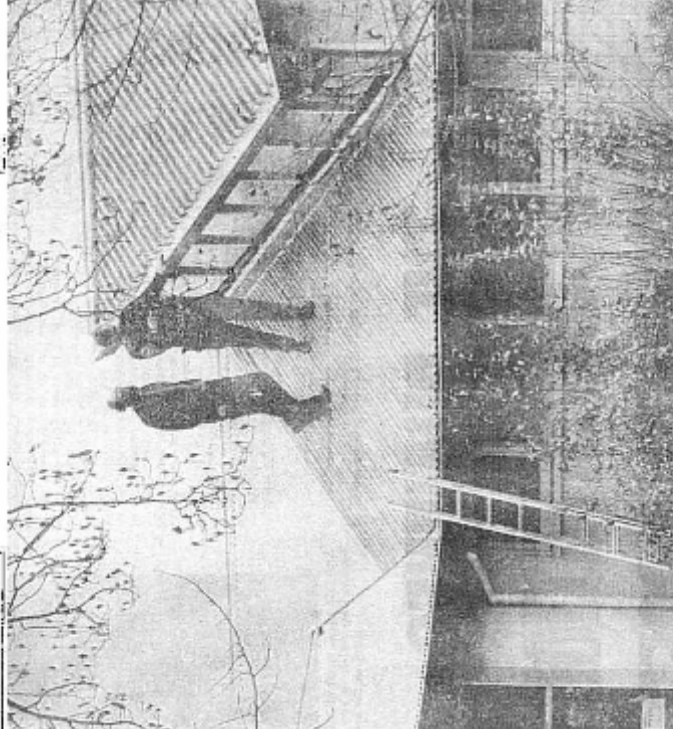
Mr. Bieringa said the gallery is "inadequate" and the city should pay for the repair work. He said the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

The gallery was built in 1959. The display part of the building was a new addition in 1971. The gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

Storage is inadequate, and the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

The building also houses the city's art collection. The gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.

Mr. Bieringa said the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work. He said the gallery is in a "state of disrepair" and the city should pay for the repair work.



The roof of the Palmerston North Art Gallery, at the corner of Grey and Carroll Streets, is inspected for leaks — AM 943

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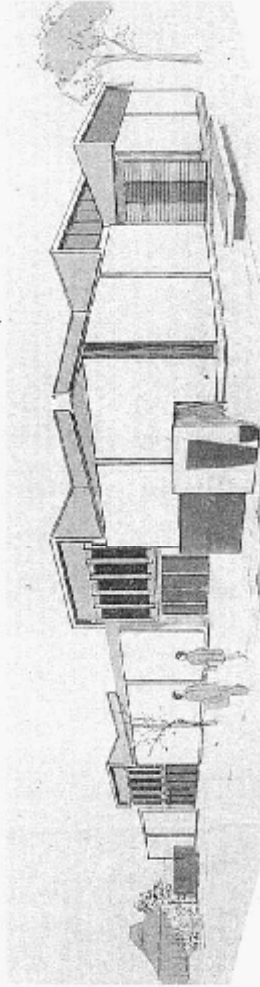
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No. 511

CIRCULATED IN PALMERSTON NORTH AND SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

Sunday June 1, 1975

New Manawatu Art Gallery - A Burden We Cannot Bear



The proposed Manawatu Art Gallery will be a burden to the ratepayer and citizens of Palmerston North and in times of mounting inflation there can be no guarantee of what the final cost of the gallery will be.

At a time when Mayor Eborard and the council are trying to keep an inflation rate like down to a "hardly acceptable level" and even with the fuel saving aspect now in its final stages the gallery should not go ahead just yet.

Granted, a gallery of the kind proposed is needed in the Manawatu but to ask the people of the region, who in general face large rate increases for donations to the project is not so - the project should be shelved for at least a year.

To ask the residents of the area to come up with \$225,000 when they are facing between 16 and 20 per cent rate rises and have to expect them to maintain it afterwards via public facility is outrageous.

EXPECTED COST

The expected cost of the gallery is \$250,000 but can there be any guarantee that this figure will not go up and the citizens of Palmerston North won't be troubled for more?

Each time we grow doubts about what the final

cost of the civic complex would be were expressed at the city council meeting.

It was even suggested that the council may never know what the final cost of stage one of the complex will be.

Already the council has committed itself to paying 25 to 30 per cent of the final building of the gallery whatever they may be. The council is currently waiting for board approval to make the money for it.

But it is not too late for council to reconsider its decision on this point although the money it has already collected from a special rate levy should be held in reserve for the eventual construction of the building.

Admittedly, the Manawatu has wanted to long time for a gallery and it is a great shame that the gallery's permanent collection worth more than \$20,000 has "fallen away" in boxes.

REALITIES FACED

But the realities of the situation must be faced and the wonder of the organizers of Campaign is can really be hopeful of raising the final money required with financial circumstances the way they are.

It would be nice to have - but would it really be in the best interests of the people if it is proposed to build

Manawatu City treasurer, Mr. S. Martin, says the gallery there exists the council something in the region of \$20,000 a year in rate. This covers the cost of wages for three permanent staff and one part timer as well as running and exhibition expenses.

As for the purchase of any new art works was concerned this was met by the reserve from the previous mortgage account.

Council has been particularly in that a number of people have left money in the gallery, he said.

The interest on this money goes the works for the gallery.

On a very rough guess Mr. Martin puts the value of the gallery's permanent collection at between half a million and one million dollars.

The value of the collection is currently being assessed for insurance purposes.

Mr. Martin said he was not able to say how much the gallery could cost the ratepayers of Manawatu this year because the estimates were last being prepared and in any case the final cost was subject to council approval.

He admitted, however, that the gallery expenses this year had been virtually affected by the effects of inflation.

The gallery has been established for some considerable length of time and is a sound structure that requires very little maintenance.

FINANCING

Gallery director, Mr. Gordon Brown, says there are no long term plans to extend the gallery but there are proposals for the better running of it but money for this did not seem to be forthcoming.

The financing of the new Manawatu Gallery will be on very similar lines to the Wanganui one. Once it is established it will be a council facility and will be financed by the ratepayer.

The special rate levy boosted the works by about \$40,000 this year.

Even in the days of increased fuel costs and other like inflation effects of appreciation just around the corner might not the Manawatu gallery provide a better alternative for the interim.

Already the Manawatu gallery has become established as an education centre for school children travelling from as far away as Levin. Perhaps it would be a good idea for the city council to quit while it is ahead.

themselves, without the feeling that they are enveloped in the sacred atmosphere of galleries of a previous era.”⁴³

Briefing and discussion documents frequently used words like “flexibility”, “cultural laboratory” and “multi-media”. David Taylor was firmly of the belief that the visitor should come first in an art gallery and wrote about ways of avoiding gallery fatigue by providing spaces for “sitting out” and allowing glimpses of the outside world.⁴⁴ Flexibility was a byword, since, as the architect says, no-one knew how it would develop.⁴⁵ Bieringa echoed these sentiments after the gallery was opened, saying to the society council that there was a “need for informality and a relaxed atmosphere in the new gallery so that it didn’t become an institution”.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, by June 1975 the cost estimate of the gallery project had risen to \$450,000, raising the intensity of the debate about the need for a gallery. The *Tribune* splashed the headline “New Manawatu Art Gallery: A Burden we Cannot Bear” across its front page (*plate 5.7*).⁴⁷ A stormy city council meeting in October considered the combined cost of a gallery, heated swimming pool, and motorcamp improvements but eventually decided to contribute further to the cost of a new gallery.

The society’s grant application to government under the Museums and Galleries scheme was successful and in November tenders were called for by architects David Taylor & Associates. In March 1975 the fundraising campaign for the society’s contribution to the new building began. The campaign was called Compro (short for “community project”) and a chairperson appointed to run it (*plate 5.8*). The initial approach, to businesses, was not successful, so the general public became the prime focus.

Many fundraising events were held, including concerts, an art auction, and various competitions, but the major component was the Road Show project. This was run by exhibitions officer Paul Hansen and involved using the arts council’s touring exhibitions van to visit Manawatu communities. Hansen took with him a model of the building and some collection works, and in each area local arts and crafts people put on demonstrations of activities such as Maori carving, spinning, macramé, pottery, stone

⁴³ *Brief for a New Public Art Gallery for the City of Palmerston North*, [Luit Bieiringa, David Taylor, and Margaret Taylor?] n.d., Manawatu Art Gallery archive. The writing here is in fact a lightly reworded version of a section from Eric Westbrook’s 1957 architectural brief for the National Gallery of Victoria, a building that was influential on Manawatu Art Gallery architect David Taylor.

⁴⁴ David Taylor and Associates, *Design Report, 31 May 1974, to PNCC* (Palmerston North: Manawatu Art Gallery Society, 1974).

⁴⁵ Conversation with David Taylor, July 1993.

⁴⁶ Manawatu Art Gallery Society Council meeting minutes, 4 April 1977.

Keith Thomson echoed these remarks, saying that the size of the building and the greater demands on the staff would “invariably result in the erosion of the easy, warm informality we are used to. Everything must be done to prevent our gallery assuming the cool, clinical aspect of most other large galleries in the country. If it does we may find that we have lost rather than gained from the decade or more of effort.” (Manawatu Art Gallery Society President’s report, July 4, 1977.)

⁴⁷ *The Tribune*, 1 June 1975.

Our children are our future

We've all heard, or made, a similar statement at some time or other. It is through our children that we express our confidence in our society. It is for our children that we try to improve our society, and way of life.

In this region, like most of New Zealand, we are generally well provided with educational, sporting and leisuretime facilities. In fact, for such a small region, with a population under 100,000, we can be proud of the extent and excellence of those facilities.

Yet, unlike most of New Zealand (including cities half the size of Palmerston North), we have no community facility adequately catering for our children's creative development.

There is a need

The school, the sports ground, the library and swimming pool all contribute a great deal to a child's progress. Yet often something more is needed. A place where children, in their own time, can develop their creative skills — to make a toy, or a kite, or to explore art, photography, films, music, drama.

The Gallery answers the need — but is too small

At present the Manawatu Gallery is the venue for these activities. But it is hopelessly small. The Gallery was built in 1959 to house the art collection, and serve the limited needs, of the local art society.

In the past year over 20,000 adults and children have visited the Gallery. Not only to see a variety of exhibitions, but also to take part in the widest range of workshop and "Have a go" sessions — including pottery, printmaking, poly-



Kite making 1976

styrene sculpture and weaving. To make room for these sessions the Gallery staff is usually required to dismantle and then re-erect exhibitions currently on show. Further, only half of the Gallery's permanent collection can be shown at one time.

The new Manawatu Gallery



The new Gallery will be built as part of the Palmerston North Civic Complex on the "Railway Land" in the central city area. It is scheduled for completion in 1976.

A place for us all

The Gallery will provide for present and future needs for our city and region.

- films, concerts, drama, happenings, social events
- lecture theatre with audio-visual facilities
- sitting out areas, bookshop, eventual coffee bar
- permanent collection of N.Z. art; travelling exhibitions from New Zealand and overseas
- print and drawing room, workshop
- education officer
- regional information and research centre, including research library

What it will cost, and how you can help

Costs are budgeted at \$450,000. Government has granted \$100,000; the Palmerston North City Council is providing the land and 1/3 of the final cost of the building.

The target for the public appeal is \$225,000. Please give generously, for your own sake, and for your children.

Donations are tax deductible, and can be spread over three tax years.

You can drop your donation into the Compro Roadshow, or mail to New Manawatu Gallery Appeal P.O. Box 1494, Palmerston North



New Manawatu Gallery Community Project Appeal

The Appeal Committee has organised a Roadshow to tour the region, so that you can see at first hand what the new Gallery will offer.

included will be: (1) plans and models of the new Gallery, (2) examples of arts and crafts — paintings, sculptures, photographic works, pottery, weaving, etc., (3) films,

(4) demonstrations by local artists and craftsmen, (5) special children's events.

Full details are below. Please try to make a visit...

COMPRO 75 ROADSHOW

ST MARKS HALL - AWAPUNI! June 30, July 1

DISPLAYS BY LOCAL ARTISTS and CRAFTSMEN of

Spinning, Weaving, Pottery, also The Play Centre, Awapuni Park Play Group,

Clay Classes (Children) Demonstrations at various times between 11am - 2pm daily

SEE PROGRAMME AT HALL

polishing, enamelling and cake decorating. Over 4,000 people visited the Roadshow during its two and a half month tour and 150 local artists and crafts people were involved. Not only did two out of three people approached by canvassers for contributions to the new gallery gave money but Hansen noted that another effect of the Roadshow was to bring together many arts workers who had previously had little contact with each other.⁴⁸ Both the Roadshow and Compro in general created a higher profile for the gallery and involved the community more than any of the gallery's activities ever previously had. The populist approach was widely approved. Said the *Evening Standard*, "The Roadshow is proving an instant success. ...The gallery is not intended for the cultural recluse. It has been planned as a living building..."⁴⁹

The gallery society raised around \$80,000 but in these times of high inflation the projected building cost constantly escalated. Figures given both in the press and in society minutes constantly varied and are inconsistent, but the final cost could have been as much as \$525,000, including furnishings, architect's fees and landscaping (not completed for several years). A further \$32,000 was paid by government and the total council contribution must have been \$300,000 or more eventually.

The new gallery was jointly opened on 3 July by minister for the arts Alan Hight and mayor Brian Elwood. *A Show of Hands* was the opening exhibition and 6,000 people visited within the week. Praise was heaped on the design of the new gallery and David Taylor received a design award from the Western Branch of the NZ Institute of Architects. Nick Spill claimed in *Art New Zealand* that it was "the best designed gallery space in New Zealand".⁵⁰ And James Mollison, director of the Australian National Gallery, said he was pleased that the gallery didn't awe people, that it was not self-conscious, and was designed "to suit the size of people". He said it was unusual to see an art gallery in which the works looked more important than the architecture.⁵¹

The new gallery was five times larger than the old one. Its overall aesthetic was of a strong 1970s modernity, with exposed beams, open plan and a favouring of "truth to materials". A sense of structure and open space were the dominant impressions, rather than the heaviness, solidity and feeling of permanence of the classical museum (*plate 5.10*). The building was relatively self-effacing from the exterior, and indeed the entrance was not at all obvious, let alone featured anything that signified "art gallery" (*plate 5.9*).

⁴⁸ "Impressive Display Mounted by Compro '75 Roadshow", unsourced newsclipping [Dannevirke?], [13 August?] 1975, Manawatu Art Gallery press clipping file.

⁴⁹ "Roadshow Proving Instant Success", *Evening Standard*, 17 July 1975.

⁵⁰ Spill, "Opening the New Manawatu Art Gallery", p. 20.

⁵¹ "Gallery Given a Bouquet", unsourced press clipping, 14 May 1978, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

Activities

Exhibitions

The exhibitions held in the year 1970 were indicative of the pattern of the '70s at the Manawatu Art Gallery. There were:

- 4 permanent collection exhibitions
- 2 annual exhibitions – one each of the Manawatu Society of Arts and the Manawatu Pottery Society
- 5 New Zealand touring exhibitions
- 2 international touring exhibitions
- 4 gallery organised exhibitions of individual artists
- 4 gallery curated theme or group exhibitions (if the *Manawatu Prize* is included)

This type of selection changed little through the decade, though there was a later trend to extravaganza shows – large exhibition and event packages. (See the appendix for a full listing of exhibitions.) Some of the notable exhibitions organised by the Manawatu Art Gallery were as follows:

Maori in Focus, a 1971 exhibition curated by director Ian North. This exhibition gained high recognition and coverage (a full page spread in the *Dominion* and cover page treatment in Alister Taylor's *Affairs* magazine, for example), probably because it was one of the first "airings" of historical photographs in New Zealand (and some remarkable photographs at that). The photographs were printed by Dominion Museum photographer John Turner principally from 1885 Burton Brothers and 1920s James McDonald negatives of Wanganui River Maori held by the Museum.⁵² North said he hoped the exhibition "would advance the cause of photography as an art form", something he felt "was lacking in the majority of New Zealand art galleries".⁵³

Not to be confused with the *Manawatu Prize's* 1970 variant title *Manawatu Centennial Prize for Contemporary Art* was the 1971 *Centenary Collection Purchase Exhibition*. The exhibition arose from discussions between Ian North and Robert Hooker, vice-president of the Awapuni Jaycees. The Jaycees decided to give \$5,000 to the gallery for acquiring art in Palmerston North's centenary year. Hooker said the Jaycees wanted to contribute to the cultural life of Palmerston North but did not want a monument and felt this would be equally accessible and long lasting.⁵⁴ The arts council added another \$1,000, and 17 works by 16 New Zealand artists were selected for purchase by Gordon Brown, North, Keith Thomson and Robert Hooker. Keith Thomson

⁵² The exhibition took place at about the same time as Turner curated *Nineteenth Century New Zealand Photographs* for the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, an exhibition widely toured by that gallery.

⁵³ "Maori Life Display", *Evening Standard*, 3 March 1970, p18.

⁵⁴ "How City Jaycees have Marked Their Centenary with Art Patronage", *New Zealand Womens Weekly*, 3 January 1972.



Plate 5.9 Exterior of the new Manawatu Art Gallery building on Main Street, 1988.

commented in his society President's Report for the year that this group purchase would give the Palmerston North Art Gallery "one of [the] two most important collections of New Zealand contemporary art in existence" (the other being that of the Auckland City Art Gallery).

Playthings set attendance records for the Grey Street gallery with close to 3,000 people (many of them children, including 40 school groups) attending in the 20 days of the exhibition. The exhibition focused on toys and comprised an historical section of old toys, art works depicting toys, some toys made by artists, quality toys, and a make-your-own section described by the *Tribune* as: "the best thing in the show. All it consists of is a pile of wood, a pile of nails, and the combined effort of the 2,000 children and adults that have passed through the exhibition. It has apparently been demolished and rebuilt hundreds of times and looks like a Picasso horse at the moment."⁵⁵

Gallery exhibitions with substantial catalogues were *Toss Woollaston* (1973), *Colin McCahon: "Religious" Works 1946–1952* (1975) and *The Active Eye* (1975). The Woollaston exhibition was the first survey in New Zealand of his work. Bieringa was eminently qualified as curator of this and the McCahon exhibition, given his masters thesis. Hamish Keith's review of the exhibition, seen in Auckland, gave it "full marks" for such a "massive survey".⁵⁶ The Colin McCahon exhibition occurred when the McCahon industry was already underway (the Auckland City Art Gallery's 1972 touring exhibition *Colin McCahon: A survey* being one of the first examples), but it was still early enough for a provincial gallery to make a significant contribution to the promotion and understanding of McCahon's work.

The Active Eye was the first survey of New Zealand contemporary photography and a landmark exhibition for the medium in this country. It was organised in conjunction

⁵⁵ "When Toys are Art", *The Tribune*, 15 December 1974.

⁵⁶ *The Herald*, 1973, undated press clipping, Manawatu Art Gallery scrapbook.

with PhotoForum by combining an open invitation with an approach to twelve established photographers to submit work. The result was an exhibition of 104 prints by 52 photographers that toured to 11 venues.⁵⁷ A two-day seminar on contemporary New Zealand photography was held in conjunction with the exhibition and participants stayed overnight at the gallery, marae-style.

Art in the Mail was claimed to be the biggest exhibition of international art ever held in New Zealand.⁵⁸ It was proposed and curated by conceptual artist Nicholas Spill and was organised by sending hundreds of invitations out to artists all over the world, asking them to return a piece of “mail art”. There was no selection of work, for Spill was not concerned with the quality of individual expression but with the exhibition as a concept: “This show uses the world’s postal system as a medium for the open transmission of art as communication and information. Such an openness and profusion of non-precious art will no doubt have a strong effect on what people think contemporary art can do in our society.”⁵⁹ The sheer novelty of the concept created a huge amount of public interest and the exhibition was toured to ten venues around the country.

The opening exhibition for the new gallery in Main St was an extravaganza called *A Show of Hands* (1977). It featured art works representing hands; displays on the process of hand making art, including pottery and weaving demonstrations; everyday visual depictions of hands such as karate charts, road signals; hand-oriented mime, theatre and musical performances, including films showing mime artist Marcel Marceau; videos by conceptual artist Bruce Barber; and a touch gallery for the blind.

Flight Fancies (1979) was the last large, integrated, exhibition/event type of programme for the decade at Manawatu. Organised for International Year of the Child and taking the history of flight as its theme, it was researched by a student over summer and comprised kites from around the world, balloons, model airplanes, the Richard Pearse plane from MOTAT, and many didactic panels about the history of flight. It was opened by an airforce personality, with clowns and the Te Rapa band in attendance and was well supported by sponsors. Kite enthusiasts Pat Hanly and Pat Travers (from Australia) ran a kite day and a workshop in which participants made and launched small-scale hot air balloons was held. Another associated event, “Take-off 79” comprised both serious and fun attempts at human powered flight and was watched by over 1,000 people. The exhibition itself was enormously popular, with 14,000 visitors attending over its six week duration. “All the activities and exhibition have been enjoyed beyond our wildest expectations up till now” said Bieringa in his director’s report.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ This includes the Auckland City Art Gallery, although they withdrew the exhibition at the last minute when police judged some work obscene (see later under Controversies).

⁵⁸ “The Postman Bought it: It’s an Art Exhibition Extraordinary”, *The Evening Standard*, 16 October 1976.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Spill, quoted in “*The Postman Brought it*”.

⁶⁰ June 1979.

The gallery's premier exhibition of the 1960s, the *Manawatu Prize*, continued into the seventies but soon faltered. Bieringa noted in 1971 that demand from artists had declined for such an exhibition: patronage for contemporary art had grown since the time the exhibition started, dealer galleries had mushroomed, and there were now other competitions such as the more lavishly funded Benson & Hedges. A change in formula was attempted in 1971 by making the competition for prints only but by 1973 the quality of paintings and other media submitted led to selectors Bieringa and James Mack choosing so little work that this became the exhibition's last year.

Ceramics enjoyed strong exposure at the gallery, as they did in many other venues in the seventies. There were invited ceramics exhibitions every year except 1971, 1977 and 1978, as well as the annual local potters exhibition. The other annual exhibition – the Manawatu Society of Arts exhibition – persisted until 1977. It was replaced in 1978 by the *Manawatu Review*, an exhibition of selected local artists, although the *Review* had already been running since 1974.

A number of the Manawatu Art Gallery curated exhibitions toured to other venues, five having extensive tours. The touring exhibitions were: *Maori in Focus* (4 venues); *The Manawatu Prize* (travelling for two years at least and up to 11 venues); John Panting (1972 version, 9 venues), *Paris Biennale Prints* (to Paris); *MT Woollaston* (6 venues); *Colin McCahon: Religious Works* (at least 2 venues); *The Active Eye* (11 venues); *Patrick Hanly Drawings* (9 venues); and *Art in the Mail* (10 venues). There was also an exhibition of the Manawatu Art Gallery collection at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts in 1972 and a Jeffrey Harris exhibition jointly organised with the Dowse and Sarjeant Galleries in 1979.

Contemporary Art

As noted earlier, the Manawatu Art Gallery had built up a reputation as a contemporary-focused gallery in the 1960s, particularly through its annual *Manawatu Prize* competition. *The Centenary Collection*, *Colin McCahon: "Religious" Works*, *MT Woollaston: Works 1933–1973*, *The Active Eye* and *Art in the Mail* all helped continue this reputation. Other Manawatu Art Gallery organised exhibitions of contemporary artists who were or became nationally known included:

- William Sutton (1970)
- Hanly's Hanlys (1971)
- David Armitage (1971) (distinct from Dunedin's touring exhibition of 1974/75)
- Young Auckland Painters Plus One* (1971)
- Paris Biennale Prints* (1973)
- Drawings Invitational* (1973)
- Michael Smither (1973)
- John Panting (1972 – not the UK curated 1976 touring exhibition)
- Patrick Hanly: Drawings 1956–73* (1975)

Four Wellington Painters (Maddox, McLeod, Taylor, Lane) (1976)

Barry Cleavin (1977)

Philip Clairmont (1977)

Marte Szirmay (1978)

Bronwynne Cornish (1978)

Five Sculptors (Pine, Viscoe, Smith, Dibble, Nichols) (1978)

Philip Trusstum Paintings (1978)

Jeffrey Harris (1978)

New Zealand Drawing (1978)

Andrew Drummond: *The Grass is Greener* (1979).

Some of these artists, such as McCahon, Woollaston, Hanly and Sutton could certainly be described as contemporary but had also been practicing for many years. Bieringa comments: “It was a period to reflect on those artists who had been neglected. Retrospectives were common in the seventies for that very reason, to provide, not a closing off, but to say, ‘these guys have been working for 40 years yet you don’t see them in the collections and in fact they’ve got a whole lifetime of work there’. There were a whole host of them. So Colin McCahon, Woollaston and Hotere were a frequent feature of the 1970s landscape. And you weren’t only introducing these artists to the public, you were giving their entire life story. It was very strange. And it partly happened because both those artists and the institutions were being pushed by a new generation coming through. It had all been piling up because nobody had been attending to the process. So there was an enormous pressure to, not dispose of the older artists, but to put them in a position where you could then judge the next generation. That was why there was so much capital expenditure and expansion with galleries, because of that pressure. Collection building was very important. And the pressure building up was probably one of the reasons we didn’t do more radical things – there was so much we had to get off our chest in a funny way.”

Indeed, the definition of contemporary at the Manawatu Art Gallery rarely extended into the area where the most radical art was being made in the 1970s – sculpture, particularly post-object or conceptual work. Sculpture exhibitions included the 1971 *NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters Touring Exhibition*, the two John Panting exhibitions, and the 1979 touring exhibitions *Bill Culbert: London and NZ Works* and *NZ Sculpture at Mildura*. More conceptual work was limited to *Art in the Mail* (in the sense that curatorially, if not in the actual works, it was concerned with process and the definition of art), a performance Andrew Drummond gave during *Flight Fancies* (Drummond, like Panting, had connections with Palmerston North) and most notably Andrew Drummond’s 1979 installation *The Grass is Greener*, in which the artist grew grass on a large tent-like structure within the gallery (*plate 5.10*).

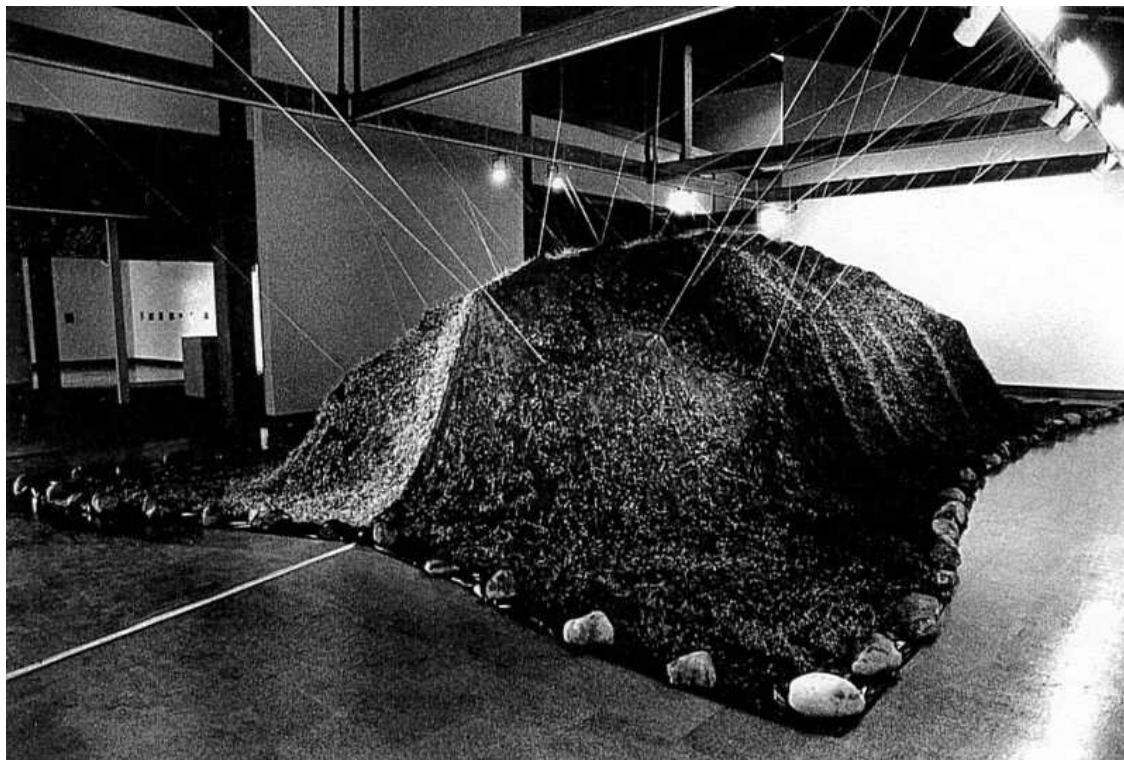


Plate 5.10 Interior of the Manawatu Art Gallery, with Andrew Drummond's *The grass is greener* (1979) installation in the foreground.

Bieringa says that although he was well aware of conceptual art and saw a fair amount on video, there were practical difficulties with showing it: most of the artists were in Auckland and low budgets discouraged getting them and their work to Palmerston North; the work was often site-specific and not easily transportable; there may have been difficulties justifying the cost of a one-off performance or the artist's time in creating an impermanent installation; and the artists themselves were spurning traditional institutions (though, in Bieringa's view, at the same time desiring institutional sanction).

Bieringa's approach to the contemporary had some points in common with the conceptual artists but also differed: "We were quite traditional really, we were looking at objects [paintings in the main], rather than processes, even if those objects were quite radical. [We were attempting to] break down the traditional media distinctions, so we experimented with showing films in the gallery, doing slide and body shows and installations. In other words we were trying to break down the static."

Public orientation & Events

Luit Bieringa has a very clear and strongly felt philosophy about relations with the public and this obviously informed the type of programme offered by the Manawatu Art Gallery in the 1970s:

A [true] community gallery is not one devised by enthusiasts in the community but one that responds genuinely to demands expressed by that community. It sounds arrogant but you can set the tone, and respond to what you hear and perceive people want. You may get it wrong, but elitism is a cheap shot, and its equally a cheap shot to put marketing people in place and to respond to the lowest common denominator.

Popular is different from being populist. The general public out there is highly intelligent and to talk down to them is to demean both them and yourself. And people get bored. Like at the National Art Gallery before I started, you had all the favourites on the wall and who came through? Nobody. People are visually astute. That's why, in my mind, the Kelliher Art Award was not a panacea for criticism about the gallery. But you *could* have an intelligent show that included works of that kind that gave a context where people could learn things rather than be given an aspirin. It would have been great to show the Kelliher Art Award at the same time as a major contemporary landscape exhibition.

Some of our thematic shows were very simple but they had something everyone could touch base with, and so without demeaning the contents you could still have high quality and the entire community remembering and enjoying them. We were not doing something that's more common now, of shows for a very small specialist curatorial coterie.

Behind this public orientation was a belief in the power of art to enrich and even change lives. Bieringa considers his own values in this area came from his 1960s education and the '60s talk of revolution: "You had to really believe in the stuff, and the role art had to play in society. If you are enthusiastic, the enthusiasm rubs off. If not, then you are only selling a product and people are only going to be sold for other reasons. You can easily tell the gallery people who like art and those who are just doing a job – and that's OK so long as you recognise there are other ways of running a gallery. With missionary zeal, God you can make mistakes, but I'd rather make exciting mistakes than dull ones."

Some of Bieringa's activities were quite literally those of an art missionary. In 1974 and 1978 he "would go out with David Aitken one day a week after school with an art box, and hold workshops making things for kids, especially in the [poorer] Awapuni area". He recalls, "I never saw anyone devour material like that – those kids had nothing at home".

Other examples of taking art to the people were showing Woollaston paintings from the gallery collection in the Majestic Hotel foyer in 1974, using the arts council truck to take exhibitions to local towns (which proved unsustainable due to lack of financial support) and the highly successful Pahiatua exhibitions.

Pahiatua is less than an hour's drive from Palmerston North, on the other side of the Tararua/Ruahine ranges. The Pahiatua exhibitions had been running since the 1960s as an annual "outreach" activity of the Manawatu Society of Arts. The society had a "Pahiatua Exhibitions Committee", whose prime mover was Pahiatua resident Amelia Haas, a dynamic and formidable woman capable, says Bieringa, of selling Cairo to the

Egyptians.⁶¹ The annual Pahiatua exhibitions (held in Wright Stephenson's Motor Showroom) were the social event of northern Wairarapa according to Thomson, and drew large crowds. The Rodin exhibition of 1968 was probably the high point in terms of visitors: 7,300 were reckoned to have seen the exhibition in five days. In opening the exhibition Dr Bill Sutch stated that he was amazed at how a town with only 2,000 people could stage an international touring show like this. Attendances in some other years were also very high: 3,500 in 1973 for the Barbara Hepworth exhibition and 10,000 in 1975 for the Pahiatua Rembrandt Arts Festival (which combined Rembrandt etchings from the National Art Gallery collection with work by New Zealand artists). The formula for these exhibition/festivals was similar to art society exhibitions in general, only raised to a higher level. There would be the guest artists (with an emphasis on the craft end of the spectrum), and then work submitted by local art society members and sometimes from art societies around the country. The Barbara Hepworth exhibition, for example, included several Hepworth bronzes and drawings plus photographs of her work against a background of local artists as well as invited New Zealand artists Anneke Borren, Gudde Moller, Michael Smither and Kobi Bosshard.

Attendances at single exhibitions at the Manawatu Art Gallery rarely reached the sort of levels seen in Pahiatua. The highest attendances recorded were:

- 1970 *Centennial Purchase Exhibition* (1,971)
- 1972 *Contemporary French Tapestries* (1,584), *Invited Potters* (1,527), *Bill Brandt* (1,431), *MT Woollaston* (1,438)
- 1974 *Scultura Italiana* (2,316), *Playthings* (2,981)
- 1975 *McCahon: Religious Works* (1,510), *Raymond McIntyre* (1,512), *Manawatu Pottery Society* (1,685)
- 1977 *A Show of Hands*, the new gallery opening exhibition (8,275)
- 1979 *Flight Fancies* (14,000)

Both the regular invited potters exhibitions and, particularly, the annual Manawatu Pottery Society exhibition, scored high attendances. However, the annual Manawatu Society of Arts exhibition never attracted more than average visitation, despite its community base of artists.

In general, attendances were moderate at the gallery. Figures vary according to the source, and accuracy of door counts is always questionable, but it seems numbers rose from somewhere around 10,000 per year in the early 1960s to just under 20,000 in 1968 and fell back a little to around 18,000 in the early 1970s until the bumper year of 1973 (24,000), a year Bieringa describes as a time he "was pushing all the right buttons".

⁶¹ Director's report, November 1973.

Numbers fell back in the lead up to the new building, and then rocketed to 40,000 for a few years, before settling down to 30,000 in the early 1980s.⁶²

The Grey St. gallery figures seem low but it must be remembered that this building was no more than a single gallery space attached to a house away from the main pedestrian thoroughfares and with relatively limited opening hours.⁶³ The small space possibly made numbers seem greater, for Bieringa remembers it as a busy place: “The old gallery was homely, an ordinary looking little building housing shows that changed very rapidly. It was on a corner site with high visibility, and people could come in for a virtually continuous programme – daytime, evening, and weekend. OK it killed you in the process but when a place looks full it gets fuller – it’s a self-fulfilling prophecy” (*plate 5.11*).

The continuous programme referred to by Bieringa included events like concerts, talks, film screenings and workshops which ran alongside exhibitions. Many of these, such as readings by touring poets Alan Brunton, Denis Glover, Sam Hunt and Hone Tuwhare in 1975, were independent of the exhibitions, with the gallery simply acting as a venue. But others were held in conjunction with the programme. Bieringa says he “felt activities had to fit like a thread throughout the programme, so there would be special pottery day for kids in a pottery show, and a weaving day in a weaving show”. Society members helped run some of these on a voluntary basis.

The diversity of events, combined with the uneven record kept of their occurrence makes it difficult to summarise the events programme, other than to say that it would probably not be greatly different from the sort of programme offered by public galleries today (aside from the film screenings). A listing of events held in 1973 (so far as they have been recorded) gives some idea of the type of activities:

Jan	Film screenings
Feb	Film evenings – <i>Civilisation</i> and film on Surrealism
Feb	Michael Smither workshop
Mar	Batik workshop with Bambang Oetoro – strongly oversubscribed

⁶² Annual attendances, financial year to 1975, then calendar year:

69/70	70/71	71/72	72/73	73/74	74/75	'76	'77(1/2yr)	'78	'79
18,776	17,993	17,270	24,154	18,324	19,236	15,242	22,447	41,140	42,951

⁶³ Visitation was around one third the city population in 1975, compared with one half for both the gallery today and the Dowse in the mid-1970s and over 100% for the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in the seventies. However, comparing attendances with the Dowse is difficult due to the large Wellington area that gallery could potentially draw on and the Govett-Brewster figures are questionable.

School attendances do not seem to be recorded, other than that there were 51 groups per year average from 1968 to 1971.

Opening hours were restricted by today’s standards, being afternoons weekdays and Sundays during the sixties and early seventies. From 1974 they expanded to 10–4.30 weekdays (with Mondays closed) and 2–5pm both days on weekends.



Plate 5.11 “Construction afternoon” workshops at the Palmerston North Art Gallery, Grey St, 1971. This activity took place on the front lawn of the gallery, in full view of a busy street intersection.

- May Palmerston North Arts Festival – gallery events include art films and films for children and a pottery making demonstration.
- July William Toomath lecture on “Design in Finland today”.
- Aug Lecture by Toss Woollaston in conjunction with his exhibition.
- Aug Childrens art classes – overwhelming response.
- Aug Screening of film *Civilisation*.
- Sept Holiday art workshops.
- Sept Screening of film by Hundertwasser.
- Oct Pahiatua Arts Festival – many events.
- Dec Auction of pottery.
- Dec “Paint-in” for children.

Four unspecified concerts are also recorded as having taken place. Such events were organised by the Palmerston North Arts Council, the gallery being one of several venues for their concerts and performing arts events. Bieringa was on the local arts council and worked gallery events in with festivals organised by the arts council and contributed gallery resources to them. There were the centenary year (1970/71) events for example, such as Jenny McLeod’s “total theatre” musical commission *Under the Sun*, supported by an exhibition of children’s art for the performance at the gallery. Other Palmerston North Arts Council organised events to which the gallery contributed were an Arts Council promotion week in 1972, an Arts Festival in 1973, and a Youth Festival in 1974.

Promoting events and exhibitions was not easy with the little money the gallery had for advertising. Fortunately the media were sympathetic enough to allow gallery staff and society members to write their own copy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Regular articles about gallery exhibitions or collection items appeared in the *Evening Standard* at this time by Ian North, Luit Bieringa, and teachers college art lecturers Ray Thorburn and David Aitken. North had arranged these on the basis of “if nobody else is going to do it, write it yourself”. In 1970, for example, there were weekly columns by North and Thorburn on very general art topics – such as abstract art by Thorburn. Aitken tended to write exhibition reviews and Bieringa’s pieces were usually either on artists showing in the gallery at the time or on collection works.

For all the effort in running events to reach wider audiences there was little conscious effort to address Maori audiences or deal with Maori issues at the Manawatu Art Gallery. Bieringa says, “People like Para Matchitt who were the path breakers between contemporary and traditional art were not evident at all, they weren’t visible. People are invisible if nobody writes about them and nobody sees their work. The structures were driven by Pakeha, let’s face it. But towards the end of the ‘70s there were some quite astute engagements from a few artists despite people thinking it all happened in the 1980s.”

Teachers college head of art Frank Davis was concerned with Maori/Pakeha relations in his work and was a local presence in this respect. His most public project was his Te

Kooti exhibition at the Manawatu Art Gallery in 1969. The opening was described at the time as a “happening”, and involved readings, theatre and music that wove Te Kooti into New Zealand history. Bieringa says of Davis’ work in general, “Frank’s ability to deal with [Maori] issues was a mixed bag at the time – a lot of people didn’t understand [his message].”

Bieringa’s remark that Maori artists were invisible really means invisible to Pakeha audiences. For example, there were two significant Maori artists living in Palmerston North during the 1970s, Cliff Whiting, lecturer at teachers college 1973–1981, and John Bevan Ford, lecturer in art for Massey University’s extension programme from 1974 to 1981. These artists were highly active, but worked outside Pakeha art circles, and neither of them exhibited at the Manawatu Art Gallery. (Fred Graham, now a senior figure amongst Maori artists, had also been a lecturer at teachers college 1957–1962.)

Collection

The gallery had a well established, small collection of 129 works by 1970. These were largely by New Zealand artists of a slightly earlier period (such as Mina Arndt, James Cook, T.A. McCormack, H. Linley Richardson, D.K. Richmond, Maud Sherwood, Margaret Stoddart, Van der Velden, Nugent Welch, and John Weeks) as well as etchings and a few paintings by British 19th century academic artists. Standing amongst these were three McCahons a Woollaston, as well as the works acquired as part of the Manawatu Prize – David Armitage, Pat Hanly, Milan Mrkusich, Ray Thorburn, Gordon Walters and another Woollaston.

Collecting in the 1970s at the Manawatu Art Gallery developed a more contemporary focus, although works by early artists were still acquired. The Centenary Collection of 1971 gave a boost of contemporary works still considered collection highlights and which help characterise the collection today as 1970s weighted. The 15 works were by Don Driver, Robert Ellis, Patrick Hanly, Ralph Hotere, Michael Illingworth, Colin McCahon, Milan Mrkusich, Ian Scott, Michael Smither, William Sutton, Ray Thorburn, Philip Trusttum, Gordon Walters, Brent Wong, and Toss Woollaston. Acquisition of works by these and similar contemporary artists continued through the seventies.

The collecting emphasis was strongly on paintings, drawings and prints. But “contemporary” also meant new media for art galleries in the seventies such as ceramics and photography. The first ceramic acquired was by celebrated Japanese potter Shoji Hamada in 1973, though further works were not acquired until 1977.

The first photographs accessioned were the 1970 *Maori in Focus* exhibition prints in 1974. They were modern prints from nineteenth century negatives. Aside from these historical works, the first photography acquisitions were a set of Glenn Busch works, also in 1974. Although the *Active Eye* exhibition gave the Manawatu Art Gallery a reputation for being sympathetic to photography these acquisitions were by no means the first photographs collected by a New Zealand public gallery, and like other galleries

who did purchase, the Manawatu Art Gallery's record of photography acquisitions in the 1970s was sporadic.⁶⁴ A major fillip to the photography collection was made with the addition of the *Active Eye* exhibition photographs (though these were not formally accessioned until 1980).

Bieringa says that nearly all collection recommendations came from him, with a few from Keith Thomson and other society council members. Asked why he decided to collect and show photographs in particular, he says he was influenced by the increasing involvement of artists in different media as well as the emergence of the first photography graduates from Elam School of Fine Arts in the early-mid 1970s.⁶⁵ "Given my background in film and interests in new media (which were undermining traditional techniques in printmaking in particular), it seemed an obvious extension for a young gallery with a nascent collection to ensure it had representative works in a medium that was going to play an important role. So it was really keeping on the cutting edge – though whether it was the cutting edge of photography is another issue. It was breaking down that whole notion of painting and sculpture, which artists had been breaking down for years."

Acquisitions were mainly funded by society membership moneys. For example, of the \$1,019 spent in 1970, \$469 came from membership moneys, \$350 from AGMANZ subsidies, and \$200 as surplus from the Manawatu Prize. No portion of the annual city grant was applied to purchases until the early 1980s and there were no private gifts of funds aside from an offer from the Waldegrave family to support the purchase ceramics.

Acquisition spending varied considerably from year to year.⁶⁶ Combining 1970 and 1972 financial year expenditures and comparing them with 1979 and 1980 gives a rough indication of the trends over the decade: while there was no increase in acquisitions spending in inflation adjusted terms over the period, the total gallery budget nearly doubled in real terms, meaning that purchases effectively declined as a proportion of the total budget. That purchases would lag behind total expenditure is not unexpected since staff increases and other costs associated with the new building required a sharp rise in expenditure.

⁶⁴ For dates when other galleries began collecting photography see McCredie, "Rear Vision: A Contextual Statement – Photography in New Zealand 1970–1988".

⁶⁵ David Aitken, lecturer in art at Palmerston North Teachers College during the 1970s, had a passion for photography and believes that he was a strong influence on the development of Bieringa's own interest in the medium.

⁶⁶ Purchases are as follows:

1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
\$1,329	\$29	\$1,136	\$745	\$649	\$1,763	\$1,358	\$1,795	N/A	\$4,195	\$2,715	\$5,204

Low amounts for 1973 and '74 may be due to the society conserving its funds for the new building. The 1971 figure is plainly anomalous and it is for this reason the 1970 and 1972 amounts are averaged in the calculations above, rather than 1970 and '71.

Controversies

The Manawatu Art Gallery had a reputation for controversies. But these focused less on controversial art than issues relating to funding, especially funding for the new building (though arguably the two are related for it was clear what sort of art would be shown in the new gallery). A contributing factor to the sense of controversy was that Luit Bieringa was always prepared to speak out in strong terms to the media. In 1974, for example, he publicly threatened to resign if annual funding did not increase. Other protests he made resulted in headlines such as: “Art Gallery Director Revolts over Conditions”, “\$200,000 for New Gallery Would be ‘Waste of Money’”, “Thumbs Down on Pig Pushing”, and “Casting Swine for a Few Pearls”. (The content of these headlines was covered earlier under *Building*.) Despite the strength of these statements, opposition to the gallery never seems to have been widespread – it was voiced by one or two councillors and sometimes the weekly give-away paper, *The Tribune*. Support for the gallery came from the more powerful positions of the mayor and the daily paper, *The Evening Standard*, the *Standard’s* editorials nearly always giving 100% backing to the gallery.

There were some art controversies. Three in particular were the Kelliher exhibition, the Fiona Clark work in *The Active Eye* (at other galleries), and the non-acceptance of David Mealing’s *Crucifixion* performance.

The non-exhibiting of the traditional landscape Kelliher Art Award exhibition in 1977 probably caused the greatest number of letters to the newspapers. Bieringa said in a letter to the *Evening Standard* that he never explicitly turned the exhibition down, only that he told the organiser that timetabling it was difficult and he found the type of work shown restrictive.⁶⁷ The further reason given by the president of the gallery society, Lois Bieder, was that the gallery not prepared to have exhibitions of selling work. The gallery was now listed amongst the top 12 in New Zealand she said, none of which had exhibitions which were for sale. Also, she continued, the gallery was aiming to establish itself as a research and educational facility and the gallery society had discouraged competitions for some time.⁶⁸

The exhibition was still shown in Palmerston North, at Massey University, but this was not appreciated by the *Tribune* nor its correspondents,⁶⁹ who felt that given the large amount of ratepayer funds spent on the new gallery, the gallery society was not in a position to “dictate” what locals could see. As “An irate pedestrian” wrote, “After all, the gallery is ours, not the toy of a few so-called experts to play around with and say ‘hands off, this is our baby’if it wasn’t for the likes of me as a ratepayer, they would not even have a job, and the society would not have a gallery”.⁷⁰ The *Tribune* itself

⁶⁷ “Becoming Aware of the Arts”, *Evening Standard*, 9 December 1977.

⁶⁸ “Venue for Kelliher Exhibition Criticised by Out-of-town Visitors to City”, *Tribune*, 4 December 1977.

⁶⁹ *Tribune* letters 11 & 18 December 1977, 22 January 1978, 5 February 1978.

⁷⁰ *Tribune*, 22 January 1978.

came down very strongly against the gallery, provoked by the fact that, by accident or design, Bieringa's long reply to its first, highly critical, article was sent to the *Evening Standard*.⁷¹

A city councillor, who also happened to be the city's public relations officer, Nev MacEwan, took up the Kelliher issue, lambasting Bieringa.⁷² "Gallery Control Tussle Looming after the Kelliher Affair" headlined the *Tribune*, reporting that the mood from councillors, spearheaded by Cr MacEwan, was to take control because they believed the gallery administration was out of touch with local taste and that the new gallery was now a valuable piece of real estate.⁷³

The controversy that dogged *The Active Eye* exhibition did not occur at the Manawatu Art Gallery itself but became associated with it because the gallery organised the exhibition and its tour. The problem with the exhibition centred on two Fiona Clark photographs of transvestites. The subjects had written comments on the mounts that some members of the public complained were offensive. Directors at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Sarjeant Gallery, and Waikato Art Museum were instructed by their local authorities to remove the Clark photographs, while the Rotorua County Council and the Auckland City Art Gallery turned down the exhibition because of Clark's photographs and the director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Brian Muir, removed the photographs from display after anti-pornography campaigner Patricia Bartlett began proceedings.⁷⁴ In July 1975 the two photographs were found to be mysteriously missing when the exhibition arrived at Wellington's Settlement Gallery from Hawkes Bay (where they also had not been exhibited). Perhaps it was a case of the exhibition's reputation preceding it, but the one gallery where there was no controversy was the initial venue, Manawatu.⁷⁵

The decision not to show David Mealing's *Crucifixion* performance work in 1978 cast a cloud over the gallery's reputation for supporting contemporary art in the minds of some. The work involved Mealing being bound and tied to a cross with the intention of suggesting there was an erosion of freedom and democracy in New Zealand and the beginnings of a police state. Mealing claimed the gallery cancelled the exhibition and produced a further conceptual work *Getting Cold Feet* consisting of the seven-month correspondence between Bieringa and himself.⁷⁶ Today Bieringa says, "The show was

⁷¹ "We Do Support the Arts", editorial, *Tribune*, 18 December 1977.

⁷² "Cr Angered at Grandiose Ideas", *The Tribune*, 18 December 1977.

⁷³ *The Tribune*, 22 January 1978.

⁷⁴ At most of these galleries the photographs were available for viewing by arrangement in the director's office, since, as defined by obscenity laws, this was not a public place.

⁷⁵ An irony of the whole affair was that the offending photographs, complete with captions, were freely available in publication form, since the police had advised the Manawatu Art Gallery Society that the catalogue was not indecent as a whole.

⁷⁶ *Getting Cold Feet* was included in the 1978/79 touring exhibition *NZ Sculptors at Mildura*. In the catalogue Mealing instructed that of his several works in the exhibition, only *Getting Cold Feet* was to be shown when the exhibition was at the Manawatu Art Gallery. Recollections vary on whether this wish was acceded to, but most likely it was.

only a proposal and I turned it down for very political reasons, with no intention of disguising this. For us to show it at this time for the sake of artistic freedom would have jeopardised the gallery's existence, which in the final analysis would be more of a blow to artistic freedom. The criticism [of artistic censorship, received from John Maynard and Tim Garrity in particular] was along purist lines. But it was a pretty rabid Muldoonite time and we were under severe pressure – to take the Kelliher exhibition especially. To put on Mealing would have provided those people [the Kelliher supporters] with an absolute lifeline.”

Summary

The Manawatu Art Gallery as it was in the 1970s evolved out of its 1960s beginnings. Significant differences were that the gallery became more director than society driven in the seventies, more active in its programme, and pre-occupied with the drive to create a new building.

Luit Bieringa put a strong personal stamp on the gallery due to his energetic and forceful personality as well as the fact that he was the only director for almost the entire decade. This does not mean the gallery society had an unimportant role though. The society was not just a friends organisation attached to the gallery but actually administered the institution and put an enormous amount of effort into fundraising for a new gallery. Running the gallery allowed a strong sense of community ownership for many, though clearly there were also councillors and others who felt frustrated with a situation where a group of people who were not publicly accountable could operate a public facility. The issue was a less important one when the gallery was in Grey Street but once it became a full-sized gallery, even support from influential voices such as the mayor and the daily newspaper for an independently run institution began to falter.

The gallery was especially energetic in touring and curating exhibitions in the early 1970s. By mid-decade the director and society had become strenuously involved in preparing for the new building. *The Active Eye* and *McCahon: Religious Works* were both organised in early 1975 despite this additional workload, but an examination of the programme shows no other significant gallery curated exhibitions from mid-1975 though to mid 1977. (The 1976 *Art in the Mail* was organised by an invited curator, Nick Spill.) After the opening of the new building energies seem to have focused on keeping the much larger spaces filled, addressing local rather than national audiences, and on back-of-house tasks. A different type of exhibition emerged at this time as well, the large extravaganzas of *A Show of Hands* and *Flight Fancies*, both enabled by the large spaces and increased staffing.

Alongside the exhibitions was an active programme of public events such as workshops, concerts and performances. Many of these had a family orientation, with children's events featuring strongly. There were occasions when art was more directly

taken out into the community, such as the Compro fundraising drive and Bieringa and Aitken's forays into the poorer areas of town (though the latter was neither entrenched in policy nor sustained in practice).

What is most remarkable about the throughput of exhibitions and events was that staff until the mid-1970s consisted only of Bieringa and a part-time secretary/custodian. Staffing increased in order to cope with the greater demands of running a larger building from 1977 but most were either temporary or part time.

It is also worth noting just how politically driven Bieringa saw his programme. He says he was trying to "create a climate where politicians could make a decision" and create goodwill generally: "We put on quite radical shows like *Art in the Mail*. These created a perception in curators and artists like Nick Spill and Andrew Drummond that the gallery was a good place to try out new ideas. That had been partly established by the *Manawatu Prize*. Also, once a year or every 18 months, we put a major show on the road. We had to prove to the arts community and arts council that this gallery was doing something and therefore deserved backing by them – whether it was McCahon, Woollaston, or *The Active Eye*. These exhibitions gave the gallery a profile beyond its own region. That was important. Some local politicians didn't think so, but they saw the wisdom afterwards. It meant that when it came to finding finances for a new gallery you had established your credentials – that was pivotal."

A local profile was also important. "We wanted the place to be in the news constantly, have it used constantly, and liked or disliked. We built an awareness profile. This partly involved servicing certain traditions in the local community – local artists, art society or review, potters, children's art, family days. We wanted to convince the political body in Palmerston North that the city deserved a new gallery."

This political motivation was not cynical or mercenary however, for Bieringa admits today that he would have done much the same things even had there been no drive for the new gallery. The rhetoric of community involvement and people-centredness surrounding both the 1959 founding and the 1970s planning for the new gallery was heartfelt, reflecting the desire to establish a new type of art gallery for the city of Palmerston North.

CHAPTER 6

The Dowse Art Gallery

We are intent upon making this new and attractive gallery community centred in its activities. Any thought that the Dowse Art Gallery will become a dignified, but aloof temple of culture, remote from the market place, is contrary to our intention.

– David Millar, *Evening Post* 1971

There was a strong feeling that the Hutt didn't need a gallery. People said you're doing a great job but questioned why a gallery in the Hutt. By the end there was never any doubt.

– David Millar, 1996

Beginnings

The City

The Dowse Art Gallery¹ opened in Lower Hutt in 1971. Unlike the Manawatu Art Gallery it did not grow from small beginnings, nor did it have the same groundswell of public support that saw Manawatu set in a new building. Instead, its formation was decided by the stroke of a city council pen, albeit with some preceding lobbying by the Hutt Art Society.

At the time the Dowse was first considered – the early 1960s – Lower Hutt was a rapidly grown young city.² It was made up of large tracts of state housing and more recent middle-class hill-top subdivisions, both fitted around an older, smaller core. Industry had been expanding into the Valley since the 1930s, providing jobs for the new residents, but many also made the daily commuter trek in to nearby Wellington.

With such a recent explosion of population in the city there was a lot of catching up to do in supplying community facilities. The Hutt Valley had never had an art gallery and, in the view of Jim Barr (Dowse director 1976–81), “it seemed culture hadn't

¹ The Gallery's name was changed to the Dowse Art Museum in c.1982.

² The population of Lower Hutt City had doubled between 1940 and 1950.

touched the Hutt Valley in any way at all”.³ Building the Dowse Art Gallery in Lower Hutt must have been like setting an outpost of culture in a brave new land, a virgin territory both physically (in the treeless and muddy housing estates) and culturally barren.

Wellington was not exactly overflowing with opportunities to see art either. The National Art Gallery was moribund, the NZ Academy of Fine Arts was, as its name suggests, dull, and the few dealer galleries were visited only by the cognoscenti.

The challenge presented to the directors of the Dowse is suggested in David Millar’s view of Lower Hutt: “It was a dormitory town, full of good honest citizens who worked 40 hours a week, washed the motorcar, and saved money for a new one. It was obvious this was not an area that got excited about any artists except Peter McIntyre.”

By necessity therefore, as well as inclination, both David Millar (director 1971–1976) and Jim Barr (director 1976–1981) were community oriented in the way they ran the Dowse. They faced the difficult task of establishing an art gallery in a city that was not always sympathetic, that knew no precedent for a gallery, and perhaps had no clear idea of what a gallery could or should be.

Formation

The push for a public art gallery in Lower Hutt seems to have come from two sides. One was the Hutt Art Society, led by Elisabeth Harper; the other was long-time mayor, Percy Dowse. The two sides were also connected, for both the mayor and his wife, Mary Dowse, were patrons of the art society.⁴

Elisabeth Harper was a prime mover in the 1958 formation of the Hutt Art Society and became its president from inception until 1978.⁵ Harper had arrived in New Zealand from Europe in 1945 and by Hutt Valley standards was sophisticated and exotic.⁶ As a war bride she was part of the influx of European immigrants to New Zealand around the time of the Second World War who brought new ideas and a more cultured way of life to this country. Before the Dowse existed, the visual arts in the Valley largely revolved around Elisabeth Harper.

³ This and all further unreferenced quotations, opinions and information attributed to Jim Barr, both in this and later chapters, are taken from an interview with Barr made by the author on 11 February 1996.

⁴ One could speculate that Mary Dowse was an important figure behind the interest in founding an art gallery since, according to Millar, her husband probably had little idea of what an art gallery was. (This and all further unreferenced quotations, opinions and information attributed to David Millar, both in this and later chapters, are taken from a tape recording made by Millar during Easter 1996 in response to written questions from the author.)

⁵ A brief history of the Hutt Art Society is contained in the Dowse exhibition catalogue *Inaugural Exhibition of Hutt Art Society*, July 1971.

⁶ She was born in Cairo, attended school in France and gained a BA in Paris. David Millar describes her as lively and intelligent with a tendency to overawe people. He says, “The Hutt was very impressed with her. She spoke fluent French and owned that icon of establishment collecting, a Goldie painting.”

Art society membership was around 6–700 in the 1960s. It was this degree of support as well as the society's energy that persuaded the city council to first propose a public art gallery in Lower Hutt as an extension to the first floor of the War Memorial Library.⁷

There were councillors who preferred a stand-alone gallery, however, and when Mary Dowse died in a road accident in November 1964 council unanimously decided that an art gallery in Myrtle St would be an ideal memorial to her.⁸

Things moved slowly for several years, and not without dissent at first. The local weekly give-away newspaper, *The Hutt News*, claimed in April 1965 that there were more pressing projects for the Hutt Valley, such as playgrounds, old peoples homes and a covered swimming pool; that there was already the National Art Gallery in Wellington, to which Lower Hutt City Council contributed a levy; and that a gallery would cater to the needs of only a tiny proportion of the population.⁹ Apparently in response to such opinion the Mary Dowse Memorial Committee felt that a combined museum and gallery would have greater public appeal and a trust board was set up to further such a project.¹⁰

Percy Dowse was a strong force behind the push for an art gallery in these years, though this probably had less to do with the created association with his late wife than his personal convictions about the amenities a city should have.¹¹ Dowse was brought up in poverty in Lancashire and he became a Fabian socialist, firmly believing that ordinary people should have access to facilities such as libraries, halls, sports grounds, swimming pools, and museums and art galleries.¹²

The vision of an art gallery for Lower Hutt approached reality in 1968 when tender documents were prepared for a gallery in Myrtle St, with a museum as an option (*plate 6.1*). In 1969 the contract was let for a gallery without a museum, although an oval shaped building to the side was planned for in the future. Following tenders, most of the storage space was eliminated in a short-sighted attempt to save money.

⁷ At the Dowse opening William (Bill) Sheat, Chairman of the arts council, paid tribute to the role of the art society in “crystalising the need for a gallery and making it apparent”, saying, “The liveliness of the society drew attention to the need for a permanent facility.” He mentioned Elisabeth Harper’s important leadership especially. (“Gallery is for all says Society Head”, *Hutt News*, 13 July 1971.)

One argument used for establishing an art gallery was that it could be a venue for housing and displaying a city art collection. In 1963 Elisabeth Harper told the Libraries, Censorship, Community Centres and Rates Appeal Committee that the art society had been collecting art works for some time and that the public should be able to see this collection in fitting surroundings (*Hutt News*, 26 November 1963).

⁸ *Hutt News*, 9 December 1964.

⁹ “Viewpoint”, *Hutt News*, 13 April 1965.

¹⁰ “Disunity on Committee Denied by Appeal Chairman”, *Hutt News*, 20 April 1965.

¹¹ Dowse in fact showed some initial embarrassment about his wife’s name being linked with the proposed art gallery/museum. (“Mr Dowse: Council will Proceed with Gallery Plan”, *Hutt News*, [c.20 April] 1965. Elisabeth Harper scrapbook.)

¹² Millar, *Once Upon a Village*, pp. 173–175.

The MP for Lower Hutt was the long serving Walter Nash, finance minister in the first Labour government and prime minister in the second. Nash would probably have held similar views but it is not known what part he had to play, if any, in the formation of the Dowse Art Gallery.

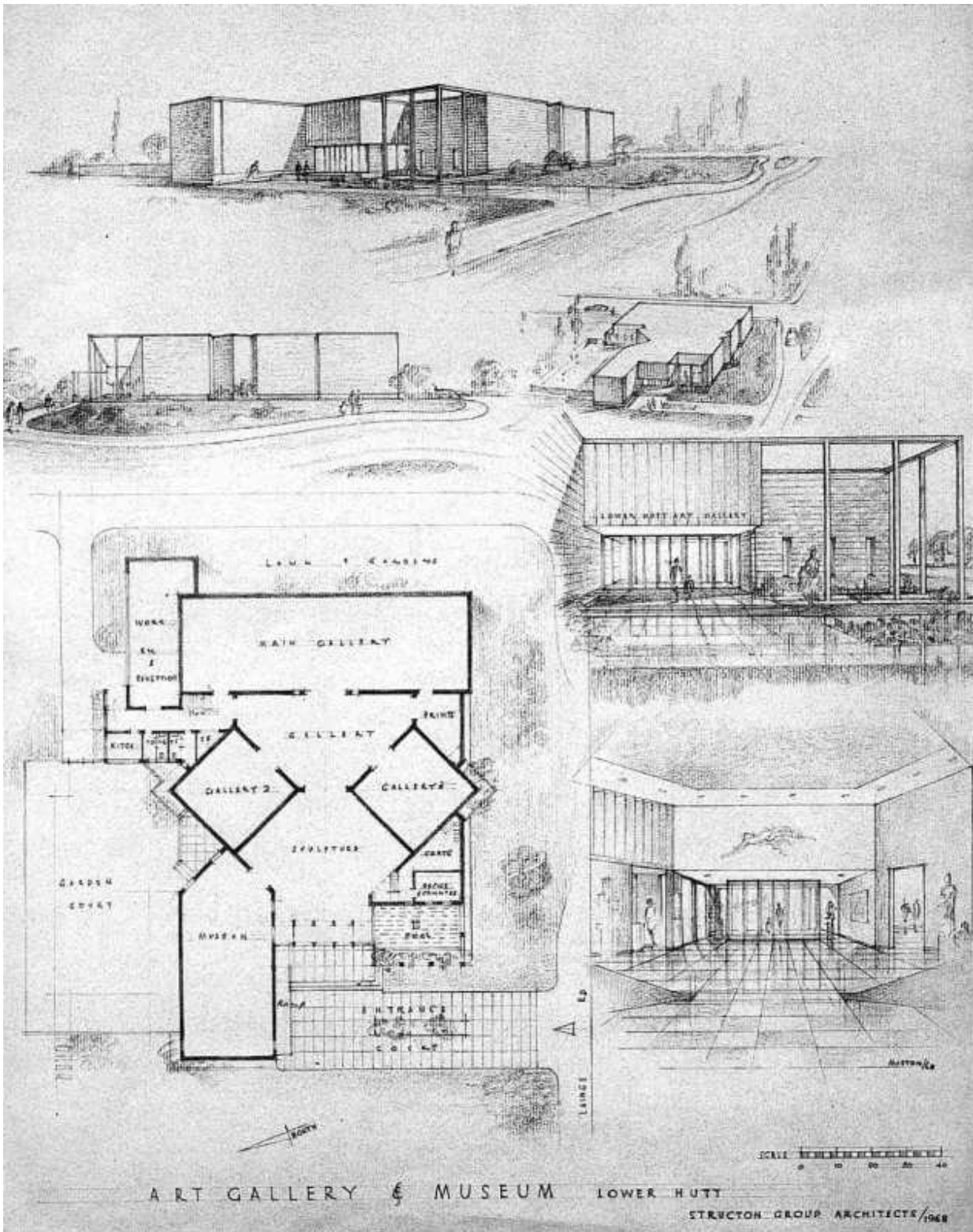


Plate 6.1 Architect's drawings for the proposed Dowse Art Gallery, 1968. Note the museum gallery to the left of the entrance which was not built.

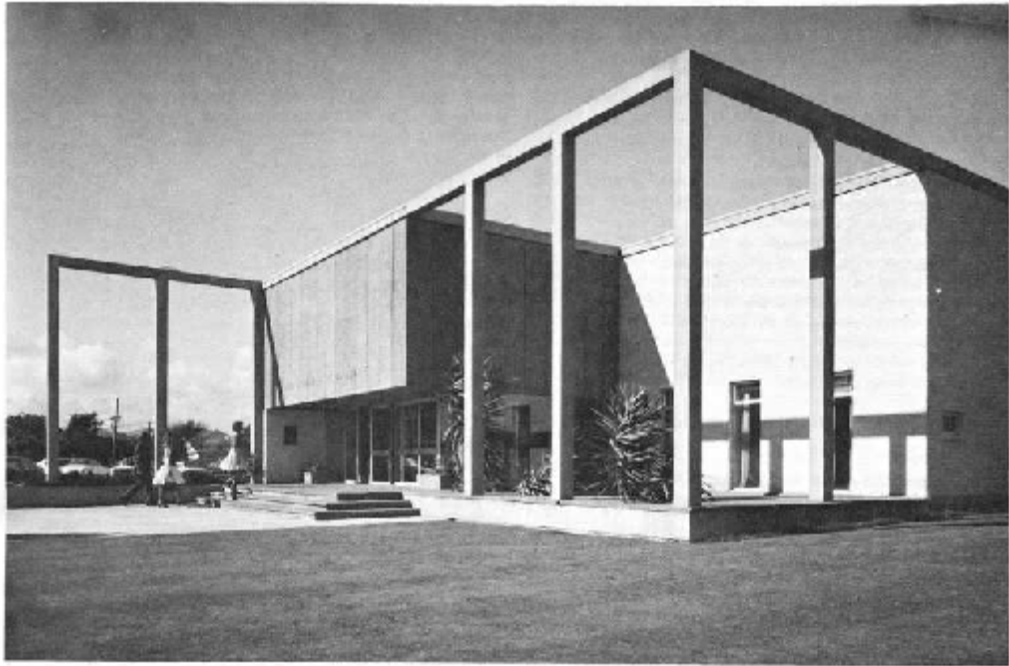


Plate 6.2 Dowse Art Gallery entrance, c.1976.

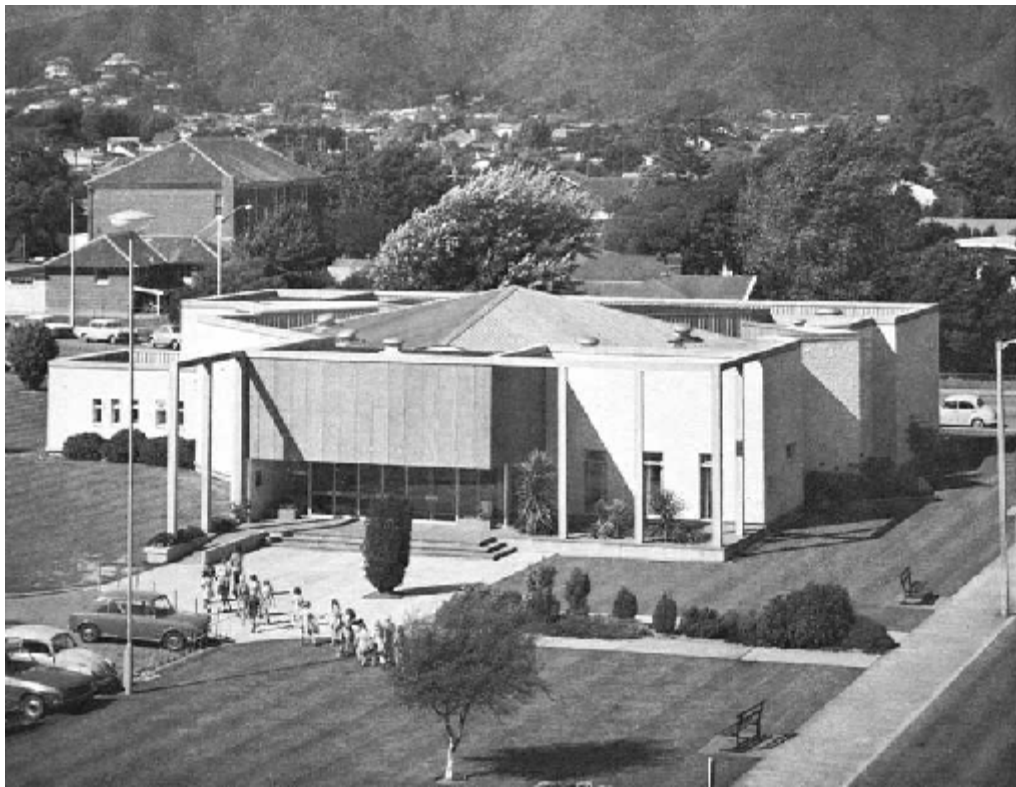


Plate 6.3 Front view of the Dowse Art Gallery, c.1976.



Plate 6.4 From the foyer looking out through the front doors, early 1970s. Note the narrow spiral staircases either side of the entrance. They led to a small display space above the entrance where ceramics and watercolours were often shown. Barr closed the space due to the impractical and dangerous access.

The building was designed by Ron Muston of Structon Group (*plates 6.2, 6.3, 6.4*). Muston was an important and influential person in the Hutt Valley and in art gallery circles, designing numerous public buildings in the Hutt and serving on a number of national committees and boards for museums and galleries. His influence on the Dowse also extended beyond simply being its architect. He became patron of the friends, and a member of both the first Dowse Management Board and the collections committee.

The gallery cost \$208,917, including architect's fees but excluding land. The art society contributed \$1,600, local businesses \$13,500, and the council paid the rest. Council had already set aside the land in 1965/66. The art society also donated its art collection, worth \$8,000 it claimed, to the new gallery.

The gallery's floor space was 930 square metres, with 300 linear metres hanging space, and the building walls were constructed of concrete blocks. These blocks were unlined and unpainted on the inside, necessitating the use of the rather old fashioned method of hanging art works from picture rails and working against the modernist concept of the "white cube" gallery space. (Both directors disliked the concrete block and picture rail appearance and Barr managed to have two galleries lined during his term.) The building had no air conditioning, though there were extractor fans and under-

floor heating. A number of additions and alterations have been made to the building over the years but the original still remains as the basic core of the present structure.¹³

One major addition was made during the 1970s. This was the so-called museum wing though it did not take either earlier proposed forms. Both directors say they were barely involved in the project and that the push for it came from council, Miller recalling that Ron Muston was, in turn, the real driving force behind council. Muston's plans were for a very extensive facility that would double the floor space of the institution and include a theatrette, a mezzanine for art classes and other activities, cafeteria, offices, sculpture court, and a large storage area as well as exhibition space.

Council received \$100,000 from the Department of Internal Affairs for the addition in 1973¹⁴ but lack of further finance and high inflation meant the wing as completed in 1978 was really only a shell. Only then did discussion ensue about its possible use, demonstrating again how council tended to impose facilities rather than respond to expressed needs or have with any idea how such facilities might operate. Consultation with museum professionals and local interest groups suggested the wing should be a museum for the city and an activities centre. However, money for development was still lacking and the bare wing was used during the remainder of the 1970s for holiday activities and storage.

The first director, David Millar (*plate 6.5*), was appointed in February 1971, aged 34. Australian born, he gained an honours degree in history from the University of Canterbury in 1961 and then went on to a two year post-graduate course in theology at Cambridge. On his return to New Zealand he became the first historian at the Dominion Museum, spending three years there. While at the museum he studied art history extramurally from the University of Auckland and wrote a book on the history of Lower Hutt, *Once Upon a Village* (1972). Millar was director for five years, until July 1976.

A council appointed management board was formed in March of 1971 (*plate 6.6*). It consisted of the mayor (John Kennedy-Good, since Percy Dowse had died in 1970), four city councillors, the deputy town clerk, the city librarian, two art society representatives (one of whom was Elisabeth Harper), an historical society representative, the director of the National Art Gallery (Melvin Day), the chairperson of the Arts Council, Ron Muston, a board secretary, and director David Millar.



Plate 6.5 David Millar seated in the Dowse

¹³ The main additions have been a glassed-in cafe space at the front and a large "museum" wing (including collection storage) and office spaces towards the rear.

¹⁴ Besides Muston being in roles of both advocate and architect, he was also a member of the Internal Affairs committee that approved the grant.

Opening

The Dowse Art Gallery was formally opened on 25 May 1971 with a survey exhibition of New Zealand art and week-long programme of activities attended by 6,000 people.¹⁵

The *Hutt News* proudly proclaimed that the opening of the Dowse Art Gallery “will be a major development in the cultural life of the community...more than that, it will be another step in the evolution of a sense of identity appropriate to one of the country’s largest cities”. It went on to say that the gallery would not merely be a place to passively view works of art but, “As the director sees it, it will become a living part of the community, a creative force to promote the graphic and other arts and to link art with industry”.¹⁶

Support and Structure

The Art Society’s Role

As a major player in the drive to found the Dowse Art Gallery, the Hutt Art Society naturally expected a good deal of involvement in its operation. David Millar noted that, “I got the feeling, within seconds of starting work, of ‘Ah, David, you have arrived. Now you can do what we have always wanted to do.’” However, he says he had no intention of fulfilling Elisabeth Harper’s dream of an art gallery for the society operated at ratepayers expense. He quickly stated that the opening exhibition would be a survey of New Zealand painting, pottery, and printmaking but Elisabeth Harper “had hoped for a big Hutt Art Society ‘do’ and [when this announcement was made] I saw her jaw drop”.

Millar nevertheless recognised political reality and said at the outset that he would be “generous” and allow the society two exhibitions a year, provided he was on the selection panel – preferably as the only selector. The two exhibitions a year (the “spring” and “autumn” exhibitions) did indeed take place throughout the 1970s, with only one or two omissions, but largely reluctantly on the part of the Dowse directors.

Millar recalls that the art society “caused me more heartburn than any other organisation by 500%. In the first art society exhibition we axed lots. There was a riot in the art society. Elisabeth Harper came to see me and said this had to stop. I suggested a professor of art history, John Simpson from Canterbury, to replace me. I knew she wouldn’t be able to turn him down. His selection was unbelievable – he cut it down to about 35. So I could say, ‘There you are, I’m much more reasonable than you think’.

¹⁵ A booklet (titled *The Dowse Art Gallery: City of Lower Hutt – May 31, 1971*) was produced for the occasion, setting out some details of the history of the building and its features as well as a programme of events for opening week.

¹⁶ *Hutt News*, 25 May 1971.

And he was very pleasant, very courteous. They couldn't argue with it. That broke their spirit. They gave up the idea of ever running the gallery themselves."

The society still kept up the pressure though, for Barr also found it a problem: "When I went there I thought they were the pits, they were the enemy, they wanted to infiltrate the gallery with their crappy painting. I felt they had to be got out of the gallery – I felt that quite strongly. I knew I couldn't do it by being antagonistic. I knew I would lose. I did it by saying the Dowse had a standard – it was really snotty. We talked about quality a lot. I don't know why they put up with it. Probably because I did a lot of the work. The first year the selection was fairly tough, the second was very tough and the third year I said there was so little good work that it was not worth doing. They had their own gallery by then. But they weren't a big issue for me. David had obviously dealt with the society. He was a tough guy."

The society built their own gallery, the Odlin Gallery, near the Dowse and opened it in September 1979. Barr says that he was very supportive of this concept and put many hours into helping the society realise their new gallery. Certainly Harper agrees that Barr was considerably more willing to compromise than Millar.¹⁷

The Friends of the Dowse

Millar called a public meeting to propose a friends organisation in May 1972. In 1973 a constitution was formally adopted with aims of the Friends of the Dowse Art Gallery and Museum being, "To stimulate and sustain interest in the gallery, to extend its influence throughout the community, and to work ultimately towards the addition of a museum wing".

Membership reached 700 in the first year and hovered around 1,000 for the rest of the decade, making it one of the larger gallery support groups in New Zealand at the time. (Millar also liked to point out that membership included many from outside the Hutt Valley and Eastern Bays areas – 20% in 1975.)¹⁸ By 1978 the friends were suggesting they should be represented on the management board as they were actually a larger organisation than the art society, which had two representatives.¹⁹

Friends' activities included purchasing or commissioning art works for the Dowse collection, purchasing equipment for the gallery, organising events and charitable functions, and assisting with gallery openings.²⁰

Commissions included a tapestry by Judy Patience for the foyer in 1974, two carvings for the foyer by local carver Rangī Hetet in 1975 (still present there), and

¹⁷ She echoes Barr's description of Millar, describing him as a "tough cookie". (Elisabeth Harper interview by the author, January 1996.)

¹⁸ Director's report, 5 December 1974 – 2 October 1975.

¹⁹ *Hutt News*, 10 August 1976.

²⁰ Examples of art work purchases included two Gary Tricker prints in 1974, a weaving by Joan Calvert in 1975, paintings by Juliet Peter and D.K. Richmond in 1976 and a Tony Fomison painting in 1977. Equipment purchases included a slide projector and Gestetner in 1977 and a dishwasher in 1979.

perhaps the highlight, a painting by Toss Woollaston, *Port Nicholson from Korokoro* in 1979. Woollaston's painting of a view from the hills above the Hutt Valley was a well co-ordinated package, with a friends-funded catalogue, a talk by the artist at the friends' AGM and a small exhibition of Wellington views by Woollaston.

Events organised by or for the friends were lunchtime concerts, art history lectures, dance performances, literary readings, studio visits, visits to major exhibitions elsewhere, such as the *Century of Modern Masters from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection* exhibition at the National Art Gallery in 1979, and film evenings. Of the latter, David Millar noted in 1975, "The friends seem to have an insatiable love of films, and these were all well attended by audiences in excess of 60".²¹

Perhaps of far greater significance than any of these activities was the role the friends had as the gallery's community support group. When asked if the friends were important Jim Barr says, "My God yes, they were the ones if you got into strife...I can't understand [a contemporary gallery] not having a friends group. It's playing with fire, things can change like... When your livelihood depends on politicians then you have got to have a community support base, and the only one you will have is the one you organise yourself. I knew that if push came to shove, I could say to the mayor that 100 angry people would phone up – though they were never used like that."

David Millar found the friends also politically important: "I was helped in the friends. I knew that the Hutt Art Society needed a counterbalance. I asked Mary McKenzie if she would become president of the friends and she agreed. Mary was a power in the land.²² Everybody respected her and she attracted others. We had quite a high-powered little committee. The success of the Dowse in my time must be shared with the staff and Mary McKenzie. You knew that if you put out a press release with your name and Mary McKenzie's the response from the movers and shakers of Lower Hutt was at worst neutral, and at its best very, very sympathetic. She was an extremely useful person with a quietly assured Quaker confidence."

Millar says he had very little conflict with the friends: "You'd ask them 'What would you like?' and there was total silence. Which was very flattering for me. They were perfectly happy for me to come up with ideas."

Millar's comments about the friends being a counterbalance to the art society are significant. From all accounts the art society was highly instrumental in having the Dowse established and logically it should have continued as the gallery's support organisation. The gallery needed a community support group but Millar viewed the art society's idea of what the gallery should be exhibiting as quite antithetical to his, and its approach to art unalterable. An ulterior motive of Millar in setting up the friends was to

²¹ Director's report, 5 December 1974 – 2 October 1975.

David Millar believes that the widespread lack of colour television probably played a part in the popularity of film evenings.

²² Mary McKenzie's main interest was theatre and she had already helped found the Little Theatre in Lower Hutt. She was awarded an MBE in 1974, nominated by David Millar.

drive a wedge between the gallery and art society and he deliberately organised the initial meeting when Elisabeth Harper was overseas. “She was not amused” on her return, says Millar.

The Management Board

The Dowse Art Gallery Management Board was very much an instrument of the city council, with half the members city councillors or council officers. They were a monitoring and advisory body on behalf of the council and seemed to play little active role in running the gallery. Both directors were initially apprehensive of the board but soon came to realise that the board was happy to give them a large degree of freedom so long as they were administratively competent and the public seemed happy.

Millar found the monthly board meetings very formal at the beginning. “Elisabeth Harper went through my budgets with a fine tooth comb. She did this for six to nine months, and then got the message that I might be an arty type but I ran a very tight ship financially, kept the place clean, and so on – partly because I was that sort of person, partly because I felt if I overspent or went over the top it would open my flank to disgruntled citizens. By end of three years, meetings were only about three per year and very brief. At the end of my time it was a dreamboat.”

Barr got off to a good start with the board. “There was a major problem to be solved. There was a Brian Brake catalogue that was printed in Japan and was way over budget. Customs were also wanting a huge amount of money. I negotiated that through free, and got money from the arts council for the catalogue and Brake’s fee, so immediately I was the management hero and that made the whole first year’s ride quite easy for me. When I said I didn’t want to be doing meetings all the time they were quite happy. I was also keen that we would try to increase the budget but not overspend. Looking back, this is not what I would do now because overspending would have got the budget up faster, but at that stage I was a very responsible soul.”



Plate 6.6 Dowse Art Gallery Management Board. Back row: 2nd from right, William (Bill) Sheat, arts council chairman; 3rd Melvin Day, director National Art Gallery; 4th Ron Muston. Seated: at left Elisabeth Harper, centre John Kennedy Good, right David Millar.

Millar consciously worked at gaining board approval: “My feeling was I would convince the board I could work. I didn’t sit up there drinking cups of tea, dusting pictures with a feather duster and looking erudite and aesthetic.²³ I actually uncrated crates, I pushed them around, I hung pictures on the walls, I could use a brace-and-bit. Art was to them a funny thing, but I wasn’t too way out.

“One of the things I was very keen on doing was not taking the city for granted. I’ll never forget the time when the first budget was announced. The town clerk had set a basic budget and it was over to me to make changes. I said, ‘I see you have put down \$2,000 for purchases of paintings. I said that’s too much, I’ll settle for \$1,000. There was an absolute gasp round the boardroom – especially from Elisabeth Harper. I said I’m more than happy to start small and win your confidence. It paid off – by the end we had the second or third highest purchase budget in New Zealand. If someone had said that when I started I would have thought it unbelievable.”²⁴

If the board approved of David Millar and Jim Barr that didn’t mean its members were personally interested in the offerings of the gallery itself. Millar says, “At first I was puzzled. The board left me alone. For the first two years I went round being paranoid, saying ‘Why don’t they come to the openings? Why don’t they come to the exhibitions?’ I was mystified. Then there was the David Armitage controversy – the word was out, a filthy picture at the gallery. That was the first and last time I saw council members of the board visit. They all wanted to look at it themselves. Then the penny dropped. If councillors never came to the gallery I was safe. So from then on I never ever expected or wanted a councillor to cross the door. My desire for council approbation was totally misplaced; council interest meant council problems.”

The City Council

John Kennedy-Good was mayor through the 1970s. Like Dowse, Kennedy-Good seemed to believe that one of the building blocks a modern city had to have besides a library, a swimming pool or a supermarket was an art gallery – even if he was not personally interested in things cultural.²⁵ When money was withdrawn from the museum wing project in the late 1970s as a result of a councillor’s advocacy, Kennedy-Good said that if he and previous mayors had adopted this attitude then “Lower Hutt would be a ‘hick town’, a turgid and dull stagnating backwater totally lacking the characteristics

²³ Millar recalls a day the gallery was closed and a city councillor visited. The councillor remarked, “What have you done today? No pictures to dust? You must have the cushiest job in council.” Millar recognised that the words were said in jest but equally that they disguised a real concern.

²⁴ In dollar terms the purchase fund rose from \$3,000 in 1972/3 to \$8,800 in 1979/80, but this was only a 25% increase in real terms when inflation is taken into account. As a proportion of the Dowse budget the amount for purchases actually dropped from 12% to 10%.

²⁵ Jim Barr interview.

The view that an art gallery was evidence of a city’s standing was echoed at the time of opening by the editor of the *Evening Post*: “...this new amenity...is but further proof of [Lower Hutt’s] urban maturity.” (“No Aloof Temple of Culture”, editorial, *Evening Post*, 1 June 1971.)

that have made it one of the most progressive and vigorous communities in the country.”²⁶

Barr found Kennedy-Good “supportive but never wanted trouble. He was very conservative but had a basic streak of liberalism, so that if you said something was not fair then he would rally.”²⁷ He was a classic politician – never liked surprises. He was always trying to smooth things over. He would sidle up to you at openings and suggest certain works be taken down for a while, but he always backed down when I said it was impossible. He never missed an opening, though he was probably never very fussed with what we were doing.”²⁸

This lack of personal interest in art on the part of the mayor, and probably councillors and council staff as well, no doubt contributed to the large amount of freedom both directors agree they had in their jobs. Millar says the gallery was 90% his vision and for Barr “there was very little accountability and very little reporting. It wasn’t a free hand but it was a free a hand as you would get.”

However, for both there was always the threat of closure. On the one hand Millar felt he could “win the place over [from the art society]. In this I was tacitly supported by council. I was told the gallery belonged to the city, not the art society.” But he also believed that “if a dog fight broke out councillors would run for cover. I never felt confident that when push came to shove they would support the gallery.”

Barr says, “We never went to council thinking we didn’t have the figures, but sometimes we knew we would get a bruising. But it was all publicity. When I had been there two years I put things in reports that I knew would get councillors jumping up and down, but not close it down. When the big council change happened the mayor felt that was possible but I didn’t think so.”²⁹

“I went through a phase where there was a change in council and the only one who supported me was the mayor. They stripped him of everything, except the chair [of the management board], which was basically an insult, but meant he was very supportive because that was the only thing he had left. Some councillors were very oppositional. Werry thought we were a bunch of wankers, which we possibly were, and Barry just wanted to blow the place up. But the mayor dealt with that. There was Seddon too. He was clever and I felt we could go. I used to go and talk to him – he was the only other

²⁶ *Evening Post*, 10 April 1978.

²⁷ An indication of Kennedy-Good’s conservatism, and the flavour of the times (when there were no women gallery or museum directors), emerges in a recollection of Millar’s. He had met a woman curator whom he felt would make a very good future gallery director but when he mentioned this to Kennedy-Good the latter said he would never appoint a female director to the Dowse.

²⁸ Barr says today that Kennedy-Good was very supportive but admits he had a few run-ins with him and might not have thought he was so supportive if asked at the time. (In an article on the occasion of his leaving the Dowse, Barr did, heap lavish praise on Kennedy-Good, describing him as “one of the best examples of the true art patron you would find anywhere”. (*Hutt News*, 3 February 1981.))

²⁹ The Council became Labour dominated around 1977 – Kennedy-Good’s allegiances were to the more conservative Citizens and Ratepayers group.

one I did this with besides the mayor, because I thought he could damage us. But he was good. Like all politicians he didn't want to shoot his foot off."

Indeed, there was, as David Millar notes, a symbiotic relationship with councillors that kept the gallery alive. "My attitude to the councillors was they wanted the public to be happy and for people to pat them on the back and say, 'Weren't you clever to put a gallery in the city?'"³⁰

One of the ways both Millar and Barr used to defend the gallery against the whims of councillors was to sell the idea that the gallery and its collections were of national importance. Barr recalls, "Whenever Kennedy-Good would go anywhere I would write him a note about what was on at the gallery and what we had touring to where he was going, so he could play the cultural ambassador, and he loved it. We had about five shows touring simultaneously at one time. If you were just Lower Hutt, then Lower Hutt could do what it wanted to do with you, but if you were national then the council would have to think, 'My God, if we do something to the Dowse, the whole country will be looking'."

In the final analysis, continues Barr, the Dowse was "a very small part of the council and as long as we kept our noses clean and didn't do anything that was absolutely terrible, we were left alone. I don't think our budget was ever cut – or perhaps only once." Taking inflation into account, the council contribution actually rose 64% between the financial years 1972/73 (the first full year) and 1979/80 from \$24,400 to \$89,600.

Staffing

The Dowse opened with just two staff members: the director and an assistant. When the latter resigned in 1974 the position was restructured to that of exhibitions officer. This was filled by Betty Logan in April 1975. In January 1976, the gallery's first education officer was appointed. This was a city council position, in contrast to the more usual Department of Education funded museum education positions, and was the first local authority funded museum education officer in New Zealand. By 1975 a clerk typist and weekend custodians had also been appointed. This staffing level of director, exhibitions officer, education officer, clerk typist and weekend custodians continued through the rest of the 1970s.

David Millar left in July 1976 to become assistant director at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney and Jim Barr began as Director at the Dowse in the same month. In January 1978 Ian McMillan replaced Michael Sanden (who had left a year earlier) as education officer and Trish Tennant replaced Betty Logan early in 1979.

³⁰ The *Evening Post*, for example, said during the Arbus exhibition controversy, "Lower Hutt is not Hickville...The Dowse enjoys a reputation other galleries around the country are known to envy." (Editorial, 5 May 1979.)

Jim Barr (*plate 6.7*) was appointed at age 29, shortly after his return from a year-long, gallery-visiting overseas sojourn with his wife Mary. He had attended Canterbury University's School of Fine Arts (without completing a degree) and then become a television floor manager. His following positions were with the publishing firm AH&AW Reed, beginning as art director in 1972 and later becoming promotions manager.

Both Millar and Barr point out that being director at the Dowse was very much a hands-on job and that all staff contributed ideas for exhibitions. Betty Logan seems to have been a key staff member in the running of the Dowse. Millar describes her as “wonderfully efficient” and “unbelievably enthusiastic. I used to feel quite tired out after half an hour of Betty Logan.” Barr supports this appraisal: “Enthusiastic amateurs are often a lot better than these bloody casual professionals. You couldn't run a gallery without someone like Betty.”



Plate 6.7 Jim Barr, 1979

Mutual Support/Infrastructure

David Millar does not remember a lot of useful mutual support amongst gallery directors, saying that he tried to get things going but it mostly happened after he left for Australia. He recalls AGMANZ being dominated by natural scientists who opposed art gallery directors splitting off because that would have reduced the effectiveness of the organisation. Millar did visit Melvin (Pat) Day, director of the National Art Gallery, quite often because he (Millar) was “professionally fairly lonely”.

Barr also had good relations with Day (“He was probably the only gallery director who contacted me when I got the job, asked me in and said all the usual stuff about not competing, etc.”). Some conflict with the National Art Gallery did occur, but the real problem was with arts council policy which did not allow it to support touring exhibitions going to both Wellington and Lower Hutt – and the National Art Gallery had the clout to take all the best shows. Barr says this was a strong motivator for touring the Dowse exhibitions because he could say to other galleries, “you can have this if we can have so and so. That's how I got [such a major show as] the Diane Arbus exhibition.”

By Barr's time a number of anti-establishment, smaller gallery directors had formed a loose, mutually supportive group. Barr remembers getting on well with Luit Bieringa, Ken Gorbey, Bill Milbank, and the Govett-Brewster directors Ron O'Reilly and then Dick Bett: “We were all friends, saw each other, stayed with each other.”

AGMANZ was dominated by older museum directors says Barr: “Overall it was a sort of gentleman’s club with some younger people doing their own thing and the older ones saying, ‘Oh look at those young people, they’ll learn, they’ll slow down.’ And we did [laughs].”

Ron O’Reilly was much older than Barr, Bieringa, et al. Yet, says Barr, “Ron O’Reilly was very important, because Ron made it seem real, because a guy of his age behaved like we did – he was rushing around, he got outraged at people who went against McCahon. You thought, ‘My God, if a guy can do it at that age it is a real thing, not just something you do when you are 24 and then maybe flag away’.”

Barr, Bieringa and O’Reilly’s rationale for establishing the NZ Art Gallery Directors Council was that it was a way to support touring exhibitions. But some of the same “them and us” feeling existed between directors at the NZAGDC meetings: “Auckland set themselves way beyond us – I don’t think they even came to our meetings at first,” recalls Barr.

Jim Barr was an executive member of both NZAGDC and AGMANZ but he doesn’t believe the Dowse benefited greatly from either organisation. Most external funding came from the Department of Internal Affairs (principally the \$100,000 for the museum wing) or the arts council. Arts council grants were given for one or two items such as a piano (\$1,000), as well as for purchase subsidies and touring exhibition support.

Activities

Exhibitions and Events: The First Five Years

Aside from the reluctantly scheduled twice-yearly exhibitions by the Hutt Art Society, exhibitions held under David Millar’s directorship were similar in type to those found at provincial galleries today. They included touring exhibitions (the majority New Zealand originated), permanent collection exhibitions, and group and solo exhibitions by both local and nationally known artists. Some of these latter were toured to other galleries by the Dowse. Only a small number of the exhibitions shown at the Dowse were historical – most were of recently made art.

As part of his plan to prove to the board and council that he (and art gallery people in general) could work hard, Millar decided at the start he would put on one exhibition a month. This was no mean feat, even with an assistant, for Millar also kept up a busy schedule of lectures, film screenings, and other events on top of his administrative duties. In the second year, Millar set a cracking pace by hanging 29 exhibitions.

Probably the most notable feature of the Dowse exhibitions programme in the first five years were the ceramics exhibitions and the solo exhibitions by well recognised artists. The solo exhibitions include Don Binney, Brian Brake, Len Castle, Barry Cleavin, John Coley, Robert Ellis, Patrick Hanly, Doris Lusk, Jan and Gerry Nigro, John

Middleditch, Don Peebles, Michael Smither, William Sutton, Gary Tricker, Philip Trusttum, Robin White, and Brent Wong.

There were slim catalogues for many of the exhibitions and the Coley, Brake, Hanly, Lusk, the Nigros, Middleditch, Peebles and Sutton exhibitions were toured to other venues.

The most significant exhibitions in terms of presenting established artists to the general public were probably the Hanly, Lusk, Peebles, and Sutton touring retrospective exhibitions. As quoted in chapter 5, Luit Bieringa observes that in the early 1970s it seemed as though there was a whole backlog of New Zealand artists who urgently deserved a solo exhibition at a public gallery.³¹ The metropolitan galleries had not shown these artists and it fell to the new crop of public galleries formed in the 1970s to disseminate their work beyond the walls of dealer galleries. Certainly the Dowse is the prime example in this regard and it is interesting that the metropolitan galleries (excepting the National Art Gallery) were precisely the venues for the Dowse toured exhibitions listed above.³²

The Lusk, Peebles and Sutton exhibitions were part of Millar's plan to show South Island artists because he felt they were less well known than they should be, would be relatively acceptable to visitors, and simply because he felt he "had to start somewhere". Millar also preferred to go his own way: "I didn't want to make the Dowse look like a smaller version of the Auckland City Art Gallery. I didn't believe there was a canon [of New Zealand art] that I had to give unswerving loyalty to." Millar admits that he knew nothing about ceramics when he started at the Dowse but found Wellington potter Doreen Blumhardt a great help in "tuning my eye". From 1972 there were ceramic group shows every year, and some solo exhibitions by potters as well. The group exhibitions included many of the nationally known names in ceramics.

The Dowse also moved into showing weaving that was beyond the hobbyist level. The first national weaving award exhibition was shown at the Dowse, in 1976, and is an example of an exhibition conceived of by a staff member (Betty Logan) rather than the director. The wish of both Millar and Barr to distance themselves from the art society and establish a national reputation for the gallery whilst still maintaining local support must have encouraged them to take a lead in showing quality ceramics and weaving – to "raise the game", as it were, in these popular media.

When it came to showing local artists, Millar's view was if they were in the art society that was where they should exhibit. Otherwise, "the Hutt was not exactly brimming with artists". Three local artists Millar did exhibit were Gary Tricker, Guy Ngan and Pat Williams. However, Millar also regarded Wellington as included in his "parish", since the National Art Gallery was not competing for local artists: "I don't

³¹ See under Contemporary Art in the chapter on the Manawatu Art Gallery.

³² New Plymouth also took Hanly, and Hamilton exhibited both the Hanly and Peebles shows.

think there were any in the Wellington area I regarded as having made it whom I didn't exhibit."

Millar says he felt very strongly that there were two groups he should have been doing something about. One was women; the other, Maori. This was born, he states, more from a personal interest than an ideological conviction. He found the Maori issue difficult to deal with and never actually had an exhibition of Maori art. But he did organise a South Island women artists show to coincide with International Women's Year, and a North Island women artists exhibition the following year, both of which he describes as "very exciting and unbelievably popular".

Beyond exhibitions, the Dowse Art Gallery operated as a sort of general cultural centre in the 1970s, with a very active programme of events. These included art lectures, concerts, dance, poetry readings, and film screenings. In the case of the performances, the gallery often functioned more as a passive venue than an active organiser of them. It is also worth noting that Millar deliberately stayed away from art or craft demonstrations. He says he didn't want the gallery to become a workshop. Perhaps it was more a case that he wished to avoid an association with art society activities here.

Where the gallery was most active was in lectures. David Millar spoke extensively on art history, both at the gallery and in schools and other venues. The three-monthly director's report of September 1972 lists, for example, the following talks he gave for June–August: 139 lectures to 7th form art history students (he took a class each day at Hutt Valley High School); six talks to voluntary organisations; eight lectures on "Problems in Art" for University Extension; and eight lectures on the "History of Sculpture" for the WEA (both lecture series held in Wellington). In the three month period to February 1972 Millar reported giving 25 evening lectures to the public at the Dowse. Another sort of "talk" Millar arranged and which he says was hugely popular with the friends was a public interview with exhibiting artists.

June to August 1972 also saw six concerts, including choral, Tudor and Russian music as well as seven informal concerts by students (to full houses) and screenings of the Sir Kenneth Clark television series *Civilisation* (to audiences which never dropped below 120).

A performing arts group sprung up around the Dowse in about 1973 called the Dowse Gallery Performing Arts Group. They began with a membership of approximately 100 people (rising to 300 in 1976), mostly of music teachers and children, and gave performances once a fortnight – both at the Dowse and later at other venues such as schools. Eighty to 120 people turned up to these performances in 1973 which included recitals, dance, poetry readings, and drama by the children. The idea came from the teachers as a way of allowing children an opportunity to give public performances. Millar says he acted as facilitator rather than initiator and was happy to

have the group because it fitted in with his idea that “the building should be used for related arts activities”.³³

The Lower Hutt Film Society was resurrected in early 1975 and held screenings at the gallery through the rest of the decade, finally leaving for another venue in 1982.

Millar undertook no education programmes with school groups visiting the gallery or visitors in general. He strongly recognised the need for an education officer but believed that if he did education work himself councillors would say there was no need for a new position. As it turned out, council granted the Dowse an education officer position in 1975 without a hint of opposition.

David Millar’s Directorship: “Hardlining the Gallery into the Community”

As the first director, David Millar’s job was, in Jim Barr’s words, to “hardline a gallery into a community that didn’t really want it”. This was probably made more difficult by the fact that the two main forces behind the gallery’s formation were no longer “there” for it: Percy Dowse had died and the art society’s support became equivocal at best (with no more than a handful of members ever joining the friends).

Millar achieved community acceptance by his very active programme of public events, the support of the friends, careful dealings with the board and council, and balance in the exhibition programme.³⁴

In the exhibitions his intention was “to cover the field” in order to “avoid frightening the horses”. “I would put on a Don Peebles retrospective, for Don and the 500 people who would come. But in exchange for that, the next exhibition would be a pottery exhibition. So the public would say, ‘We didn’t like the funny bits of wood nailed to the walls, but we really liked the pottery’. And after that we would have a printmaking show. So I tended to say, ‘What does the public need and what does it want?’ My aim was a compromise between the two.”

In his effort to build relations with the community Millar even gave money away. This was via the charity events organised for Birthright and other community organisations by the friends at Christmas. “Most of those people would not come back to the gallery. But I felt if this gallery was going to be socially involved with the community we should put into the community as well as take rates out of it. Elisabeth Harper said I was throwing money away and should be buying paintings. But it paid off. I felt at the end that people were accepting of the gallery (including those who never went there), or at the best, very supportive.”

Millar believes that if he had stayed longer he would have cut down some of the activities, that he didn’t need to “be so frenetic. We had built up a lot of support. We

³³ Millar, letter to the author, n.d. [September 1996].

³⁴ Barr feels that Millar also managed acceptance by showing fairly conservative work.

were virtually inviolable from public criticism or sabotage from political influences. Now we could row with a longer stroke.”

Exhibitions and Events: The Second Five Years

On being appointed Jim Barr said he had no intentions of radically altering the gallery.³⁵ And the following year he was able to say, “In essentials I have followed Mr Millar’s path.”³⁶ Certainly the exhibition programme followed much the same format, with touring exhibitions, group exhibitions by well known potters, annual art society exhibitions, and Dowse organised individual artist surveys. The latter included Melvin Day, Brent Wong, a combined Peter Peryer and Don Driver exhibition, Doreen Blumhardt, Jeffrey Harris, and Tony Fomison. (Barr also inherited the touring exhibition of Brian Brake photographs initiated by Millar.)

Major exhibitions toured by the Dowse included Brent Wong (1977) and Tony Fomison (1979). The touring programme was slightly less frenetic than under David Millar’s directorship but this was made up for by the higher level of exhibition development.

Examples of this development were the *Light* (1977) and *Touch* (1978) exhibitions. Both were ceramics exhibitions, but rather than just another group exhibition, they each had a theme. The first was about light, the second, as a Braille week exhibition, consisted of commissioned ceramics specially designed to be touched.³⁷

More complex was *Making an Impression* (1979). This was, as Barr puts it, “basically a collection show, but no-one would have come if we had called it that”. The idea was to show off recent print acquisitions by building a whole range of activities and displays about printing around the collection works. These included “Give us a Hand”, an attempt to cover a wall with visitors’ hand prints; a fingerprinting display by Wellington police (including sessions in which visitors were fingerprinted); prints by school children; a tour of the Petone Print factory; a batik workshop with Wahyono Sukarno from Java; and a Gestetner offset printer operation in the exhibition that produced an edition of prints by artists Kate Coolahan, Gordon Crook, Selwyn Muru and Ian McMillan. The exhibition was enormously popular, attracting 26,000 visitors. *Evening Post* art critic Neil Rowe commented: “By doing all this [the various activities and components of *Making an Impression*] Barr has ensured that, in spite of this exhibition’s didactic nature, the crowds continue to roll up to the country’s most energetic and successful civic art gallery.”³⁸

³⁵ “New Dowse Director Aims at Art Selection for the People” [*Evening Post?*], 7 July 1976, Dowse Art Museum scrapbook.

³⁶ Director’s report, 30 March 1977.

³⁷ The *Touch* exhibition was given a half-page review by Alison M. Wilson in the *Listener* (“A Feeling for Touch” [2 September 1978]: p. 24).

³⁸ “Jim Knows How to Draw Crowds”, *Evening Post*, 23 June 1978.

Barr makes an observation about the Auckland City Art Gallery that throws light on his thinking behind exhibitions such as *Making an Impression*: “They had some very innovative programmes, yet the general feeling was they were hopeless and never did anything. So I always thought, if you have people thinking that, you’re dead. If you can get people to think you are doing something fantastic and innovative and they come in and see something that’s basically ordinary, then they will still think its fantastic and exciting.”

Selwyn Muru’s *Parihaka* exhibition was another high profile event. The exhibition consisted of 37 paintings about the Maori prophet Te Whiti and the events at Parihaka last century. But it was the opening that really made the news. “In one of the most remarkable art exhibition openings ever held in New Zealand, the Dowse Art Gallery will become a marae on Saturday night” announced the *Hutt News*.³⁹ The next issue reported: “There’s never been an opening like it. Maori pleasures, Maori anger, remembrances of old hurts, protests at present injustices – they were all wrapped up in a night at the Dowse Art Gallery, Lower Hutt, that went on, and on, and on...”⁴⁰ Over 700 people were believed to have attended an evening that included a powhiri, hangi, a play by Rowley Habib, and readings by Hone Tuwhare. Mattresses and blankets were spread around the gallery walls, as in a meeting house.

Muru’s view of the exhibition was that an art gallery was an appropriate place to have a conciliatory gathering of races: “Art and literature are inseparable in the Maori world. ...Our galleries must reek with human odour. They have become too sterile, with paintings like icons, not to be touched. They should be touched.”⁴¹

But in terms of media coverage and sheer numbers through the door it was the touring exhibition of work by American photographer Diane Arbus that set records. 23,000 people visited the exhibition in 23 days. Barr says his two memories of the exhibition were the carpets getting worn out, and he and Betty Logan having to clean the toilets four or five times a day. Viewers were up to four deep.

The exhibition was hugely controversial because Arbus had photographed “freaks”. The emotionally explosive combination of voyeuristic attraction and concern at exploitation meant “a lot of people,” recalls Barr, “went apeshit. Every objector had their own type of freak they didn’t like [seeing exploited].”

The other type of big public drawcard, and a form of exhibition not present in Millar’s time, were the August school holiday programme exhibitions (*plate 6.9*). They

³⁹ “‘Marae’ Opening for Unusual Exhibition”, 7 February 1979.

⁴⁰ “Shoes Shed for Marathon Event”, [*Hutt News?*] [14?] February 1979, Dowse Art Museum scrapbook.

⁴¹ Selwyn Muru quoted in “‘Marae’ Opening for Unusual Exhibition”, *Hutt News*, 7 February 1979. *Parihaka* was reviewed by Bernie Kernot in the *Listener* (24 March 1979).



Plate 6.8 Rose Wedde's puppets taken into the community (Hutt Valley High School) during the *It's No Show Without Punch* exhibition, 1978.



Plate 6.9 Extension activities for children, Dowse Art Gallery, c.1977.

included *Face It* (masks, 1977), *It's no Show Without Punch* (puppets, 1978), *Crash, Bong, Tinkle* (musical instruments, 1979), and in 1980, *It's an Illusion* (on optical illusions). These programmes were exhibitions combined with children's activities. The education officer ran the activities but Barr claims the programmes were essentially his ideas.

Crash, Bong, Tinkle used exhibits such as a ceramic wind instrument powered by a vacuum cleaner, large bones suspended by string which made sounds when struck by visitors, drums, a seraphim, and other types of conventional and not so conventional sound making devices. Composer Jack Body ran a week-long workshop for children in which they constructed their own musical instruments from odds and ends and learnt how to compose music for them. A "cranks cabaret" of saw, spoon, washboard and hose players was also organised, as well as a car horn concert.

For *It's no Show Without Punch*, children made their own puppets at the gallery and gave performances. Rose Wedde displayed her spectacular pterodactyl puppets on sticks 3–4 metres high (*plate 6.8*). These required three people to operate and the puppets were given outings into the streets every day. Some days recorded nearly 1,000 visitors for the exhibition and events.

As suggested previously, the Dowse was a leader in showing fibre in the 1970s. Following on from the *First National Weaving Award* in 1976 were *Forms in Fibre* (1977) and the *BNZ Weaving Award* in 1978. The BNZ award caused some controversy in the judge's selection being art rather than craft oriented. The *Hutt News* noted that one of the winners, an off-loom piece by Margaret Finnerty, was "substantially a piece of rope".⁴² Another winning piece, Rangimarie Hetet's korowai, also came in for criticism as being only loosely within the definition of its award category, "traditional loom".

A further type of innovative exhibition for the Dowse was the series of small *Offshoot* exhibitions held in the later 1970s. These were essentially didactic exhibitions that sought to expand on the main shows. Examples include contextual material for Melvin Day's exhibition (1976), Clarice Cliff ceramics (1979), scientific aspects of ceramics (1979), pinhole cameras (1979), and a number of permanent collection exhibitions.

David Millar had operated selling exhibitions but Barr was against this on the basis of it being unfair competition with dealers. He tried to stop the selling exhibitions but found it very difficult because money from sales went into the acquisition fund.

Barr says that the exhibition programme was determined by his personal interests; being lobbied by local community interests; and the touring shows that were available. The board, let alone councillors, never suggested anything and, as was Millar's experience, he was rarely approached by artists who wanted an exhibition.

⁴² "Weaving Winners Worry Some", *Hutt News*, 10 October 1978.

Jim Barr: Keeping the Community On-Side

Like Millar, Barr wanted to show the community some of what he considered the best and most interesting art being made in New Zealand but knew that the gallery would not gain wide acceptance if that was all he did: “We had a show of Jeffrey Harris works – about five people came to the opening, and about ten for Peryer/Driver. They were done in spite. Attendances in general were low on these exhibitions. But they were terrific shows. However, I didn’t feel we could put a Peryer show into the Hutt community without something else people would think was terrific.

“It was all evangelistic. I was basically trying to keep the community on-side enough so I could show them the best of what was around. My idea was that if people would look at things long enough they would accept them. So there was always a variety of work. We would have something that people would come to see, but then they would see other things too, so that’s why we would have McCahons hanging...to sort of trick people in a way.

“I didn’t like ceramics at all when I arrived. Weaving was even worse, that I really hated. I thought that there was art and then there was craft, and craft didn’t appeal to me. But I kept these on, because I was only the second director and I felt quite a strong responsibility to what the Dowse was. And everyone loved the ceramics. It seemed if you were running a community gallery in Lower Hutt it was going to be a bit mean to take the one thing that everyone really liked, and say “we’re not doing that any more”. The main thing that I changed with craft when I arrived there was to raise the level of the art – it was pitched very much at the middle class, socialising level.”⁴³

Besides trading-off exhibitions, the other way Barr tried to get visitors on-side was “to let them in on the process, so that was one of the main reasons we collected drawings, and we had artists in there quite a lot, and those school holiday programmes”.

The trade-offs were not necessarily seen as a chore either. “I quite liked the community thing and enjoyed doing the schools programmes. We used to put a lot of time and energy into them. They were great fun, and we made them into something we all felt happy about.”

Controversies

Controversy is a common association with the Dowse in the 1970s. Most of this took place during Jim Barr’s time and was connected with outspoken councillors who had little sympathy for contemporary art or even culture in general. David Millar experienced few controversies aside from his early battle with the art society and some

⁴³ Millar disagrees, saying he showed the very best of the ceramic work then being produced. And that when a shift away from Japanese-inspired ceramics began later in his tenure he showed funk pottery and abstract glass that no-one else in Wellington would touch. (Letter to the author, n.d. [September 1996]).

conflicts over a David Armitage painting. He says he never received a complaint in writing nor saw one in a letter to the editor. However, unlike Barr, who would create or wind up controversies for the sake of the publicity they would generate, controversy was something Millar could less afford given his task of establishing a new gallery.

The David Armitage controversy concerned his painting *She said, "Look at me". I looked. She rose into detail forever* (1972) depicting a nude couple making love on the floor (plate 6.10). It



Plate 6.10 David Armitage. *She said, "Look at me". I looked. She rose into detail forever*, 1972.

was taken down as a result of a complaint while Millar was overseas and then reinstated by him on his return. Patricia Bartlett, anti-pornography campaigner and leader of the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards, complained to Millar about the work, describing it as "filthy". She convinced Ron Muston that the work should come down, who also persuaded the mayor. Muston subsequently changed his mind and the mayor was left unsupported and very angry to be out on a limb. The work was put back.⁴⁴

Barr actually sought out controversy: "I used to jazz those along. We couldn't afford much advertising and I thought we had to be in the paper once a week, so that was our advertising". Three controversies that probably generated the most media coverage were the fight with the china painters, councillor Werry and the McCahon affair, and the Diane Arbus exhibition.

"Gallery Won't Accept China Painting" and "We're Left Out Say China Painters" ran headlines in the *Hutt News* late in 1976.⁴⁵ David Millar had already told china painters in the Hutt Art Society he would not exhibit their work so long as their paintings were copies. Barr followed the same tack, adding that their work had to reach a certain standard of quality before he would show it. One of the Dowse Management Board members was strongly in support of the china painters, arguing against Barr, and the Hutt Valley China Painters Association made some forceful statements to the *Hutt News*.⁴⁶ Barr says the china painters were one group who were genuinely very angry and he later tried to make amends with a small Clarice Cliff exhibition.

⁴⁴ This was the same work that later had a label to say it was gifted by the American Ambassador, a scheme Millar devised to defuse opposition to it (see under *Collecting*). For more on the affair see the *Auckland Star* 29 June 1973.

⁴⁵ c.14 December 1976 and 21 December 1976 respectively. Dowse Art Museum scrapbook.

⁴⁶ "We're Left Out Say China Painters", *Hutt News*, 21 December 1976.

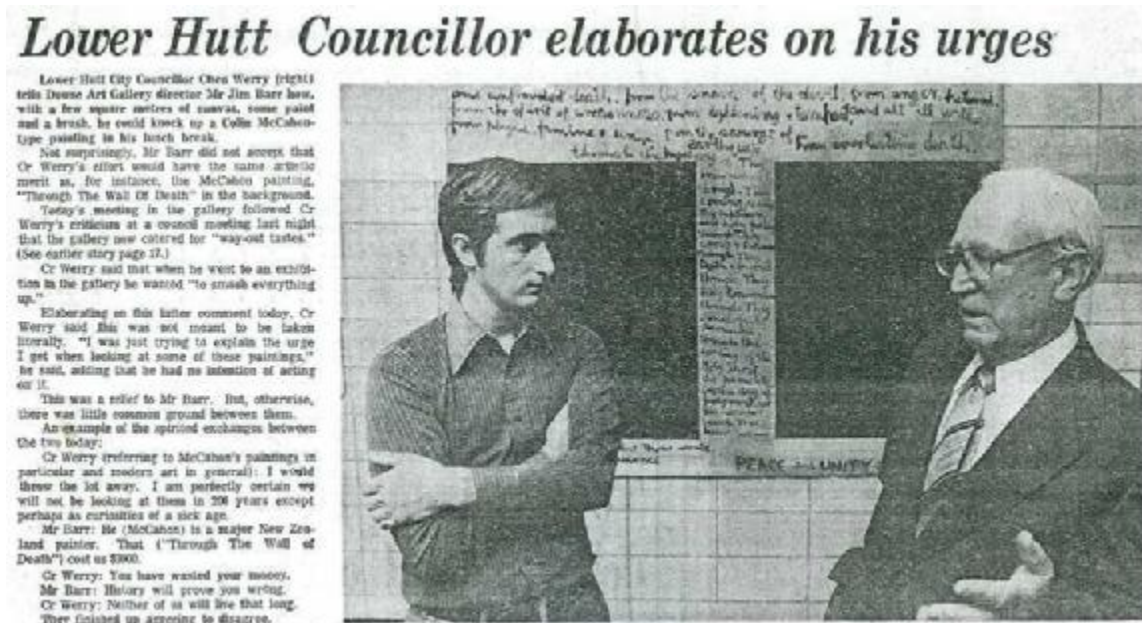


Plate 6.11

Other controversies, like the McCahon affair, were set-ups. Barr says, "The McCahon...took us by surprise but we egged it on mercilessly and eventually got hoisted by our own petard. We lost because, naively I suppose, I was trying to keep it on McCahon."

The controversy began when Cr Chen Werry stated in a council meeting that whenever he went to exhibitions at the Dowse he wanted "to smash everything up" and the gallery catered nowadays "for 'way out' tastes".⁴⁷ The press followed up the comment and organised a meeting between him and Barr (*plate 6.11*). The photo session was arranged by Barr in front of a McCahon painting and Werry was stimulated to claim that he could knock one up like it in his lunch hour. Following publication of this comment letters flew back and forth in the newspapers. Then television took Werry at his word, inviting him to paint a McCahon on TV1's *Good Day* programme, with critic Professor John Roberts passing judgement on his work. Werry realised he had been set up but it was too late to back down. Of his television painting he claimed no merit, saying it was typical of modern art and therefore an ideal subject for the Dowse Art Gallery.⁴⁸

The Diane Arbus exhibition was deputy mayor Cr Barry's opportunity for some Dowse bashing. He described the exhibition as "straight out filth" and "sick". Barry asked for the exhibition to be closed, and when the mayor (as chairman of the management board) refused he sought the removal of five photographs. He was unsuccessful but the Arbus exhibition probably generated more newspaper columns than any other Dowse exhibition. The following sample of headlines for articles, editorials

⁴⁷ "Lower Hutt Councillor Elaborates on his Urges", *Evening Post*, 28 February 1978.

⁴⁸ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, pp. 15, 36.

and letters gives the general impression: “Cr Barry Plans ‘Close Look’ at Dowse Plans”, “Show Was Sick”, “‘Leave Gallery Alone’ Plea”, “Arbus Argument Angers Retailer”, “Call for Apology From Cr Barry”, “Arbus Critics Could Learn From Children”, “The Sensitive Art of Diane Arbus”, “No Petition Over Art Show”, “Crowds Flow in After Attack”.

Of controversies at the Dowse in general, Barr says, “All these things tended to happen when I went away. My abiding memory is of going away to AGDC meetings at Palmerston North or somewhere and getting off the train to see billboards announcing that a councillor wanted to close the Dowse down. I would see the mayor and demand the councillor apologise, and threaten to resign. It would make another story and the gallery would look like the white knight but all we had done was put on a performance.

“There was a reputation that it was rough and tough going but it wasn’t. Because I quite enjoy political brawling, whenever something happened I waded in. But this was somewhat at odds with what was being shown. The gallery programme was quite conservative.”

Collecting

Despite all the energy they put into exhibitions and events both Millar and Barr feel strongly that building up the art work collection was their most important responsibility. Millar says, “I had been greatly influenced by my three years at the Dominion Museum, and by my reading on museums. A museum is about objects – the collecting of objects, the research on those objects, the display of those objects, and public education. It’s object driven. We did lots of other things – lectures, ballet, music, play readings. I saw those all as very important, but in the pecking order those were subsidiary. A permanent collection was the spine of the gallery. I always felt my most important achievement at the Dowse was not the extramural activities, which were fun and so on, but the basis of a good collection.”

Barr says that of all his Dowse activities, building the collection was the thing he liked least, despite enjoying actually purchasing work. “I was always worried that I was not getting the right things. I felt an incredible responsibility. Looking back, that was silly. It was the one thing that I anguished over. Everything else was comparatively easy. Shows didn’t worry me. And it made buying quite cautious really, buying things with public money.”

Dealing with the board on acquisitions was not always a simple business. Millar says he found it very difficult to argue against the view of councillors that artists would be falling over themselves to donate work to the collection: “I said, only those who were on the way up offered gifts of artwork.” For the controversial painting of a nude couple by David Armitage (*She said, “Look at me”...*) Millar gave the painting what he called “diplomatic immunity”. He cooked up a scheme with the support of the American ambassador whereby he sold an Australian work gifted by the ambassador. Then he used

the money to buy the Armitage and present it as a gift from the ambassador. The councillors were not prepared to question a gift from this source and their opposition to the acquisition simply fizzled out.

Barr faced equal difficulties: “No-one in the Hutt Valley knew anything about contemporary art. When I said to the board that I going to buy a McCahon, they all said, ‘Who is this person?’ When I mentioned it would cost \$3,000 they went ape shit.” Barr was able to use the arts council purchase subsidies for works the board had difficulty with, such as the McCahon, as it was hard for board members to argue against an offer of a 50% subsidy.

If approval might sometimes be difficult, collecting was in many ways easier than today. Barr remembers that when he started “there was not much money around in the art market – it was cheap collecting.⁴⁹ We got the McCahon for \$3,000. At the end of the 1970s there was a lot more money. Dealers were very low key in those days. I don’t think any suggested we buy anything. You had to do all the work. But also there was not the rush to buy art then, so that made it easier. You could put a hold on something.”

The collecting policy of the Dowse in early 1976 covered New Zealand painting, pottery, weaving and prints since 1840, plus “a display collection of Maori carving”. Millar had decided to collect ceramics in 1972, ahead of most other galleries at the time, and he did it with the Victoria and Albert Museum’s collection in mind. His intention with Maori work was to collect post-contact carving but he found it too expensive to buy at auction and the only piece that qualifies under this description is Rangi Hetet’s foyer commission. Photography and drawing were added to the collection policy by Jim Barr, partly because they were affordable on the gallery’s budget. Barr feels he didn’t go very far in building up photography but did create a good drawings collection.

Both directors are disappointed that with the radical shift in policy of the Dowse towards craft in the 1980s the painting collection they created has not been significantly added to (and indeed, has been considered for de-accessioning). However, it should also be said that the ceramics collection they built up – to the point where Barr could say in 1979 that it was “without doubt, the best collection of ceramics in the country” – provided part of the rationale for altering the exhibition and collecting emphasis of the Dowse in the eighties.

Energy and Personal Motivation

Working at the Dowse in the 1970s demanded a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, energy and commitment from directors and staff. Millar describes his time as like being

⁴⁹ An indication of just how cheap collecting was at this time is suggested by Barr in relation to his and Mary Barr’s personal collecting that he still found it amazing how “at age 30-odd we can collect McCahon. Every home can have one for the price of a TV set. And they’ll change your life forever.” (“He’s Hooked on Art and Nuts-and-Bolts as Well”, unsourced press clipping, 17 May 1978, Dowse Art Museum scrapbook.)

on a roller coaster and says he is stunned to find that he organised over 90 exhibitions in five years, adding that he could never have worked at that pace with a family. Barr observed in 1979: “With a full-time staff of only myself, [education officer] Ian McMillan and exhibitions officer Trish Tennant and one part-time secretary, the gallery operates on enthusiasm”⁵⁰ and commented when he resigned that, “My family and I have spent almost as much time at the gallery as we have at home: I think my two year old son thinks it is home.”⁵¹

Both directors agree that they were feeling somewhat burnt-out at the end of their terms and that they could never keep up such a pace today.

Motivating factors for the enthusiasm, energy and commitment was the freedom the gallery staff had and the gallery’s small size. For Barr, “Nothing happened unless you did it, so the personal likes and dislikes of the directors controlled the programme. You organised exhibitions from the artists you liked because you wanted to see their work anyway. ...All I wanted to do was to get into their studios and get to know them. Suddenly I had this job where I could meet all these people. I met McCahon, for instance. That was the best part of the job. That and hanging the shows.”

Being small meant energy and hard work were solutions that could be applied to any problem. As Barr puts it, “With any business there is a point where they are small enough you can do everything yourself. Then it gets to what I call the stage where you can’t paint the walls yourself and you have to project ahead. I never had a crisis at the Dowse that couldn’t be solved by working through the night.”

Public Orientation

The strong public focus of the Dowse programmes was reflected in both Millar and Barr’s philosophical inclinations.

David Millar says, “sure we wanted to educate the locals about art, we wanted to establish a reputation, but I want to stress that I had a very strong social conscience. My job was not to sit there and have this wonderful plaything called ‘my gallery’ that I could do wonderful things with to satisfy my image of myself. I never felt that at all. My aim was to make people’s lives better – in the sphere in which I was working. Namely, people would come to an exhibition and feel excited, stimulated, concerned, or angry. Or they would walk out the door with a print, or a pot. I saw it very, very much that my job was to enrich people’s lives. I’ve never been happy with the take it or leave it approach. That wasn’t me.”

Jim Barr was happy to continue with Millar’s approach, stating when he was appointed that “David Millar has done a fantastic amount of spade work. ...The foundation has been well set. I am concerned that the gallery remains a place for people

⁵⁰ “The Dowse”, *Focus on Lower Hutt* 2, no. 4 (December 1979): p. 2.

⁵¹ “Sees Exciting Future for Dowse Gallery”, *Hutt News*, 3 February 1981.

and not a mausoleum for paintings. I don't want people to stop talking when they come into the gallery. ...[The Dowse] will remain a gallery for the people, and a place to bring people closer to the arts."⁵²

Barr's day-to-day approach was positively evangelical: "I used to guarantee myself that I would spend at least two hours in the galleries every day. All the staff would have to spend at least an hour every day."⁵³ I always thought, 'If I could just get to these people'. If I could be standing beside someone when they were having a spak attack in front of a McCahon then I knew I could talk them out of it. I've got those skills. All you had to do was be there at the time. Or someone is looking a bit puzzled and it's just a matter of Ian being there and talking to them. All it took was your personal energy to win the day. It was all quite religious really. It sounds a bit naive today, but I was a zealot, I believed in art education, I believed that people's lives would be better if they had access to art. I still think that."

Barr said at the time of his resigning: "If I have achieved one thing more than anything else I hope it's that I have made the Dowse Art Gallery accessible to every single person...The Dowse was established 10 years ago with the idea of fostering community activity and involvement both in the gallery and in the arts. This is one thing that I have really tried to push above all else, and I think the attendance and participation levels over the past few years testify to the success of this policy. The art profession in New Zealand has in the past been guilty of establishing forbidding temples to art: that's something we have strived to get away from."⁵⁴

Millar and Barr were both conscious of the desirability of attracting Maori audiences. Millar made some moves to show Maori art but as previously noted did not make a lot of progress. Barr went further but admits that his actions did not match today's bicultural ideals: "I used to go down to Waiwhetu and talk. But it was all quite colonial, I was taking the good word down to them, and what they did didn't impact on us. We also had quite a good relation with the courts – I saw all these people lounging around, so we got them in, but they weren't in the least bit interested."⁵⁵ And I have to say the reason I showed Selwyn was the work rather than because it was Maori. Selwyn was a crash course in Maori culture but the whole Parihaka thing was done in a Pakeha way. The only Maori things about it were because they did that. We allowed them to because they could do that best but none of it impacted on what we did."

⁵² "Gallery Director to Follow On" [*Evening Post?* c.Aug] 1976 press clipping, Dowse Art Museum scrapbook.

Barr felt that simply continuing the same activities as David Millar would have been quite acceptable to audiences. And though he liked seeing community involvement with art, he was less interested in being involved with it personally in the way David Millar was.

⁵³ Barr says he went so far as to remove his desk for one year but concedes it did not work very well.

⁵⁴ "Sees Exciting Future for Dowse Gallery", *Hutt News*, 3 February 1981.

⁵⁵ The Lower Hutt District Court was a short distance away from the Dowse and visible from its entrance.

Figures on attendance at the Dowse in the 1970s are incomplete. Millar reported that between 300 and 1,000 visited per week in 1972, yielding a theoretical total of 33,800 per year.⁵⁶ The following have been recorded, and do show a strong trend upwards:

1977	1978	1979	1980
44,333	62,532	66,252	75,000

The 1980 figure of 75,000 was achieved in a city of 75,919 at 1981 census. In per capita terms this is not far off visitation levels today.⁵⁷

Contemporary Art

Both directors describe themselves as basically conservative, but the term is relative and can be understood in different ways. Certainly Millar stated at the time that “by exhibiting one man shows of contemporary artists...we will have a policy which would be inexpedient for the National Art Gallery to follow. This policy places this gallery on the artistic barricades.”⁵⁸ Millar went on to say that there had been a renaissance in New Zealand art over the last 15 years which meant there was no problem of bringing a constant supply of shows to the Dowse. Increasing numbers of visitors to Lower Hutt and requests from out-of-town libraries for Dowse catalogues “more than justified this policy”.

Publicly positioning the Dowse against the National Art Gallery was possible because Millar got on well with the National Gallery director, Melvin Day, and found that Day considered his hands were tied by his controlling authorities and was more than happy for the Dowse to fill the role of a contemporary gallery for the Wellington region.

Looking back at the Dowse exhibitions, the artists shown seem to characterise New Zealand art in the 1970s – Robin White, Don Binney, Brent Wong, Michael Smither, Barry Cleavin, Jan and Jerry Nigro, Pat Hanly, John Middleditch, Don Driver, Grahame Sydney, Jeffrey Harris. The work was mostly hard-edged and usually figurative, though there was also Philip Clairmont and Tony Fomison as well as abstractionists Don Peebles and Philip Trusttun. The way these artists represent the period so well suggests that the Dowse was in the thick of it, and indeed was helping to create the shape of New Zealand art. However, it also has to be said the artists were mostly at the popular end of

⁵⁶ Millar says today that the early figures were so low he deflected all requests for them and only felt comfortable about releasing figures when queues were out the door for the costumes of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1975).

⁵⁷ In 1994/95 105,000 visits were recorded against a city of 94,540, only a 10% increase of per capita visits to the gallery over 1980, and this with the additions of a cafe and the museum wing. The figure was similar in 1997. (Hutt City boundaries changed to take in Petone and Eastbourne in the late 1980s, but the 1980 figure includes these.) However, the 1994/95 reported by the gallery is a conservative interpretation of the much higher 131,000 visits recorded on the door counter and the accuracy of any of the counts, whether 1970s or 1990s, remains questionable (Bob Maysmor, letter to the author 22 November 1996; Price Waterhouse, *Hutt City Council Museums Strategic Review*, 1998, p.7.)

⁵⁸ Director’s report, 1 June – 1 August 1971.

the spectrum and few receive the same critical interest today as they did in the seventies. It could be argued that these were artists for the new, middle-class audience for art which emerged in the decade. This view is reinforced by the absence of any conceptual art in the exhibition programme at the Dowse. Barr confirms that he simply wasn't interested in this type of work.

Summary

This chapter has told the story of the Dowse largely from the point of view of the directors. This is because the Dowse was very much their vision and their response to a local context.

The programme David Millar and Jim Barr each ran was partly determined by the need to establish and make secure a new gallery. There was no directive to this effect from their political masters, however, nor any proposals on how they might achieve these objectives. It may have been the way the gallery was imposed, with no precedent, on the city that allowed the directors this freedom. With little understanding of what an art gallery was in the community, let alone by council, anything was possible.

Lack of understanding of how a modern gallery functioned is suggested by the very design of the Dowse in its minimal storage space, concrete block interior walls, and narrow spiral staircases. The museum wing suffered even greater drawbacks and what it was to be used for was only seriously considered after it was constructed.

Such lack of thought raises the issue of who really pushed for the Dowse to be built. Was it simply Percy Dowse, or did Muston have a greater role than generally acknowledged? And what about the historical society, given the intention from the beginning to have a museum attached? The art society obviously was a major force, but why then wasn't it given greater say in the gallery's operation? Presumably because council administrators had enough nous to consult with other local authorities, the arts council or the National Art Gallery about staffing and structuring a public art gallery. Yet city councillors would probably have been quite happy with the sort of programme operated by the art society had they gained control (a programme of regular spring, summer, autumn and winter art society exhibitions interspersed with touring shows and a semi-permanent collection hang).

Community involvement was strong under both Millar and Barr's directorship, though its nature changed over the two periods. During Millar's term there was a high level of lectures, concerts, performances, and film screenings at the gallery. These were largely separate from the exhibitions and the gallery tended to act as a passive venue for many of these events. In the absence of other venues or organisations (such as a community arts council) the Dowse operated somewhat like a community cultural centre. Much of this continued through the late 1970s as well, but with the appointment

of an education officer in 1976 and the beginning of Jim Barr's directorship, exhibitions themselves became more activity oriented and involving. There were the school holiday exhibitions specifically designed to involve people, especially children, but other exhibitions utilised the same approach (*Making an Impression* and the *Offshoot* exhibitions for example). Exhibitions became less passive experiences and community involvement occurred through the core activity of exhibitions rather than just through additional events.

Both directors maintain that they did not have particular models for the Dowse, nor that what was going on elsewhere in New Zealand galleries greatly influenced them. They both travelled overseas during their terms to look at other galleries and came back convinced of the rightness of what they were doing. Millar took a study trip to the USA in 1973 and says "What America did was confirm to me was that small galleries could do exciting things. What amazed me was the professionalism of American galleries, even the small ones." Barr visited Australia in 1977 to view galleries, especially to look at storage: "One factor that became quite obvious during my visit was the danger of losing touch with the community through increased size and elitist attitudes."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Director's report, 28 April 1977 – 1 January 1978.

CHAPTER 7

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery

Parochial loyalties are strained by the discovery that a relatively new art gallery in a city of 40,000, in a province previously famous only for a mountain and cows, can offer a more complete experience of contemporary New Zealand painting in a few hours than our own [Auckland City Art Gallery] can give in 12 months.

– Hamish Keith
Auckland Star, 1974

No gallery in New Zealand has stimulated more acclaim, abuse and controversy in its opening year and it is doubtful whether any other gallery in the country has achieved national importance in so short a time.

– Bryan James
Daily News, 1970

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery differed from the Manawatu Art Gallery and the Dowse Art Gallery – and indeed from most New Zealand galleries – in being substantially founded by a benefactor. This gift enabled the gallery to set its own course, largely independent of the community and city council, giving the institution a particular flavour that has continued to this day.

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery differed also in its course being already well set on opening in February 1970. The lead-up had seen a director appointed three years beforehand, considerable planning made for its future operation, and intensive discussion and formulation of policy undertaken. The story of the gallery's origins in the 1960s which begins this chapter is therefore crucial to an understanding of the Govett-Brewster's nature in the seventies.

Beginnings

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery's first recorded beginnings are in 1962, when discussions were held between the city council's finance committee and prominent citizen Wilfred Watts about ways of promoting the arts in New Plymouth. That year, the committee decided to set up an arts purchase and advisory committee with the task of

acquiring art works for the city as well as another committee to look at the general concept of a civic art gallery.

Later in 1962 the council accepted a gift of numerous stocks and shares worth £50,000 (\$1.4m in 1997 terms) from local citizen Monica Brewster “for the purpose of the establishment in New Plymouth of a public art gallery and the maintenance and development thereof”.¹ The trust deed imposed a number of significant conditions,² among them that:

- The gallery was to be named the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.³
- Council was to appoint an establishment committee.
- The directors of the four metropolitan galleries (known as the Advisory Committee) were to give majority approval to plans for any proposed gallery building.
- A curator (i.e. director) was to be employed (the appointee also to be approved by the four-director advisory committee).
- The advisory committee was to have final say in any disputes between curator and council over gallery policy.

Taken together, the thrust of these conditions was a determination that the gallery be run professionally in accordance with museological principles and practice.

New Plymouth: The Local Context

New Plymouth seems an unlikely town to give birth to a gallery exceeded in sophistication and modernity only by the Auckland City Art Gallery during the 1970s. Isolated on the edge of New Zealand, it was a conservative farming centre in the 1960s, a retirement town for farmers where, as first director of the gallery John Maynard puts it, “the only place you could buy olive oil was at the chemist’s”.⁴ It had been declared a city in 1949, but population growth was fairly moderate, reaching just 38,780 for the greater urban area in 1971.⁵

¹ *Trust Deed Between Monica Romaine Brewster and the Corporation of the Mayor, Councillors and Citizens of the City of New Plymouth*. Unless otherwise noted, papers, reports and minutes quoted are held by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive.

² Auckland Art Gallery director Peter Tomory advised Monica Brewster on the content, according to John Maynard (Maynard, interview with the author, January 1997).

³ “Brewster” was Monica Brewster’s married name, and “Govett” her family name.

⁴ Unless otherwise sourced, information, opinion or quotes attributed to John Maynard in this and future chapters are taken from a taped telephone interview made by the author in January 1997.

⁵ This made the city smaller than other provincial centres such as Hamilton, Napier, Hastings, Rotorua, Tauranga, Palmerston North, and Invercargill, and only marginally larger than Wanganui and Nelson (*New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1971.)

The city's modest aspirations and realisation of its limitations are suggested in a 1967 letter written by the town clerk to Treasury in which he argued for a loan to build the gallery: "Rather than decry the fact that industrial development is only slowly coming this way, the council has developed its own natural assets such as its parks and reserves, its places of historical interest, its small but nevertheless worthwhile museum and its tourist conference centre attractions. There is a need and, we strongly believe, a demand for an art gallery to complete the cultural amenities of the city, a rounding off of the whole."⁶

New Plymouth was not entirely lacking sophistication and receptivity to a gallery like the Govett-Brewster however. Terry Boon, architect of the gallery, mentions the sprinkling of Chapman Taylor houses as an indicator of some advanced thinking in the town, and the reputation of Boys' High School as a source of high achievers.⁷ There was also Boon himself who, after qualifying, spent three years in Europe where he experienced its art and galleries, and then returned to his home town in 1965 to set up practice. John Matthews, a mechanical engineer and significant figure on the gallery committee, was a similar individual, returning to New Plymouth in the mid-1960s after obtaining a degree.

An organisation of artists known as Group 60 (presumably titled after its founding in 1960) also had some influence. They were keen to see a contemporary art gallery and individual members were very supportive of John Maynard when he arrived. Group 60 included David Aitken, John Bevan Ford (both school art advisors), Michael Smither, Bobby Winchcombe, and Don Driver, amongst others. The presence of Driver was important because of his growing national reputation. In 1968 another contemporary oriented artist, Tom Kreisler, arrived and Toss Woollaston (who was brought up in Taranaki) visited occasionally. Maynard mentions Smither, Driver, Boon and Kreisler particularly as strong supporters of his efforts to establish the gallery.

One other feature of New Plymouth in the 1960s mentioned independently by both Kreisler and Maynard is the enlivening effect of transient surfers. Kreisler recalls, "with the surfing scene, people were coming through, including Australians. The place felt young."⁸ Related to this was the existence of the port. As Maynard observes, "any town with a port gives the feel that there is a world somewhere else".

This, then, was New Plymouth in the 1960s. But from the early seventies major changes began to occur. Oil and gas were discovered and with this came an influx of oil industry people, particularly Americans. Maynard says, "real money, real power was coming into the town, and you knew something was going to change. It was a thing to

⁶ Quoted in gallery committee meeting minutes, 12 December 1968.

⁷ Opinions or quotes attributed to Terry Boon are taken from an untaped interview by the author in January 1997.

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, information, opinion or quotes attributed to Tom Kreisler are taken from an interview made by the author in January 1997.

hook onto.” Although the oil companies were not interested in sponsoring community facilities and projects, a considerable amount of oil money entered the local economy in servicing the needs of the new industry and its personnel. The oil people mixed well in the community, joining various clubs and societies,⁹ and so added more cosmopolitan perspectives to the city as well as a demand for more sophisticated activities and facilities – such as restaurants, and no doubt, an art gallery.

Monica Brewster

Monica Brewster’s contribution to the new gallery was almost entirely financial. She was philosophically inclined towards contemporary culture but not, says Maynard, actually a “strong voice for culture in the community”. She was in her eighties, reclusive and bed-ridden during the later 1960s and took no active part in the planning of the gallery, though the committee conferred with her on major issues.

Monica Brewster came from a well-off New Plymouth family. She was a liberal thinker, an independent minded woman who bravely declared herself a pacifist during WWII, had travelled extensively, and was well read. She sided with the committee in their conflict with the society of arts but never became involved in the debate. John Matthews recalls, “I think those who went in wringing their hands and looking to her for support were probably quite disappointed [by] her joie de vivre for all this debate and excitement and argument”.¹⁰

Maynard believes that there was a lot of pressure from the New Plymouth establishment to get rid of him. However, he was “acutely aware of the politics. I always kept my nose clean with Monica. I saw her as often as I felt was necessary, so she was kept informed all the time. Her mind was as sharp as a pin and she never did anything other than encourage what I was doing. She never once interfered.” In fact, it is often related how Monica Brewster told Maynard to “stand up to them, young man” in his difficulties with council.¹¹

Monica Brewster died in 1973 aged 87. She only visited the gallery once, before opening, but evidence of her approval of the gallery is her bequest in May 1970 of the remainder of her estate, worth \$72,000, for Govett-Brewster art work purchases.

The Committee

Council set up the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Establishment Committee in March 1963, a six person committee of two councillors and four members of the public. Its

⁹ According to Omer and Don Hooker. Unless otherwise noted this and further views, information or quotes attributed to Omer or Don Hooker, former presidents of the Friends of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, are taken from an interview made by the author in January 1997.

¹⁰ Maré, *Monica R. Brewster*, p. 18.

¹¹ Maynard, interview by the author, for example.

initial terms of appointment were to make recommendations to council on the establishment and operation of the art gallery, but a November 1963 agreement also gave it full autonomy over the planning and control of the gallery. In practice, the committee indeed functioned more or less independently from council through the 1960s, reporting to it only on major issues. Once the gallery was opened there seems to have been no winding-up of the establishment committee but simply a continuation of the committee without the word “establishment” in its name.

In John Maynard’s time the committee included councillors Dr Peter Allen and Laurie Herdman. Allen was deputy mayor and deputy chair of the committee, becoming chairperson in the 1970s. The citizen members were Wilf Watts, an accountant and chair of Ivan Watkins Dow Ltd, who had a strong interest in music and was chairperson of the committee in the 1960s; Colyn Nicholls, president of the art society and a painter of traditional landscapes; Ian Mitchell, a lawyer; and John Matthews, a young engineer with a engineering business.

The committee worked on creating a gallery out of the Regent Theatre, as well as developing policies on such areas as exhibitions, collecting (including de-accessioning), the use of the building, and public admissions. Their first move was to try and find a building site for a gallery. Their second, following Australian art historian and critic Bernard Smith’s strong suggestion to get a director before designing a building, was their appointment of John Maynard in 1966. (Smith had some other warning words to motivate the committee too: “One wants to avoid the kind of art gallery in Wanganui, which is dead on its feet. The Wanganui gallery is a very lonely, desolate institution.”)¹²

Bernard Smith’s challenge came on a brief visit, but Maynard challenged the committee on an ongoing basis. John Matthews says, “The committee mostly got in behind Maynard. There was a row over the collection policy and in fact members of the committee voiced doubts over everything they did – about policy, the building, the [opening] Narbey exhibition. But it was all healthy debate. The committee was lost over the conflict with the art society though. We were just a provincial committee and didn’t understand the issues.”¹³ Maynard’s version is that he often “bullied” the committee into things. “They were struggling. One person [Herdman] was at least prepared to give people the benefit of the doubt, and one resigned [probably Nichols] but there were some members who were terrifically supportive.”

¹² *Taranaki Herald*, 10 August 1965.

Smith was in New Zealand to judge the Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art at the Palmerston North Art Gallery.

¹³ Unless otherwise noted, information, opinion or quotes attributed to John Matthews are taken from an interview made by the author in January 1997.

Another instance where Maynard was ahead of the committee was when he was offered a Peter McIntyre exhibition and collection but turned it down. “The committee was stunned, let alone the public”, says Matthews.

John Maynard

Although John Maynard (*plate 7.1*) was only at the gallery for the first year of the 1970s, both the policies he worked out in the late 1960s and his first exhibitions and acquisitions set an influential precedent for later developments. It was Maynard who really cast the die for the Govett-Brewster, creating a legacy with which later directors had to deal.

Maynard was appointed in 1966 at only 23 years of age (there were few applicants, he says). He was an art teacher with the Victoria Education Department in Melbourne and as he had no museum background the committee agreed paying him to gain four months work experience at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the National Gallery of Victoria before he took up his duties at the Govett-Brewster in January 1967.¹⁴



Plate 7.1 John Maynard, c.1970

Maynard's tasks were to support the design and building of the gallery, develop and recommend policies to the committee, and develop an exhibitions programme. During this time he also travelled within New Zealand extensively, visiting galleries and artists. In this way he gained a well-informed perspective on the country's art and art galleries and built up many contacts.

Even Maynard's friends and strongest supporters describe him then as "a brash young fellow", "aggressive, abrupt and rude", "tough as nails, brash and arrogant". Maynard doesn't deny this: "I took an aggressive and abrasive approach quite deliberately. I couldn't believe that contemporary art was still an issue here [in New Plymouth]. I thought it had been solved in the 1920s. By creating a bit of heat you can shed a bit of light too. I didn't always have a lot to do and it was a way of amusing myself. Today I would take a more consensus approach. At the time I decided to work more in conflict."¹⁵

Tom Kreisler says Maynard was "like a little king" given both the isolation of New Plymouth and that he always had the safety net option of appealing to the advisory committee of other directors if conflict with council became serious. Boon recalls witnessing an interaction with the mayor, Denis Sutherland, which illustrates the point. The mayor had arrived to complain about something, already livid as he stormed up the stairs. Maynard quickly told him to "fuck off out of my office". Sutherland "went

¹⁴ By then aged 24. He also visited Newcastle and met some of the major directors in Australia. He says that Mildura Art Gallery, an institution on a scale similar to New Zealand provincial galleries, was then a strong influence in Australia.

¹⁵ One story that has been handed down of Maynard's amusing himself is about his giving a lecture on performance art. Part way through he said, "Excuse me", walked out, and simply never came back. Matthews recalls that the audience "were pretty pissed off".

apoplectic, but because of the support of Peter Allen and others, Denny just had to wear it”.

John Maynard’s approach was far more than simply wilful though; it arose from his passion for contemporary art and his wish to establish an uncompromised institution:

It was an extraordinary opportunity. When I arrived there was a site, a trust deed and a committee. I saw that no-one else had had an opportunity like that and I didn’t want it wasted. The pay was abysmal so I wasn’t doing it for the money, but for the idea. I knew it could happen and I was determined to make it happen. I was determined to be single-minded. I was prepared to take risks because I was not looking for a long-term career, and I knew something big was at stake. Plus I felt an obligation to the future and to Monica Brewster. I saw it as a long-term project that the kids being born that year would use and see as being part of their community. I wanted to add something to the jigsaw of New Zealand.

I knew to start that I had to dispense with the “first ships” people. You just couldn’t take the [old guard] on board so you had to leave them behind. You couldn’t take prisoners. You never gave away an inch or you would never get it back.

Maynard admits that there was “always the risk that I would wake up and I’d lost my job but [the operation] was scrupulously run financially, there was never any favouritism, and everything was well above board. I also had New Zealand-wide support.” This latter backing was primarily located in the national arts community and included dealer Peter McLeavey and important artists like Gordon Walters, Toss Woollaston, Pat Hanly, Colin McCahon, and the influential head of sculpture at the Elam School of Fine Arts, Jim Allen. As far as the gallery/museum profession went, Maynard says that James Mack and Gordon Brown were the only two he could really talk to, though Hamish Keith (then curator at Auckland City Art Gallery) was also helpful. Other directors belonged to a much older generation at that time – geriatrics from Maynard’s perspective: “At directors’ meetings I was too scared to hit the table in case there were two or three heart attacks.”

The effect of Maynard’s personal style, then, was to polarise. Traditionalists, like the mayor and the society of arts, were profoundly offended. Others, particularly artists and the young, were inspired. Tom Kreisler, for example, says he was attracted to a teaching job in New Plymouth because of what he had heard about the Govett-Brewster. He believes John Maynard demonstrated that art could have a toughness and that he opened up the eyes of people like Wilf Watts to contemporary art. He also recalls how his students at New Plymouth Boys High School – John Leuthart and Paul Hartigan¹⁶ amongst them – admired the rebellious, iconoclastic John Maynard.

¹⁶ Leuthart went on to be director of the Wellington City Art Gallery in the 1980s and Paul Hartigan a well known Auckland-resident artist.

For Terry Boon, Maynard was “spectacular, had zing, and put the place on the map.” And Don Driver believes that he was “good for the Govett-Brewster because he was uncompromising and put the place on a strong footing with distinctive character”.¹⁷

Formulating Collection and Exhibitions Policy

One of John Maynard’s most enduring and notable legacies has been the collection policy. This was, and probably remains, the most radical in the country.

In 1964 the committee gained council approval for an acquisition policy they formulated on the advice of metropolitan directors Peter Tomory and Stewart Maclellan that they “purchase a representative collection of New Zealand art from the year 1880 onwards”.¹⁸

Maynard, however, was quick to propose a new policy on his appointment. He pointed out that the Manawatu Art Gallery had a virtually identical policy and that nearly all galleries and some libraries in the country were also collecting New Zealand art, of which “a large percentage . . . are of works of artists either deceased or very old.”¹⁹ Moreover, with the advent of travelling exhibitions it seemed even more pointless to duplicate other efforts. He adds today he didn’t want a gallery like all the rest, one that didn’t take risks and which had a collection little different from others.

Maynard’s proposal was adopted in April 1968. It included the following key phrases:

- That it be the general policy to purchase works of art which are representative of current ideas and are significant in the development of contemporary forms in the plastic arts from New Zealand, Australia, Japan, United States of America, Mexico and any other countries in or around the Pacific Ocean where a body of work of substantial artistic merit is to be found.²⁰
- That an emphasis be placed on the acquisition of contemporary works of art executed by New Zealand artists.

However, the most notable part of the collection policy was the de-accessioning clause. The simple fact of having a formal statement on de-accessioning was probably

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, information, views and quotes attributed to Don and Joyce Driver are taken from an interview with the author in January 1997.

¹⁸ Minutes of Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Committee, 10 December 1964.

¹⁹ *Addendum, Proposed Purchase and Acquisition Policy*, September 1967. (Maynard’s initial acquisition policy proposal was made to the gallery committee in May of this year.)

²⁰ Maynard’s rationale for the inclusion of Pacific Rim countries was that art from these countries had already influenced New Zealand artists and NZ was likely to become increasingly associated – economically, culturally, and militarily – with them.

remarkable enough at the time, but what was special about the Govett-Brewster policy was its intent as an *active* policy.

The de-accessioning clause read:

- That after a period of five years from the date of acquisition the committee shall have the right to de-access and dispose of . . . any work that no longer fits into the structure of the collection.

The word *structure* is important here, as it means something different from the more usual deaccessioning reason that a work does not lie within the collection *policy*. Maynard's intention was to create a collection that would be perpetually contemporary, avoiding the situation an institution like New York's Museum of Modern Art has found itself in, where what was modern when it began collecting in the 1930s eventually becomes historical. "What I wanted was a lively gallery that didn't end up a research institution" he says today.²¹ The related aim was to allow for the weeding out of works which time showed to be less significant than others by the same artist.²²

The exhibition policy was unremarkable compared to its collections counterpart. It stated, "That it be general policy to conduct a temporary and loan exhibition programme as approved by the committee on the recommendation of the director." The key points were that the director and committee had the say on what was exhibited and that the programme would consist of temporary exhibitions rather than the semi-permanent displays for which older art galleries had become notorious.

The Building

The establishment committee's initial attempts to create a gallery building became bogged down in council prevaricating. In frustration John Matthews and artist Michael Smither proposed to the committee that the Regent Theatre building be converted to a gallery. The idea met with approval, Matthews was invited onto the committee, and in 1966 the cinema and the adjacent corner section were acquired by the council with Brewster trust funds.

Maynard investigated gallery design before starting work in New Plymouth and soon after he began there in January 1967 created a design brief for the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. His brief expressed the typically modernist view that the building should be sufficiently self-effacing not to overpower the art works while also having "a high

²¹ Maynard felt that New Plymouth's isolation was one reason why the gallery should not aim to house research collections. He concedes that acquisition of the Len Lye collection has successfully gone against this view though.

²² John Maynard, *Recommendations by the Director to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Committee on Purchase and Acquisition Policy, Temporary Exhibition Policy, Gifts of Works of Art, and Donations*, unpublished report, May 1967.

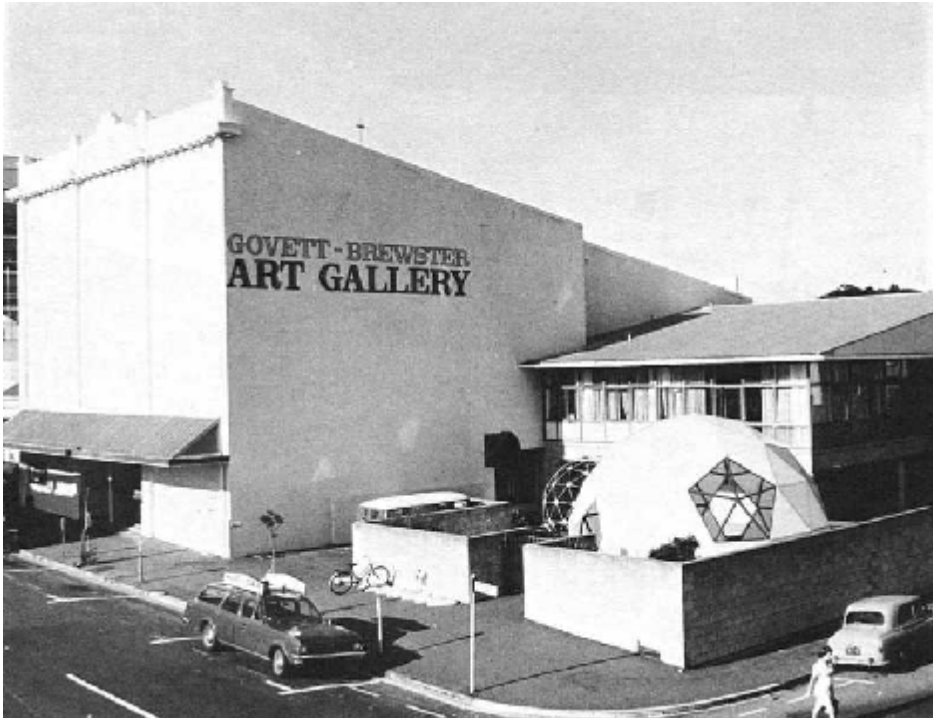


Plate 7.2. The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in 1974, while the *Great Dome Experience* exhibition was being held (this was in the sculpture court area).

degree of dignity and poise and an architectural style of elegance that the average citizen rarely experiences.”²³ He also made the point that experience had shown exhibition space should only be about one third the total floor area.

In March 1967 local architect Terry Boon was appointed to design the building. His design met with enthusiastic responses when the four metropolitan directors’ approval was sought, as well as from David Peters, director of the Arts Council, who proclaimed, “I can see [the plans of the building] as symbolic of the future rather than the past”.²⁴ The building was to be financed with \$47,000 from the Brewster trust and \$50,000 from council, and building work began in July 1968.

The building cost was finally \$142,400 and it opened in early 1970. It was an internal reconstruction in the shell of the cinema with a two storied annexe on an adjacent section and a walled sculpture court (*plate 7.2*).

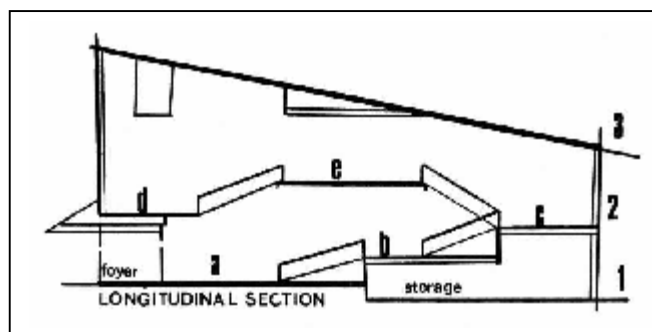


Plate 7.3 Cross-section elevation of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery showing the decks.

²³ John Maynard. *Requirements for the New Building to be Named the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery*, unpublished report, 7 March 1967.

²⁴ Wilfred Watts, *Report to the New Plymouth City Council on Proposals for Establishing an Art Gallery*, [c.1967].



Plate 7.4 "C" deck, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1970s.



Plate 7.5 Looking towards the entrance from "C" deck, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, 1970s.

The annexe contained a coffee lounge (closed in 1987 due to poor profitability and a need for space), offices and toilets. There were five decks within the shell (*plates 7.3, 7.4, 7.5*), and the proportion of display to storage and work space decreased from Maynard's ideal of 66% to 40%. Despite this compromise, the building included many desirable features for an art gallery operation, including extra-wide doors, hoists, good security and a climate controlled collection store. Air conditioning was added to the display spaces in 1975, making the gallery only the second in New Zealand after the Auckland City Art Gallery to have full climate control.

Opening

The opening exhibition, Leon Narbey's light and sound installation *Real Time* (*plate 7.6*), might conceivably be described as the art event of the decade. It certainly presented to New Zealanders in a highly public fashion a new way of thinking about both art and art exhibitions. Maynard did have the opportunity to show the touring blockbuster exhibition *Rodin and his Contemporaries*, but felt he needed something truly unique to set the stamp on the Govett-Brewster's image. He found it in a storeroom at the Elam School of Fine Arts occupied by Narbey's *Room 2* student installation. "I had never seen an installation. I'd never heard of such a thing and was very taken by it. I flew Leon to New Plymouth and he said it would cost a bit. So I went round and brokered deals everywhere. An enormous amount of money came from sponsorship – possibly one of the first examples of arts sponsorship in New Zealand."

Real Time took sixteen months of planning and three months of installation. "We worked 14 hours a day for three months. People came down from Auckland and helped. Narbey really rose to the occasion. We introduced the gallery to New Plymouth, to a whole lot of people who never would have gone otherwise. It wasn't a society type

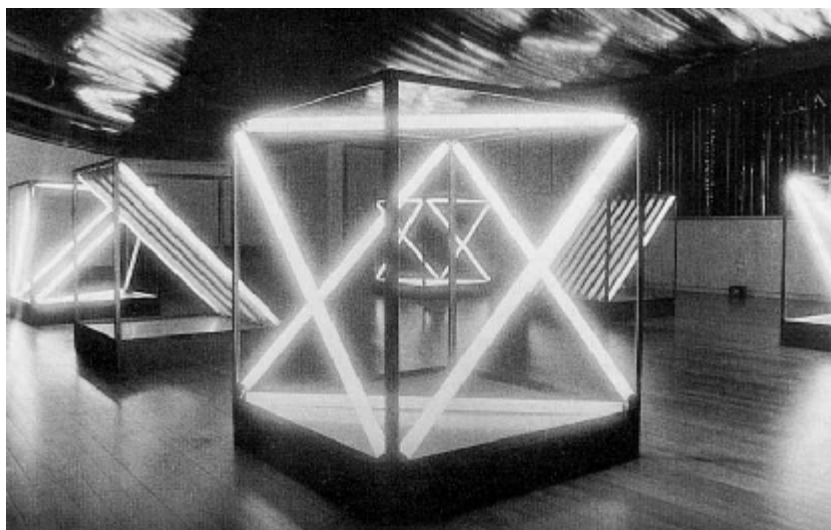


Plate 7.6 Leon Narbey, *Real Time* (detail), 1970.

opening. It was like a fireworks display. You didn't have to have an aesthetic background [to appreciate it]. There was a big contingent [of artists] from all over New Zealand. Some were even camping out in tents. There was a who's who of New Zealand art."

Tony Green commented, "I think everyone [in the art scene] sensed that something extraordinary was going to happen. Rumours about the opening exhibition...began to spread throughout the long period of its planning and assembling. ...There was a sense of solidarity with Leon Narbey and with the gallery director, John Maynard, because what they were doing was courageous and exciting."²⁵

Maynard took a huge gamble. There had only been two previous environmental installations in New Zealand – by Jim Allen at Barry Lett Galleries and Ted Kindleysides at New Vision, both small spaces. Narbey was only 21 when Maynard commissioned him and had next-to-no exhibition experience.

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery opened on 22 February 1970 and Narbey's *Real Time* was a sensation.

It was left to Leon Narbey...[to] set New Zealand art off to the kind of start the 'seventies should have. His light and sound environment *Real Time*...floated, swung, boomed, rang and flashed its way into a major event...[It] was in every sense an environment. So much so that it was difficult to come away from the opening with any clear idea of what the new gallery was really like.

...Nothing on the scale of *Real Time* has been attempted here before. For that alone it must be rated a major achievement, but beyond that the environment does involve the participant...Perhaps Leon Narbey's *Real Time* and its significant occurrence away from the established centre, and the 1970 *Benson and Hedges Art Award*, might be the lines along which the cultural battles of the next decade are fought.²⁶

Real Time was described as a "light and sound environment" by the artist. It was a complex array of reflective material such as sheet aluminium, metal coated plastic, and chrome strip as well as black PVC sheeting, illuminated by neon and fluorescent tubes. The lights were activated by photo-sensors and foot operated pressure pads. Spectator sound was picked up by microphones and transmitted amplified to other areas.

Local response was both for and against. The local reviewer M.J. Morehead, headlining his article "A new step into the world of the seventies", was cautiously positive:

The opening of a civic art gallery in any centre is an occasion for satisfaction and pride in a city that has come of age, for until it has the facilities for the complete

²⁵ Green, "Culture's Most Remote Province?", p. 22.

²⁶ "Hamish Keith Reviews Current Exhibitions", *Arts and Community* 6, no. 3 (March 1970).

observance of the arts, a community cannot be considered to have fully grown to adulthood.

It is most fitting therefore that the opening exhibition at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery should be one which forcefully reflects the outlook of the seventies and dispels from the start the age-old concept of a gallery as a stern and rather gloomy place where the visitor can do nothing other than stare at works of art.

...[However] the concept of walking through a gallery and being subjected to a bombardment of garish light and sound and of having no artwork to look at lies beyond the bounds of imagination for most of us.²⁷

Another newspaper article was less sympathetic: “Beep, beep, buzz, buzz, flash, flash...that is almost the sum total of the first art exhibition held in the fine new Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. ...We’ve...come to the conclusion that someone is having us on. Of the hundred or so people we have interviewed, some 97% thought that this was the case. And we go along with the majority. ...As a feat of electronic ingenuity it is something, but as an art exhibition it left us stone cold.”²⁸

Twenty-six thousand people attended the exhibition over its two month duration and a spate of both hostile and supportive letters flowed in correspondence columns of the local papers.²⁹

Support & Structure

The Society of Arts

Unlike most other art galleries in New Zealand, the origins of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery owed little to the local art society. Despite this, the Taranaki Society of Arts expected that the new public gallery would be a facility they, of any group, would be able to use. In particular, they assumed there would be a place in the gallery’s programme for their annual exhibition. Given Maynard’s determination to establish a contemporary gallery, this did not enter his calculations, and a debate, fierce at times, ran for several years on the issue. Maynard and the gallery committee were on one side and the society and the mayor (himself an amateur painter and a member of the TSA) on the other.

The dispute began when the Taranaki Society of Arts asked the committee in August 1968 whether its annual exhibition would be held at the gallery. The reply was non-committal and when the request came again one year later the gallery committee sought the opinion of the directors of the four metropolitan galleries. Their feedback

²⁷ *Sunday Express*, 22 February 1970.

²⁸ Unidentified news clipping. Govett-Brewster Art Gallery scrapbook.

²⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 28 February and 5 March; *Daily News*, 3 and 4 March 1970.

encouraged the committee to a position of vigorous opposition and Maynard threatened to resign if amateur groups were allocated exhibition space as of right. He claimed that the maintenance of standards based on artistic merit was fundamental to public art galleries.³⁰

However, the committee decided to compromise in September 1969 and allow an annual exhibition of works by TSA members, potters and other Taranaki artists provided the selection was by the director, a gallery committee member and an independent juror. The committee also pointed out to the society of arts that the gallery was available to local groups for meetings, lectures and similar activities. The society appeared to accept this offer of an exhibition but when they were later told that the *Taranaki Review* exhibition of July/August 1970 would not contain areas allocated to particular societies but would “place emphasis on artistic merit rather than special interest groups” they expressed surprise, disappointment and upset. This highlighted the nub of the issue. The society wanted an exhibition where all its members could show their work as of right – a “have-a-go” sort of exhibition. The gallery wanted an exhibition selected solely on the basis of excellence.

The exhibition went ahead but the society of arts was not happy and their complaint to the city council resulted in a meeting called between council and the committee in January 1971. At this meeting councillors proposed the gallery be a little more unbending in its policy, Cr Scanlan suggesting, “We have got to fit the gallery into the community. We can’t expect it to appeal to ratepayers at the present time.” But if councillors expected the gallery to be more flexible, their own views were less than open-minded: “The word art meant something pleasant to look at. ...[ratepayers] were entitled to something more attractive than they had had in the past” (Cr Phillips); “[some exhibitions at the Govett-Brewster] were juvenile. Better examples...were on display in the children’s library” (Cr Penrose); “I would be one of the established squares in the world of art and I have many supporters in the city” (the mayor); “I don’t know anything about art but I know what I like” (Cr Little). But the committee stood firm, insisting that “high standards, as seen through the eyes of the director, will be the criteria by which exhibitions will be judged” and that not much



Plate 7.7 *Taranaki Herald* billboard, 17 Sept 1971. An example of the sort of local profile Govett-Brewster Art Gallery controversy received.

³⁰ [Bett? Untitled history of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery], unpaginated.

could be done with the broad policy of the gallery.³¹

The committee did consider ways of meeting the society of arts' request however, and finally informed council in September 1971 that it would have a 1972 exhibition called *Taranaki Art Societies and Independent Artists* encompassing all local art societies and allowing for designated areas if they so wished, but that the selection would still be juried. The gallery had "no intention of abandoning its professional standards and works will be chosen accordingly".³²

Obviously this wasn't completely satisfactory for the society of arts as three years later the mayor asked the gallery committee to again reconsider its policy on local groups, for he had received adverse comment from members of the public asking why the TSA and Potters Group were staging their annual exhibitions in a furniture store when the city had a high quality, rate-payer funded gallery. However, the committee once more decided to retain its policy and this was accepted by the city council (in August 1974).³³

The *Taranaki Review* (aka *Exhibition of Taranaki Art Societies and Independent Artists*) was held every year of the 1970s and it is John Matthews' view that this fact and the use of outside selectors gradually helped defuse the issue. The more diplomatic and community minded approach of later directors probably also helped, as did the fact that the society of arts found other venues for its exhibitions.

The Friends

A friends organisation was first suggested by the gallery committee in October 1968. However, according to Don and Joyce Driver, John Maynard "wouldn't hear of a friends. He felt they would be like the art society". Maynard had certainly expressed his view to the committee that friends organisations were primarily of benefit to galleries as a funding source via membership monies.³⁴ Whether this was also the committee's view is not clear, but in March 1971 they instructed the new director, Robert H. Ballard, to contact and form a small group of people interested in forming a nucleus for a friends organisation. The Auckland City Art Gallery's Gallery Associates was taken as a model, with the gallery assisting but not actually administering such a group. At the inaugural meeting in July it was decided that the principal aim of the Friends of the Govett-

³¹ "Art Gallery Policy Debated Again", *Daily News*, 28 January, 1971; "Criticism of Art Gallery Welcomed", *Taranaki Herald*, 28 January 1971.

³² [Bett? Untitled history of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery], unpaginated.

³³ The issues raised themselves again in the early 1980s, this time with the Taranaki Artists Co-operative (TACO). A dispute arose over selection of a TACO exhibition at the gallery, the director wishing to have an independent selection based on artistic merit, TACO wanting the right of each of its members to be represented.

³⁴ John Maynard, *Alternative Sources of Income*, unpublished report, February 1969.

In April 1970 he also told the gallery committee that institutions "usually welcome associate membership primarily as a means of obtaining economic assistance".

Brewster Art Gallery was to support and promote the interests of the gallery. This would include encouragement of art work acquisitions and publication and distribution of printed material about the gallery. Appreciation of the arts would also be encouraged, and in its educational and social roles the friends would seek to bring the gallery closer to the public.

In practice, the friends organised exhibition openings, ran concerts, workshops and other activities at the gallery, arranged studio visits and bus tours, provided docents, and part-funded equipment and art works for the gallery. Aside from a few instances of the latter, raising funds for the gallery was not on the friends' agenda.

Openings were the most obvious and best supported friends activity. They organised the hospitality aspects and provided a nucleus of attendees, helping to make the openings special occasions. The 1972 *Portrait of Mexico* exhibition, for example, had Mexican-themed food provided by the friends.

Concerts were regular, well-attended events, organised by a friends committee convened by Joyce Driver on a Friday lunch-time. Films, especially for children during the holidays, were also a frequent activity, as were workshops, both for children and adults. Bob Ballard's wife, Gay, ran activity days in the courtyard and the friends had craft displays (on Sundays) which brought in hundreds according to Omer Hooker, a leading figure in the friends. (A list of typical friends organised events is given under *Events* later in this chapter.)

The docents scheme was announced in 1973 by Bob Ballard who said he would be happy to train any members who were willing. While there is no other mention of the scheme in friends' newsletters, Omer Hooker recalls members running continuous tours at the *Portrait of Mexico* exhibition and also providing a security and guiding presence at pottery and textile exhibitions through the decade. Membership of the friends ranged around the 300 to 400 level.

The three directors after Maynard were very supportive of the friends. Omer Hooker says that O'Reilly "didn't know how to do events, but he was pleased to have the friends organise them", and Dick Bett was "keen to get people in the door by any means whatsoever". Don and Joyce Driver confirm that Dick Bett was strongly behind the friends, though Bett's own account is that he found the friends a bit conservative and set in their ways and so created a more informal "bughouse committee" which organised rock concerts, poetry readings and movies.³⁵ It may be that the 1970s were the most active time for the friends organisation, for once additional gallery staff – especially the extensions officer – began to be appointed under Bett's directorship, there seemed, recalls Hooker, less for the friends to do and some members had a sense of being unwanted.

³⁵ This and any other information, opinion or quotes attributed to Dick Bett is taken from an telephone interview made by the author in August 1997.

Certainly the friends were able to make up for the lack of gallery staff and to create, in a way exhibitions alone could not, community interest and involvement. John Matthews also considers the strengths of the friends were that they generated a pride and sense of ownership in the gallery. He says the support base they created meant there was a nucleus for openings as well as people who could phone the mayor or write to the newspaper when the gallery was in trouble.

City Council Relationship

The gallery had a difficult relationship with council, or at least with some councillors who disliked contemporary art. They include the mayor, Denis Sutherland, in particular. John Matthews says of Sutherland: “He was a self-imposed moralist of the community. He loved this role and hated the Govett-Brewster. It was a significant problem for him for a long time. He found he couldn’t control the committee or influence it when he felt it was making mistakes. He never accepted the Govett-Brewster.”

Sutherland was in the frustrating position of not having full council control over the gallery. The gallery always held an ace up its sleeve of the trust deed and especially its arbitration provision if there were disputes between the council and the director. In addition, the objections of Sutherland and other councillors to acquisitions was made difficult by the fact that purchases were not ratepayer funded, coming as they did from other sources like the Brewster bequest, donations, and arts council subsidies. A further stumbling block was that Dr Peter Allen, the deputy mayor, was also chair of the gallery committee and a strong advocate for the gallery.

Major areas of dispute with council were acquisitions, and the society of arts. The society dispute seemed to die down by mid-decade, but councillors were constantly objecting to acquisitions they felt were unsuitable. (This is mostly covered later under *Controversies*.)

The council sought to gain greater say in running the gallery by progressively removing citizen representation on the controlling committee and integrating its operation with council, a process John Matthews describes as “creeping paralysis”.

Major changes were made in 1974. Following a budget blow-out at the gallery, council resolved to have a secretary and treasurer on the gallery committee. Later in the year the gallery, library, and war memorial hall committees were merged into a new Cultural Committee.³⁶ The gallery committee was most unhappy about this and claimed that the formation of the cultural committee was an apparent method for the mayor to get his own way. They accused him of trying to override the policy of the gallery with his own personal views and of trying to do this since inception. The mayor replied that

³⁶ Though in November 1974 a gallery sub-committee of the cultural committee consisting of five citizens and two councillors was created. While this allowed back a good measure of citizen representation the sub-committee had limited powers and was disbanded three years later by council – against the recommendation of the cultural committee.

he set up the cultural committee to prevent further overspending. The gallery committee then released a statement refuting the mayor's claims of serious overspending; deploring his failure to attend any of their meetings despite repeated invitations; and criticising his attitude to the gallery and the committee and his apparent attempts to impose his views on them. They argued that there were good reasons for being over budget, pointing out the various causes and the fact that with greater income than expected from the *State of California Painting* the bottom line deficit was to some extent compensated for.³⁷

In response, the mayor said "he had never made any secret of his belief that a facility such as the art gallery, subsidised as it was by the city council, should be available for full utilisation by the community." (His implication was that greater council control would mean groups like the society of arts would have better access to the gallery.) He also challenged people to name another provincial gallery receiving greater council funding.³⁸ (The mayor was probably right for the Dowse lagged about \$10,000 behind the Govett-Brewster for most years of the seventies and the Manawatu Art Gallery was below that again, despite their being located in larger cities. The Govett-Brewster's allocation from council also increased each year ahead of inflation, rising 33% from 1971/72 to 1979/80 in real terms.)³⁹

The mayor regularly claimed he could not interfere with the gallery but the gallery and cultural committees did not seem convinced his actions matched his words. In 1975 he had Fiona Clark's photographs removed from the *Active Eye* exhibition. Gallery sub-committee members protested that only recently had the mayor declared councillors would not decide what hung on gallery walls.⁴⁰ On other occasions he made a play of an assumed unwillingness to interfere with professional judgements. For example, when Cr W.L. Elliot expressed concern at a council meeting that the new director, Ron O'Reilly (a McCahon collector), might be preoccupied with works "of the Colin McCahon type" and that "if this were the case she would not enjoy the gallery, nor would '95% of New Plymouth'", Sutherland replied that his first concern had been administrative ability and "Anyway, it makes no difference. No matter who we appoint it is going to upset someone. So you might as well relax and enjoy it."⁴¹ Several acquisition proposals also gave the mayor an opportunity to claim he could not intervene, while still expressing his opinions anyway. (These and the Fiona Clark affair are covered under *Controversies*.) As the Drivers point out, "Denny Sutherland liked to be popular. He genuinely believed the Govett-Brewster shows and purchases were rubbish and felt he could say so."

³⁷ "Gallery Controversy: Arts Council Chairman Joins Battle", *Taranaki Herald*, 23 April 1975.

³⁸ "Gallery Controversy: Arts Council Chairman Joins Battle".

³⁹ Contributions to the gallery budget from rates (compiled from Govett-Brewster Art Gallery annual financial reports):

1970/71	1971/72	1973/74	1975/76	1979/80
\$ 21,065 (budget)	\$ 29,120	\$ 47,467	\$ 53,775 (budget)	\$ 97,254

⁴⁰ "Broken Promise Accusation", *Taranaki Herald*, 13 June 1975.

⁴¹ "New Directors Taste Queried" [c.1975], unsourced press clipping, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive.

The final act to remove any independence of the gallery was the decision taken in 1983 to abolish citizen representation on the cultural committee entirely – again, against the recommendation of the committee itself.

John Matthews had already resigned from the cultural committee the year before because, he said, it was ill-conceived, allowing relatively little citizen input and the harnessing of individual enthusiasm, talents, and interests that went with that. The town clerk replied to these parting shots by saying that councillors were in a better position to achieve control over total council activity and so balance the demands of special interest groups, costs to ratepayers, and the services offered by council. He believed that citizen members of the former gallery committee were primarily interested in fostering the interests of the art gallery, and paid “little attention to the rating impact and political sensitivity. During this period the gallery tended to alienate itself from the council and from the community at large.” Council by contrast was “more sensitive to the total needs and aspirations of the community and therefore less likely to allow cultural activities to get out of step with mainstream thinking.”⁴²

Directors

The distinctive personalities of each of the four directors of the Govett-Brewster in the 1970s created different variations on the flavour that was the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. John Maynard was noted for his aggressive energy and uncompromising determination in setting the gallery going. Californian Bob Ballard was much more “laid-back”. His period was marked by international exhibitions, a very active friends organisation and relatively little strife with the community. By contrast, under Ron O’Reilly’s directorship the gallery experienced numerous controversies, perhaps because he was as principled and passionate about art as Maynard, despite being more considered, intellectual, and mature in his approach. Dick Bett was no less interested in contemporary art than any of the previous directors, but community involvement is a dominant characteristic of his term.

John Maynard has already been covered at length under his own heading because of his significance in setting the policies, standards and general tone of the gallery. He resigned after four years, finishing in January 1971. After a period overseas he returned to New Zealand to take up the post of exhibitions officer at the Auckland City Art Gallery, where he introduced the important series of *Project Programme* installations and performances by conceptual artists.⁴³

⁴² Memorandum by the Town Clerk, 10 September 1982, quoted in Bett [Untitled history of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery], unpaginated.

⁴³ He then became involved in film as well as working on a contract basis organising and curating exhibitions, including organising the Govett-Brewster’s 1976 Len Lye exhibition. He was probably the first person in New Zealand to be employed this way.

Robert (Bob) H. Ballard (*Plate 7.8*) took over from Maynard as director in mid-January 1971.⁴⁴ Maynard ensured there was a week overlap between the two so that none of the ground he had struggled so hard to win was lost. “I wasn’t prepared to take my hand off the wheel without someone there”, he says.

Ballard is generally described by those who knew him then as quiet, gentle, thoughtful and approachable. John Matthews says that Ballard “was good for his time because people were exhausted by the time John Maynard left”. Maynard recalls that Ballard himself said “you’ve taken all the brunt of this and I’m going to look pretty reasonable after you”.

Bob Ballard was from California. He had a BA as well as a MFA in painting and was curator at the California College of Arts and Crafts when he was appointed, at age 30, to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. He and his wife were Baha’is – followers of Meher Baba – and Joyce Driver describes them as “like hippies from California” in conservative and insular Taranaki, Gay Ballard being “probably the first to wear a long [hippy-style] dress in the New Plymouth”.

Gay Ballard presented a marked contrast to her more low key and conservatively dressed husband. She was flamboyant and energetic, with strong opinions and little fear of expressing them. She became a very active organiser on the friends, doing a lot of behind-the-scenes work.

Bob Ballard does appear as a moderate besides Maynard in his behaviour as director though he continued approximately the same sort of contemporary programme as Maynard and many exhibitions in his time were high profile and very international in flavour.

Aside from his exhibitions (covered later) the most significant international activity by the gallery during his period was the building of a relationship with expatriate New Zealand sculptor Len Lye, then residing in New York, and organising to construct some of his kinetic sculptures. (q.v. *Collection* for more on Lye.)

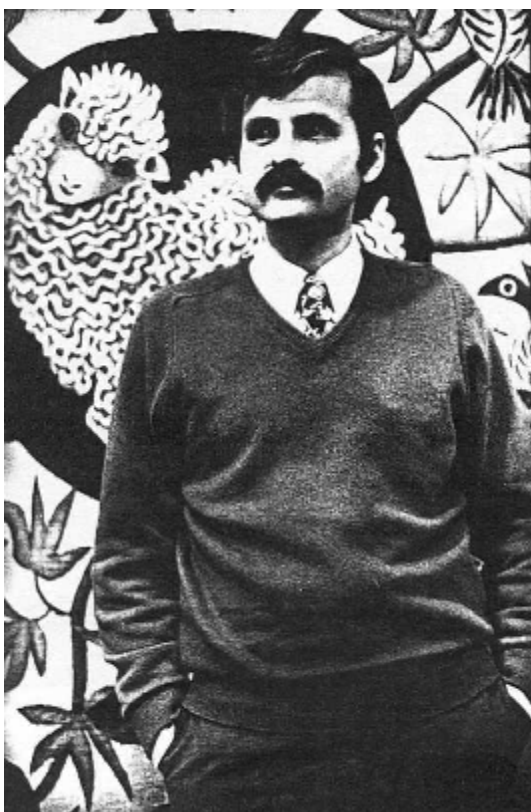


Plate 7.8 Bob Ballard [early 1970s?]

⁴⁴ “Who you should know – 4: Robert H. Ballard”, p. 6.

Ballard was appointed under a four year contract.⁴⁵ This was something devised for the director's position by John Matthews and the town clerk during Maynard's period. The contract was conceived because Matthews was concerned there was no mechanism to remove directors who turned out to be unsuitable. Though relatively common today, it was probably unique in New Zealand galleries and museums at the time. The contract was renewable but Ballard chose to leave the gallery in January 1975 to join forces with Peter Webb in running the Barrington Gallery dealership and then returned to the USA.



Plate 7.9 Ron O'Reilly, late 1970s.

After a gap of six months, during which Don Driver was acting director, Ron O'Reilly (*plate 7.9*) was appointed as Bob Ballard's successor in July 1975. O'Reilly already had a distinguished career as a librarian from 1947 to 1974. He also had a life-long interest in the work of McCahon and Woollaston, and was known for his collection of both McCahon paintings and African sculpture.

O'Reilly was 61 when appointed. With only four years to go until council retirement age, he was, according to the Drivers, completely dedicated to the job because it could never be a career stepping stone. Dick Bett's perspective, however, is that he was simply marking time to retirement, running a low-key operation and indulging himself with curating major exhibitions on McCahon and Driver. He has been described as decisive, but also, by many people, as meticulous and pedantic. The Drivers recall him as very diplomatic as well. They believe this quality, as well as the fact that he was local (in the sense that he originally came from New Plymouth), and was prepared to take the society of arts seriously, helped the society to feel more reconciled towards the gallery.

A further indication of the breadth of O'Reilly's tastes in art are that he pushed for a widening of the collection policy to include non-contemporary works, yet at the same time championed the very controversial contemporary exhibitions and acquisitions by Christine Hellyar, Billy Apple, and Don Driver.⁴⁶

O'Reilly was doubtless a very competent administrator with a strong intellect but John Maynard describes him as not very practically oriented and says this was a reason why he (Maynard) was brought in on contract by O'Reilly to organise aspects of the Len Lye reconstructions and exhibition.

⁴⁵ Directors from Dick Bett onwards have been employed on five year contracts, but Matthews remembers the early ones as four years, and this seems plausible given that Ballard worked for exactly four years, and O'Reilly for four years and three months. Maynard also happened to work for four years but he was not on a contract.

⁴⁶ See also Barr's comments in the Dowse chapter under *Mutual Support/Infrastructure*, on his support of contemporary art.

Ron O'Reilly was director at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery for four years, leaving on 3 October 1979. He died only three years later.⁴⁷

Dick Bett (*plate 7.10*) became director of the Govett-Brewster in September 1979 following two years' experience as a dealer running Wellington's Elva Bett Gallery.⁴⁸ Previous to this he lived in Australia, where he gained a fine arts and masters degree and worked in set design and related areas of theatre.

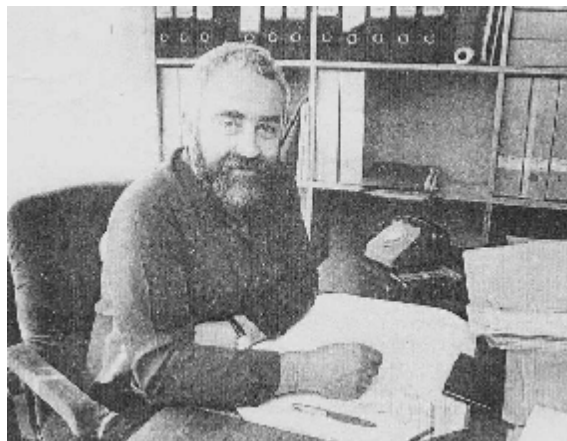


Plate 7.10 Dick Bett [early 1980s?]

Bett's term only covered four months of the 1970s, however it is worth touching on the characteristic features of his directorship as an indication of the next phase of the gallery.

Bett was known for his strong pursuit of community education and interaction, though he also points out that he spent a lot of time putting systems in place so the Govett-Brewster could operate in a more professional manner. His community activities included establishing an extensions officer position and, with PEP labour, a host of city-wide art related projects such as the painting of numerous city murals, construction of adventure playgrounds, sending a group of five art educators round schools, and formation of both a Gallery Film Group and the New Plymouth Folk Club. He also initiated a more active programme of workshops, lectures, and concerts. An education service was formally established, with activities for visiting groups, teacher meetings and in-service courses. He says his aim was to continue to show contemporary work and to make "hard nosed" acquisition decisions but also to surround people with art (hence the murals) and with all the community activities to "break down the antagonism people had to the gallery".⁴⁹

Staffing

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery operated with four to five staff throughout most of the 1970s. Following the director, the first staff positions of secretary/typist, attendant (Don Driver) and assistant/maintenance person were created in September 1969. The next position proposed was that of education officer in September 1971 but the gallery

⁴⁷ Bieringa, "Obituary: Ronald Norris O'Reilly, pp. 15–16.

⁴⁸ "Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Director Dick Bett", pp. 2–3; "Dick Bett", unpaginated; "Each Director Makes his Mark...", *Taranaki Herald*, 12 November 1984.

⁴⁹ "Each Director Makes his Mark...", *Taranaki Herald*, 12 November 1984..

committee extended the director's job instead to include education duties (for which he was paid an extra \$500 per annum).

Although staff did not increase greatly, some professionalism developed through the decade as positions became more specialised. In 1974 there were now four staff besides the director and the coffee lounge personnel. They were a senior technician, technician, secretary and a new post of registrar/librarian. The latter position was created this year after the director reported that workload on staff was high and the job of cataloguing, receiving, maintaining records and research was being neglected. In 1976 O'Reilly recommended the job be re-graded from a "sub-clerical rate of pay" to one higher and be called registrar, with the technicians reporting to this person. The registration position was approved, making it only the third established in New Zealand, following the Sarjeant Gallery (late 1974) and the Auckland City Art Gallery (early-mid 1975). Don Driver was the appointee.

A second try for an education officer was made by O'Reilly in 1976 when he asked council to support an AGMANZ initiative of seconding an education officer from the Department of Education. He was turned down. The Labour Department's TEP employment programme finally came to the rescue when an extensions officer was appointed on the scheme in 1978. His job involved organising visits by school classes and other visitors, as well as publicising gallery activities. A position of exhibitions officer was also created in 1978 by upgrading one of the technician positions.

The late 1970s and early '80s saw large numbers of staff appointed on short term TEP and PEP programmes. They were engaged on jobs involving security, research, registration documentation, upgrading storage, running extension programmes and clerical duties. (A PEP supported mural painting scheme ran each summer from 1981 to 1985 as well.) In 1982 Bett claimed that no other gallery in New Zealand utilised the work schemes as much as the Govett-Brewster.⁵⁰ Five new TEP staff were appointed between December 1979 and January 1980 alone.

Activities

Exhibitions

The following exhibitions are offered as high points with which the gallery has been identified. These are selected on the basis of personal knowledge of the exhibitions, degree of press coverage, critical response at the time, and recollections of interviewees.⁵¹ Comparative analysis of patterns amongst all Govett-Brewster Art

⁵⁰ Memo to town clerk, 2 July 1982. Quoted in Maré [History of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery], p. 20.

⁵¹ For a full list of all exhibitions held at the Govett-Brewster during the 1970s see the appendix.

Gallery exhibitions is given in chapter eight and a full listing of the gallery's exhibitions 1970–1979 is given in the appendix.

Significant exhibitions obtained or organised by John Maynard for the Govett-Brewster include Leon Narbey's *Real Time*, the *Kim Wright Collection*, *19th Century New Zealand Photographs*, and three major contemporary touring exhibitions: *NZ Art of the Sixties*, *Art of the Space Age*, and *Art from Malaysia*. The Kim Wright Collection was an important collection of contemporary New Zealand art placed on loan to the Govett-Brewster. *19th Century New Zealand Photographs* was notable for being the first major survey of historical New Zealand photography ever undertaken. It was curated by John B. Turner of the Dominion Museum and was a benchmark exhibition in the New Zealand photography boom of the 1970s. *NZ Art of the Sixties* was a survey exhibition assembled by the Auckland City Art Gallery for the 1970 Royal Visit, while *Art of the Space Age* consisted of international futuristic art from the Peter Stuyvesant Art Collection, and was shown only in New Plymouth outside the four main centres.

Two other exhibitions organised by Maynard are worth mentioning because they followed on from the precedent set by *Real Time*. Most obviously was the commissioned installation by David Brown, a student from the Ilam school of fine arts in late 1970. Very few other “environments” were created at the Govett-Brewster during the 1970s.⁵² The other exhibition was *Permanent and Impermanent Forms* in early 1971. While it simply comprised photographs of land projects by Elam students, the work represented very new ideas about art, and the fact that these were seen in a public gallery and toured by the Govett-Brewster makes the exhibition significant.

Bob Ballard's period (January 1971 – January 1975) is marked by the large quantity of international exhibitions seen at the gallery, a number of which he organised himself. The term “blockbuster” may be too strong to describe these but many of the exhibitions had a profile and stature beyond the usual exhibitions seen at provincial galleries, and certainly beyond most of those shown at the gallery later in the seventies.

The internationalism came partly from the relatively high number of overseas contemporary art exhibitions that seemed to flow through New Zealand in the first half of the 1970s – exhibitions such as *Brassai*, *Contemporary French Tapestries*, *Art from Canada's West Coast*, *Recent British Painting*, *Bill Brandt*, *Scultura Italiana*, *Portrait of Mexico*, *New Photography USA*, *Modern Art in Prints*, *Contemporary Australian Painting and Sculpture*, *Luc Peire Environment*, and *Hundertwasser*. Most such touring exhibitions were Auckland City Art Gallery or arts council organised, and the Govett-Brewster would have taken more of these than other provincial galleries. *Brassai*, *Bill Brandt*, *New Photography USA* and *Modern Art in Prints* were all from New York's Museum of Modern Art.

⁵² The only obvious ones are Jim Allen (1972), Luc Peire (1973), *Taranaki Environment* (1973), Billy Apple (1975), as well as perhaps Michael Smither (1977), Andrew Drumond's *3 Cycle* project (1977), David Mealing's *Sting/Stung* (1979), and some of *NZ Sculptors at Mildura* (1979).

A further international contribution came from Ballard using his American contacts. Exhibitions he brought to New Zealand include *Californian Works on Paper, 18x22: Top Box Art, The State of California Painting, Leroy Parker Drawings, Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum, Tamarind: Homage to Lithography, and Three Dimensional Fibre*. This is a very creditable score that would be unmatched by any other provincial gallery (or indeed by the two South Island metropolitan galleries) at the time. The *Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum* was probably Ballard's biggest coup, and the tour included all four metropolitan galleries. Just how many exhibitions Ballard actually organised directly, as against brought to New Zealand in the form of ready packages, is not clear, though *18x22* almost certainly comes within the second category. With the probable exception of *Californian Works on Paper* and *Leroy Parker*, all these exhibitions were also toured within New Zealand by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

The one other exhibition toured by the Govett-Brewster during Ballard's time was the already mentioned *Kim Wright Collection of NZ Painting*. This was shown again at the gallery in 1974 and a small catalogue produced before sending it around New Zealand.

A reasonable number of international exhibitions continued to be shown in O'Reilly's time but they tended not to have the status of those listed above. Highlights were perhaps *Photo Realists* (from the Auckland dealer Barrington Gallery); *Diane Arbus*; *Tsutsumu: The Art of Japanese Packaging*, organised and widely toured by the Waikato Art Museum; and *Six New Zealand Artists*, included here as it consisted of work by UK-resident New Zealand artists.

O'Reilly's own major exhibition contributions were *McCahon: Necessary Protection, Don Driver* and the Len Lye installation of *Trilogy, Fountain and Blade* (covered further under *Collection*). *Necessary Protection* consisted of works by Colin McCahon from 1971–76 with a theme described by the artist as "our constant need for protection". The exhibition was accompanied by a substantial catalogue with an essay by Wystan Curnow, and was toured. The *Don Driver* retrospective in 1979 also had a sizable catalogue and was toured (there had been Driver exhibitions at the gallery in 1973 and 1977 as well).

O'Reilly was known for his strong interest in high-modernist art but several exhibitions with community appeal were shown during his time. He organised *Painting in Taranaki* for the 1976 New Plymouth Centennial, with many nineteenth century works and a contribution from the friends of a contextual exhibition of period furniture, clothing and implements. Michael Smither's *You, Me, Us* (1977) exhibition was a novel interactive exhibition in which the artist was present each day to discuss his work and involve visitors in a variety of artistic activities. Smither covered his paintings with calico, thereby inviting the public to lift the covers to actively inspect his work. In the following year *Hot Rods, Choppers and Street Machines* really shattered conventional notions of art exhibitions when the National Street Rod Association of New Zealand

brought hot rod cars into the gallery to have them displayed as works of art in their own right.

The Public

The nature of the gallery's public interactions can be seen in its relations with council, the society of arts, the friends, artists, the media, and schools – and also read through things like controversies, public programmes, bequests, and attendance figures. Many such interactions are mentioned throughout this chapter, but some further specific examples and indicators of public interaction are covered here as well.

There seems little rhetoric concerning the Govett-Brewster having a public orientation – at least not until Dick Bett's period. One of the few instances is referred to in a letter from the gallery committee to the town clerk on 13 October 1970. This was a refutation of a claim by the society of arts that the Govett-Brewster had gone against statements made in an audio-visual presentation that it would be a "people's gallery". The committee's letter pointed out that admission was free, opening hours were long (six days a week, with two evenings and Saturday and Sunday), it was comfortable and attractive, and possessed a coffee lounge (the only one in a New Zealand gallery at this time aside from the Auckland City Art Gallery). As far as the programme went, said the committee, this was continuous and included exhibitions of work not normally available in provincial cities as well as opportunities to see local artists in exhibitions like the *Taranaki Review*. Attendances were high, there was good school use, a lecture programme was being commenced, and a friends organisation under consideration, the committee added.

Apart perhaps from the lecture programme and friends proposal, none of the committee's reply indicated any *active* attempt at community engagement, however. This is consistent with Maynard's own view, for he says he never believed art museums had anything to do with education or that they should run art classes and other forms of community participation. Democracy for him was simply providing free and easy access to the collection and exhibitions for all.⁵³

The high attendances claimed by the committee are borne out by the figures. They are especially high for a city with a population of around 43,000 mid-decade and for a gallery that was so frequently criticised for being avant-garde and elitist by citizens and councillors. While the accuracy of door counts is always highly questionable, perhaps one explanation is that the gallery had reasonably frequent blockbusters of the sort normally seen only in the four main centres. Attendances for exhibitions like *Portrait of Mexico*, *Kim Wright Collection/NZIA 1969 Award*, *Art of the Space Age* and *Art from*

⁵³ Maynard in telephone conversation with the author.

Malaysia were all around 10,000.⁵⁴ (It is interesting to note that the *Taranaki Reviews* of 1970 and 1971 – exhibitions of local content – recorded significantly lower attendances of 5,000 and 7,000 respectively.)

Attendance figures given in director's reports are:

1971	1972	1976	1977	1979
44,952	54,452	70,090	51,900 (approx)	52,694

Admission was always free to the Govett-Brewster apart from certain special exhibitions. These included *Art of the Space Age*, *Portrait of Mexico*, *Luc Peire / Hundertwasser*, *Alfred Sharpe*, *Modern Art in Prints*, *Painting in Taranaki 1840–1970 / Antiques and Relics of Old Taranaki*, *Len Lye* (1977) and *Hot Rods, Choppers and Street Machines*. When asked by the committee about the impact of charging, Ballard said that in some cases it did not seem to inhibit visitors, but in others, like the poorly attended *Alfred Sharpe* and *Modern Art in Prints*, it may have had a negative effect.⁵⁵ In 1978 O'Reilly was asked to report on the issue and he came out strongly against a general charge. He cited the familiar reasons of cost of collection, potential drop in visitors, and the principles of free education and social equity. However, he did support charging for special exhibitions, assessed on a case-by-case basis.⁵⁶ This advice was accepted and approved by the city council.

Education activities are not well recorded at the gallery aside from listings of numbers of classes in the director's reports. These give visits for the *Brent Wong* (1978) exhibition, for example, as 17 classes from six schools, totalling 533 students. The director reported that this was about average for an exhibition, though some others, like *Face Coverings* (1974) had considerably greater numbers (37 classes). Many of such visits were probably self-guided, though the directors, and later the extensions officer, would have also spoken to some groups.

Public response to the gallery as measured by the attitude of the two main New Plymouth newspapers was sympathetic, with the response of their respective arts columnists particularly positive. Noeline Blackman wrote a Saturday column called "Backstage" for the *Taranaki Herald* on the arts. And for the *Daily News* Bryan James wrote a weekly column titled "Stage and Studio".

Editorials stuck up for the gallery too. On Billy Apple, the *Daily News* wrote, "Perhaps one of the dividends of Mr Apple's visit, besides proving again that New Plymouth's young gallery is a lively bone of contention instead of a mausoleum, is a reminder that beauty and art lie in the eye of the beholder..."⁵⁷ The *Taranaki Herald's*

⁵⁴ These exhibitions were all in the first two years of operation. Attendances on a per exhibition basis do not seem to be recorded after March 1973.

⁵⁵ Director's reports 18 September and 18 December 1973, cited in Bett [Untitled history of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery], unpaginated.

⁵⁶ Report to the Cultural Committee, 14 August 1978.

⁵⁷ "Apple Cart Upset", editorial, 2 October 1975.

editor also gave approval to controversy: “Many of its exhibitions and purchases created considerable controversy but this was by no means a bad thing. Unlike the larger centres where the population is great enough to attract sufficient people with a particular interest, the Govett-Brewster, if it is to serve its purpose best, must catch the interest of a wide cross section of the community.”⁵⁸

Collecting

Collecting began from 1965 using a portion of investment income from the Monica Brewster gift. Once funds from the second Monica Brewster bequest of \$72,000 became available in 1973 income from this was dedicated for acquisitions, an amount of \$6,000 per year through most of the 1970s. Donations and arts council subsidies supplemented this figure, as well as the small Gibson and Atmore bequests. No council money from rates sources was ever applied to collection purchases.

A tension that keeps recurring at the Govett-Brewster throughout the 1970s was a desire to collect beyond the strictness of the contemporary focused policy, suggesting that directors wished to cater more widely to public tastes. Some traditional works acquired pre-Maynard were disposed of in 1971 and 1972, yet Ballard noted in 1974 that there was still a small collection of gifted work lying outside the collection policy.⁵⁹ He further suggested that the policy encompass Asia and the Americas, as well as primitive and folk art from these and the Pacific regions, though this was not accepted by the committee.

The desire to collect local work was expressed in the next attempt at broadening the collection. In 1975 O'Reilly announced that the friends would start their own collection of purchases of local artists work from the *Taranaki Review*. These would be items falling outside the collection policy criterion of works “significant in the development of contemporary forms in the plastic arts”. They were to be available for public hire and administratively separate from the main collection. However, the friends collection did not, in practice, seem to develop to any great extent.

In June 1977 O'Reilly was proposing to widen the collection policy to include more historical art, in part to provide a better context for the recent works. This was eventually accepted in February 1979 when council approved amendments to widen the definition of art to include: “photographs, films, pieces of pottery, tapestries, weavings, and other craft works”. Historical photographs important in the development of New Zealand photography were also allowed, reflecting the existing acquisition of the *19th Century New Zealand Photographs* exhibition prints. So too were non-contemporary

⁵⁸ “Aware of Art”, editorial, 8 January 1979.

⁵⁹ “Robert H. Ballard. Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth”, pp. 76.

paintings important to the development of New Zealand painting (provided they were not funded from the contemporary intended Brewster or Atmore bequests).⁶⁰

In late 1978 O'Reilly assembled the *Ten Turbulent Years* exhibition as an opportunity for the public to assess the collection, and thereby the collection policy. What the public thought does not seem recorded, but Hamish Keith, then chairperson of the Arts Council, offered in his opening speech the opinion that "though not New Zealand's largest collection of contemporary art, [it is] the one most consistently high in standard".⁶¹ Art critic Neil Rowe endorsed this view in the *Listener*, adding that the sculpture collection stood head and shoulders above any other in New Zealand.⁶²

John Maynard also noted in 1977 that sculpture had been a major thrust at the Govett-Brewster. He added that in all media many artists collected had Taranaki connections, such as Woollaston, Driver, Kreisler, Smither, Lange, and Hellyar.⁶³ Looking back to the 1968 collection policy it is interesting to see that neither sculpture nor local connections are mentioned as particular emphases. On the other hand, the Pacific Rim weighting of the policy was barely realised. Maynard bought some Australian works (Jeffrey Smart and Alun Leach-Jones), as did Ballard (William Delafield Cook). Ballard also purchased Californian works, but O'Reilly stuck to New Zealand. As Schulz summed up, "the emphasis remains on New Zealand art, with works from other countries providing an interesting but unsustained sidelight".⁶⁴

One major sidelight, however, is the work of Len Lye, an expatriate NZ artist whose name has become synonymous in this country with the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. Art educator Ray Thorburn made contact with Lye when in New York in the early 1970s. He interested Bob Ballard and then John Matthews and Peter Allen in Lye's work. A decision was made to build Lye's kinetic sculptures *Fountain* and *Trilogy* in New Plymouth. This presented a considerable engineering challenge, especially when Lye decided the works should be twice the size originally contemplated (and after a year's work had already been carried out by John Matthews and others). It was only the time, resources and enthusiasm of John Matthews that allowed the works to be built and finally displayed in 1977. The end result was the largest Len Lye installation anywhere and a flow-on effect of the rapport built with Lye was the formation of the Len Lye Foundation shortly before his death in 1980. The foundation's aims were "to acquire, conserve, reproduce and promote the works of Len Lye" and it acquired many Lye

⁶⁰ The rationale for collecting historical photographs was that the Govett-Brewster already had the entire *Nineteenth Century New Zealand Photographs* exhibition it had organised in 1970 in its collection. However, given that the photographic prints were not 19th century originals, but modern reprints, the significance attached to the precedence created by this collection seems excessive.

⁶¹ Thomson, *New Zealand Art Galleries and Museums*, p. 29.

⁶² Rowe, "Ten Turbulent Years".

⁶³ *Friends of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery newsletter* 4, 1977.

⁶⁴ Schultz, "The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery", p. 51.

works, including films, sculptures, paintings, batiks, slide/tape works, and memorabilia. These are cared for by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

A further evaluation both of the collection policy and the collection itself took place in 1982. Dick Bett called a meeting of both the cultural committee and the previous directors who were available (Maynard, O'Reilly and himself) to discuss the policy and to deaccession some works. The three directors agreed that the policy was fundamentally sound and that five areas of strength had developed: Len Lye, abstract painting, sculpture, works with Taranaki connections, and nineteenth century New Zealand photographs.⁶⁵

Associated with this meeting was a public forum held to discuss deaccessioning the works Bett had placed on exhibition. There was a good deal of public disquiet expressed about deaccessioning work, especially gifts⁶⁶ and Maynard recalls saying to the audience "many of you actively tried to stop me acquiring this stuff and now you want to stop us getting rid of it". This public distrust and anxiety is no doubt one reason why the deaccessioning policy of the gallery was never activated aside from dealing with work that clearly fell outside the policy. Another may have been that in starting a collection from scratch the desire was naturally to build it up, not to thin it out at the same time.

Controversies

Public controversies at the Govett-Brewster were too numerous to describe more than a handful briefly. The main ones were the difficulties with the society of arts, the Leon Narbey opening exhibition (both already covered), Billy Apple's *Neon Accumulation* installation, the *McCahon Religious Works* and *Active Eye* exhibitions, and a number of acquisitions – particularly those by McCahon, Hellyar, Woollaston, Driver and (again) Apple. All the controversies, aside from the society of arts conflict, were essentially the same: a focus on particular works to express of a dislike for contemporary art in general, or the Govett-Brewster in particular, by the mayor, certain other councillors and some members of the community.

Things were relatively quiet for a few years after John Maynard left, and the society of arts conflict died down. But in April 1975 Councillor Elliot got the ball rolling again with her protests against the Manawatu Art Gallery touring exhibition *McCahon: Religious Works*. She described the work as a "load of rubbish" and asserted that a child could do better. The mayor supported her view, pointing to recent over-spending at the gallery and questioning whether "we as a small provincial centre are in a position to operate in the van of art promotion on a national scale". Then Hamish Keith, the new chairperson of the arts council joined the fray, stating that "The arts council viewed with considerable concern what appeared to be attempts to limit the gallery's role and

⁶⁵ "Consensus, Conflict, During Art Forum", *Taranaki Herald*, 23 April 1982.

⁶⁶ "Consensus, Conflict During Art Forum".

freedom....When statements of this kind come from public figures with public responsibilities such as Mrs Elliot, one can only describe them as impertinent, and an insult to one of this country's finest painters." Letters for and against flowed in the local newspapers.⁶⁷

Two further exhibitions made 1975 a year for controversies. The first was the mayor's removal of Fiona Clark photographs, mentioned earlier. The other was over Billy Apple's *Neon accumulation* installation. Consisting of a scattering of broken neon tubes over a back stairway, it first caused an upset when "a four letter word" briefly appeared in the arrangement of tubing.⁶⁸ Then the New Plymouth Fire Department ordered it removed because it was blocking a fire exit. Finally, when Apple offered to give the work to the gallery Cr Elliott moved to have council dissociate itself from the director's letter of thanks, though her motion was not supported.

When it came to acquisitions, Neil Rowe, writing in the *Listener* on the *Ten Turbulent Years* exhibition of 1978/79, said, "Almost every purchase the gallery has made over the past ten years has been the subject of controversy, furore, or even, it would seem, near riot in the city of New Plymouth."⁶⁹ This may be an overstatement but controversial acquisitions were certainly a recurring issue.

A Colin McCahon work, *Am I scared*, made the newspapers in December 1976 when the gallery was asked to reconsider its purchase recommendation on the work, the mayor claiming that councillors could accept or reject recommendations from council departments or heads of departments. Director Ron O'Reilly responded with a three page report defending his professional right to select work for the gallery which lay within policy.⁷⁰ *Am I scared* was finally purchased.⁷¹

In the following year a Toss Woollaston work, *Moturoa*, depicting a New Plymouth land and sea-scape with the prominent power station smokestack "drew outraged howls from some members of the cultural committee" and caused the mayor to claim that "Mr Woollaston must be laughing all the way to the bank". This drew angry protest and the mayor was again accused of political interference, but he maintained that he and other councillors had the right to pass an opinion at least on acquisition proposals. The purchase was also approved in the end.⁷²

If there *was* one "near riot" over an acquisition proposal it was Christine Hellyar's *Country clothesline* in March 1977, a work Hamish Keith described as "the most publicly abused and disliked work of art since Colin McCahon's Hay's Prize winning

⁶⁷ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 32.

⁶⁸ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 13, 33.

⁶⁹ "Ten Turbulent Years".

⁷⁰ Director's memo, January 1977, included in Govett-Brewster Art Gallery sub-committee meeting minutes, February 1977.

⁷¹ [Bett? Untitled history of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery], unpaginated; Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 33.

⁷² Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 35.

painting in 1958".⁷³ Hellyar was from New Plymouth and her work was a clothesline of latex-dipped washing. Cr Elliot described it as "the last straw" and Cr Squire said it was "the most appalling misappropriation of public money I've ever seen. ...Everyone is laughing at the gallery and no-one is doing anything about it." However, the mayor this time stated that purchases were a matter for the director and sub-committee and "this is an area I have no intention of straying into. ...I do not intend to be party to any form of censoring." He added that ratepayer moneys would not be used, as this purchase would come from Brewster trust funds.⁷⁴

Considerable hostility towards *Country clothesline* appeared in letters to the press. In reply O'Reilly wrote, "I want to assure your readers that we do not engage in 'put-ons' or indulge in jokes at the expense of the public." He continued that if the gallery was going to purchase contemporary work people would have to live with controversy but they could always take comfort in the broad spread of exhibitions shown, ranging from secondary school student work to van der Velden.⁷⁵ The final say on this controversy was made anonymously when, on 1 April, a banner mysteriously appeared on the outside of the gallery wall reading, "Govett-Brewster Lunatic Asylum – home for mentally disturbed artists".⁷⁶

Finally in 1977, an anonymous tip was made to the *Taranaki Herald* that a Don Driver work proposed for acquisition which incorporated plastic fertiliser bags would decompose rapidly on exposure to light. Ron O'Reilly was forced by public pressure to defer the purchase until expert assurance could be given that this would not occur.⁷⁷

The decade was rounded off with another controversy created by Billy Apple. The artist was on a tour of New Zealand galleries in which he used the politics of the institutions as the content of his work by making alterations to their display spaces. In Wanganui he caused an outcry when he had *The Wrestlers* sculpture moved from its traditional site at the centre of the gallery. His New Plymouth visit caused a nearly equal upset. Here his "alteration piece" consisted of widening the gallery's stairway. As an art work by Apple's definition, and a permanently sited one, it was logical that it should enter the permanent collection and so be funded from the acquisition account. Some members of the cultural committee didn't see it this way though, and felt it was simply an improvement of the stairway that should be funded out of building maintenance, and

⁷³ Rowe, "Ten Turbulent Years".

⁷⁴ "Hangup over 'Clothesline' Wit, Beauty", *Taranaki Herald*, 22 March 1977.

⁷⁵ "No 'Put On' Says Gallery Director", *Taranaki Herald*, 18 April 1977.

⁷⁶ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 33.

It was a Hellyar work in February 1982 that caused the director to invoke, for the first time apparently, the trust deed clause that allows for arbitration if there is a dispute between council and director. When council turned down the purchase proposal for the work Dick Bett gained the support of the four metropolitan directors, forcing council to buy the piece and causing one councillor to complain that these directors would inevitably support their professional colleague (Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 9).

⁷⁷ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 36.

that Apple should not receive a \$500 fee simply for thinking of the idea. The matter went to council and the councillors did approve the purchase out of acquisition funds.⁷⁸

Contemporary Art

The gallery's strong orientation towards contemporary art should be clear by now, but a few points are still worth making or reinforcing. One is that the contemporary emphasis appears essentially director driven, aided by support from a handful of people in the local community (Kreisler, Boon, Mathews, and Smither), perhaps gallery staff (Driver at least) and from sectors of the arts community in the rest of New Zealand. Many locals may still have supported contemporary art as an idea, but without knowing a lot about it, and when it came to particular exhibitions or acquisitions simply gave the directors the benefit of the doubt. Peter Allen, for example, admitted to the society of arts that some members of the committee found modern works in the exhibitions "difficult to comprehend" at times.⁷⁹

Another point is the difference between exhibitions and collecting. Some exhibitions were quite contemporary but many others were not. While the exhibition programme was partly determined by the type of touring exhibitions available there also seemed a deliberate intention to cater to a wide audience in this area. The acquisitions, by contrast, were much more consistently contemporary, as required by the collection policy. (That O'Reilly clearly recognised this difference is indicated under the Hellyar controversy above.)

The third point is that while there may not have been much rhetoric about public orientation, for Maynard, and implicitly for O'Reilly, there was certainly a belief that contemporary art equated with an activist stance towards the world, an engagement with the present. This could imply a people and participation orientation. Process oriented contemporary sculpture such as Narbey's *Real Time* was a good example of work that was of the moment and required interaction. (Though whether this equated with popularity is another issue. It *was* popular but would probably still have been judged a success by Maynard and art world audiences had it not been so.)

Statements made by Maynard in the press give a feeling for his activist philosophy of art: "Art reflects its own age – and this is the age in which we are living. Artists are leaders, not followers. They should push out the frontiers of knowledge as fast as scientists. The important thing is an open mind. ...For me art is total involvement. ...Up to now, art galleries have tended to institutionalise art. Some galleries in this country are dead. All they have is a permanent collection which no-one goes to see. I find it hard to accept that art galleries should be mortuaries of past achievements; of a way of life that

⁷⁸ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 14, 38.

⁷⁹ Letter to the town clerk, 13 October 1970.

has been destroyed. ...We want [the Govett-Brewster] to be alive; a place for everyone. Not for stuffed shirts – and not for stiff white ones, with bow ties, either.”⁸⁰

Summary

The formative period of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery was covered in depth in this chapter for two reasons. Firstly, it was a period when both the policies and ethos of the gallery were set in a very strong way. And second, much of the reputation of the gallery through the seventies was derived from the Maynard era – in particular from the Leon Narbey opening and the gallery’s first year of operation.

John Maynard put a powerful personal stamp on the nature of the gallery. He was able to do so because of the Monica Brewster gift and the trust deed. These gave both himself and the gallery committee some measure of independence from the city council and from the local community in general. Maynard decided on a modernist, professionally run, contemporary-oriented art gallery without in any way considering what locals wanted.

In pushing his own concept so strongly, Maynard excluded the main body of opinion in New Plymouth – the society of arts – on what an art gallery should be, and naturally created some very antagonistic feelings towards the gallery. Had the society been involved, New Plymouth could have had quite a different institution. In fact it is interesting to speculate what would have happened if there been no gift. Would the gallery have been society of arts or city council driven? Would the forces of modernity – the Group 60 artists, the oil industry personnel and individuals like Matthews, Boon, Allen and Maynard – have still over-ruled more conservative views?

The city council never felt comfortable with the independence of the Govett-Brewster, despite the fact that the two Brewster gifts relieved it of considerable expense. This is most obvious in the controversies over contemporary art acquisitions. As these were never funded from council coffers the violent opposition so often expressed about the works shows just how strong the sense of moral ownership (or expectation of ownership) of the gallery by the community was.

It would be more precise to say that council’s opposition was that of the mayor and one or two councillors. The gallery seemed well supported financially by council, allowing it to pay for relatively expensive, prestigious exhibitions, the like of which were less often seen in other provincial galleries, including those centres with larger populations (such as Palmerston North and Lower Hutt).

⁸⁰ “New Art Gallery will be a Pace-Setter”, [c.1969], unsourced newspaper clipping, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive. Maynard’s ideas here strongly reflect those of Alexander Dorner whose essay “The Future Art Museum” appeared in a 1947 book *The Way Beyond Art*. Maynard acknowledges Dorner as a source of inspiration today and quoted from him in some of his policy proposals at the time.

The question of distinguishing the mayor and individual councillors from council also raises the issue of to what extent controversies were personality driven. It is interesting to note that there were few during Ballard's time, and those that did exist were really inherited and systemic. Maynard, Sutherland and O'Reilly all carried a strong personal sense of rightness about their respective positions.

It is hard to get away from an image of the Govett-Brewster in the 1970s as a sort of battle-ground, a place where elitism triumphed or the philistines were beaten, depending on your point of view. The way history is recorded tends to encourage such a picture. People interviewed for this chapter naturally remembered the controversies far more than the everyday activities. Controversy was also a pre-occupation in the newspapers and in committee meetings. These biases in source material inevitably influenced the content of this chapter, as did the qualities that make controversies so attractive to the news media (of offering a good read).⁸¹

But what tends to get lost in the story is the degree of community support. As noted, the two main newspapers were behind the gallery and the friends made a strong contribution to its success by acting as a vehicle for community participation and organising an active programme of events. There is, however, far less documentation of short-lived, unspectacular events than of controversial exhibitions and acquisitions.

In a similar way, the degree of compromise from Maynard's position is easily obscured. Both Ballard and O'Reilly seemed to find the solely contemporary focus restrictive and neither carried out any significant deaccessioning. And while good judgement may have been exercised, strengths developed, and some unique works acquired, contrary to Maynard's intentions the collection did not become greatly different from that of other New Zealand galleries.

The last words go to some of the people who have witnessed the whole history of the Govett-Brewster. Their views suggest that the gallery has been sold to the community less as an asset for community use (although that was a thrust under Dick Bett) than as a symbol of civic prestige and sophistication understood to be respected in the other centres. For a town that may have felt isolated from the bright lights of Auckland and Wellington this must have been an attractive pitch.

John Matthews: "The community was pleased with the Monica Brewster gift and now probably have pride in the gallery because they understand it is held in regard elsewhere. And there is [the association with] Len Lye. There is pride that he is internationally famous."

Don and Omer Hooker: "In the early days people used to say that Govett-Brewster was twenty years ahead of New Plymouth. ... The gallery helped the town grow up."

⁸¹ The record is uneven in other respects. Collected press clippings for large sections of the 1970s are missing at the Govett-Brewster. The accounts of two directors for most of the period were, as noted in chapter one, also not available. Formal records are generally well preserved, however.

Terry Boon: “Even today the rednecks say that although they don’t understand art they do understand that the gallery has done something for the town. People understand its importance, even if they don’t visit.”

CHAPTER 8

Analysis

This chapter returns to the themes outlined in the *Introduction*, examining each in turn to see what the intervening material has had to say about them – in particular to see whether the original hypotheses have been supported or otherwise. It also reviews the reasons put forward in earlier chapters for developments in New Zealand galleries in the 1970s and presents some additional ones.

The essential hypothesis is that the 1970s were a time in New Zealand when large changes took place in the public gallery field. In particular, that new galleries were founded and older ones revitalised; that galleries became more publicly focused (often by being more populist and connected with their community, and more engaged with contemporary life); and that all of these trends were especially noticeable in some of the provincial galleries.

The following comparisons and contrasts rely heavily on the three case studies. This is because the subject of this thesis is the new developments in public galleries of the 1970s and it is in the new or renewed provincial galleries where they tended to be found. They are also where the greatest depth of information has been uncovered and presented. To consider only the Dowse, Manawatu and Govett-Brewster art galleries, however, would limit the exploration of the hypotheses, since these galleries did not necessarily represent the full range of gallery activity in the period, making it important to include information on the other institutions as well.

Support for the Hypotheses

A Watershed Period of Activity

Were the 1970s a quantum leap period for the founding, development and professionalising of NZ art galleries? The answer must be yes, for a huge burst of energy in art gallery formation and development took place in the 1970s. While only four galleries were actually founded during the period, the Wairarapa Arts Centre and Wellington City Art Gallery opened so close to either side of the decade that they might

as well be included in the statistics.¹ In addition, changes in certain existing galleries raised their level of activity such that they amounted to re-openings. These changes include the building of new facilities and appointment of the first paid staff. Referring to *fig 1.3* in chapter one we see that 11 galleries opened or were revitalised from 1969 to 1980. If we add the lesser but still substantial changes of the Auckland City Art Gallery (addition of the Edmiston Wing), National Art Gallery (activation in the late 1970s) and Robert McDougall Art Gallery (Brian Muir's appointment) this brings the number which changed to 14, out of 19 galleries or combined gallery/museums existing at 1980.

Reasons why some galleries changed significantly are numerous, and are both suggested throughout this thesis and summarised later in this chapter. But why did some galleries not change? In common with organisations generally, size and age seemed to create an inertial effect. Of the four largest galleries, three were notoriously static up until the 1970s. And, when it came to age, the oldest institutions, with two exceptions, also seemed to be in "set and forget" mode. They include the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Suter Art Gallery, Sarjeant Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, and the National Art Gallery. The exceptions were the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum which constantly evolved throughout its history, and the Auckland City Art Gallery, though it did remain as static as the rest up until the early fifties.

Auckland's exception despite age and size suggests a third dimension to lack of change: geographic location on a north/south line. The institution which changed first in New Zealand was located in Auckland, the most affluent, forward and outward looking of our cities. Those which changed least were located in the more conservative south, especially as one moved down the South Island. So the Dunedin Public Art Gallery changed slower and less thoroughly than the McDougall, reflecting the two cities' relative conservatism (and perhaps also the stimulating influence of the Ilam School of Fine Arts in Christchurch and the community of artists it spawned).

Professionalism

Staffing increased at probably almost all New Zealand public galleries in the 1970s. In many cases there were very significant changes as institutions gained their first paid directors. These include Gisborne, Rotorua, Waikato, the Suter and the Sarjeant.

These positions were significant indicators of a shift from the rule of the amateur to that of the professional. Art societies, honorary curators and other volunteers, custodians, and committees or boards of control all gave up, willingly or not, their control over the country's art galleries to professional staff just before or during this

¹ The actual date of opening a gallery disguises the fact that there are usually several years of preceding planning. If one is looking at the formation of a gallery as reflecting a local climate of thought then the date of the first substantial planning action is a more accurate measure of an institution's beginning. By this argument the Govett-Brewster is a sixties gallery. The other view is that the impact of a gallery on the public is the more important measure and from this perspective the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery is a seventies institution.

period. For example, at the Sarjeant Gallery power shifted from the honorary curator, the paid custodian, and the city council library and gallery committee to the director, though the transfer from the last mentioned body was more difficult and took much longer. At the formation of the Dowse and Govett-Brewster the directors battled against the influence of the art societies – and won. Manawatu saw a more gradual shift of control and hands-on involvement from the gallery society to the director. The change from Baverstock to Muir at the McDougall might also be counted as a move from the amateur to professional. In other words, what stood behind the outwardly visible shift from the “temple on a hill” to a “going public” stage of gallery development in all these cases (as proposed in *fig 1.1*) was a shift from amateur to professional operation.

Once director positions were established, other staff tended to follow. Examples include Manawatu, the Sarjeant, the Dowse, and over a longer term, the McDougall, National and Dunedin Public art galleries. In some cases, use of the Labour Department’s TEP and PEP employment work schemes yielded spectacularly increased staff numbers (as at the Govett-Brewster, McDougall and National art galleries). While this was a temporary situation from the late 1970s to early 1980s, some of these positions transformed into permanent ones during the 1980s (at the last three galleries, for example).

The first stage of professionalism in galleries might be defined as the appointment of paid staff. As staff numbers increased, another sense of professionalism developed – specialisation – with roles such as registrar, exhibitions officer and educator evolving. The first New Zealand registration positions were created during this period, the Sarjeant Gallery probably leading the way with a registrar appointed in 1975. Despite all the metropolitan museums having education officers since the late 1930s there were none in their art gallery counterparts.² The only metropolitan galleries to have them in the seventies were the National Art Gallery (not continuously) and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (in a sense). Combined museum/galleries also gained education officers early in the seventies.³ The first of the remaining majority of art galleries to gain an education officer was the Dowse in 1976, with others waiting until the 1980s and even beyond.

The increased staff were a response to an awareness that higher standards of practice were required, especially in collection care, as well as a desire for more active exhibitions and events programmes. Staff appointments in collection management did allow for more professionalism (higher standards, specialisation) but specialisation was less evident in the public programmes area. What was needed here was mainly more

² Though the Auckland City Art Gallery had a Department of Education funded position 1954–57. See the following for further information on the history of museum and gallery education services in New Zealand: Hall, *Grandma’s Attic or Aladdin’s Cave*; G.S. Park, “The Employment of Education Officers in New Zealand Museums: A Report on Progress”, *AGMANZ Journal* 20, no. 3 (1989): pp. 6–8, 30; Wilson, “Museum Education”, pp. 5–7.

³ Southland part-time 1967; Hawke’s Bay part-time 1970; Waikato part-time in 1971, full-time 1978; Gisborne part-time in 1973.

hands to manage and install exhibitions, organise events, and promote them both. Specialist registrars or educators allowed other staff to get on with these activities. Curators, however, were not appointed in provincial galleries in the 1970s (aside from a position devolved from director of the art gallery at Waikato) and curatorial work was either undertaken by the director or collectively by staff.

Professionalism as a sense of occupation also grew in the 1970s. Increased staff numbers across the board and increased communications amongst galleries on matters such as touring exhibitions no doubt contributed to this feeling. The founding of a special organisation to serve art gallery needs, the NZAGDC, was a measure of a growing sense of professional community (amongst directors at least). Formed largely to facilitate touring exhibitions, it also functioned as a forum and advocacy group for art gallery directors in a way that AGMANZ only partially met. An indication of how recent this co-operation and communication was amongst gallery directors is a comment by James Mack in 1967 that a meeting held at the offices of the arts council in that year was the first time NZ gallery directors had formally met together.⁴

Finally, there is professionalism as a self-promoted quality seen as lending credibility to an institution. Some galleries were keen to distance themselves from the amateur by proclaiming to city councils and the public in general that they were professionals and acted in professional ways. Examples include Jim Barr telling the Hutt Art Society there were “standards” that had to be reached for art exhibited at the Dowse, and similar stances taken by Gordon Brown and John Maynard. The Govett-Brewster aimed for a professional image in general by following the modernist model set by overseas galleries (and locally by the Auckland City Art Gallery) of what an art museum of dignity, substance and sophistication might be. The international exhibitions both brought in and organised by the gallery were one means of doing this.

At the same time, directors, and probably staff, at some galleries seemed to pride themselves on retaining the best qualities of amateurism – of informality, enthusiasm, and individualism – though this approach was not so publicly promoted. We have heard Barr speak strongly on this under *Staffing* and *Energy and Personal Motivation* in chapter six, condemning professionals and saying he never had a problem at the Dowse that couldn't be solved by working through the night. Milbank also reports that exhibitions were often set up in a day and a night of hard work at the Sarjeant. Bieringa seems to have operated a very flat staffing structure, and says explicitly today that there was no trend towards increased professionalism at the Manawatu Art Gallery and it was staff enthusiasm and passion for art that drove the programmes. At both the Sarjeant and Manawatu art galleries in the late 1970s there was a strong sense of a professional director surrounded by a small band of young helpers who were learning on the job.⁵ And although staff in other galleries, like the Govett-Brewster and Dowse, may have

⁴ *Director's Report*, June 1967, Manawatu Art Gallery.

⁵ Margaret Taylor at Manawatu was one exception, as she had overseas museum experience.

had professional-sounding titles, nearly all were learning in this way since there was no established museum profession or form of museological training in New Zealand.

These positively amateur approaches are a good illustration of what Charles Handy has called a “club culture” of management.⁶ A club culture typically arises in new, small organisations and includes a strong central figure surrounded by like-minded individuals. It has the advantages of quick responsiveness, low operating cost, and enthusiasm. Its disadvantages are that it depends on the calibre of its leader and risks being a closed shop with no accountability. (This latter charge might well be laid at the National Art Gallery under Ian Hunter when it was following paths of community involvement at the expense of national responsibilities.)

Public and community orientation

New Zealand galleries in general became more publicly and community oriented through the seventies. The lead in this seems to have been taken by the smaller galleries, though as suggested in chapter one, museums in smaller towns can more readily form community relationships than metropolitan museums anyway.

Chapter four set out how the notion of a community arts centre became bound with that of an art gallery in many areas. This was before or around the formation period of community arts councils and when cultural facilities in smaller centres were often scarce. Art galleries were naturally seen as a place where music, drama, poetry readings and dance could all be performed. Wairarapa, Hawke’s Bay, Hastings, Gisborne, Manawatu, the Suter, Govett-Brewster and Dowse are all good examples where this type of thinking applied. In some cases, such as the Govett-Brewster, Dowse and Manawatu, these performances were essentially “extra-curricular”, and did not come under the director’s ambit. Here the gallery supported and encouraged such events, but did not usually actively organise them, though whether the distinction was perceived by the general public is another issue, particularly at the Govett-Brewster. Here the friends were a major community connection for the gallery and the events they organised very popular. Yet these programmes seem somewhat at odds with the high tone of the Govett-Brewster’s exhibitions and acquisitions and it may be that a double standard operated, such an arrangement allowing the gallery to benefit from a perception of community focus amongst some (mainly locals) at the same time as it could remain aloof from these activities and be perceived as a high art institution by others (especially at a national level). There is a parallel here with Auckland City Art Gallery’s Outreach, ostensibly operated by the gallery but located well away from it, its day-to-day administration quite separate, and little public acknowledgement made of the connection with the gallery.

The degree of hands-on involvement with events like concerts and theatre at many galleries is unclear, though it appears that the Wairarapa Arts Centre was one institution

⁶ Handy, *Gods of Management*, pp. 26–8.

at least which took a fully pro-active role. Workshops tend to fall into a different category, and were organised directly at the Dowse and Manawatu art galleries, usually to tie in with an exhibition, though once again at the Govett-Brewster they seemed to remain the province of the friends.

An interesting synthesis of exhibition and event began to occur at the Dowse in the second half of the seventies and at the end of the decade at Manawatu. These were the extravaganza exhibitions like *Making an Impression* (Dowse) and *Flight Fancies* (Manawatu) where interactive opportunities were offered, and workshops and events operated almost non-stop.

Another shift occurring both during the decade and before was a move to a broader audience address as art or gallery society ownership weakened. Maynard and Miller squashed art society influence at the beginning in New Plymouth and Lower Hutt respectively, refusing to cater in any major way to the one identifiable part of the community with an interest in art. They traded off responding to one community group in favour of a general public orientation. Similar breaks were made at the Sarjeant and Suter galleries but not at Manawatu and it is a measure of that gallery's less divided relationship with its community that it showed the highest number of both annual exhibitions and exhibitions by local artists of the focus galleries (see *fig 8.1*).

The situation at Manawatu was more complex too, for the art (gallery) society was more sophisticated and public spirited here, but there is a sense that the gallery's programmes always looked to an audience amongst the well-educated, middle-class individuals who comprised the society. The construction of the new gallery, however, brought into relief the fact that the gallery's responsibilities were broader than the society could fully conceive. Gisborne and Hawke's Bay continued to be operated by societies as well, but again there seems to have been a focusing outward, a greater awareness of public responsibility than just serving members' needs as the seventies progressed, especially again once new buildings or facilities were constructed.

The most radical development in public orientation was actually taking art to the community, rather than waiting for it to come to the gallery. However, this seems to have really only occurred at the Manawatu Art Gallery amongst the smaller institutions, and even then it was not a major part of the programme.

Of the metropolitan institutions, the National Art Gallery and Robert McDougall Art Gallery made the greatest shift towards a public orientation as they moved from a preponderance of semi-permanent exhibitions of the collection to rapid turn-over of temporary exhibitions. In this they provided greater public service by delivering increased quantity and variety of "product", though one could argue that there was an audience who enjoyed seeing old favourites from the permanent collection and who were less well served with this arrangement. The Auckland City Art Gallery had already made the same shift in the fifties and sixties, but another way it displayed greater public orientation in the seventies was with its string of blockbusters. Aside from the much

		Average no. / yr			% of Total		
		Dowse	Govett-Brewster	Manawatu	Dowse	Govett-Brewster	Manawatu
TYPES:	Touring: Overseas	1	5	3	6%	20%	14%
	NZ Touring	3	9	5	20%	37%	24%
	TOTAL Touring Exhibitions	4	13	8	26%	57%	38%
In-house:	Permanent Collection	0	2	2	2%	9%	11%
	Annual Exhibition	2	1	3	9%	4%	14%
	Single Artist	5	3	4	30%	12%	18%
	Group Exhibition	4	1	3	25%	4%	17%
	Theme Exhibition	2	3	3	9%	14%	13%
	TOTAL in-house shows	12	10	13	74%	43%	62%
	TOTAL all shows	16	23	20	100%	100%	100%
CONTENT:	Local Artist/s	2	2	3	11%	9%	14%
	Toured	2	1	1	9%	4%	3%
	Contemporary Fine Arts	7	12	8	37%	53%	36%
	Traditional Fine Arts	2	2	2	10%	11%	11%
	Crafts	4	1	3	18%	5%	13%
	Other (incl school art)	2	1	3	9%	5%	11%
	Photography	1	3	3	5%	15%	12%

Fig 8.1 Average number of types of exhibitions per year for Dowse, Govett-Brewster, and Manawatu art galleries. Derived from fig 8.3. Permanent collection exhibition figures are not accurate. (Numbers are written with the decimal fraction rounded off, but totals are added from non-rounded numbers, hence apparent errors in addition.)

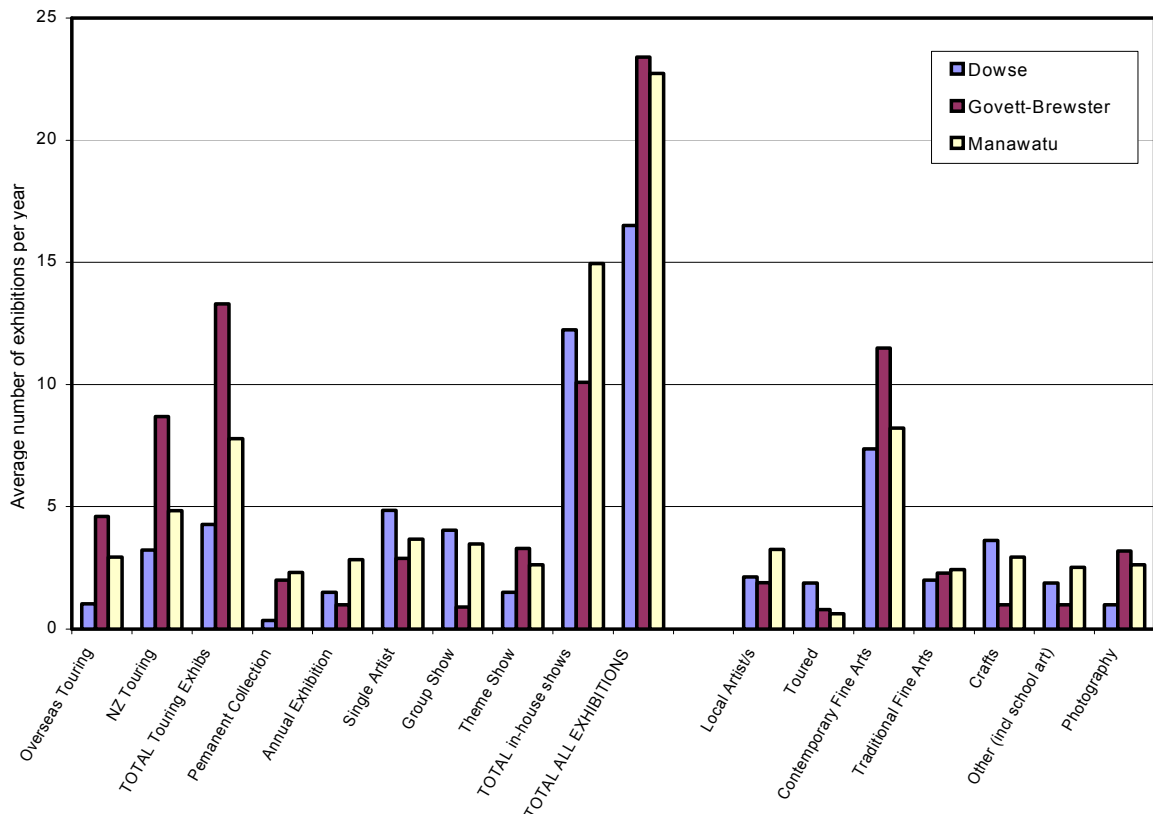


Fig 8.2 Graph of average number of different types of exhibitions per year for the focus galleries. Graphed from fig 8.1.

earlier Henry Moore exhibition, and perhaps one or two others, the blockbuster was a new phenomenon for New Zealand.

What was most remarkable about the metropolitan galleries is that all four echoed the Manawatu Art Gallery with some form of outreach activity, even if, like Manawatu, these were relatively short lived experiments (aside from Auckland's Outreach) and were not core programmes.

TEP and PEP programmes of community arts activity at the Sarjeant and Govett-Brewster art galleries (and probably others) could be counted as forms of outreach, particularly at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, but occurred more into the early eighties and at the Sarjeant they were simply under the wing of the gallery as an administrative convenience and were not really an institutional activity.

Finally, another measure of the new interest in reaching a broad public was the attempt to gain education officers for galleries. With the exception of Lower Hutt, city councils were not willing to pay for such a position in art galleries, arguing that since the Department of Education funded educators in museums it should fund art gallery positions as well. However, approaches to the Department by the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1965, the Manawatu Art Gallery in 1973, and AGMANZ in 1976, as well as further attempts by Manawatu, Auckland, the McDougall, and NZAGDC, all fell on deaf ears.⁷

Energy

From the earlier chapters it should be evident that the three focus galleries (and some of the other provincial galleries) displayed a high level of energy in their exhibition programmes, promotion, and public programmes. This was both compared with the metropolitan galleries (at least early in the decade) and relative to the low level of resources they had available. The level of energy and activity was also noticeably greater across the gallery field as a whole than during the previous decade.

A crude measure of energy and activity is the number of exhibitions held.⁸ Bieringa and Millar's turnover of exhibitions, including curation and touring, was phenomenal at the time in the early seventies when they were running practically one-person operations. From *fig 8.3* we see high points where the Dowse mounted 30 exhibitions in 1972 and Manawatu 29 in 1973 (as well as probably further permanent collection exhibitions). Ballard also managed 29 in 1973, with slightly more staff though he was also extending himself strongly in organising overseas exhibitions.

Touring an exhibition is always particularly demanding on time and energy. *Fig 8.3* shows that of the three focus galleries the Dowse toured a remarkable 15 exhibitions through the decade, many in the early seventies, while the Manawatu Art Gallery

⁷ Wilson, "Museum Education", p. 5.

⁸ At least, it is a measure of energy from the public's point of view. A museum could be highly energetic in collection management but this would probably not be appreciated by the public.

managed six and the Govett-Brewster eight. Numbers do not tell the whole story here, though, as the Govett-Brewster and Manawatu Art Gallery exhibitions were often larger affairs than those of the Dowse (the McCahon exhibitions they organised, for example). As in previous decades, the Auckland City Art Gallery took a dominant role in touring exhibitions in New Zealand, followed a good way behind by the National Art Gallery. A small number of exhibitions came from Waikato and the McDougall, and a lesser number again from the Sarjeant and Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

The number of touring exhibitions received could also be considered a measure of activity (or rather, inactivity) in the sense that the more a gallery took, the less energy it put into developing its own exhibitions. Referring to *fig 8.1*, we see that the Govett-Brewster had by far the greatest proportion (57%) of its exhibitions as touring shows from other institutions. The Manawatu Art Gallery was some way below this at 38% and the Dowse lower again at 26%, including a negligible quantity of overseas exhibitions. These figures may reflect affordability as much as energy though, especially in relation to overseas exhibitions (the Govett-Brewster having relatively greater funding).⁹

Given the volume of exhibitions and the relatively low numbers of staff to service the exhibition programmes it is hardly surprising that Dowse directors Barr and Millar, as well as Bieringa, mention the huge amount of energy they put into their jobs, and how they bordered on burn-out. There is a sense that these directors were trying to match the programme of an institution like the Auckland City Art Gallery but without the staff and resources of the latter. An advantage they did have, however, was freedom from the demands of caring for and developing large collections.¹⁰ There were also the benefits of operating in club-culture contexts, where decisions could be taken without a layer of bureaucratic approvals and paper trails.

Without full information on exhibition programmes at other galleries it is difficult to compare exhibition numbers across the country, and there is always the risk of comparing chalk with cheese as an exhibition at a metropolitan gallery is probably more carefully crafted in its research and production than at a smaller gallery, as well as being simply a larger and more resource demanding affair. With these provisos in mind, *fig 8.4* shows that numbers of exhibitions at progressive provincial galleries were comparable to those at the Auckland City and Robert McDougall art galleries and were

⁹ For example, 1977/78 local authority expenditure per capita on operations for galleries was \$1.85 at New Plymouth vs. \$0.91 in Lower Hutt, \$1.01 in Wanganui and a very low \$0.62 in Palmerston North, the figure here perhaps explained by the fact that the last gallery differed from the others in not being council run. Such figures have to be considered with caution though, as a particular year is not necessarily representative, and especially because what is included under the definition of gallery operations varies from council to council. (First three figures calculated from Neave, *A Survey of Municipal Authority Cultural Spending*, p. 20.)

¹⁰ Stephen Weil has noted that surveys of American museums have shown small art museums devote proportionately less space and less institutional resources to collections than large ones (Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, pp. 27–41).

Numbers and Types of Exhibitions at the Focus Galleries

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery		1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	TOTALS	Av per yr	% of total
TYPES:	Overseas Touring	3	7	3	6	3	6	6	1	3	8	46	5	20%
	NZ Touring	4	8	9	12	8	8	14	8	11	5	87	9	37%
	TOTAL Touring Exhibs	7	15	12	18	11	14	20	9	14	13	133	13	57%
	Permanent Collection	3	2	2	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	20	2	9%
	Annual Exhibition	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	1	4%
	Single Artist	2	1	2	3	1	2	1	12	1	4	29	3	12%
	Group Show	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	2	9	1	4%
	Theme Show	3	3	4	4	7	3	1	0	5	3	33	3	14%
	TOTAL in-house	10	7	11	11	10	9	5	16	11	11	101	10	43%
	TOTAL ALL SHOWS	17	22	23	29	21	23	25	25	25	24	234	23	100%
CONTENT:	Local Artist/s	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	4	19	2	9%
	Toured	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	8	1	4%
	Contemporary	7	10	13	14	10	10	11	18	11	11	115	12	53%
	Traditional Fine Arts	3	3	0	4	1	2	5	2	0	3	23	2	11%
	Crafts	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	2	11	1	5%
	Photography	2	2	1	2	1	5	3	0	4	3	11	1	5%
	Other (incl school art)	1	0	5	3	5	3	6	1	5	3	32	3	15%

Manawatu Art Gallery		1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	TOTALS	Av per yr	% of total
TYPES:	Overseas Touring	1	0	5	6	4	4	2	1	2	3	28	3	13%
	NZ Touring	4	8	4	4	3	5	5	3	5	5	46	5	21%
	TOTAL Touring Exhibs	5	8	9	10	7	9	7	4	7	8	74	8	34%
	Permanent Collection	4	2	1	5	1	2	0	2	2	3	22	2	10%
	Annual Exhibition	3	2	2	4	3	4	3	3	2	1	27	3	13%
	Single Artist	3	4	3	4	3	3	1	4	8	2	35	4	16%
	Group Show	2	5	6	5	1	3	4	0	5	2	33	3	15%
	Theme Show	6	3	0	1	3	0	2	2	5	3	25	3	12%
	TOTAL in-house shows	18	16	12	19	11	12	10	11	22	11	142	15	66%
	TOTAL all shows	23	24	21	29	18	21	17	15	29	19	216	23	100%
CONTENT:	Local Artist/s	3	5	2	3	4	4	3	2	4	1	31	3	14%
	Toured	2	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	6	1	3%
	Contemporary	8	12	8	8	8	8	7	4	9	6	78	8	36%
	Traditional Fine Arts	4	1	2	3	2	3	3	1	2	2	23	2	11%
	Crafts	2	2	2	3	1	4	2	3	5	4	28	3	13%
	Photography	1	3	2	5	0	1	3	1	5	3	24	3	11%
	Other (incl school art)	2	2	4	2	4	2	1	2	4	2	25	3	12%

Fig 8.3

cont...

Dowse Art Museum		1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	TOTALS	Av per yr	% of total
TYPES:	Overseas Touring		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	2	9	1	6%
	NZ Touring		2	6	2	3	2	3	2	4	4	28	3	20%
	TOTAL Touring Exhibs		3	7	3	4	3	4	3	4	6	37	4	26%
	Permanent Collection		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	2%
	Annual Exhibition		0	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	13	2	9%
	Single Artist		2	14	5	4	3	4	3	2	5	42	5	29%
	Group Show		7	6	2	1	4	4	5	3	3	35	4	24%
	Theme Show		1	1	3	0	0	0	1	3	4	13	2	9%
	TOTAL in-house shows		10	23	12	7	8	9	11	10	13	106	12	74%
	TOTAL all shows		13	30	15	11	11	13	14	14	19	143	17	100%
CONTENT:	Local Artist/s		3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	17	2	11%
	Toured		0	2	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	15	2	9%
	Contemporary Fine Arts		10	15	4	6	4	5	5	5	5	59	7	37%
	Traditional Fine Arts		2	2	4	1	1	1	1	2	2	16	2	10%
	Crafts		0	2	4	2	4	4	4	4	5	29	4	18%
	Photography		0	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	2	8	1	5%
	Other (incl school art)		0	4	1	1	1	0	3	2	3	15	2	9%

Fig 8.3 cont.

This chart is derived from the exhibition lists given in the appendix.

“Touring” includes any show from another venue, even if the receiving gallery is the only one on the “tour”, as it still counts as an exhibition from an outside source so long as the sending venue has created or organised the exhibition. Whether an exhibition is counted as an overseas or NZ touring one depends on the origin of the artist more than the origin of the exhibition.

Permanent collection exhibitions are not reliably counted since they are often not recorded in gallery promotions, reports or exhibition files.

Annual exhibitions are mostly art society, pottery society exhibitions, or annual reviews. Manawatu Art Gallery’s *Manawatu Prize* has not been counted here because it differs from the usual type

of annual exhibition in not being local.

Group exhibitions are those with two or more artists.

Theme shows are those where the exhibition was selected on the basis of a theme rather than similar types of artists. It is more likely to involve a variety of media and periods than a group show.

Local artist exhibitions include annual society shows but exclude artists living locally who had national reputations.

“Contemporary Fine Arts” takes the word contemporary in a broad sense to mean art of a contemporary style. This includes, say, Picasso and Mondrian, but not Russell Clark’s illustrative work, or Impressionism. Art society exhibitions have not been counted as contemporary. Neither has craft or photography overlapped in this category.

“Crafts” means current craft work. Non-Western “craft” (e.g. Nigerian sculpture is counted as “Other”), as is traditional Western material (e.g. 12th century ecclesiastical embroidery).

“Photography” includes any type of photography from contemporary “art” work to illustrative exhibitions of photographs.

Some exhibitions have been counted twice in the Content section. In a few cases where exhibitions contain two types of media they have been counted in each.

Totals of Content categories may not match those of Types as some content is unknown and so not counted, and some types are counted in more than one content category

Institution	1960s	early 70s	mid-70s	late-70s
Govett-Brewster	–	23	23	25
Dowse	–	19 (30 in 1972)	13	17 (21 in 1979)
Manawatu	21	24	19	21 (29 in 1978)
Sarjeant	–	12	23	25
Auckland	–	18	26	31
National	7	11	11	26 (24 in 1978, 43 in 1979)
McDougall	–	19	29	30 (45 in 1979)
Waikato	15	13	21	18
Hawke's Bay	12	20	15	25
Southland	4	13	16	14

Fig 8.4 Average number of exhibitions per year for selected galleries, with high points in parentheses. Numbers for Waikato, Hawke's Bay, Auckland, National Art Gallery, McDougall, and Southland are provisional only. Figures for Dunedin have not been gathered.

well ahead of the National Art Gallery for most of the decade. However, metropolitan and Hawke's Bay figures show a sharp rise towards the end of the seventies, while several provincial institutions were steady, despite increasing numbers of staff. Manawatu and the Dowse show only isolated peaks in 1978 and 1979 respectively, for example (see *fig 8.3* for greater detail on the three focus galleries).

The difference between the three focus galleries and what was seen at Hawke's Bay, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch was perhaps that they started off with a high level of ambition, and as they gained more staff simply maintained the same number of exhibitions but produced them to a higher standard. Meanwhile, the other four may have been inspired to follow the trend set by Manawatu, the Govett-Brewster and the Dowse to relatively quick changing, temporary exhibitions, and had the capacity to do so. For example, both the McDougall and National art galleries gained large numbers of temporary staff at the end of the decade, enabling them to achieve high exhibition numbers at this point. They also had the gallery capacity, for the space they previously devoted to displaying the permanent collection could be converted to temporary exhibitions. But for galleries like the Dowse, Govett-Brewster, Manawatu and Sarjeant, available space placed a more restricted upper limit to the number of exhibitions per year if they were not to be of unreasonably short duration. Supporting the claim of a limit to turnover level is that the Dowse, Govett-Brewster, Manawatu and Sarjeant all have around 25 exhibitions per year today – the same as they did in the 1970s.

As for comparing the level of energy and activity in the seventies with the sixties, the commentary in chapters three and four bears out an significant increase. Exhibition

listings are scarce for the sixties but the information in *fig 8.4* shows significant increases for three institutions at least.¹¹

Innovation

Were the smaller galleries acting in innovative ways the metropolitan ones were not? The answer is yes, but it was more accurately a case of the smaller galleries taking a lead, for the larger galleries often did the same things, only several years later. Other qualifications are that it is commonplace for newer, smaller organisations generally to introduce practices that are only later picked up by larger ones,¹² and that what is possible or appropriate in a small gallery may not be so for a larger institution (this recalls again Bennett's observation of chapter one that large museums have a different sort of relationship with the public than smaller ones).

The most obvious new practices beginning amongst small galleries in the seventies were the introduction of both high-turnover temporary exhibitions and community and public involvement via events, as covered above. Associated with these was a new relationship with the news media, in which controversy was sometimes exaggerated or even generated in order to gain publicity. Bieringa was adept at the latter in relation creating a pressure for a new building¹³ and Barr enjoyed provoking councillors. However, Millar and Ballard, as well as the Sarjeant directors, adopted more of a "head-down" attitude, as controversy was something they could less afford.

Public involvement included, as also previously mentioned, taking art to the people, especially the disadvantaged who would not normally visit. This was one of the most innovative developments of all in the seventies but only at the Manawatu Art Gallery amongst provincial galleries is it known to have occurred.

Another side to involving audiences was showing newly popular media, especially the sort which visitors might practice themselves, like ceramics, photography and printmaking. Printmaking already had an established place in New Zealand gallery collections, mainly as etchings rather than more populist and commercially tainted forms such as the screenprint, but ceramics and photographs had only been occasionally exhibited and far less collected. These latter two media both shared a lack of authorised tradition, an exclusion from the art establishment, and this may have been another reason for interest shown in them by new public galleries – the new recognised the new.

¹¹ Waikato was restricted by a very small building in the 1960s, but in the 1970s the space available for art was also limited by having to share with the other disciplines. The figures for the Manawatu Art Gallery in the sixties show just how active the gallery was in this earlier decade.

¹² In a discussion on museums Harrison notes that Max Weber and Raymond Williams have argued that change comes from the social or spatial margins and that Ames describes the centre as "self-absorbed, monopolistic, cautious and involuted". (Harrison, "Ideas of Museums in the 1990s", p. 70.)

¹³ One measure of the increased volume of news coverage is that the press clippings for the Manawatu Art Gallery in the sixties (when the gallery found its way into the news relatively often) fill one scrapbook; the seventies occupy two and a half.

The Manawatu Art Gallery and the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery showed photography exhibitions reasonably often, more so than the Dowse (*fig 8.1*). In fact, the Govett-Brewster organised what was possibly the first touring exhibition of historical photography in the country, *Nineteenth Century Photography in New Zealand* (1970) and Manawatu the first survey of contemporary New Zealand photography, *The Active Eye*, (1975). These were both deliberate attempts to promote a recognition of photography. While other public galleries also showed exhibitions like *The Active Eye*, often it was with mixed feelings and the question whether photography really was art frequently voiced. Provincial galleries also tended to lead the way in collecting photography, though Auckland City Art Gallery and the National Art Gallery had an early involvement as well.¹⁴ By 1980 probably all public galleries were both showing and collecting photography.

The first institution to collect contemporary New Zealand studio ceramics was probably the Auckland Museum from 1964,¹⁵ but a groundswell of interest in (collecting and exhibiting) ceramics in the seventies came from provincial galleries and museums such as Manawatu, Wairarapa, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay, Waikato, and the Dowse, Suter, and Sarjeant (though not, as *fig 8.1* shows, by the Govett-Brewster). The metropolitan galleries, by contrast, rarely showed or collected contemporary ceramics, both in the seventies and since. As suggested in chapter four, potting was practiced by a huge number of New Zealanders, and the quality of work was consequently extremely variable. A contribution galleries such as the Dowse made in the seventies was to raise standards by rejecting both hobbyist ceramics and the purely commercial in favour of work that, in the words of its 1980s collection policy, tended towards "art made in media traditionally associated with the crafts".

A similar situation existed for weaving, and the holding of the first national exhibition of weaving in 1976 at the Dowse again helped to raise something that was merely hobbyist to a level of artistic excellence.

Provincial galleries were not always so responsive to new art forms, however, demonstrating that innovation was limited to things that would receive local acceptance and interest. Post-object art, for example, might have found sympathy in new galleries, for it demanded a new type of relationship between art, the institution and the visitor. But aside from a few instances, principally at the Govett-Brewster and to a lesser extent Manawatu, such work was not often shown.¹⁶ It was mainly left to John Maynard to demonstrate an interest in post-object art, first as director at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and then as exhibitions officer at the Auckland City Art Gallery where he ran

¹⁴ McCredie, "Rear Vision: A Contextual Statement".

¹⁵ *AGMANZ News* 14, no. 3 (September 1983) (issue on ceramics collecting in New Zealand).

¹⁶ Barton, *Post-object Art in New Zealand 1969–1979*, pp. 27–36.

NZ Sculptors at Mildura was one, token, post-object exhibition shown by many public galleries in 1978–79. It consisted of work shown at the Mildura 1978 Sculpture Triennial in Australia. The controversial 1979/80 Billy Apple tour covered mostly dealer galleries but also took in the Govett-Brewster, Sarjeant and National art galleries.

the exhibition series *Project Programme*, a series he says he operated with little institutional support or commitment. Most post-object art was strongly associated with the art schools of Auckland and Canterbury universities and had only a small following in the large cities, let alone any in provincial centres, so there was little demand to see it in public galleries. Its artists also sometimes preferred not to show in art institutions for ideological reasons.

Interest in feminism was, in contrast, widespread, but in a period of such strong feminist concern it is surprising so little “women’s art” was shown by public galleries. Part of the reason was perhaps that there simply was very little work addressing feminist concerns created in New Zealand in the seventies (certainly in the first half of the decade), interest concentrating instead on promoting past and present women artists of all varieties, of righting the gender balance in exhibitions.¹⁷ The first such exhibitions were held in Auckland in 1973 at the ASA, dealer galleries, and the Auckland City Art Gallery to co-incide with the first National Women’s Conference. In 1975 both the Dowse Art Gallery and the Auckland City Art Gallery again held exhibitions entirely of art by women in conjunction with International Women’s Year. None of these exhibitions were organised from a strongly feminist perspective, however. The credit for that goes to the Robert McDougall Art Gallery’s contribution to Women’s Year, *Six Women Artists*, organised by feminist Allie Eagle, exhibitions officer at the gallery.¹⁸ This completed the sum total of exhibitions specifically of women’s art at public galleries in the 1970s. There were other exhibitions besides *Six Women Artists* which had a seminal influence on the women’s art movement but these occurred at Christchurch’s CSA (*Women’s Environment*, 1976 and *Three Feminist Artists*, 1978) and at Victoria University Library (*A Season’s Diaries*, 1977).¹⁹

The little contemporary Maori art that was exhibited in public galleries in the seventies was limited to a few provincial galleries. The success of the 1976 South Pacific Arts Festival exhibition led to the Waikato Art Museum holding *Contemporary Maori Art* in the same year.²⁰ *Contemporary Maori Art* was also the name of the other Maori group exhibition in the 1970s, staged as the opening exhibition of the Gisborne

¹⁷ There certainly was a gender imbalance. A count of Manawatu Art Gallery exhibitions in the 1970s, for example, shows that of 71 solo or two person exhibitions, 46 were by contemporary male artists, 15 by non-contemporary males and 10 by contemporary women artists. In sum, only 14% of such exhibitions were by women.

Another reason for the absence of women’s art in public gallery exhibitions may have been that women tended to work in (traditionally) less visible media such as watercolours, drawings, printmaking, photography, artists’ books, textile art and, according to Eastmond and Penfold, sculpture (Eastmond and Penfold, *Women and the Arts in New Zealand* [unpaginated]).

¹⁸ Trevelyan, “Since the Sixties” [unpaginated]; Kirker *New Zealand Women Artists*, p. 175.

¹⁹ The *Women’s Environment* and *A Season’s Diaries* influenced the formation of Wellington’s Women’s Gallery (1980–1984), by providing both momentum and models for collaborative and mutually supportive exhibition processes (*Women’s Environment*) and diary formats (*A Season’s Diaries*) (Kirker, *New Zealand Women Artists*, p. 175–6.)

²⁰ 11 September – 17 October 1976. Accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Frank Davis.

Museum and Arts Centre in 1977.²¹ The *Parihaka* exhibition by Selwyn Muri at the Dowse was another early exhibition by a Maori artist, and toured to the Govett-Brewster, but as Barr related in chapter six, it was the artist who made the exhibition innovative, not the gallery.

Survey exhibitions by living New Zealand artists were an area where provincial galleries did take a lead. The Auckland City Art Gallery had created a number of survey exhibitions in the fifties and sixties, but these were art historical exercises on safely dead artists, for the gallery was not prepared to risk its authority and reputation on a living artist, nor to become involved in local artist politics by doing so. Provincial galleries had less to lose and so could afford to gamble on an artist whom history might judge was not a winner. There was also an enormous pressure of new art created in the 1950s and '60s and into the '70s that was waiting to be seen, as Bieringa noted in chapters five and six. In fact Bieringa pointed to this as the prime reason why new galleries were opened in the 1970s. The three focus galleries, and later the Sarjeant Gallery, were all active in developing one-person survey exhibitions, the Dowse taking a particular lead in this area early in the seventies.

Much of the above has been concerned with new art forms and artists. Provincial galleries such as the Manawatu Art Gallery and Dowse at least were also innovative in creating new forms of visitor-involving exhibitions, as mentioned in the last section (though there is no evidence of this at the Govett-Brewster). These mixed art works with museum and everyday objects to create multi-experience attractions.

Finally, there is one area where the Govett-Brewster was uniquely innovative and that was in its collection policy. No other New Zealand gallery had a strictly contemporary policy and if any had a deaccessioning policy it was certainly not intended to actively refresh the collection on a rolling basis as the Govett-Brewster's was (though in practice the policy was never really implemented).

Activism

Where, in earlier times, more energetic galleries may have run "add-on" education programmes such as public lectures or classes for schools, in the 1970s there was a much greater drive to actively involve people with art. This included running hands-on workshops (something not done by public galleries before, aside perhaps from those run by art societies) which empowered audiences to create their own art. It meant showing art that demanded a response, such as new, challenging, and controversial work. It also involved showing art that had relevance to audiences, such as crafts (work anyone could do *and* use) and art reflecting current social and cultural concerns (art relevant to this time and place). And in a small measure there was post-object art, with its interest in process, intervention and "viewer" participation rather than aesthetic contemplation. All

²¹ *Contemporary Maori Art: The Opening Exhibition of the New Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre 26th March to 21st April 1977* (Gisborne: Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre, 1977).

this represented a shift from a humanist inspired approach of improving and enriching the quality of people's lives to a more radical one aimed at transforming experience (and ultimately, by implication, at transforming society).

The Dowse and Manawatu art galleries are the best examples of institutions that took a pro-active stance towards engaging with visitors. At the Dowse there were the audience-involving exhibitions, and Jim Barr's evangelical practice of trying to open people's eyes to art by approaching them in the gallery. As Barr suggests, a passionate belief in the power of art lay behind these: "The main difference from today is that it was obvious to our community that we believed in [art and education], whereas now, with increased staff, that's a luxury directors don't have. Directors have to be managers or other things. That shining blue light in the eyes isn't going to be in the public face." Bieringa held a similar view, as the following quote from chapter five reveals: "You had to really believe in the stuff, and the role art had to play in society. If you are enthusiastic, the enthusiasm rubs off. If not, then you are only selling a product. ...You can easily tell the gallery people who like art and those who are just doing a job."

At the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery John Maynard and Ron O'Reilly obviously passionately believed in the power of art but there is less evidence they were so strongly interested in communicating that passion to audiences, particularly in O'Reilly's case.

Contemporariness

Was there an increased engagement with contemporary art by New Zealand galleries in the seventies? Once again, the answer must be yes.

Collecting at the metropolitan galleries shifted in the sixties and into the seventies towards contemporary New Zealand art, as seen in chapters three and four, with the Auckland City Art Gallery beginning the process in the fifties. Galleries also increasingly showed contemporary art, Auckland again taking the lead. This began with travelling exhibitions of overseas work such as *British Abstract Painting* (1958), then moved to Auckland City Art Gallery touring group exhibitions of New Zealand work such as the gallery's annual contemporary surveys (1957–1966) and *NZ Art of the Sixties* (1970). The relatively few exhibitions the metropolitan galleries mounted of individual artists tended, naturally, to be of well-established ones (Mrkusich and McCahon at Auckland), as well as of those recently deceased (T.A. McCormack at the National Art Gallery, Russell Clark and Carl Sydow at the McDougall).²² However, Auckland and the McDougall, if not the National (and Dunedin's exhibitions are not known), were happy to take many more exhibitions of mid-career contemporary artists organised by the smaller galleries – such as the William Sutton and Don Peebles exhibitions organised by the Dowse, and the Woollaston exhibition from Manawatu.

²² *T.A. McCormack Memorial Exhibition* (1973), *Russell Clark (1905–1966) Retrospective* (1975), *Carl Sydow (1940–1975) Memorial Exhibition* (1979).

Of the provincial galleries, it is hardly surprising that those which began in the sixties and seventies like the Dowse, Govett-Brewster and Manawatu had a contemporary emphasis. They began with little “cultural baggage” aside from local expectations and a small collection including some non-contemporary work in each case. Given the combination of the contemporary collections they built up (and which became the substance of their permanent collection exhibitions), the predominantly contemporary exhibitions touring the country, and the predilections of their young directors, there was little likelihood of more traditional work being shown. Even the Sarjeant Gallery, with a strong collection of traditional painting, took the contemporary route once Gordon Brown became director, though presumably the permanent collection exhibitions had a traditional emphasis here.

The ability of the three focus galleries to become players on a national stage was in fact enabled through their engagement with contemporary art. With the increased demand to see the outlines of New Zealand’s recent art history, retrospective exhibitions like those created by the Dowse in the early seventies, Manawatu’s McCahon and Woollaston exhibitions, and the Govett-Brewster’s McCahon and Driver exhibitions all had their tours well subscribed by other galleries. The provincial galleries filled a niche not being met by the metropolitan institutions here and their smaller size enabled a rapid response. A large institution might take two or more years of planning and put considerable resources into a catalogue. The provincials could get *something* on the road – it might be a lesser affair, but it filled a gap.

The Govett-Brewster had the strongest reputation for being a contemporary art gallery out of the three focus galleries²³ and the data in *fig 8.1* bears this perception out, with 53% of its exhibitions rated contemporary as against 37% for the Dowse and 36% at Manawatu. While 53% is high compared to other galleries it is less so if one considers the Govett-Brewster was known simply as a contemporary gallery, though some distinction needs to be made between exhibitions and collecting. The gallery got off to a very strong start with *Real Time*, and whilst always maintaining a contemporary edge and gaining respect for exhibitions like *Necessary Protection*, *Don Driver* and especially the Len Lye project, there were a great many exhibitions which were not all that different from those seen at other provincial, and metropolitan, galleries. In collecting, however, the gallery nearly always stayed resolutely with contemporary art and it was partly via the controversies surrounding many of these that the gallery established its contemporary reputation.

The programmes offered by the Dowse or Manawatu art galleries were also perhaps not quite as radical or contemporary as their reputations. An examination of the exhibitions at Manawatu reveals the bulk of them to be touring exhibitions (i.e. seen in many other venues also), collection shows, or local artist exhibitions. This demonstrates

²³ Wystan Curnow claimed that, by 1971, Maynard “had made New Plymouth *the* place to see new Auckland sculpture.” (Wystan Curnow, “Project programme 1975, nos.1–6”, *Auckland City Art Gallery Quarterly* 62–63 [December 1975]: p15.)

how a few radical exhibitions or controversies – such as *Art in the Mail* or Drummond's *The Grass is Greener* – can create an impression or image by which an institution's programme as a whole is characterised. (The rhetoric associated with the gallery, and Bieringa's personal manner, probably helped reinforce this image too.)

There was also a limit to how contemporary any of the public galleries were prepared to go, as noted in the *Innovativeness* section, with relatively little of the most avant garde art (post-object work) in New Zealand being shown at public galleries, provincial or otherwise.

However, in downplaying the degree of contemporariness in provincial galleries in the seventies it is easy to forget two things. One is the degree to which directors fought huge battles with city councillors and others over the right to show and collect contemporary art. Such work may not have been on the programme every day, but it was rarely something any of them backed down from championing. The other point is that it is easy to judge seventies contemporariness by the standards of the present. Luit Bieringa makes the point today that the programme he offered at Manawatu was radical and contemporary for the time, and more particularly, for Palmerston North audiences, who often had difficulty with it.

As for other provincial galleries, a distinction about contemporary art made in chapter one needs recalling. This is, that contemporary art can be literally defined as any art made in the present, but is usually understood as art which engages with the contemporary. This engagement can, moreover, be a question of degree. Most of these provincial galleries had fairly young collections (the Sarjeant, Suter and to an extent Hawke's Bay being exceptions) and certainly few options for showing older work. What they exhibited was largely contemporary therefore, but less often engaged in a significant way with the issues of contemporary art or culture than that shown at the three focus institutions.

Controversy

It is difficult to say if there were more controversies in the 1970s than at any other time. A rough count of controversies over the decades in the catalogue *When Art Hits the Headlines* does not show a significantly larger number of art controversies in the seventies. What is noticeable, though, is how the great majority of controversies during this decade occurred at provincial galleries. Barr is probably correct in observing that the reason was because these galleries were far more vulnerable than the big institutions and faced a continuing debate over what their functions were and who their audience was.²⁴

²⁴ Barr and Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 14.

Of course, the larger number of controversies at provincial galleries in the seventies could also be explained by there simply being more of these galleries in existence by then.

This is borne out in looking at the different types of controversy at the three focus galleries. Controversies tended to be provoked by city councillors and were either over contemporary art, the art society, council control (Govett-Brewster), or funding level (Manawatu). Each of these was at base an issue about the function of an art gallery and who it was for, with many in the community or in council unwilling to accept a contemporary vision of an art gallery.

Often controversies seemed close to a life or death matter for the institution, though Barr's remark that he never seriously thought the Dowse would be closed is significant, suggesting vulnerability was more in appearance than reality. As noted above, directors at the three galleries sometimes deliberately inflamed controversy for promotional or political purposes. Motivations could go deeper as well. Controversy could give gallery staff a sense of self-importance, a feeling they were fighting the good fight against the philistines. There is a certain self-justifying satisfaction in feeling beleaguered and embroiled in controversy – provided you know the outcome will not be disastrous. This could work the other way too, for there were political and moral victories to be made for councillors in attacking art galleries. David Millar recalls that councillors like Cr Werry who raised questions in meetings “never approached me personally first – there was always the danger that my explanation would remove their opportunity to grandstand.” Controversies, then, were rituals that served the respective (and symbiotic) ends of the gallery, city councillors, and the media.

Art was also expected to be controversial by some, Ron O'Reilly saying in 1975, "Controversy is a fundamental of art – without it art galleries would not function".²⁵ Barr similarly claimed that “the day [controversy] stops we won't be doing our job properly.”²⁶ John Maynard and other directors no doubt held similar views – that contemporary art wasn't working if it didn't upset someone.

This sense of righteousness probably applied to the art world in general, the smaller galleries gaining reputations amongst artists and art followers precisely because they appeared to position themselves at the barricades. The question is just how exaggerated this perception might have been, for the controversies took place in the provinces, away from the artistic centres in New Zealand. Could it have been that the Govett-Brewster gained such a strong reputation amongst the nationally distributed arts community because it was conveniently remote, and could exist as a sort of half-invented, mythical institution where the good fight was fought on behalf of artists everywhere? It may have been strengthening too for those in the metropolitan centres to believe that if their local gallery wasn't showing contemporary art, then there were places elsewhere which were (and fighting for it), proving just how misguided their local institution was.

Provincial galleries could have functioned symbolically in their own communities as

²⁵ *Daily News*, 17 July 1975, cited in Jim Barr and Mary Barr, *When Art Hits the Headlines*, p. 15.

One wonders how well O'Reilly was able to function however, with frequent controversies, particularly the series he experienced in 1977. These sorts of events typically demand a great deal of time and energy to deal with.

²⁶ “The Dowse”, p. 2.

well, though in a slightly different sense, as lightning rods for existing social tensions. For example, there may have been tensions in New Plymouth arising from the city's transition from a traditional farming centre to an economy dominated by industry. As a representation of modernity and outside influences, the gallery was a convenient whipping boy for those who felt threatened by such change. There were similar transitions in Palmerston North and Lower Hutt also and in all cases galleries may have operated as a fault zone in the expression of generational differences as well.

Finally, there is the question of personality in this era when both galleries and local authorities were much more personally driven. Maynard, Barr, and Bieringa were all "street-fighting" characters, and O'Reilly and Miller were not ones to compromise either. Faced with equally outspoken mayors or city councillors, the sparks were bound to fly.

Reasons for Developments

Why were so many public galleries either built or revitalised in the 1970s? Why were they more publicly and contemporary oriented and energetic than previous galleries? And why did so much activity seem to happen outside the four main centres? This section reviews some of the influences on these developments suggested in chapters three and four and expands on others raised in the three focus gallery chapters. It begins with enabling influences or forces and then moves into shaping influences.

Enabling Forces: Social Contexts

Chapter three documented how New Zealanders in general became more affluent, educated, urbanised, internationally aware and sophisticated in the years following the Second World War, particularly through the sixties. In art, New Zealand had been a sleepy backwater pre-war following the uninspiring example of Britain, but began to gain an independence and maturity in the 1950s and '60s. Touring exhibitions of overseas contemporary art were seen, international publications became more available, and art education began to move away from the traditional discipline of draughtsmanship. In a 1960s culture of self-expression, protest, and talk of revolution, art-making became a fashionable pastime, and even occupation, amongst the young. New forms of expression developed or become rediscovered which did not require traditional skills and knowledge: ceramics, photography, and printmaking (as well as art which did not require technique at all – post-object art). Around 1970, new art publications set out a canon of New Zealand art and tied it into explorations of national identity. By the early seventies there was a whole generation of baby boomers who were ready for more sophisticated art experiences than had been available in the past, who wanted a closer involvement with art, and who wanted to see "their" art – the art of their country, their time, and often of their peers.

There had been limited responses to this demand in the 60s, with a handful of dealer galleries opening, artist-organised exhibitions occurring in miscellaneous spaces, and willing art society galleries in a few cities (Hamilton, Palmerston North, Christchurch). But the public gallery response generally was at first negligible. Aside from the Auckland City Art Gallery, the metropolitan galleries remained in a moribund state and smaller centres were not in a strong position to respond themselves. The provincial cities either had a gallery with the same faults as the metropolitans (Wanganui), a minimal operation run by volunteers (Gisborne, Nelson, Timaru), a gallery subsumed into museum (Napier, Invercargill), or did not have a public gallery at all (New Plymouth, Lower Hutt, Hastings, Tauranga, Rotorua).

By 1970, then, there was a backlog of art ready to be seen (and more being created every day) as well as a generation who wanted to see it. What was largely missing was an infrastructure to bring the two together.

New cities/ civic growth phases

Why were new or renewed galleries created in certain cities and not others? What the three cities hosting the focus galleries had in common (and Hamilton can be added here as well) was that they were “renewed” cities themselves. All had healthy growth rates post-war, with Hamilton and Lower Hutt particularly booming.²⁷ There were no art galleries or museums in Hamilton or Lower Hutt earlier partly because they were small towns pre-war, and even New Plymouth and Palmerston North were smaller than, for example, Wanganui, in the 1930s. The subsequent rapid growth of cities like Hamilton and Lower Hutt meant their city councils were pre-occupied with planning and spending on building basic infrastructure such as drains and roads in the 25 years following the war, so it was only as these projects became manageable that they could consider “luxuries” like art galleries.²⁸ Other factors besides sheer growth probably operated as well. Both Hamilton and Palmerston North gained universities in the sixties, creating a level of sophistication in each city and generating a demand from transplanted academics for the attractions of bigger centres. In addition, both grew from farming to transport and manufacturing centres, attracting entrepreneurs and the technically skilled and educated. New Plymouth also expanded into an industrial centre following the harnessing of oil and gas in the seventies. Each of these cities, then, became newly established in the post-war years and could see that earlier maturing cities like Wanganui, Napier and Nelson, as well as the metropolitan centres, had art galleries and museums. These new cities wanted to be taken seriously, to change their

²⁷ Tauranga and Rotorua were the fastest growing cities from 1945, followed by Hamilton and then Whangarei, yet neither Tauranga (with an urban area population equivalent to that of New Plymouth in 1971), nor Whangarei (admittedly smaller and equal to Gisborne at 1971) gained an art gallery, and Rotorua’s came later in the seventies. (Bloomfield, *New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics*, pp. 58–9.)

²⁸ Thomson, *Art Galleries and Museums in New Zealand*, pp. 88–9.

Size rank of urban areas (out of 17) without an art gallery	1	•				•					•	•			•	•	•
	2				•			•									
	3																
	4		•	•	•									•			
	5																
	6								•	•					•		
		Auckland	Dunedin	Nelson	Wanganui	Christchurch	Wellington	Napier	Hamilton	Gisborne	Timaru	Palmerston North	Invercargill	Masterton	New Plymouth	Lower Hutt	Hastings

Urban areas ranked by date they gained an art gallery

Fig 8.5 Relative size of cities (based on urban area statistics) when they gained a gallery amongst those still without a public art gallery.

image. Mayors in both Lower Hutt and Palmerston North spoke of wanting to avoid a hick-town perception.²⁹ With little in the way of existing traditional art gallery supporters and audiences, and wishing to be seen as forward-looking cities, such centres desired a modern conception of an art gallery. This was one that not just provided prestige value, in the traditional sense of a citadel on a hill, but was also an amenity suggestive of a town's health or liveliness.

In general, art galleries are founded because they can stand as representations of sophistication and prestige as well as proof that the funder possesses culture and soul in addition to material wealth. Certainly we can see from *fig 8.5* that New Zealand cities could not bear for long to be the largest one remaining without an art gallery. That is, once the largest cities acquired galleries, the next tier of cities decided they had to have one, and so on. Seven cities gained a gallery when they were the largest left without a gallery, and most built a gallery while they were amongst the top four without a gallery.³⁰

Of course, cities (i.e. city councils) did not necessarily actively decide they wanted an art gallery. In some cases they did, but in others galleries emerged more organically.

²⁹ The civic and other architecture of Lower Hutt was another measure of this desire. The civic building, the library and St James' church were all examples of modernist architecture envisaged for a modern city in a new post-war world.

³⁰ Wellington and Christchurch appear as particularly late developers but in both cases they had an art society gallery which functioned approximately as a civic gallery, and Wellington's situation was different in that its gallery was intended as a national one (and subject to much delay in construction).

The fact that relative sizes of New Zealand cities have changed over the years is one reason why date of gaining a gallery does not follow size order as we understand it today. Wanganui, for example, was a much more important city in the early 20th century than it is now, explaining why its gallery was founded as early as 1919.

Yet even then the galleries could still represent a diffuse civic desire. Certainly in nearly all cases where city councils did not operate a gallery themselves they had a form of partnership with art and gallery societies wherein they made annual contributions to gallery operations. This was the case at Manawatu, for example, where council not only provided a building and land free of charge, but made annual grants to the gallery from the early sixties.

Central and Local Government Support

Government support was a key factor in allowing a number of revitalising projects of galleries to occur in the seventies. Most provincial local authorities either inherited art society galleries, received bequests (New Plymouth), or funded building projects themselves (Lower Hutt) when creating new institutions. But new buildings or major refurbishments were probably only made possible with the Art Galleries and Museums Scheme. They include the Manawatu Art Gallery, Suter Art Gallery, Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre, Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum (the Century Theatre project), and the museum wing of the Dowse Art Gallery.

Central government support was also an important sustaining force via the arts council's artwork purchase subsidy scheme. This was used at all three focus galleries and both Bieringa and Barr report that it was useful not only in funding works which otherwise would have been unaffordable, but gaining arts council backing for a controversial purchase created a proposition that was hard to turn down by governing authorities.

Funding sources and levels could be a shaping force. In nearly all cases local authorities began increasing their contribution to provincial galleries through the 1960s and '70s. A typical example is the Manawatu Art Gallery where memberships and income from sales were the major part of its revenue in the early 1960s but assumed lesser significance as the city council grant increased to become the main source of income by the end of the seventies. Hand in hand with this trend went an expectation from local authorities of greater say in the operation of galleries, particularly an expectation that they serve the whole community, not just a membership.

Mutual Support

Provincial galleries worked at creating their own support networks in the seventies. These were largely absent during the first half of the decade, David Millar reporting that he felt professionally lonely and pushed for a gallery directors group. Maynard also started before a network of young directors formed and tended to look more to artists and other figures in the art world for goodwill and support.

AGMANZ did not seem to serve gallery director's needs well, though several gained office in the organisation and played a subversive role there. By the second half of the seventies a new national organisation of gallery directors had been formed, the

NZAGDC, and directors of the Dowse, Sarjeant, Manawatu and Govett-Brewster art galleries had formed an additional informal network of co-operation in exchanging, and sometimes jointly organising, exhibitions. NZAGDC was largely formed to take on the touring of the numerous exhibitions being created by public galleries but also created a lobby and advocacy group, pushing for education officers in art galleries and falling in behind Gordon Brown in his troubles with the Wanganui City Council, for example.

Shaping Forces: Models for a gallery

The lack of clear models for art galleries in smaller centres at this time allowed directors a very free hand to create their own. The Govett-Brewster, for example, was very much John Maynard's personal conception, inspired by Alexander Dorner's vision of an art museum and by large modernist art museums such as MoMA – presumably exemplified for Maynard by Australian versions, and by the local form, the Auckland City Art Gallery. Dorner's philosophy is worth quoting here both for the light it sheds on the vision Maynard had but also because it could stand to some extent for the philosophy of the provincial galleries that emerged in the 1970s:

So long as the museum remains content to preserve old truths and to collect relics that house the timeless spirit of quality it acts as an escape from life...It is like a dead hand reaching forward into our lives and stopping them. ...The new type of museum would partake of the energy of [the modern movements]...It would not only be more alive and stimulating but also much more easy to establish, for it would depend much less than the current type on quantitative accumulation, i.e. wealth...[and] it would be constructed functionally and flexibly of light modern materials. It would rely primarily on the imagination and leadership of its staff. ...This new type of museum would then be an important factor in our urgently needed integration of life.³¹

The Manawatu Art Gallery shared with the Govett-Brewster a relative independence from the city council, allowing the director and the gallery society alone to decide what shape the gallery should take. Where it differed was that the 1960s form of Manawatu, as essentially an art society gallery (albeit with unusually ambitious aspirations), created something of a local model for it to follow in the seventies. Architectural determinism may also have had an influence here and at the Govett-Brewster. Manawatu's community hall-like Grey St building was a far cry from the high-modernist white cube spaces of the Govett-Brewster, perhaps encouraging a more community orientation – certainly it was a difficult space in which to make recent modernist painting look good (compare *plates* 5.2 and 5.3 with 7.4 and 7.5).

³¹ Alexander Dorner, "The Future Art Museum", *The Way Beyond "Art"* (1947), quoted in *Recommendations by the Director to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Committee on Purchase and Acquisition Policy, Temporary Exhibition Policy, Gifts of Works of Art and Donations* (May 1967, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery archive).

In Lower Hutt the council itself created the gallery but with few ideas of what an art gallery was or should be, leaving matters like these to a professional. The combination of nearby Wellington, with art audiences hungry for what the National Art Gallery could not provide, and the mostly unsophisticated audience of local citizens must have suggested twin paths of populism and elitism to both Dowse directors.

Chapter two touched on some of the historical models for art museums in Europe and America and finished with the large art museum of these countries with its elitist and democratic threads as the model for galleries here. But there were three additional models influencing provincial galleries of the 1970s in New Zealand. An art society gallery was one. This was the sort of place where group shows were the norm, especially regular annual exhibitions of members work, as well as the occasional invited artists and permanent collection exhibitions. The dealer gallery was another model. Present only in the four main centres, mainly Auckland, dealers concentrated on one-person exhibitions by contemporary artists and sometimes published catalogues, handouts or newsletters to educate potential buyers (notably at Barry Lett and Elva Bett galleries). The third model was the community hall, the multi-purpose venue where a scout meeting might be held one night and an art class the next.

Direct influences from overseas art galleries on local developments are not evident – aside from the influence the international background of the Auckland City Art Gallery directors would have had on that gallery. Each of the directors at the three focus galleries had travelled overseas, as had members of the administering bodies for the Govett-Brewster and Manawatu art galleries. Bieringa had an extended study break in the mid-1970s, and Millar and Barr both travelled to other countries to look at art galleries, so there was potential to bring back ideas after directions had been established, though in each case it seemed the directors returned confirmed in their direction, rather than filled with new ideas to practice.

In general, New Zealand's communication with the international museum/gallery community during the seventies was probably minimal and talk of the new museology or news of the protests in New York and France against museums by the counterculture generation probably barely entered the consciousness of local practitioners. Where developments were similar it was very likely a case of similar societal influences than direct transmission of ideas amongst museums.

Independence: Imposition or Evolution

Galleries appeared by different means and this had some influence on their future nature. The Govett-Brewster was one of several galleries in New Zealand to originate in private benefaction (the others were the Sarjeant Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, and to an extent, the Auckland City Art Gallery) but where the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery differed was in its policies being part determined by the benefactor's deed of gift. This required professional control, management and

development of the gallery. These policies gave the gallery a measure of independence, and consequently some distance, from the community (and council) at the outset.

The Govett-Brewster's independence allowed Maynard to impose his high-modernist vision of an art gallery on New Plymouth. However, there was nothing formal in place to keep the gallery fully to this vision, to stop a similarly strong-minded person arriving and shifting the gallery into quite a different direction. This in fact happened to an extent as Dick Bett made another clean break, taking the Govett-Brewster off for a time on a path as one of New Zealand's most community active galleries (from temple art to mural painting one might say).

The Dowse was granted independence of another sort. By setting the gallery up as a professionally run organisation in a similar manner to any other sphere of council operations the city council made a break with the previous amateur mode of arts organisation in Lower Hutt. A large measure of professional freedom was given to the first director by council and David Millar grasped it firmly, cutting the art society, which had been a driving force behind the gallery's formation, from their inheritance.

Similar disenfranchising occurred in Wanganui and New Plymouth. Art societies which had, as Bieringa puts it, "kept the hearth warm" for art, were pushed aside, creating major upsets. The effect was that the new galleries were left naked and quickly moved to clothe themselves by creating new forms of community support in the form of friends organisations through which directors could win the hearts and minds of other sections of the populace.

By contrast, the Manawatu Art Gallery grew out of the community to a much greater degree and its support was therefore both broader and deeper. This led to influential support from the mayor and the daily newspaper, as well as, on the government level, from MP Joe Walding. While there were oppositional forces in the community to overcome, Bieringa had the advantage of being able to build on this existing support.

Manawatu's friends organisation was also not an add-on, but actually operated the institution. This meant the gallery couldn't easily be extinguished. Had the city council withdrawn funding entirely the society probably would have tried to continue the gallery one way or another (while it was in Grey St at least). The arms length relationship with council also made it harder for locals to criticise the gallery's programme since it was less obviously being run on behalf of ratepayers. It allowed more freedom to pursue the fairly radical and strongly held ideas of both the director and certain society members about the role of a public gallery.

The Politics of Programming

The need to gain support from the community for continued existence as well as from funding sources for expansion was another shaping influence on provincial galleries. Luit Bieringa makes no secret of the fact that this drove the programme at the Manawatu Art Gallery: "Whatever programme we did had to project to the politicians that we had something to offer – the gallery had to be popular if not populist, had to

have national status, had to be constantly in the news one way or another by being extreme or being popular with the general public.” This was particularly in relation to generating support for a new gallery but even operated at the level of Bieringa gaining backing from the gallery society. He says the society council liked to see a diverse programme but were also pleased to “feel they were part of an exciting, quite radical institution”.

We have seen how the two Dowse directors created an exhibition and events programme very specifically to win over the sympathies of locals in order to establish the Dowse in the Hutt Valley cultural landscape. Like Bieringa, they provided populist programmes but also organised exhibitions by nationally recognised artists which could give the gallery a reputation outside of the city and so make local politicians realise they possessed an institution of national significance.

The Govett-Brewster had less need to cater to the desires of locals because of the Monica Brewster trust deed, concentrating somewhat more on the “national reputation” argument. One of the advantages of playing this card was that it created a sense that the rest of New Zealand was watching, so attempts to stifle the gallery would be commented on at a national level and reveal the provincialism of those who made such attempts. Hamish Keith, chairperson of the arts council, stepped in to condemn the attitude of local councillors towards McCahon for example, and some of the controversies at the Govett-Brewster, as well as at the Dowse and Manawatu art galleries, were covered in the national newspapers.

Politics operated at a national level too, particularly in relation to arts council or other government funding. As related in chapter five, Bieringa says the Govett-Brewster, Sarjeant, Manawatu, and later the Dowse jointly organised exhibitions partly to undermine the power of the metropolitan galleries and to show bodies like the arts council that smaller galleries were producing the exciting exhibitions and so equally deserving of support.

1970s Society and Culture

Chapters three and four have presented an argument that the 1970s were a time when the ideas of the 1960s were put into action. This follows claims of such chroniclers of American political history and popular culture as Carroll and Kennedy,³² but was also mentioned independently by gallery directors Bieringa and Milbank. Bieringa in particular spoke of being involved in the art scene in Auckland in the ‘60s and of the discussions then about the need for venues for contemporary New Zealand art.

The development of new galleries, and revitalisation in others, reflect the sort of new-dawn, idealistic thinking seen in the Kirk government. Both in turn would seem explained by the post-war generation coming of age. Ministers in the new Labour government were young and well educated and were matched by a new generation of

³² Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*; Kennedy, *Platforms*.

technocrats in the public service. Equally so were the new crop of directors in the 1970s – Bieringa, Maynard, Ballard, Millar, Milbank, Barr, Gorbey, Davies and Perry were all aged around 30 or under when they were appointed and would have been students in the '60s (though slightly older than baby boomers). Only Munro, Brown and O'Reilly amongst the provincial directors belonged to an earlier generation, and the latter two were of a like mind with the younger directors. New developments at the metropolitan galleries may well have been impelled by younger staff too. Certainly the Auckland City Art Gallery's *Project Programme* exhibitions probably wouldn't have happened without John Maynard on staff and the educational activism at the National Art Gallery, as well as its community arts foray, was due to the equally youthful Ian Hunter.

The way the 70s "went personal" might also be explained as a generational consequence – of baby boomers entering long-term personal relationships. Whatever the case, developments in public galleries seem to perfectly echo those of society in general: the interest in self-expression, the perception of society and politics in terms of the self (promoted by feminism), intimate and personal environments, smaller scale enterprises, and the hand-made. Trends in art were similar, and the smaller, less authoritarian venues of the provincial gallery (and dealer galleries) were the perfect place to discover a relationship with art. This can be seen in the architecture of the new galleries. No longer was the aloof temple on the hill, as exemplified by the National Art Gallery or the Sarjeant Gallery, seen as suitable. Considerations for a Govett-Brewster site, for example, were all in the downtown area, and eventually settled not on erecting a grand monument but on refurbishing a cinema. Ceremonial architecture was done away with almost entirely at Manawatu, the entrance being so self-effacing that new visitors still often have difficulty finding it. And at Nelson and Gisborne human-scaled wooden buildings were constructed that allowed the social activity of wining and dining to be associated with art.

Activism and challenges to authority, as seen in the protests of the 70s amongst environmentalists, feminists, Maori, and anti-nuclear campaigners, was also reflected in galleries, as covered above. It was also at times seen in art, as artists challenged established notions of subject matter, form and artistic media. At the most extreme, post-object artists like David Mealing made art that dealt with social issues and involved the community (*plate 4.1*). Contemporary art challenged tradition and "the establishment" in a way that is less easy to do now. For provincial galleries, showing contemporary art and being involved in community activities thus had a greater compatibility than it does today. Challenging the big galleries by organising the sort of exhibitions they should have been doing and collecting works they were failing to acquire was also part of this anti-establishment activity.

The backlash against social protest in the Muldoon era was perhaps the response of an older generation who finally decided to keep quiet no longer as they saw their values persistently under attack. For galleries the parallel came in the attacks by city councillors, art societies, and others in the community, though here the response was less delayed.

A wave of interest in community involvement with art occurred in the seventies. This is most obviously represented by the arts council's setting up of the regional/community arts council system. The creation of the Council for Recreation and Sport would appear to be another symptom of an interest in community during the '70s. The activities of galleries like Manawatu, Wairarapa and the Dowse seem to be early expressions of this drive to community involvement.

Finally, we have seen under *Innovation* above, and in chapters three and four, that new artistic concerns made art more relevant to younger New Zealanders in the '60s and '70s. This, and the new, democratic forms of art which became popular in the period, must have been an enabling force, creating a demand for accessible places to see such work – places like public art galleries.

The Nature of Organisations

The very youth of the galleries considered was undoubtedly a large influence on their character. They seem to share all the entrepreneurial characteristics of businesses before they become institutionalised as corporations. Emerging organisations typically have an energetic, opportunity-seeking spirit, as we have seen amongst the leading provincial galleries. They also tend to lack the inertial burden of reporting structures, administration, and extensive assets and are characterised by the strong leadership of club cultures as noted above under *Professionalism*. LeRoy Thomson says that opportunities also typically outweigh capabilities and decisions are driven by the immediacy of these opportunities.³³ But, he says, a crunch time will come if an organisation succeeds too quickly and lacks the infrastructure to sustain the momentum. Such a case of ambition outstripping resources occurred at the Manawatu Art Gallery in the early '70s as Bieringa found he could not achieve everything he wanted single-handed. What is needed before this stage is reached, says Thompson, is the development of a clear vision of where the organisation is headed and how it will accomplish this. Maynard was denied the chance to begin operating a gallery immediately and so had time to spend on this area, when normally such work would come a little later.

The “expanding” stage follows emergence, says Thompson, and here continuous improvements are made to products and processes. Again, as noted above (under *Energy*) the focus galleries did not increase their exhibition output when they gained more staff but appear to have consolidated instead.

As for the more static institutions, some appear to have remained in a state of arrested development for many years. The National, Robert McDougall and Sarjeant galleries were starved of resources and as institutions which did not evolve naturally but were imposed, they also lacked the motivated, energetic, and often charismatic leadership of club cultures. Had they been businesses they would have died in the

³³ Thompson, *Mastering the Challenges of Change*, pp. 6–14.

marketplace, but as formally constituted bodies they could be kept alive in a semi-comatose state with a drip feed of funds. They reached Thomson's "mature" stage of development without fully passing through emerging and expanding stages and typifying Thomson's claim that mature organisations often fall asleep at the wheel, losing contact with the wants and needs of their customers or constituents.³⁴ When they were revived they essentially started again, working through the emerging and expanding phases simultaneously roughly concurrently with the provincial galleries.

Summary

The four hypotheses stated in the *Introduction* have now been demonstrated as substantially true: the 1970s were a quantum leap period in the founding, developing, renewing and professionalising of New Zealand art galleries. The period was marked both by building activity and by a shift from the operation of galleries by amateurs, or those with amateur mind-sets, to management by professionals. There was a trend towards public orientation and community involvement, especially in the smaller galleries, but also amongst the metropolitan institutions. With this orientation went energy, innovation, activism, and controversy, especially at the three focus galleries, but again across the board (in the first three areas at least). And finally, there was an increased engagement with contemporary art by public galleries, both in collecting and exhibiting. This was a trend which had begun in the sixties, but became much more pronounced in the seventies.

³⁴ *Mastering the Challenges of Change*, pp. 7, 11.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

Conclusions related to the original hypotheses have been dealt with in the previous chapter. However, there are also some higher level conclusions pointed to by the evidence presented in this thesis and these are discussed here. Before reaching this point though, some further historical contextualising of the 1970s is necessary, for while the decades before the seventies have been considered, the period since has not.

Did the changes in public galleries that began in the 60s (or even '50s) and boomed in the '70s, continue afterwards? Or did the 1970s developments simply fizzle out? Given typical patterns of organisational growth, the answer is not unexpected: institutionalisation set in amongst the new or renewed 1970s galleries; further galleries emerged to repeat the 1970s successes in virgin territories; the metropolitans continued a process of renewal; and there were mergers.

Institutionalisation did not occur immediately. The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery continued under Dick Bett until 1984 with the high level of “out in the community” activities he was known for. An energetic programme of social activity continued also at the Dowse under the directorship of James Mack. The museum wing was turned into a large gallery space and a series of extravagant exhibitions which mixed art and social history mounted there, expanding on a trend set by Jim Barr. Mack also built on the strong crafts orientation of the Dowse and radically changed its collection policy to focus entirely on a contemporary conception of craft (which included photography and printmaking). Dowse exhibitions tended to follow this direction as well. Manawatu also became extremely community engaged for a time under leftist director Peter Purdue. However, the gallery society objected to Purdue’s alienation of more conservative audiences, as well as his loose administrative style, and dismissed him in 1983 in a storm of controversy.

All three galleries then went into lower key relationships with their local communities. The situation at Manawatu seems similar to that at the Govett-Brewster after Maynard departed, locals preferring a quieter style of operation for a time. The emphasis shifted more to connoisseurship and to being an accessible venue for local and younger artists. At the Govett-Brewster, community activity was pulled back by director Cheryll Sotheran in favour of exhibitions presented in ways which themselves allowed community access. Then following directors in the 1990s steered the gallery back closer

to the straightforward contemporary emphasis of the 1970s, with fewer concessions to local audiences. At the Dowse, director Bob Maysmor seems to have reduced the high level of activity and community involvement of Mack but continued with the craft theme, particularly promoting the idea of the Dowse as a niche player on a national scene.

Finding a niche identity was another aspect of provincial gallery maturity. As provincial galleries grew they tended to become more alike – to have similar exhibitions, to own similar collections, and to appear as simply scaled-down versions of the metropolitan galleries. Some tried to develop a distinctive character or brand as a way out of this position. The Govett-Brewster already had its contemporary identity and the Dowse sought one as the craft specialist. The Sarjeant Gallery decided to collect in depth on a limited number of artists rather than try and cover the whole field and this was a direction at Manawatu for a time in the mid-1980s. However, while adopting complementary roles made sense at national level, such moves meant little to local audiences. Dissatisfaction in the Hutt Valley, for example, led to the city council commissioning a report on the Dowse in 1998 which proposed a return to community for the gallery.¹

Growth for the provincial galleries also meant they gained further staff, developed specialised positions within their staffing structures, expanded their collections, improved collection management, and offered more structured programmes, particularly in the area of education. They became institutionalised as they entered Thompson's expanding stage of improving products and processes, and some arguably entered the mature stage of organisations where risks of losing touch with customers arise.

Part of this maturing process was a narrowing of focus to the business of being an art gallery rather than a community centre, as complementary arts and culture organisations in the respective cities either formed or matured and it was no longer necessary for the art gallery to be the sole venue for arts activity. Community arts councils were a particular instance, so that now most centres have a division of focus whereby the arts councils concentrate on involving people with art activity (regardless of quality) while the public galleries direct themselves towards displaying works of excellence.

At the same time as provincial galleries matured, new ones sprang up. These filled niches left by the large and, by now, medium sized galleries, both in terms of locality and art. They were part of the process seen in chapter eight for the formation of public art galleries, where galleries formed in successively smaller cities and towns as each larger centre gained a gallery. As listed in *fig 1.2*, such galleries included those developed in smaller centres like Gore, Greymouth and Oamaru in the 1980s, as well as those founded in new cities within large urban areas, such as Manukau City, Waitakere and Porirua.² The Wellington City Art Gallery may also be counted amongst these

¹ Price Waterhouse, *Hutt City Council Museums Strategic Review*, 1998.

² Eastern Southland Gallery (Gore), Left Bank Art Gallery (Greymouth), Forrester Gallery (Oamaru), Fisher Gallery (Manukau City), Lopdell House Gallery (Waitakere City), Page 90 Artspace (Porirua).

latter, for each was a civic rather than regional or provincial gallery. Of the larger regional centres without a gallery, Whangarei gained a gallery in 1996 but Tauranga and Blenheim remain anomalies, though moves have been made to establish galleries in each centre recently.

As newer, smaller galleries, many of the above took on the earlier mantle of galleries like the Manawatu Art Gallery, Govett-Brewster and Dowse, now that these three had found respectability. The Fisher Gallery and Lopdell House, for example, with staff of two or three each, including energetic directors, have created a reputation for intensive community involvement while also curating exciting and innovative exhibitions, sometimes of national significance. The Wellington City Art Galley (now retitled City Gallery, Wellington) began in a similar manner, with a strong populist and community oriented flavour in the early eighties, though repositioned itself as a sophisticated, contemporary space later in the decade and especially once it gained new premises.

Wellington City Art Galley's shift signals a further development in New Zealand public galleries: an emphasis away from community to the sophistication of contemporary art. This reflects the escalation of trends noted in chapters three and four of New Zealanders' increasing sophistication and level of education. Art education at tertiary level, for example, exploded in volume during the late 1980s and into the '90s, with the result that the number of artists and intended audiences has continued to grow exponentially since the 1970s. Public galleries responded to such trends by shifting emphasis or developing contemporary adjuncts. The National Art Gallery operated The Temporary/ Contemporary space in the late eighties, the McDougall opened the contemporary Art Annexe in 1989, the Auckland City Art Gallery opened its New Gallery devoted to contemporary art in 1995, and the Dunedin Public Art Gallery took a more contemporary turn in the 1990s. Of provincial galleries, the Govett-Brewster already occupied this territory but the Waikato Museum of Art and History, aided by the Chartwell Trust, entered as well in the late 1980s. Added to this were the contemporary oriented Fisher Gallery and Lopdell House, and new "cutting edge" arts council-funded contemporary spaces of Artspace in Auckland and, more recently, a Christchurch counterpart, The Physics Room. If this were not enough, artist-run spaces such Teststrip, the Honeymoon Suite (both now defunct), Fiat Lux and the High Street Project were opened in the 1990s, as were dealers who exhibited similar work such as Wellington's Hamish McKay Gallery and Auckland's Ivan Anthony Gallery.

Alongside the proliferation of new galleries and the emphasis on the contemporary, some of the biggest changes since the 1970s have, or are, occurring in the metropolitan institutions, both in museums and art galleries. The most obvious and notable example is, of course, the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa with its integration of an art and history/natural environment museum. Major developments have occurred at the Auckland Art Gallery (with its New Gallery and refurbishments), Dunedin Public Art Gallery and City Gallery, Wellington (both new facilities), and the Robert McDougall Art Gallery will soon have a new building. These developments, particularly those at Te Papa, give lie to the view expressed earlier that significant change most often occurs at

the margins. However, aside from Te Papa, whether these changes are truly significant or simply expensive window dressing to restore the prestige of the “temple on the hill” to an urban ‘90s ethos is another question.

Te Papa also represents another recent trend, that of “merging”. Combining art galleries and museums is nothing new in New Zealand, as we have seen in the case of the Waikato Art Museum and other integrated institutions. But the quest for greater efficiencies by controlling authorities seems to have accelerated in the nineties. It began with the merger of the Hastings Cultural Centre and Hawke’s Bay Art Gallery and Museum into the Hawke’s Bay Cultural Trust in 1989, and was followed in the mid-‘90s with mergers of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery with the Otago Early Settlers Museum, the Manawatu Art Gallery with The Science Centre and Manawatu Museum, Waikato Museum of Art and History with the Hamilton Public Library, Page 90 Gallery with Porirua Museum, the development of the Wellington Museums Trust, including City Gallery, Wellington, and currently talk of merging the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and Taranaki Museum.

These, then, are some of the outward changes that have occurred in public galleries since the seventies, but there have been internal ones as well. Worldwide, museums have become more market than mission driven from the 1980s. Marketing departments have appeared in large museums and what were formerly thought of as museum services have been commodified into “products” such as exhibitions, research, public programmes, and spaces for hire that can be “sold” to target markets.³ The adoption of business models of management and greater accountability has been forced on museums by legislation by and the need to generate more of their own funds. Where a generation ago museums were measured by inputs – how well resourced they were and how good the collection was – from the 1970s there has been a shift to formal performance measurement of outputs and outcomes: how many people visit and how satisfied they are. In New Zealand the use of attendance figures as measures of value has led to the blockbuster phenomenon spreading beyond the Auckland City Art Gallery to the other three main centres (where there are large enough audiences to support such expensive exhibitions). Performance measurement has also meant more calculated and precise programming. The contemporary move at the Auckland Art Gallery and McDougall, for example, has been carried out carefully, with such art “cordoned off” from traditional work so as not to alienate either traditional or contemporary audiences. Audience surveys enable galleries to find out what attracts visitors and to deliver according to their needs and wants. The sort of informal public and community interaction seen at the focus galleries in the seventies is now institutionalised, with education specialists delivering structured education and interactive programmes. In the face of post-modernist and new-right thinking which promotes a plurality of communities and prioritises the rights of individuals to access services they are paying for via their taxes

³ Harrison, “Museums in the 1990s”, p. 165.

or rates, the leftist-inspired, intuitive, blanket approach of seventies galleries now looks presumptuous, patronising and totalising, despite its anti-establishment origins.

In summary, since the seventies there has been an institutionalising of provincial galleries, the appearance of new galleries to fill entrepreneurial roles, the physical renewal and pre-occupation with the contemporary by the metropolitan galleries, and a refinement of the definition of the public. In all these things there is a degree of continuity with the seventies.

The seventies also had some continuity with what had gone before. This thesis set out to show that the 1970s were a watershed period for New Zealand galleries and that radical approaches were practised in the smaller, mostly provincial, galleries. While this seems broadly true, what the research has also shown is that the gallery developments the 1970s are known for began in the 1960s (and even the 1950s for the Auckland City Art Gallery). And, that radical practices in the seventies were not only seen at the provincials but in metropolitan galleries as well.

These findings would suggest that the rhetoric associated with provincial galleries in the 1970s has disguised similar developments in other institutions and periods as well as the ongoing patterns of evolutionary change. In particular, it obscures the fact that each generation understands “public orientation” in its own way. A New Zealand gallery in the 1930s, for example, would have seen itself as publicly directed in presenting long-term exhibitions, lectures and perhaps some interpretation via a catalogue. Indeed, if audiences in the 1930s were offered the quick-change exhibition programmes and activities of today they may well have found them bewildering and unbecoming of an institution with the status and prestige of a public art gallery. But for the audiences of the 1970s – vastly better educated, more aware of the world beyond these shores, and more culturally diverse – where the approach of the 1930s still prevailed it looked elitist, dull and tradition-bound. They expected reform and embraced it when it occurred.

Chapter two suggested that internationally there has been an increasing trend towards public orientation of museums over time, though also that this has been in conflict with traditional, elitist values. Whether this increase has really occurred across all museums, and not just amongst exceptional models repeatedly held up as exemplary, might be arguable, but what is certain is that the rhetoric of reform for museums – for them to be accessible to all and, more recently, to represent the cultures and values of the different sectors of the public – has been going on for around 100 years or more. Bennett suggests that talk of reform has existed precisely because (as described by Bourdieu),⁴ regardless of how democratic museums may appear, the social function of museums has been to exclude, to create social distinction.⁵ Bennett derives his idea by analogy from Foucault, who claims that calls to reform the prison, however well intentioned, will be perpetual, so long as the effective social function of the prison is to divide off a social

⁴ For example, Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

⁵ Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*: pp.89-102.

underclass rather than rehabilitate individuals. To the extent, then, that museums are perceived to be reinforcing social divisions, there will be pressure for reform, for museums to be inclusive. And while reform may well follow rhetoric it will only deal with the ways that people at the time understand museums to be divisive, and the social machine will constantly find new and less visible ways to harness its institutions to create social stratification. That is, there will always be a lag between social effect and the perception of that effect.

The way elitism keeps creeping back in is suggested by Zolberg.⁶ She maintains that while art museums in the US have continued to represent high cultural status values, the effect of fostering appreciation in a broad public at the same time has been that the middle classes have grown increasingly sophisticated and now demand higher standards from museums of display, scholarliness and education, “decrying the amateurishness of the inheritors of wealth” as much as they do the “obstreperousness of a mass public”. This new sophisticated public is now “claiming legitimacy for its own distinction as a status group in relation on the one hand to dominant elites and on the other to the unsophisticated public, new to the museum world”.

Such an observation seems particularly relevant to the emergence of art galleries supported and driven by a young, educated, middle-class group in provincial towns in New Zealand in the 1970s. The directors of these institutions may have positioned themselves against traditional elites (the “inheritors of wealth”) but their audiences consisted of a new (if considerably larger) elite – the young and well-educated. Other sectors of the population, such as most Maori for example, were not generally catered for. In fact, it might be argued, they were actively excluded by art and gallery architecture which spoke of intellectual sophistication. Today, the young and well educated are still a driving force, albeit of a new generation, explaining the volume of contemporary art seen in public galleries and the existence of exclusively contemporary institutions like City Gallery Wellington by which urban sophisticates can define a social identity.

Despite, then, all the public orientation of the seventies, including such radical activities as outreach programmes, the need to be more publicly oriented (“customer focused” in the parlance of today) continues to be talked about as much as ever. Each generation renews the language in order to keep its ideological screening effect invisible and notions of public orientation suffer perpetual inflation.

⁶ Vera L. Zolberg, “Tensions of Mission in American Art Museums”, *Non-profit Enterprise in the Arts: Studies in Mission and Constraint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986): p.196.

Appendix

Manawatu Art Gallery Exhibitions*

– 1970 –

Paintings from the Collection	5 Jan - 1970
Petrus van der Velden (1837-1913) Organised and toured by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery.	8 Jan - 6 Feb 1970
Raymond McIntyre (1879-1933) Paintings, drawings, prints. From the National Art Gallery collection.	8 Feb - 27 Feb 1970
Maori in Focus Aka Pakeha Focus . 40 mostly pre-WWI photographs selected by Ian North from the National Museum. Toured to Gisborne Library, New Plymouth, Masterton, Christchurch.	1 Mar - 13 Mar 1970
M T Woollaston Recent watercolours. Catalogue.	15 Mar - 3 Apr 1970
T'ang, Sung, Sawankhalok, Ming, Anam Pottery from 14th & 15th centuries from Thailand. From a Wellington private collection.	5 Apr - 17 Apr 1970
Australian, Japanese and NZ Prints Australian and Japanese prints from the Robert McDougall Art Gallery collection, NZ from the Manawatu Art Gallery collection.	19 Apr - 8 May 1970
NZ Art of the Sixties: A Royal Visit Exhibition 34 painters, 7 printmakers, 5 sculptors, 17 potters. Organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery with the arts council, from public collections. Catalogue.	10 May - 22 May 1970
Permanent Collection Featuring Mina Arndt.	24 May - 29 May 1970
Benson and Hedges Art Award Touring exhibition, opening at the Auckland City Art Gallery. Selected by Eric Westbrook. Won by Susan Chaytor. Travelled to Dunedin, Christchurch (CSA), Palmerston North, Wellington (NZAFA), Napier and Hamilton.	31 May - 12 Jun 1970
Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition Catalogue.	14 Jun - 26 Jun 1970
European Painting from 1900 to 1925 UNESCO touring exhibition of 90 reproductions. Catalogue.	5 Jul - 17 Jul 1970
Manawatu Pottery Society Guest potter Doreen Blumhardt. Catalogue.	21 Jul - 28 Aug 1970
High Schools Exhibition Local high schools, organised jointly with Queen Elizabeth College Art Dept. Sponsored by Rotary. Catalogue.	16 Aug - 28 Aug 1970
W.A. Sutton Paintings. Catalogue.	30 Aug - 11 Sep 1970

* Unless marked by an asterisk, all items in the following lists have been confirmed by retrospective reports (e.g. director's reports and annual reports)

- James Cook** 13 Sep - 25 Sep 1970
13 pencil drawings from the collection.
- Manawatu Centennial Prize for Contemporary Art** 26 Sep - 14 Oct 1970
Pat Hanly winner, judged by Hamish Keith. Included Illingworth, Wong, Smither, McFarlane, Harris, Hotere, Thorburn, Trusttum. Toured to Christchurch, Hamilton, Rotorua Society of Arts.
- Permanent Collection** 19 Oct - 25 Oct 1970
- A Japanese Environment** 29 Oct - 13 Nov 1970
Japanese items - woodcarving, ceramics, embroidery and prints - from the collection of Mr & Mrs Paul Knight.
- Ted Francis** 15 Nov - 4 Dec 1970
Christchurch artist, senior lecturer in painting at University of Canterbury.
- Invited Potters 1970** 6 Dec - 20 Dec 1970
Nola Barron, David Brokenshire, Barry Brickell, Len Castle, Roy Cowan, John Fuller, Ian Grey-Smith, Juliet Peter, Mirek Smisek, Graeme Storm. Catalogue.
- Paintings by Gavin and Vivian Bishop** 15 Nov - 3 Dec 1970
- Also:
- Pahiatua Exhibition 1970** 2 Nov - 6 Nov 1970
Venue in Pahiatua. Comprising selection from Manawatu Centennial Prize Exhibition, plus Stan Jenkins ceramics and Bridget Smeeton weaving.

– 1971 –

- Permanent Collection** 7 Jan - 5 Feb 1971
- Mexican Bark Paintings** 7 Jan - 5 Feb 1971
From collection of Dr Ruth Irma Bing of Mexico City.
- Student Painting: Gerda Leenards** 7 Jan - 5 Feb 1971
- James Dornan: The Teeming Brain** 7 Feb - 19 Feb 1971
Wairoa artist.
- Hanly's Hanlys** 21 Feb - 11 Mar 1971
Aka *Patrick Hanly: Paintings*. Paintings and drawings.
- 19th Century NZ Photography** 14 Mar - 25 Mar 1971
Organised and toured by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
- Centenary Collection Purchase Exhibition** 4 Apr - 23 Apr 1971
Toured to Rotorua Society of Arts gallery. Work selected by Gordon Brown, Ian North, Keith Thomson and Robert Hooker (Awapuni Jaycees, sponsors of the purchases).
- Under the Sun: Primary and Intermediate School Students** 25 Apr - 30 Apr 1971
Art made for projection during performance of Jenny McLeod's "total theatre" composition, Under the Sun.

- Manawatu Centennial Photography Exhibition** 2 May - 7 May 1971
Organised by Manawatu Camera Club as a Centennial Project.
- Young Auckland Painters - Plus One** 9 May - 28 May 1971
David Mealing, John Nicol, Geoffrey Tune, Richard Killeen, Roy Good, Denys Watkins. (The 'plus one' is Watkins). Selected from Barry Lett Gallery stable. Catalogue.
- Seven Christchurch Sculptors** 23 May - 4 Jun 1971
Invited sculptors from the Sculptors Group, Christchurch. Included Nola Barron, Eric Doudney, David Jackson, Jack Nutall, Carl Sydow, John Turner.
- Permanent Collection** 30 May - 11 Jun 1971
Portraits and figures.
- NZ Society of Sculptors and Painters Touring Exhibition** 14 Jun - 25 Jun 1971
30 works by c.20 artists. Including Twiss, Beadle, W. Allen, Szirmay, Narby, Matchitt.
- David Armitage** 27 Jun - 16 Jul 1971
Catalogue.
- Dominion Schools Art Exhibition** 18 Jul - 6 Aug 1971
Organised Wairarapa Arts Foundation with Dept of Education and sponsored by Wellington Newspapers Ltd.
- Paintings From Private Collections** 8 Aug - 13 Aug 1971
- NZ Universities Art Festival Exhibition** 15 Aug - 27 Aug 1971
Opened at Manawatu Art Gallery, judged by Ray Thorburn.
- Photography 1971** 29 Aug - 17 Sep 1971
Organised WAG. Includes John Fields, Roy Long, Ans Westra, Mac Millar, Richard Collins, Michael Hawkins, and Bryan James.
- Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition** 19 Sep - 1 Oct 1971
- Manawatu Pottery Society Exhibition** 3 Oct - 22 Oct 1971
- Permanent and Impermanent Forms** 24 Oct - 3 Nov 1971
Touring exhibition of photographs of space/time works by sculpture by Elam students.
- Print Pac Manawatu Prize 1971** Nov 1971
Prints only. Winners John Drawbridge, Robin White, Barry Cleavin. Toured to 11 other galleries.
- The Kim Wright Collection of NZ Painting** 28 Nov - 18 Dec 1971
Previously shown at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. Includes, McCahon, Angus, Peebles, Hanly and others.
- John Kinder** 19 - 24 Dec 1971 and 3 - 14 Jan 1972
Watercolours from the collection of Dr Watson-Ferrier, Turangi. Organised by Gordon Brown.
- Also
- Pahiatua Arts Festival** 27 Sept - 3 Oct 1971
Held in Pahiatua but organised by Manawatu Art Gallery Society. Guest artists David Carson Parker (ceramics), Tanya Ashken (sculpture), Ans Loma (weaving).

– 1972 –

- International Road Safety Posters** 16 Jan - 28 Jan 1972
From the Department of Transport.
- John Panting: Prints, Drawings, Sculpture** 30 Jan - 18 Feb 1972
Catalogue. Toured to the Wairarapa Arts Centre, Sarjeant Gallery, and Govett-Brewster, Waikato, Barry Lett, Dowse, McDougall, Dunedin Public art galleries.
- 19th and 20th Century French Prints** 20 Feb - 8 Mar 1972
Picasso, Renoir, and others. From the Auckland City Art Gallery collection.
- Contemporary French Tapestries** 13 Mar - 30 Mar 1972
From the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation Collection. Displayed at Centennial Pavillion as well as Gallery.
- Acquisitions 1971-72** 5 Apr - 30 Apr 1972
c.30 works, including the Centenary Collection.
- Olympic Posters** 2 May - 4 May 1972
15 posters commissioned for the 1972 Olympic Games from major European artists. Touring exhibition?
- Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition** 6 May - 25 May 1972
Michael Smither guest exhibitor. Catalogue.
- Third National Exhibition of Prints** 28 May - 9 Jun 1972
- Edith Collier & Marion Tylee** 11 Jun - 21 Jun 1972*
- Nelson Thompson & Sonia Juriss** 11 Jun - 22 Jun 1972
Watercolours and drawing.
- Invited Potters** 29 Jun - 16 Jul 1972
Peter Stitchbury, B Cornish, Wilf Wright, Martin and Nancy Beck, Denys Hadfield, B Brickell, Brian Gartside, Carl Vendenbosch, Warren Tippett.
- 18 x 22** 19 Jul - 11 Aug 1972
Aka *Boxed Top Art*. Exhibition of 18x22" paintings organised by Illinois State University, USA, toured by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
- Max Oettli: Photographer** 19 Jul - 11 Aug 1972
- Manawatu Secondary Schools Art Exhibition** 13 Aug - 23 Aug 1972
- John Hutton** 27 Aug - 6 Sep 1972
Expatriate NZer living in UK. Drawings, engraved glass, paintings and engraved glass panels. Organised by the National Art Gallery and toured by the arts council.
- Bill Brandt Photography** 14 Sep - 28 1972
aka *The Photography of Bill Brandt*, from MoMA collection, toured to 3 NZ venues.
- Colin McCahon: A Survey Exhibition** Part I: 1 Oct-15 Oct 1972; Part II: 18 Oct-27 Oct 1972
150 works, hung in two stages due to space requirements. Organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery and toured with arts council assistance.

Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition 169 exhibits in 7th annual exhibition.	4 Nov - 22 Nov 1972
Manawatu Prize for Contemporary Art Judged by James Mack, won by David Armitage. Probably toured.	26 Nov - 10 Dec 1972
National Bank Art Workshop 1973 Work from Wellington workshop for senior secondary school students sponsored and organised by National Bank and Dept Education, with McCahon, Coolahan and Drawbridge as tutors.	13 Dec - 24 Dec 1972
Pedra Zandegrocomo Monoprints	14 Dec - 24 Dec 1972
– 1973 –	
Italian Graphic Art From the National Modern Contemporary [sic] Art Gallery, Rome, toured by the National Art Gallery.	2 Jan - 18 Jan 1973
NZ Painting 1900-1920: Traditions and Departures Organised by Hocken Library for the arts council.	20 Jan - 13 Feb 1973
Recent Acquisitions	14 Feb - 28 Feb 1973
Michael Smither 28 paintings.	3 Mar - 16 Mar 1973
The Art of Indonesia and Batik Painting by Bambang Oetoro Organised by the Manawatu Art Gallery from public and private collections. Catalogue.	19 Mar - 4 Apr 1973
New Photography USA 10 photographers, 110 works, from MoMA, NY. NZ tour organised by Auckland City Art Gallery.	8 Apr - 22 Apr 1973
Paris Biennale Prints Prints selected for exhibition in Paris. Robin White, Barry Cleavin, John Lethbridge, Denys Watkins, Mervyn Williams, Gary Tricker, Ray Thorburn.	24 Apr - 2 May 1973
Permanent Collection	24 Apr - 3 May 1973*
Permanent Collection Shown at Pavillion during Festival of the Arts.	22 May - 1 Jun 1973
Toys by Artists 10 toys commissioned by Bonnier International from Swedish artists, brought to NZ & toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery. Exhibited in the Centennial Pavillion.	22 May - 15 Jun 1973
Contemporary Australian Paintings and Sculpture 1973 42 works by George Baldessin, Eunter Christmann, Donald Laycock, Clement Meadmore, Alan Oldfield, Ewa Pachuka, Peter Powditch, Brett Whitely, organised by Australian Arts Advisory Council with arts council, curated by Margaret MacKean (now Taylor).	5 May - 18 May 1973
Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum, USA, 1600-1900 Poussin, Ingres, Delacroix, Millet, Degas, Cezanne, Roualt, etc. Organised by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery with the arts council.	20 May - 10 Jun 1973

- Ans Westra** ? - 10 Jun 1973
Dowse touring exhibition? Shown as part of the Arts Festival.
- Clive Stone** May – 15 Jun 1973
A Manawatu Art Gallery exhibition shown at Massey University as part of the Arts Festival.
- Permanent Collection** Jun - Jul 1973
- Contemporary Ceramics 1973** 12 Jun - 1 Jul 1973
21 potters. Catalogue.
- Manawatu Review** 3 Jun - 15 Jun 1973
Frank Davis, Natalie Woodhams, Ray Thorburn.
- Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition** 5 Jul - 15 Jul 1973
- Beatrix H. Russell Bequest Exhibition** 17 Jul - 25 Jul 1973
With furniture display by the Manawatu Museum Society.
- M.T. Woollaston: Works 1933-1973** 5 Aug - 29 Aug 1973
A survey of 98 paintings and drawings. Organised by Manawatu Art Gallery and toured with arts council assistance. Venues included Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, National Art Gallery, Waikato Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Hundertwasser: Paintings and Prints** 2 Sep - 21 Sep 1973
Fredrich Hundertwasser. Touring exhibition organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery.
- David Aitken: Environment Ketetahi - Photographs and Sound** 23 Sep - 5 Oct 1973
- The Watercolours of Alfred Sharpe** 7 Oct - 22 Oct 1973
Organised by ACAG from public and private collections in Australasia.
- Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition** Oct - Nov 1973
Guest exhibitor Anneke Borren.
- Zonta Print Exhibition** 5 Nov - 21 Nov 1973
Tanya Asken, Barry Cleavin, Kate Coolahan, Gordon Crook, John Drawbridge, Ralph Hotere, John Lethbridge, Colin McCahon, Guy Ngan, Collette Rands, Susan Skerman, Gordon Walters, Robin White.
- Drawings Invitational** 18 Nov - 2 Dec 1973
150 works, by over 60 artists, e.g. Gretchen Albrecht, David Armitage, Ted Bullmore, Pat Hanly, Louise Henderson, Ralph Hotere, John Lethbridge, Doris Lusk, Para Matchitt, Jan & Gary Nigro, Greer Twiss and Robin White. Catalogue. Toured?
- Photography by Leith Jennings and Jim Payne** 4 Dec - 21 Dec 1973
40 prints each. Jennings Palmerston North teacher, Payne Wellington photographer.
- Pots from Private Collections and Pots for Auction** 4 Dec - 9 Dec 1973

Also:

- Pahiatua Exhibition: Barbara Hepworth** 10 Oct - 14 Oct 1973
Organised by Pahiatua Committee of Manawatu Art Gallery Society and held in Pahiatua. Also showing as guest exhibitors: Anneke Borren (pottery), Gude Moller (weaving), Brian Grouden (toys), Michael Smither (prints), Kobi Bosshard (jewellery).

– 1974 –

- A Gallery at Work: The Permanent Collection** 2 Jan - 23 Jan 1974
- Tamarind: Homage to Lithography from the Museum of Modern Art** 26 Jan - 10 Feb 1974
Organised by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
- Engravings by John Buckland Wright** 13 Feb - 24 Feb 1974
Expatriate NZ illustrator living in the UK. Organised by Waikato Art Museum and toured by the arts council.
- Fourth National Print Council Touring Exhibition** 13 Feb - 20 Feb 1974
24 printmakers, featuring work by John Buckland Wright.
- Early Views of Manawatu** 3 Mar - 24 Mar 1974
Barraud, Linley-Rcihardson, W.G. Baker, E. Swainson, William Fox, T.R. Attwood and others.
- Scultura Italiana** 30 Mar - 28 Apr 1974
60 works by contemporary Italian sculptors from the Peter Stuyvesant collection. Toured with arts council assistance.
- Ray Thorburn: A Survey** May 1974*
May have been shown at Massey.
- Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition** 2 May - 19 May 1974
- Balinese Folk Art** 23 May - 16 Jun 1974
From a private collection, organised by Waikato Art Museum with arts council assistance.
- Contemporary Ceramics 1974** 20 Jun - 7 Jul 1974
Seven potters invited to select their own co-exhibitors.
- Ralph Hotere: 1963-1973** 11 Jul - 28 Jul 1974
Survey exhibition organised by Dunedin Public Art Gallery and toured with arts council assistance.
- Frank Davis** 30 Jul - 9 Aug 1974
Paintings, photographs, screen dyed fabrics.
- Aboriginal Bark Paintings** 11 Aug - 25 Aug 1974
37 paintings organised by Art Gallery of South Australia, toured by the National Art Gallery.
- Manawatu Review** 28 Aug - 12 Sep 1974
Work by 11 young local artists: Susan Artner, Andrew Drummond, Alan McIntyre, John Patterson, Roger Smith, Sam and Jim Tomlin, Jenny Vidgen, Malcolm Warr, Brian Wenmouth, Natalie Woodhams.
- Michael Eaton: Paintings** 15 Sep - 29 Sep 1974
Christchurch painter.

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| Nigerian Sculpture
From Ron O'Reilly collection of the Canterbury Museum.
Manawatu Art Gallery organised. Catalogue. | 2 Oct - 24 Oct 1974 |
| John Coley
Paintings. | 27 Oct - 7 Nov 1974 |
| Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition | 10 Nov - 24 Nov 1974 |
| Playthings
40 artists, craftspeople, designers and toymakers were invited to submit a plaything (organised by the Manawatu Art Gallery?) | 27 Nov - 22 Dec 1974 |
| - 1975 - | |
| Eskimo Prints and Canadian Arts and Crafts
29 "Eskimo" sealskin stencils and stone-cut prints plus contemporary jewellery, ceramics, and artefacts. Organised by Canadian High Commission. | 3 Jan - 12 Jan 1975 |
| NZ Print Council Fifth National Tour | 15 Jan - 24 Jan 1975 |
| Pottery Summer School Ceramics Exhibition
Summer workshop tutors exhibition: Roy Cowan, Brian Gartside, Mirek Smisek, Stan Jenkins, plus Australian guest exhibitor Leonie Ryan. | 15 Jan - ? 1975 |
| David Armitage Part I & II
Survey exhibition of 68 works organised by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, toured by the arts council. | 26 Jan - 19 Feb 1975 |
| Permanent Collection | 22 Feb - 28 Feb 1975 |
| Betty Kent Drawings and Paintings
Paintings, drawings and prints by Californian artist, formerly of Palmerston North. | 2 Mar - 21 Mar 1975 |
| McCahon: Religious Works 1946-1952
Toured to Auckland City Art Gallery and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery by the Manawatu Art Gallery at least. Catalogue. | 23 Mar - 14 Apr 1975 |
| Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition
Guest artist Barry Cleavin. | 17 Apr - 30 Apr 1975 |
| The Active Eye: Contemporary NZ Photography
Organised with PhotoForum, toured to 11 venues (possibly 12). | 4 May - 18 May 1975 |
| William Blake
Illustrations of Grey's poems. British Council organised. | May 1975 |
| Raymond McIntyre
Paintings, drawings, watercolours. From the National Art Gallery collection. Catalogue. | 24 May - 29 Jun 1975 |
| Pat Hanly: Drawings 1956-1973
60 drawings from the artists collection. Toured to the Sarjeant Gallery, Barry Lett Gallery, the Wairarapa Arts Centre, and to New Plymouth, Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch, Timaru and Dunedin. | 6 Jul - 27 Jul 1975 |

- Face Value: A study in Maori portraiture** 31 Jul - 17 Aug 1975
Work by European artists such as Goldie, Lindauer, Angas, etc.
Organised by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition** 28 Aug - 7 Sep 1975
Guest exhibitor Barry Ball and Frank Davis guest screenprint exhibitor.
- Manawatu Review** 11 Sep - 30 Sep 1975
Local artists.
- Wellington Weavers** Oct 1975
- Frank Martin: The Movies** 25 Oct - 16 Nov 1975
Etchings and woodcuts by English artist depicting the movies.
Toured by Waikato Art Museum.
- Women's Suffrage** 19 Nov - 7 Dec 1975
Photographs, cartoons, posters and notices from the Turnbull and Auckland Public Library and Auckland Museum. Organised and toured by Waikato Art Museum.
- Netherlands Posters 1945-1970** 12 Dec - 23 Dec 1975
57 posters organised by Royal Netherlands Embassy.
- Permanent Collection** Dec 1975 - Jan 1976
- Also:
- Pahiatua Rembrandt Arts Festival** Oct 1975
Rembrandt etchings from the National Art Gallery, plus crafts, etc.
Organised by Pahiatua Committee of the Manawatu Art Gallery Society and shown in Pahiatua.
- 1976 –
- Frans Massereel Woodcuts / Marti Friedlander Photographs** 18 Jan - 15 Feb 1976
Massereel (1899-1972), founder of modern Flemish wood-cutting.
Touring exhibition.
- Four Wellington Painters** 19 Feb - 7 Mar 1976
Alan Maddox, Robert McLeod, Robert Taylor, Tony Lane.
- Michael Smither's Approach to Printmaking** 9 Mar - 21 Mar 1976
In conjunction with his University Extension workshop.
- Russell Clark Retrospective 1905-1966** 25 Mar - 14 Apr 1976
70 works. Organised RMAG, toured with arts council assistance.
Catalogue.
- 6 x 4: Six Australian and Four NZ Printmakers** 18 Apr - 5 May 1976
Touring exhibition?
- NZ Painting 1920-1940: Adaptation and Nationalism** 8 May - 20 May 1976
Organised by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery and toured by the arts council.
- Edward Weston Photographs** 23 May - 15 Jun 1976
Touring exhibition of famous American photographer's work.

- Contemporary Ceramics** 17 Jun - 11 Jul 1976
Sally Connolly, Bronwynne Cornish, Lawrence Ewing, Paul Fisher, Denys Hadfield, Margaret Milne, Joan Rout, Olga Spence, Doreen Swift.
- Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition** 18 Jul - 3 Aug 1976
Guest exhibitor Michael Sanden.
- Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition** 7 Aug - 22 Aug 1976
Lawrence Ewing guest exhibitor.
- Children's Art Festival** 24 Aug - 27 Aug 1976
- Benson and Hedges Art Award 1976** 1 Sep - 12 Sep 1976
Richard Killeen winner.
- Photographic Exhibition** 15 Sep - 3 Oct 1976
1920/30s photographer W.T.G. Cody, organised by PhotoForum/Wellington, plus local contemporary photographers David Aitken & Noel Trustrum.
- Print Council of NZ Sixth Touring Exhibition** Sep - Oct 1976
- Art in the Mail** 18 Oct - 14 Nov 1976
Curated by Nicholas Spill, toured with arts council assistance to 10 venues, including CSA and the National Art Gallery.
- Manawatu Review** 18 Nov - 9 Dec 1976
- John Panting Sculpture** 15 Dec 1976 - 15 Jan 1977
Memorial retrospective. Organised by the Serpentine Gallery with the British Council. Catalogue published with arts council assistance. Toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery.
- 1977 -**
- A Bowl is a Bowl is a Bowl** 22 Jan - 6 Feb 1977
Work from private and public collections. Shown in conjunction with University Extension summer school.
- A Show of Hands** 2 Jul - 24 Jul 1977
Open invitation opening exhibition for new gallery building. "Celebratory events spun around the theme of hands with contributions from artists, craftsmen, musicians and actors from NZ and overseas. Concerts, audio-visual displays, craft demonstrations, and a touch exhibition..."
- Philip Clairmont: Recent Works** 20 Jul - 14 Aug 1977
- 100 Paintings and Drawings of Petrus van der Velden** 27 Jul - 21 Aug 1977
Organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery, toured with arts council assistance.
- Permanent Collection** 27 Aug - 2 Oct 1977
- Peter Bromhead: Cartoons and Drawings** 1 Oct - 24 Oct 1977
Auckland Star cartoonist. Toured?
- Ian Smail: Small, Medium and Big Pots** 6 Oct - 24 Oct 1977

- Necessary Protection: Colin McCahon** 6 Oct - 30 Oct 1977
Works from his series 1971-1976. Organised by the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, toured with arts council assistance.
- Brian Brake: 40 Photographs** 1 Nov - 30 Nov 1977
Organised by the Dowse Art Gallery, toured with arts council assistance.
- Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition** 5 Nov - 27 Nov 1977
Guest exhibitors George Kojis & Beverly Luxton.
- Denis Mitchell** 9 Nov - 27 Nov 1977
Abstract bronze sculptures. Toured by British Council.
- Barry Cleavin: Printmaker** 3 Dec 1977 - 10 Jan 1978
38 etchings. Organised by the Manawatu Art Gallery.
- Manawatu Society of Arts Annual Exhibition** 3 Dec - 18 Dec 1977
- Faces and Figures** 1 Dec 1977 - 10 Jan 1978
From the permanent collection.

Also:

- Pahiatua Arts Festival** Aug - Oct 1977
Organised with Manawatu Art Gallery assistance. John Drawbridge guest exhibitor, and photographs from Israel as the focus exhibition.

– 1978 –

- Weaving: Summer School in Handweaving** 17 Jan - 31 Jan 1978
- NZ Drawings 1976** 14 Jan - 8 Feb 1978
Organised and toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Encapsulated Landscape: Trevor Hodgson and David Keane** Feb - Mar 1978
Toured?
- Colin Parish: Centrepoint Theatre - A Documentary** 12 Feb - 12 Mar 1978
Photographs.
- Five Sculptors** 12 Feb - 12 Mar 1978
Aka **Five NZ Sculptors**. Matt Pine, Warren Viscoe, Terry Smith, Paul Dibble, Peter Nichols. Toured?
- Drawings of the Passion from the School of Bernardino Poccetti** 17 Mar - 9 Apr 1978
From the Sarjeant Gallery collection.
- The Printed Image (printmaking then and now)** 17 Mar - 16 Apr
Large exhibition with prints from various collections and showing examples of printing processes, printing presses, etc.
- Brent Wong: Paintings, Drawings and Watercolours** 23 Apr - 14 May 1978
Organised by Dowse Art Gallery and toured with arts council assistance.
- Jeffrey Harris: Painting 1969 - 1978** 18 May - 11 Jun 1978
Exhibition organised in conjunction with and toured to Sarjeant Gallery and Dowse Art Gallery. Catalogue.

The Right to Work: International Posters of from the Institute of Human Rights	18 May - 7 Jun 1978
David Moore Australian photographer, toured by the Auckland City Art Gallery.	2 Jun - 30 Jul 1978
Bronywnne Cornish: Porcelain Supreme	10 Jun - 2 Jul 1978
Tibetan Carpets From Trade Aid NZ Ltd.	10 Jun - 25 Jun 1978*
Manawatu Review Absorbs Manawatu Society of Arts exhibition.	8 Jul - 30 Jul 1978
Manawatu Pottery Society 13th Annual Exhibition	8 Jul - 30 Jul 1977
Quantas Press Photographs of the Year	15 Jul - 30 Jul 1978
Youth Festival: School Art Exhibition Primary, intermediate, and secondary schools. Organised PN Community arts council and PN Headmasters Assn.	18 Jul - 28 Jul 1978
Portraits by Ben Boer Photographs.	3 Aug - 3 Sep 1978
John Perry Collection photographs Anonymous studio photographer's work (c.1900-20s) printed by Clive Stone.	4 Aug - 3 Sep 1978
Man Together: Today's Housing Choice Organised Western Branch of NZ Institute of Architects.	20 Aug - 2 Sep 1978
Work in Progress: Research and Registration of the Permanent Collection	5 Sep - 1 Oct 1978
Peter Paul Piech: Martin Luther King Poster Prints Touring exhibition?	4 Oct - 29 Oct 1978
Marte Szirmay: Recent Sculpture	4 Oct - 29 Oct 1978
Through the Eye of a Needle Embroidery from 12-20th centuries from public and private collections.	8 Oct - 29 Oct 1978
15 Manawatu Artists Aka Contemporary Manawatu Artists.	1 Nov - 26 Nov 1978
Philip Trusttum Paintings Aka Banners.	10 Nov - 17 Dec 1978
Thomas Bewick: Tailpieces Touring exhibition.	18 Nov - 17 Dec 1978
Three Manawatu Potters Stan Jenkins, Peter Wilde, Catherine Sanderson	Dec 1978
Selections from the Permanent Collection	Dec 1978 - Jan 1979
- 1979 -	
Huhsien Peasant Paintings Touring exhibition, sponsored by Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	15 Jan - 8 Feb 1979
Bill Culbert: London and NZ Works From the Brooke-Gifford Gallery, with arts council assistance.	20 Jan - 18 Feb 1979

- Fifteen by Five: David Aitken** 3 Feb - 25 Feb 1979
Photographs.
- Vivian Smith 1883-1946: Paintings and Drawings** 22 Feb - 18 Mar 1979
Organised and toured by Sarjeant Gallery.
- Australian Crafts: A Survey of Recent Australian Work** 11 Mar - 1 Apr 1979
116 works by 65 artists. Organised by Crafts Board of Australia Council in association with Australian Art Gallery Director's Council. NZ tour by NZAGDC with arts council assistance. Manawatu Art Gallery was NZ organising gallery.
- NZ Sculpture at Mildura** 3 Apr - 29 Apr 1979
Touring exhibition.
- Selections from the Permanent Collection** Apr - 13 May 1979
- Flight Fancies** 18 May - 1 Jul 1979
Large exhibition on the history of flight, including kites from around the world, balloons, model airplanes, etc. A celebration for International Year of the Child and International Museums Day.
- Diane Arbus** 8 Jul - 5 Aug 1979
Organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery and toured with arts council assistance.
- Manawatu Pottery Society Annual Exhibition** 22 Jul - 5 Aug 1979
- The Grass is Greener: Installation by Andrew Drummond** 11 Aug - 26 Aug 1979
- Don Driver: 1965-1978** 29 Aug - 9 Sep 1979
Organised by the Govett-Brewster and toured with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- IYC Children's Art Work** 1 Sep - 16 Sep 1979
- The Child in the World** 18 Sep - 14 Oct 1979
Historic and contemporary photographs on the way children see the world. For International Year of the Child.
- Waldegrave Collection of Ceramics** 19 Oct - 18 Nov 1979
- Invited Potters** 10 Nov - 2 Dec 1979
Aka Invited Auckland Potters. Lex Dawson, Brian Gartside, Barbara Hockenhull, Barry Hockenhull, Margaret Symes, Don Thornley, Peter Oxborough, Rick Rudd, Ian Smail, Nick Strather, Dianne White.
- Benham, Mcleod, Taylor** 10 Nov - 2 Dec 1979
Malcolm Benham, Robert McLeod, Rob Taylor.
- Permanent Collection** 4 Dec 1979 - 20 Jan 1980
- Tony Fomison** 12 Dec 1979 - 13 Jan 1980
Survey of paintings and drawings from 1961 to 1979. Organised by the Dowse Art Gallery.

Dowse Art Gallery Exhibitions

– 1971 –

- Artists in the Wellington Province 1840-1970** May - Jun 1971
Inaugural exhibition of 91 works, drawn from collections around NZ.
- Hutt Art Society** Jul 1971
200 works.
- Louise Lewis** Jul - Aug 1971
Paintings by Nelson artist (awarded Manawatu Prize 1970). Loaned from Bett Duncan Gallery.
- John Weeks** Aug 1971
Paintings, from National Art Gallery collection.
- Colin McCahon: Northland Panels** Aug - Nov 1971
Paintings, loaned by the arts council.
- Durer Quincentenary Exhibition** Aug 1971
Reproductions from German Embassy. Dowse catalogue, toured to Timaru & Wairarapa Arts Centre(?)
- Loan's Exhibition** Sept 1971
40 works of NZ art loaned from Hutt Valley private collections.
- Don Binney: Recent Works** 14 Sep - 3 Oct 1971
Paintings, (supported by Benson & Hedges). 2pp catalogue.
- NZ Young Contemporaries 1971** Oct 1971
Organised Auckland City Art Gallery, costs shared locally with NZ Academy of Fine Arts. Catalogue.
- Hutt Art Society Spring Exhibition** 19 Oct - 31 Oct 1971
Catalogue.
- Gary Tricker** Oct 1971
Prints.
- Manawatu Centennial Exhibition** Nov 1971
Paintings, organised Manawatu Art Gallery, toured with the arts council and supported by Palmerston North's Awapuni Jaycees.
- Robin White** 8 Nov - 28 Nov 1971
Paintings and prints. Catalogue sheet.
- Robert Ellis: Motorway Paintings** 8 Nov - 28 Nov 1971*
- Melvin Day: Retrospective** 30 Nov 1971 - 30 Jan 1972
Paintings, occupied whole gallery. Catalogue.

– 1972 –

- Susan Chaytor** 1 Feb - 13 Feb 1972
1970 Benson & Hedges winner.

Maud Sherwood (1886-1956) 37 watercolours, toured to Napier & Masterton, from a local collection. Catalogue.	15 Feb - 19 Mar 1972
Hutt Art Society Annual Exhibition Catalogue.	21 Mar - 2 Apr 1972
Guy Ngan Sculptures (Dowse Art Gallery organised).	21 Mar - 23 Apr 1972
Manawatu Print Exhibition Manawatu Art Gallery's annual print exhibition.	3 Mar - ? 1972
Brent Wong	21 Mar - 4 Apr 1972
Roland Hipkins & Jenny Campbell From Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum (Campbell = Hipkins' wife).	4 Apr - 30 Apr
Nineteenth Century NZ Photographs Toured by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.	3 May - 28 May 1972
Rev John Kinder 1819-1903 Watercolours, loaned from Hamilton.	3 May - 28 May 1972
National Bank Workshop Work from the 1971 secondary schools National Bank workshop.	June 1972
12 Invited NZ Potters Doreen Blumhardt, Barry Brickell, David Brockenshire, Len Castle, Roy Cowan, Crewenna Potteries, John Fuller, Patricia Perrin, Juliet Peter, Mirek Smisek, Peter Stitchbury, Graeme Storm.	13 Jun - 2 Jul 1972
Pat Williams Abstract sculpture by local artist.	13 Jul - ?, 1972
Susan Skerman: Bushwalk drawings Prints, working drawings, plus one perspex panel from Expo 70 Bushwalk	13 Jul - 30 July 1972
Vera Jamieson 10 paintings by local artist.	13 Jul - 30 July 1972
Five Architects Claude Megson, Peter Beavan, John Scott, Ian Athfield, Roger Walker. Dowse organised.	1 Aug - 3 Sept 1972
Michael Smither Seven paintings, loaned by Peter McLeavey Gallery.	1 Aug - 3 Sep 1972
German Stamps Touring exhibition from German Embassy.	Aug 1972
John Panting Touring exhibition.	5 Sept - 24 Sept 1972
Barry Cleavin Prints.	19 Sep - 15 Oct 1972
Schools Exhibition Local secondary schools art.	26 Sept - 15 Oct 1972
Hutt Art Society Craft Exhibition	2 Oct - 15 Oct 1972

- The Franzheim Exhibition** 2 Oct - 15 Oct 1972
20 paintings. Eight were a gift of the American Ambassador and his wife, Mrs Franzheim, to the Dowse Art Museum. The other 12 were 19th century paintings of horses.
- Gwen Knight** 17 Oct - 5 Nov 1972
Watercolours by Eastbourne painter.
- John Drawbridge & John Taiapa** 19 Oct - 5 Nov 1972
Shaw Savill mural panel by Drawbridge + canoe prow carving by Taiapa gifted to the company.
- A Victorian Photographic Tour of the Pacific** 24 Oct - 29 Oct 1972
Dominion Museum photographs.
- Milan Mrkusich** 12 Nov - 19 Nov 1972
Organised Auckland City Art Gallery with arts council assistance, going on to Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.
- Print Council Touring Exhibition** 14 Nov - 23 Nov 1972
- Caroline Williams** 24 Nov 1972 - Feb(?) 1973
Drawings by Wairarapa artist.
- W.A. Sutton** 24 Nov 1972 - 11 Feb 1973
Organised Dowse Art Gallery, loaned from public and private collections, arts council assistance with tour to AK, CHCH, DN. 40 works covering 40 years. Catalogue.
- Ans Westra** 24 Nov 1972 - 11 Feb 1973
Photographs.
- 1973 –
- Neil Stocker 1925-1967** 13 Feb - 25 Feb 1973
Drawings & sculpture by Australian artist (deceased former assistant to Henry Moore). Catalogue.
- Russian Art Through The Ages** 27 Feb - Mar 1973
Theatre (sets, costumes, posters, programmes) and reproductions of paintings from the 14th century to the present. Also referred to as **Russian Prints** (work obtained by Miller from embassy and direct from Russian museums, and assistance provided by Russian Dept of Victoria University).
- Ecclesiastical Embroidery** 27 Mar - 15 Apr 1973
Wellington Anglican and Catholic work, organised Dowse Art Gallery.
- Hutt Valley Art Society Autumn Exhibition** 17 Apr - 29 Apr 1973
Catalogue.
- Ikebana and NZ Pottery** 8 May - 20 May 1973
Ikebana International & 10 invited NZ potters: Doreen Blumhardt, Len Castle, John Fuller, Neil Grant, Jim Greig, Jack Laird, Beryl Lovett, Mirek Smisek, Graeme Storm, Wilf Wright.
- Doris Lusk: Retrospective** 3 Jun - 8 Jul 1973
Painting, organised Dowse Art Gallery, toured to AK, CHCH, DN.

- NZ Painting 1900-1920** 10 Jul - ?, 1973
Organised by the arts council.
- Three Generations: J.C. Richmond, D.K. Richmond & E.H. Atkinson** 2 Aug - 26 Aug 1973
Paintings, from Atkinson family collection and National Art Gallery collection, organised Dowse Art Gallery.
- William Beetham 1809-1888** 2 Aug - 26 Aug 1973
Portraits, organised Wairarapa Arts Centre. Beetham was an early settler in the Hutt Valley. Catalogue.
- French Masters** 29 Aug - 23 Sept 1973
Drawings, from Allyn Lynn Museum, Conn., USA.
- Jan & Jerry Nigro** 24 Sept - 28 Oct 1973
Paintings, toured to Napier, Masterton in 1974, and Rotorua. Catalogue.
- Hutt Art Society** Oct 1973
Annual craft exhibition - weaving, pottery and china painting.
- Joan Calvert Tapestry** Oct - Dec 1973
Commissioned work for Stokes Valley Licensing Trust.
- Mirek Smisek** 2 Nov - 18 Nov 1973
Pottery.
- Don Peebles: Retrospective** 3 Dec 1973 - 28 Feb 1974
78 works, covering 25 years, organised Dowse Art Gallery. Toured to CHCH, DN, AK, Ham. Catalogue.

- 1974 -

- Rembrandt Engravings** 4 Mar - 31 Mar 1974
From National Art Gallery collection.
- Hutt Art Society** 2 Apr - 15 Apr 1974
- NZ Print Council Exhibition** 16 Apr - 5 May 1974
60 prints, organised Wairarapa Arts Centre. Catalogue.
- Pat Hanly: Retrospective** 10 May - 23 Jun 1974
Dowse Art Gallery organised. Gallery received arts council subsidy to organise. Proposed tour to CHCH, DN, NP, AK, HAM.
- Balinese Folk Art** 26 Jun - 21 Jul 1974
Toured by the arts council, organised by Waikato Art Museum.
- Zonta Print Exhibition: Thirteen Artists** 23 Jul - 11 Aug 1974
Tanya Ashken, Barry Cleavin, Kate Coolahan, Gordon Crook, John Drawbridge, Ralph Hotere, John Lethbridge, Colin McCahon, Guy Ngan, Colette Rands, Susan Skerman, Gordon Walters, Robin White.
- Michael Eaton** 12 Aug - 8 Sept 1974
CHCH artist, organised Dowse Art Gallery, travelling to PN.
- Hutt Art Society Arts and Crafts Exhibition** 10 Sept - 22 Sept 1974

- John Coley** 25 Sep - 20 Oct 1974
 Paintings, organised by Dowse Art Gallery, toured to PN and possibly Sarjeant Gallery & Govett-Brewster Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Graeme Storm** 26 Oct - 17 Nov 1974
 Pottery, organised Dowse Art Gallery.
- Under 35: Contemporary Wellington Painting** 25 Nov 1974 - 23 Feb 1975
 Paintings, aka **Six Young Wellington Artists**: Garry Griffiths, Allen Maddox, Robert Franken, Robert McLeod, Rob Taylor, Mark Lander.

– 1975 –

- John Middleditch** 27 Feb - 23 Mar 1975
 Sculpture from DN sculptor, organised Dowse Art Gallery, toured to Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Sarjeant Gallery, and possibly Waikato Art Museum, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, & CHCH.
- Print Council of NZ** 25 Mar - 8 Apr 1975
- Hutt Art Society** 9 Apr - 23 Apr 1975
 Combined with Gary Tricker work
- Wellington Artists (aka 10 Invited Wellington Potters)** 24 Apr - 25 May 1975
 Pottery: Doreen Blumhardt, Anneke Borren, Flora Christeller, Roy Cowan, John Fuller, Patti Meads, Juliet Peter, Jane Smisek, Mirek Smisek, Wilf Wright.
- Victorian Artistry** 30 May - 13 Jun 1975
 NZ Breweries paintings & antiques.
- The Six Wives of Henry VIII** 9 Jun - 31 Aug 1975
 Exhibition of costume from the BBC, seen in AK.
- Invited South Island Women Artists** 15 Jun - 6 Jul 1975
 Dowse Art Gallery contribution to International Womens Year, 10 artists: Janice Gill, Shona McFarlane, Angela Meeson, Eileen Mayo, Rosemary Campbell, Pamela Wolfe, Helen Rockell, Olivia Spencer Bower, Susan Chaytor, Jane Evans. Catalogue.
- Dowse Art Gallery Weaving Award** 9 Sept - 2 Oct 1975
 Aka **Wellington Weavers 75**. For Wellington province only. Friends of Gallery offered \$250 prize. Catalogue.
- Hutt Art Society Craft Exhibition** 5 Oct - 16 Oct 1975*
- Len Castle** 21 Oct - 9 Nov 1975
 Pottery. Catalogue.
- Muriel Moody** 12 Nov - 30 Nov 1975
 Ceramic sculpture.

- Wellington Artists** 3 Dec 1975 - 3 Feb 1976
 Aka **Wellington Painters** or **Second Annual Christmas Exhibition of Invited Wellington Artists**. Invited painters. Melvin Day, Betty Clegg, John Drawbridge, Jeanne Macaskill, Robert McLeod, Alvin Pankhurst, Simon Payton, Juliet Peter, Helen Stewart, Robert Taylor, Wong Sing Tai.
- 1976 –**
- Canada** 10 Feb - 29 Feb 1976
 National Film Board of Canada photographs.
- Philip Trusttum** 2 Mar - 16 Mar 1976
 Toured by New Vision Gallery.
- Print Council of NZ** 25 Mar - 8 Apr 1976
- 10 Invited NZ Potters** 2 Apr - 22 Apr 1976
 Pottery: Nicholas Brandon, Laurence Ewing, Paul Fisher, Brian Gartside, Edna Hanafin, George Kojis, Gennie de Lange, Bruce Martin, Estelle Martin, Margaret Milne. Catalogue.
- Brian Brake: 40 Photographs** 28 Apr - 23 May 1976
 Photographs. Exhibition toured by the Dowse with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- 1st National Weaving Award** 30 May - 20 Jun 1976
 Winners Georgia Suiter (AK) traditional weaving, Margaret Thomson (L.Hutt) off-loom, Kathleen Lowe (L.Hutt) merit. Toured to CSA Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Tourist and Publicity Department 75th Anniversary Art Award** 1 Jul - 1 Aug 1976
 NZ landscape in oils. Eric Avey winner, Peter Belton second, Darcy Nicholas merit. Catalogue.
- Lorna Ellis** 10 (17?) Aug - 8 Sept 1976
 Sculpture, 50 sculptured heads and ceramic pieces. Catalogue.
- Hutt Art Society Craft Exhibition** 12 Sept - 23 Sept 1976
- Melvin Day: Recent Paintings** 26 Sept - 17 Oct 1976
 With "Offshoot" exhibition giving context for Day's work.
- Doreen Blumhardt** 20 Oct - 14 Nov 1976
- NZ Painting 1920-1940** 17 Nov - 16 Dec 1976
 Touring exhibition. Accompanied by "Offshoot" exhibition, giving history of the period.
- 4 x 3 Wellington Artists** 20 Dec 1976 - 16 Jan 1977
 12 artists?

– 1977 –

- Print Council Touring Exhibition** 20 Jan - 17 Feb 1977
- Hutt Art Society: Painting and Sculpture** 20 Feb - 28 Feb 1977

- Invited North Island Artists** 2 Mar - 29 Mar 1977
Gretchen Albrecht, Claudia Eyley, Suzanne Goldberg, Louise Henderson, Juliet Peter, Margot Philips, Glenda Randerson, Freda Simmonds. 2pp catalogue.
- Light** 1 Apr - 24 Apr 1977
16 potters invited to contribute 4 works each on theme of "light". Catalogue.
- Private View: The Paris Family Collection of Contemporary NZ Painting** 27 Apr - 29 May 1977
Catalogue.
- Forms in Fibre** 3 Jun - 30 Jun 1977
9 invited artists: Zena Abbott, Joan Calvert, Shirley Culy, Jenny Hunt, Maaike Knottenbelt, Vivienne Mountford, Andre Simonin, Georgina Suiter, Judy Wilson. Toured to Nelson with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- Face Value** 3 Jul - 31 Jul 1977
Portraits and figure studies from the Robert McDougall Art Gallery collection. Toured by the McDougall.
- Hutt Art Society Spring Craft Exhibition** Aug 1977
- Face It** 22 Aug - Sept 1977
School holiday exhibition and events, occupying whole gallery. Face coverings, including masks, from invited artists, as well as ethnological masks, everyday face coverings such as sunglasses and motorcycle helmets, and theatrical masks.
- Raymond Boyce: Models for Downstage Plays** 7 Sept - 21 Sept 1977
- Brent Wong: Painting and Drawing 1961-1976** 9 Sept - ?, 1977
Toured, with arts council assistance, to Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Sarjeant Gallery, Manawatu Art Gallery, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Rotorua Art Gallery, Waikato Art Museum, Auckland City Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Southland Museum and Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Jack Laird: Recent Work** 19 Oct - 9 Nov 1977
Catalogue.
- Aboriginal Art** 13 Nov - 12 Dec 1977
Exhibition given by Australia, on loan from the National Museum.
- Peter Peryer & Don Driver** 16 Dec 1977 - 22 Jan 1978
Combined catalogue/poster.

Plus a series of small exhibitions titled **Offshoot**, from the permanent collection.

– 1978 –

- Hutt Art Society: Painting** 20 Feb - 15 Feb 1978
- Man Together: Today's Housing Choice** 25 Jan - 14 Feb 1978
Organised and toured by NZ Institute of Architects. Catalogue.

- 10 Invited Potters** 2 Apr - 29 Apr 1978
 Roger Brittain, Charles Holmes, Leo King, Warwick Lidgard, Beverley Luxton, Chester Nealie, John Parker, Lyn Spence, Irene Spiller, Warren Tippett. Catalogue.
- Olivia Spencer Bower** 2 Mar - 31 Mar 1978
 Painting retrospective, from Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Substantial catalogue.
- Benson & Hedges Art Award** 1 May - 31 May 1978
 Judged at the Dowse by James Mollison, director Australian National Gallery, tour organised by Dowse Art Gallery, to Sarjeant Gallery, CSA Gallery, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Rotorua City Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Gisborne Museum & Arts Centre, Waikato Art Museum, Southland Museum & Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery. Ian Scott winner.
- Hutt Art Society: Crafts** 2 Jun - 13 Jun 1978
- Introduction to Jeffrey Harris** 19 Jun - 12 Jul 1978
 30 paintings, toured by Manawatu Art Gallery & Dowse Art Gallery as joint venture, toured to Sarjeant Gallery.
- Touch** 24 Jul - 20 Aug 1978
 18 ceramics that could be touched, made specially by invited potters, organised for Braille Week in co-operation with Royal Foundation for the Blind. "Offshoot" exhibition organised with local and WN herb societies as a tactile room. Potters included Susan Artner, David Brockenshire, Roy Cowan, Flora Christeller, Ian Firth & Beryl Jowett, Paul Melser, Peter Stitchbury, and Howard Williams.
- It's No Show Without Punch** 22 Aug - 3 Sept 1978
 Puppets from public and private collections, with extensive school holiday programme.
- 3 NZ Artists: DK Richmond, Margaret Stoddart, Frances Hodgkins** 7 Sep - 21 Sep 1978
 Aka **Three Women Artists**.
- BNZ Weaving Award** 23 Sept - 24 Oct 1978
 Catalogue. Won by Rangimarie Hetet (traditional) and Margaret Finnerty (off-loom).
- Grahame Sydney** ? - 19 Nov 1978
- Vivian Smith 1883-1964** 10 Dec 1978
 Paintings and drawings, from Sarjeant Gallery.
- Three Wellington Artists: Benham, Lane & McLeod** 11 Dec 1978 - 7 Jan 1979
 Paintings.
- Drawing the line** ? - ? 1978
 Drawings from the collection(?)

– 1979 –

- Hansells Sculpture Award** 8 Jan - 5 Feb 1979
 From Wairarapa Arts Centre. Catalogue.

- Selwyn Muru: Parihaka** 11 Feb - 7 Mar 1979
Shown at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and Sarjeant Gallery.
- Hutt Art Society Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture** 11 Mar - 20 Mar 1979
- Six North Island Potters** 24 Mar - 10 Apr 1979
Brian Gartside, Ted Dutch, John Parker, Rick Rudd, Howard Williams, Barbara Hockenhull. Catalogue. Associated "Offshoot" exhibition on scientific aspects of ceramics.
- Clarice Cliff** 24 Mar - 10 Apr 1979
"Offshoot" exhibition. 20 pieces from Peter Shaw's collection.
- Diane Arbus** 20 Apr - 13 May 1979
Photographs.
- Pinhole Cameras** 20 Apr - 13 May 1979
"Offshoot" exhibition associated with Arbus.
- Quilts** 19 May - 4 Jun 1979
Aka **Bedspreads**. From Otago Early Settlers Museum.
- Making an Impression** 9 Jun - 3 Jul 1979
Prints and printing, from artists and institutional collections. Including artists prints from the collection, examples of commercial processes, Gestetner print edition, early copper engravings from National Art Gallery, prints by school children, special exhibits by Kate Coolahan, Roy Cowan, Stanley Palmer, Juliet Peter, NZ Post Office, and Petone Print. Included operating Multilith press.
- Bewick Tailpieces** 9 Jun - 3 Jul 1979
Organised Waikato Art Museum. Catalogue.
- Australian Craft** 9 Jun - 3 Jul (5 Aug?) 1979
116 works of ceramics, jewellery, fibre, and other crafts.
Touring exhibition to 5 NZ venues arranged by NZ Art Gallery Director's Council. Substantial catalogue.
- Crash Bong Tinkle** Aug 1979
Sound making devices. School holiday exhibition and events.
- Parihaka** Aug 1979
Reshown to replace cancelled Hutt Art Society craft exhibition.
- Maori Heritage** Sep 1979
Educational exhibition based on a 1971 Turnbull Library exhibition of early NZ photographs, prints, and reproductions of sketches, with additions of artefacts from the National Museum, dating from the 19th century to the present.
- Tony Fomison: A Survey of Paintings and Drawings 1961-1979** 15 Oct - 18 Nov 1979
Catalogue, toured with arts council assistance to Sarjeant Gallery, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Waikato Art Museum, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery, & Manawatu Art Gallery(?)
- Permanent Collection** - 7 Oct 1979
- Max Gimblett** 17 Oct - 17 Nov 1979
Also shown Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and Waikato Art Museum.
From Barry Lett Gallery?

- Woollaston's Wellington** 7 Nov - 18 Dec 1979
Aka **Woollaston in Wellington**. A commissioned work by Friends of the Dowse plus studies for this painting and other works depicting Wellington from the Dowse and private collections.
- South Island Potters** 22 Nov - 19 Dec 1979
Aka **Pots**. Eight potters: Roger Chaplin, Lawrence Ewing, Paul Fisher, Denys Hadfield, Judith McMillan, Michael Trumic, Rex Valentine, Denise Welsford.
- Gustavus Ferdinand von Tempsky** 22 Dec 1979 - Jan 1980
Organised Waikato Art Museum and toured with arts council assistance.
- Hodgkins, Atkinson and Sherwood (title?)** ? - ? 1979
"Offshoot" exhibition.
- The Artist's Garden** ? - ? 1979
Permanent collection.

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery Exhibitions

– 1970 –

Leon Narbey: Real Time Catalogue.	22 Feb - 19 Apr 1970
Maori in Focus Early photographs of Maori from the Dominion Museum collection, organised by the Palmerston North Art Gallery. Catalogue.	1 May - 24 May 1970
Print Council of NZ Touring Exhibition	1 May - 24 May 1970
Works from the Permanent Collection	1 May - 31 May 1970*
NZ Art of the Sixties Touring exhibition of art assembled for the 1970 Royal Visit. Catalogue.	1 Jun - 14 Jun 1970
Acquisitions 1969-70 Catalogue.	17 Jun - 24 Jul 1970
Taranaki Review Catalogue.	28 Jul - 26 Aug 1970
Kim Wright Collection c.f. 1974 exhibition.	28 Aug - 11 Sep 1970
NZ Institute of Architects 1969 Award	Aug - Sept 1970
Art of the Space Age Touring exhibition from Peter Stuyvesant Art Foundation collection. Brought to NZ by Rothmans Cultural Foundation and arts council, NZ tour by Auckland City Art Gallery. Also to Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, National Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery. 48 artists, 54 works.	14 Sep - 11 Oct 1970
Art from Malaysia Touring exhibition (also to National Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery.) Organised by National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Toured by arts council. 136 paintings, sculptures, prints, mostly created 1968-69. Catalogue.	14 Oct - 22 Nov 1970
Three Acquisitions	25 Nov - 18 Dec 1970
19th and 20th Century French Prints	25 Nov - 18 Dec 1970
Japanese Prints Catalogue.	25 Nov - 18 Dec 1970
NZ Print Council Touring Exhibition Same as above???	25 Nov - 18 Dec 1970*
Commissioned Environments: David Brown Ilam School of Fine Art student. Catalogue.	30 Nov - 18 Dec 1970

- 19th Century NZ Photographs** 21 Dec 1970 - 17 Jan 1971
Organised by the Govett-Brewster with assistance from Dominion Museum and sponsors. Toured to Sarjeant Gallery, Manawatu Art Gallery, Gisborne, Wairarapa Art Centre, Dominion Museum, Hocken Library, Southland Museum and Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery and possibly Aigantighe Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Art works from Taranaki Museum** 21 Dec 1970 - 17 Jan 1971
Catalogue.
- 1971 -**
- Californian Works on Paper** 20 Jan - 27 Feb 1971
- Permanent and Impermanent Forms** 1 Mar - 30 Mar 1971
- John Kinder Watercolours** 1 Mar - 30 Mar 1971
Ferrier-Watson collection from Waikato Art Gallery.
- Colin McCahon** Mar - Apr 1971
Small exhibition of McCahon's from Kim Wright collection and permanent collection.
- Ten Big Paintings** 2 Apr - 2 May 1971
From Auckland City Art Gallery.
- Contemporary Chinese Paintings** 5 May - 30 May 1971
From the Republic of China (Taiwan). Catalogue.
- Manawatu Art Gallery Centennial Collection** 1 Jun - 14 Jun 1971
Catalogue.
- Art from Canada's West Coast** 1 Jun - 14 Jun 1971
Catalogue.
- Contemporary French Tapestries** 15 Jun - 15 Jul 1971
Brought to NZ by Peter Stuyvesant and arts council. Toured by Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Recent Acquisitions and Loans** 18 July - 9 Aug 1971
Catalogue.
- Brassai Photographs** 26 July - 9 Aug 1971
Organised by MoMA and toured by Auckland City Art Gallery.
- Taranaki Review 2** 11 Aug - 5 Sep 1971
Selected by Brian Muir, director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. 49 works by 31 local artists. Catalogue.
- Rembrandt Etchings** 11 Aug - 5 Sep 1971
From the National Art Gallery collection. Catalogue.
- Alun Leach-Jones** 7 Sep - 26 Sep 1971
Australian painter-printmaker. Recent silkscreen prints and vacuum formed multiples. Organised and toured by Barry Lett Galleries.

Table Top Sculptures	7 Sep - 19 Sep 1971*
Vasant Khusai Praggi	7 Sep - 19 Sep 1971*
18 x 22 (aka Top Box Art Show and Small Paintings) Paintings from Illinois State University, brought to NZ and toured by the Govett-Brewster. Catalogue.	29 Sept - 24 Oct 1971
John Weeks Organised by National Art Gallery from its collection.	29 Sept - 24 Oct 1971
Photography 1971 Organised by the Waikato Art Gallery. 32 photos by 7 contemporary NZ photographers. Catalogue.	29 Sept - 24 Oct 1971
Views of Mount Egmont (aka 111 Views of Mt Egmont) Catalogue.	29 Oct - 14 Nov 1971
Recent British Painting Auckland City Art Gallery/arts council toured from the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation collection. Included Bacon, Caulfield, Davie, Hockney, Kitaj, Nicholson, Pasmore, Riley, Sutherland. Catalogue. Dates also given as 25 Nov - 28 Dec and 16 Nov - 31 Dec	16 Nov - 12 Dec 1971
Acquisitions 1971	15 Dec 1971 - 9 Jan 1972
Fred Butler Wall Hangings	31 Dec 1971 - 13 Feb 1972

– 1972 –

Michael Smither	22 Feb - 2 Apr 1972
NZ Environment: Jim Allen	22 Feb - 24 May 1972*
Extended Formality: Darcy Lange Both from permanent collection.	
John Panting Touring exhibition, organised by Manawatu Art Gallery. Catalogue.	5 Apr - 27 Apr 1972
Manawatu Prize Exhibition Prints	11 Apr - 27 Apr 1972
Edgar Mansfield: Sculpture 19 bronze works by internationally known NZ sculptor and book artist.	28 Apr - 18 May 1972
Molas From the San Blas Islands 10 needlework panels by Cunas indians. Loaned from local private collection.	28 Apr - 18 May 1972
Art Bank Workshop Exhibition (aka National Bank Art Awards?) High School student work from a WN workshop. Sponsored by the National Bank.	28 Apr - 18 May 1972
Outdoor Invitational Sculpture Exhibition Approx 6 NZ sculptors. Aka <i>NZ Invitational Sculpture Exhibition</i> .	27 May - 9 July 1972

- The State of California Painting** 27 May - 25 June 1972
Organised for a national tour by Govett-Brewster, including National Art Gallery and Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Town Centre Exhibition** 28 June - 9 July 1972
Palmerston North town centre proposal and related exhibits.
- Bill Brandt Photography** 28 Jun - 27 Jul 1972
From MoMA, New York.
- Scultura Italiana** 13 July - 13 Aug 1972
Contemporary Italian sculpture from the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation collection, mostly cast bronzes. Toured by Auckland City Art Gallery with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- 1972 Print Council** 29 July - 13 Aug 1972
Toured by Wairarapa Art Centre. Catalogue.
- An Exhibition of Taranaki Art Societies and Independent Artists** 17 Aug - 7 Sept 1972
- Colin McCahon Survey** 21 Nov - 17 Dec 1972
Organised by Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Nigerian Sculpture - From the Ron O'Reilly Collection** 17 Aug - 20 Sept 1972
From the Ron O'Reilly collection of Canterbury Museum. Catalogue. Date also given as to also to 7 Sept.
- Benson and Hedges Art Award** 11 Sept - 20 Sept 1972
Selected by Australian Elwyn Lynn, won by Don Driver.
- Landscape Painting : a Survey from the Collection** 11 Sept - 15 Oct 1972
- NZ Pottery Invitational** 25 Sept - 15 Oct 1972
Organised by New Plymouth Potters Group of top NZ potters.
- Portrait of Mexico** 25 Oct - 12 Nov 1972
Blockbuster exhibition. Pre-Columbian through to contemporary art from Mexico. Organised by the Mexican government, sponsored by QEII Arts Council and toured by Auckland City Art Gallery and Auckland Museum. Catalogue.
- Leroy Parker Drawings** 21 Nov - 17 Dec 1972
Californian painter. 12 charcoal and pastel drawings.
- Milan Mrkusich** 21 Dec 1972 - 13 Jan 1973
Toured by Auckland City Art Gallery.
- Art Students Purchase Prize** 21 Dec 1972 - 13 Jan 1973
Art students throughout NZ. Toured by Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
- 1973 –
- Acquisitions: 1972** 17 Jan - 11 Feb 1973
- Manawatu Prize: 1972** 17 Jan - 3 Feb 1973
Organised by the Manawatu Art Gallery.

- Taranaki Environment** 6 Feb - 11 Feb 1973
"An environment by Allen Herald and friends centring around Taranaki."
- Italian Graphics** 14 Feb - 8 March 1973
Contemporary work toured by the National Art Gallery.
- Marte Szirmay** 14 Feb - 8 Mar 1973
16 sculptures.
- NZ Painting 1900-1920: Traditions and Departures** 13 Mar - 1 Apr 1973
Gordon Brown exhibition organised by Hocken Library and toured by the arts council.
- New Photography USA** 18 Mar - 1 Apr 1973
Organised by MoMA, toured by Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue. (Previously listed June/July 1972)
- Master Drawings from the Lyman Allyn Museum, USA** 11 Apr - 6 May 1973
European painting 1600-1900, organised and toured by Govett-Brewster to Manawatu Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dowse Art Gallery, Waikato Art Museum, Auckland City Art Gallery.
- Zonta Print Exhibition** 11 Apr - 29 Apr 1973
Touring exhibition, organised by Zonta, Wellington.
- Manawatu Review** 3 May - 13 May 1973*
Three artists - Natalie Woodhams, Ray Thorburn and Frank Davis, organised by Manawatu Art Gallery.
- 1600 Years of Asian Sculpture** 15 May - 1 July 1973
From the collection of Mr R.H.T. Longden. Catalogue.
- Don Driver Retrospective** 15 May - 2 June 1973*
- Contemporary Australian Painting and Sculpture** 5 June - 14 June 1973
Organised by Australian Arts Advisory Board and the arts council.
- Luc Peire Environment** 4 July - 29 July 1973
Paintings, graphics and a mirrored environment structure by this Belgian-Parisian artist. Toured by Auckland City Art Gallery.
- Hundertwasser** 4 July - 29 July 1973
Work by Viennese artist Friedrich Hundertwasser. Organised and toured by Auckland City Art Gallery.
- Toys by Artists** 4 July - 29 July 1973
Bonner International exhibition of toys designed by American and European artists.
- Barbara Hepworth** 8 Aug - 26 Aug 1973
Small exhibition of sculpture, drawings and photos of originals. Organised and toured by National Gallery.
- Three NZ Photographers** 8 Aug - 26 Aug 1973
Baigent, Collins and Fields. Toured by Auckland City Art Gallery

- An Exhibition of Taranaki Art Societies and Independent Artists (aka Taranaki Review)** 30 Aug - 16 Sept 1973
Selected by Tom Kreisler, the director and one other person.
- Selections from the Collection** 30 Aug - 16 Sept 1973
- Print Council 1973** 20 Sept - 3 Oct 1973
Selected by the Print Council of NZ. Toured by the Wairarapa Arts Centre.
- MT Woollaston: Works 1933-1973** 20 Sept - 14 Oct 1973
Toured by the Manawatu Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Tamarind: Homage to Lithography** 9 Oct - 23 Oct 1973
Work done at Los Angeles Lithographic Workshop. Organised by MoMA (NY) for NZ tour by the Govett-Brewster.
- Recent Acquisitions** 17 Oct - 3 Nov 1973
- Shoji Hamada** 17 Oct - 11 Nov 1973
From collections throughout NZ.
- Alfred Sharpe** 15 Nov - 9 Dec 1973
19th century NZ watercolourist. Organised and toured by Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Modern Art in Prints** 15 Nov 9 - Dec 1973
50 historical and contemporary prints, including work by Braque, Chagall, Hockney, de Kooning, Miro, Picasso, Stella, Warhol and others. Organised by MoMA.
- War and Peace: 17th Century Etchings** 12 Dec - 30 Dec 1973
From the collection of Dr Walter S. Auburn. Toured by Dunedin Public Art Gallery with arts council assistance. (Dates also given as into Jan 1974)
- Art Students Purchase Prize Exhibition** 21 Dec 1972 - 13 Jan 1973
Organised and toured by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

– 1974 –

- John Buckland Wright** 8 Jan - 28 Jan 1974
50 engravings. Organised by Waikato Art Museum with arts council assistance.
- Recent Acquisitions** 3 Jan - 3 Mar 1974
- The Great Dome Experience** 5 Mar - 7 Apr 1974
“A look at the geodesic dome, where it comes from and how it can be used”
- Balinese Folk Art** 10 April - 12 May 1974
40 painted wooden sculptures and 17 paintings. From a private collection. Organised by Waikato Art Museum.

- Aboriginal Bark Paintings** 10 April - 12 May 1974
Organised by Art Gallery of South Australia and toured by National Art Gallery.
- Kim Wright Collection of NZ Painting** 16 May - 9 June 1974
Included Angus, Hotere, Hanly, Illingworth, McCahon, Mrkusich, Wong, Woollaston. Toured by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery to Auckland City Art Gallery, Gisborne Art Gallery and Museum, Hawkes Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Sarjeant Gallery, Waikato Art Museum, NZ Academy of Fine Arts. Catalogue.
- Ralph Hotere 1963-1973** 12 June - 30 June 1974
Organised by Dunedin Public Art Gallery and toured by the arts council.
- Face Coverings** 3 July - 28 July 1974
Traditional ethnographic and modern masks and face coverings.
Organised by the Govett-Brewster.
- An Exhibition of Taranaki Art Societies and Independent Artists (aka Taranaki Review)** 31 July - 25 Aug 1974
- Some Recent Australian Painting** 31 Jul - 29 Aug 1974
- Terry Reid** 31 Jul? - 29 Aug? 1974
Sculpture
- David Graham: A retrospective exhibition** 29 Aug - 29 Sept 1974
Robert McDougall Art Gallery touring exhibition on South Island abstract painter Graham (1928-1972).
- Molly Morpeth Canaday** 29 Aug - 29 Sept 1974
National Art Gallery collection of 53 works.
- Polish Graphics** 3 Oct - 20 Oct 1974
Contemporary Polish work toured by National Art Gallery.
- Art from the Solomon Islands** 3 Oct - 20 Oct 1974
Ethnological items from Waikato Art Museum collection.
- Photography as a Fine Art** 3 Oct - 20 Oct 1974
American university student work, toured by US Information Service.
- Pat Hanly Retrospective** 24 Oct - 17 Nov 1974
Toured by the Dowse Art Gallery.
- Print Council Exhibition** 24 Oct - 3 Nov 1974
Toured by the Wairarapa Arts Centre.
- Benson and Hedges Art Award** 6 Nov - 17 Nov 1974
Touring exhibition of contemporary NZ painting. Selected by James W. Foster, Director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts.
- Silent Auction** 20 Nov - 24 Nov 1974
Exhibition of work to be auctioned by Friends of the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery.

- Three Dimensional Fibre** 29 Nov - 29 Dec 1974
Govett-Brewster touring exhibition of international artists. Toured to Waikato Art Museum, National Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Substantial catalogue.
- 1975 -**
- French Photography** 8 Jan - 26 Jan 1975
80 photographs taken 1932 to 1971 by France's most important photographers, including Brassai, Cartier-Bresson, Doisneau, and Riboud. Toured by Embassy of France.
- Roberto Matta: Les Oh! Tomobiles** 8 Jan - 26 Jan 1975
Ten etchings based on the automobile by Chilean surrealist Matta. Organised by Barrington and Pacific Fine Arts galleries. (Later acquired by the Auckland City Art Gallery.)
- Picasso: 66 Etchings** 8 Jan - 16 Feb 1975
Organised by Barrington and Pacific Fine Arts galleries with M. Knoedler & Co., New York.
- Six NZ Artists** 30 Jan - 9 Feb 1975
Ken Griffiths, Stephen Furlonger, Darcy Lange, John Panting, Terry Powell, Boyd Webb (all NZ artists working overseas). Organised by Antoinette Godkin, London. First shown at the NZ High Commission, London, and then toured by Auckland City Art Gallery with arts council assistance.
- Max Oetli: Photographs** 11 Feb - 23 Mar 1975
39 photographs by Swiss-born Auckland photographer. Organised by Waikato Art Museum. Shown in Coffee Lounge.
- Inigo Jones** 19 Feb - 14 Mar 1975*
Festival designs from the collection of the Duke of Devonshire. Toured by the National Art Gallery with arts council assistance.
- McCahon Religious Works** 18 April - 14 (or 4) May 1975
Organised and toured by the Manawatu Art Gallery.
- Ilott Graphics: 100 Master Prints** 7 May - 25 May 1975
Toured by National Art Gallery from its Sir John Ilott collection of prints.
- The Active Eye** 30 May - 22 June 1975
Photography survey, organised and toured by the Manawatu Art Gallery.
- Persian Carpets** 25 June - 20 July 1975
Govett-Brewster carpets from the collection (gifted by Monica Brewster), plus Auckland Institute and Museum, and local private collections.
- Nineteenth Century NZ Photographs** 24 July - 24 Aug 1975
From the collection - a re-showing of the 1970 exhibition.

- Recent Philip Trusstum Paintings** 24 July - 24 Aug 1975
Small exhibition loaned from New Vision Gallery, Auckland.
- An Exhibition of Taranaki Art Societies and Independent Artists** 27 Aug - 14 Sep 1975
(aka **Taranaki Review**)
Selected by Anne Kirker, Colin Nicholls, and the acting director, Don Driver. Catalogue.
- Face Value** 19 Sep - 12 Oct 1975
Portraits of Maori. Organised by Dunedin Public Art Gallery.
- Billy Apple: Neon Accumulation** 20 Sep - 14 Dec 1975
Neon sculpture (crushed red and blue neon tubes on the stairway) and performance.
- Graphic Art of German Expressionism** 7 Oct - 26 Oct 1975
118 prints by Beckmann, Feininger, Grosz, Kandinsky, Kirchner, Klee, Kokoschka, Marc, Nolde and others. Organised by the Institute for Foreign Relations, Stuttgart and toured by the National Art Gallery with arts council assistance.
- NZ Women Painters** 30 Oct - 23 Nov 1975
Auckland City Art Gallery exhibition from its collection (with additions from Govett-Brewster collection) to celebrate International Women's Year.
- Three Exhibitions In One** 27 Nov - 14 Dec 1975*
(aka **Four Exhibitions in One**, with inclusion of:
Billy Apple's Scatter piece (= *Neon Accumulation?*)
Early Christchurch (NZIA photographs)
Graphic Art From the Collection
Works on Loan from Private Collections)
- Photo-Realists** 18 Dec 1975 - 4 Jan 1976
American work, from Barrington Galleries, Auckland. Catalogue.
- African Arts** 18 Dec 1975 - 4 Jan 1976
Unesco touring panels plus Nigerian material from Canterbury Museum and a private collection.

– 1976 –

- Graphics from the Collection** 3 Jan - 26 Jan 1976*
- Victorian Artistry** 7 Jan - 25 Jan 1976
Victorian paintings from hotels owned by NZ Breweries. Organised and toured by NZ Breweries. Catalogue.
- Frank Martin: The Movies** 7 Jan - 25 Jan 1976
Coloured etchings and woodcuts with theme of early days of the movies. Organised and toured by Waikato Art Museum with arts council assistance. Catalogue.

- 6x4 Prints** 29 Jan - 22 (also 26) Feb 1976
Eight works each by 10 Australian and 8 NZ printmakers. NZ print makers were Barry Cleavin, Stanley Palmer, Gary Tricker and Marilyn Webb. Organised and toured by Waikato Art Museum, with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- Chinese Handcrafts** 2 Mar - 14 Mar 1976
PRC work toured by NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Catalogue.
- Canadian Photographs and Crafts** 16 Mar - 31 Mar 1976
(Aka **Canada**.) Colour photography and poems plus film programme. Toured by Canadian High Commission.
- Helen Flora Scales** 3 Apr - 21 Apr 1976
Auckland City Art Gallery exhibition. Catalogue.
- Early Trade Labels and Posters** 3 Apr - 21 Apr 1976
Organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery from private collections.
- 22 Invited Potters** 27 April - 16 May 1976
Organised by New Plymouth Potters Society of leading NZ potters as city centennial project. Catalogue.
- Patrick Hanly Drawings** 4 May - 23 May 1976
Toured by Manawatu Art Gallery with arts council assistance.
- Anuszkiewicz, Jenkins [and Peterdi] Prints** 19 May - 3 June 1976
Two American printmakers. USIS organised. Toured to Auckland City Art Gallery & Govett-Brewster only.
- Russell Clark 1905-1966** 27 May - 20 June 1976
Retrospective toured by Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Benson and Hedges Art Award** 24 June - 4 July 1976
Judged at Barrington Gallery, Auckland. Catalogue.
- NZ Painting 1920-1940: Adaptation and Nationalism** 8 July - 1 Aug 1976
73 paintings. Curated by Gordon Brown, organised and toured by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. Part of a series planned by the arts council.
- Taranaki Review** 5 Aug - 29 Aug 1976
Catalogue.
- Edward Weston Photographs** 1 Sept - 12 Sept 1976
Touring exhibition, sponsored by Barrington Gallery, with arts council assistance. Catalogue.
- Neil Stocker Sculpture and Drawings** 1 Sept - 12 Sept 1976
Australian/British artist Stocker (1925-1969). Arranged by his widow, Jeanne Macaskill. Catalogue.
- Painting in Taranaki 1840-1970 & Antiques and Relics of Old Taranaki** 16 Sept - 10 Oct 1976
Traditional painting. Assisted by Taranaki Museum. To celebrate New Plymouth Centenary. Catalogue.

- John Panting Sculpture** 13 Oct - 7 Nov 1976
Retrospective of the recently deceased expatriate NZ sculptor.
Organised by Serpentine Gallery with arts council of Great Britain;
NZ tour by Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- The Printmakers (aka Photographs by the Printmakers)** 13 Oct - 7 Nov 1976
Christchurch photographers, organised by Robert McDougall Art
Gallery.
- Watercolours from the Courtauld (aka Landscape and the English
Watercolour ?)** 10 Nov - 28 Nov 1976
Works c.1750 to 1850 from the Spooner and Witt collections.
Organised by the National Art Gallery.
- Wanganui Lions AA Travel Art Award** 1 Dec - 21 Dec 1976
Organised by Sarjeant Gallery. (Paul Hartigan winner.) Catalogue.
- Christine Hellyar: Perverse Sculpture** 1 Dec - 21 Dec 1976
Casts of familiar objects.
- Art in the Mail** 23 Dec 1976 - 9 Jan 1977
Organised and toured by Manawatu Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Record Cover Art** 22 Dec 1976- 30 Jan 1977
(Aka **Art of the Record Cover.**) From the Sarjeant Gallery.
- 1977 –
- Don Driver Wall Hangings and Sculpture** 11 Jan - 30 Jan 1977
Aka **Don Driver: Works 1972-1976** and **Driver's first exhibition at
Govett-Brewster since 1972.** Typed A4 catalogue. Part of show
extended to 27 Feb.
- An Italian Suite of Watercolours by Doris Lusk** 3 Feb - 27 Feb 1977
From the Dowse (or Robert McDougall Art Gallery?)
- Woollaston: A Taranaki Excursion** 3 Feb - 27 Feb 1977
Govett-Brewster invited Woollaston back to Taranaki for 1 month's
painting for Centennial (of New Plymouth). Typed A4 catalogue.
- Len Lye Kinetic Works (aka One Flip and two Twisters,
Fountain and Blade)** 4 Mar - 27 Mar 1977
Trilogy, Fountain and Blade. Catalogue. May have run to 11 April.
- Christine Hellyar: Country Clothesline** 22 Mar - ? 1977
Shown in sculpture courtyard.
- Permanent Collection** 12 May - 25 May 1977*
- NZ Drawings** 30 March - 24 April 1977
Auckland City Art Gallery touring exhibition from artists
throughout NZ (Abridged selection). Catalogue.

- "Dominion" Schools Art** 28 Apr to 22 May 1977
Primary and secondary schools in southern North Is. Organised by Wairarapa Arts Foundation and the Dept of Education, sponsored by the *Dominion* newspaper. First time taken by Govett-Brewster. Catalogue.
- Denis Mitchell: Sculptures** 25 May - 12 Jun 1977
Catalogue.
- Robert Frannken: Drawings** 25 May - 12 Jun*
- Six British Painters** 25 May - 12 Jun 1977
(Aka **Six British Paintings**.) Lucian Freud, Graham Sutherland, Mathew Smith, LS Lowry, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson. British Council exhibition
- Carole Shepherd: Prints and Drawings** 25 May - 12 Jun 1977
- Graphic Work from the Permanent Collection** 25 May - 12 Jun 1977
This and above 3 exhibitions aka **Overseas and Other Works from the Collection**. Typed A4 catalogue.
- Petrus Van Der Velden 1837-1913** 16 June - 10 July 1977
100 paintings and drawings. Auckland City Art Gallery touring exhibition. Catalogue.
- Michael Smither: You/Me/Us** 13 July - 31 July 1977
Aka **Michael Smither: Happenings**. Exhibition with viewer participation and collaboration with other artists. Typed A4 catalogue.
- Taranaki Review** 4 Aug - 9?, 28? Aug 1977
Selected by Colin McCahon, Pam Walker, Ron O'Reilly and Don Driver. Catalogue.
- Colin McCahon: Necessary Protection** 1 Sept - 25 Sept 1977
Govett-Brewster organised and toured. Catalogue.
- Bewick Tailpieces** 28 Sep - 24 Oct 1977
Thomas Bewick 1753-1828 chapter endpiece illustrations. Organised by Waikato Art Museum from their collection. Catalogue.
- NZ Print Council 1976-77** 28 Sept - 24 Oct 1977
Toured by Wairarapa Art Centre. Catalogue.
- Sculpture from the Collection** 28 Oct - 20 Nov 1977
- Andrew Drumond's "3 cycle" Project** 24 Nov - 18 Dec 1977*
Project with public participation
- Philip Clairmont: Paintings** 24 Nov - 18 Dec 1977
From Sarjeant Gallery. Catalogue. Catalogue gives dates as 26 Oct - 20 Nov.
- David Mealing: Sting/Stung** 24 Nov - 18 Dec 1977
Three hives with live bees in gallery (with tube to outdoors) and video playback of hive life. Catalogue.
- Max Gimblett Paintings** 24 Nov - 18 Dec 1977
Touring exhibition from Barry-Lett Galleries.

- Len Lye II** 22 Dec 1977 - 29 Jan 1978
Fountain, Trilogy (shown for 2nd time at the Govett-Brewster) and loan work, Blade.
- 1978 -**
- Asian Sculptures of the 13th Century** 2 Feb - 26 Feb 1978
From a local collection.
- Indian Miniatures of 17th-18th Centuries** 2 Feb - 26 Feb 1978
Collection of Roy Dalgarno, Auckland
- Contemporary Australian Watercolours** 2 Feb - 26 Feb 1978
Paintings by 38 members of Australian Watercolours Institute, Sydney. Organised by AWI and NZ tour by Hastings City Cultural Centre. Catalogue.
- Brent Wong** 2 Feb - 26 Feb 1978
Dowse organised and toured. Catalogue.
- 39 Drawings: 8 NZ Artists** 22 Mar - 11 Apr 1978
Martin Ball, Gavin Buxton, Gavin Chilcott, Philip Clairmont, Dick Frizzell, Paul Hartigan, Allan Maddox, Denys Watkins. Organised and toured by Auckland City Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Strasbourg Human Rights Posters** 29 Mar - 16 Apr 1978
Organised by the Hastings Cultural Centre from a poster competition held in Strasbourg by the International Institute of Human Rights.
- NZ Spinning and Weaving** 29 Mar - 16 Apr 1978
From the collection of the arts council.
- David Moore: Photographs** 19 Apr - 21 May 1978
Australian photographer. Auckland City Art Gallery toured. Catalogue.
- Jens Hansen and John Parker** 19 Apr - 21 May 1978
Paintings, prints and drawings from Nelson and Blenheim artists respectively.
- Junk into Art** 10 May - 21 May 1978
The public were invited to bring in junk they thought could qualify as art. The pieces were auctioned at the end of the exhibition.
- Brian Brake: 40 Photographs** 24 May - 18 Jun 1978
Organised and toured by Dowse Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- NZ Printmakers** 24 May - 18 Jun 1978
Organised and toured by Auckland City Art Gallery, with arts council assistance.
- Artists Books** 5 Jun - 18 Jun 1978
- Hot Rods, Choppers and Street Machines** 21 Jun - 9 Jul 1978
Assembled by National Street Rod Association of NZ.

- Taranaki Schools: Paintings of People** 12 Jul - 23 Jul 1978
Student art. Sponsored by the Friends with assistance from the Arts and Crafts Branch of the Department of Education. Typed catalogue.
- Taranaki Review** 27 Jul - 20 Aug 1978
Selected by Helen Hitchings, Don Driver, Pam Walker and Ron O'Rielly.
- Benson and Hedges Art Award** 23 Aug - 3 Sep 1978
Ian Scott winner. Judged by James Mollison. Catalogue.
- Olivia Spencer Bower Retrospective** 6 Sep - 1 Oct 1978
Catalogue. Touring exhibition?
- Man Together: Today's Housing Choice** 6 Sep - 1 Oct 1978
Organised by NZ Institute of Architects.
- Alistair Grant: Colour Photographs** 24 Sep - 3 Oct 1978
- Jeffrey Harris** 4 Oct - 29 Oct 1978
Organised by Manawatu Art Gallery in conjunction with Sarjeant Gallery and Dowse Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- Peking Photographs** 4 Oct - 29 Oct 1978
By un-named Chinese photographers.
- Bill Culbert Sculpture** 1 Nov - 26 Nov 1978
Supported by the arts council. Catalogue.
- Batik NZ Style: Dinah Wright and Tony Burton** 1 Nov - 26 Nov 1978
Typed A4 catalogue.
- The Govett-Brewster's Great Show of its Purchases over Ten Turbulent Years** 30 Nov 1978 - 21 Jan 1979
Catalogue.

– 1979 –

- Gretchen Albrecht: Tristan and Iseult** 24 Jan - 18 Feb 1979
Commsioned by AK Festival Society. Toured by Manawatu Art Gallery, with arts council assistance.
- Vivian Smith** 24 Jan - 18 Feb 1979
Early-mid century Wanganui artist. Curated by Gordon Brown for Dunedin Public Art Gallery(?). Typed A4 catalogue.
- London Transport Posters 1908-76** 24 Jan - 18 Feb 1979
Toured by Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Catalogue.
- NZ Sculptors at Mildura** 22 Feb - 18 Mar 1979
Don Driver, Andrew Drummond, Jacqueline Fraser, Peter Nicholls, Nicholas Spill, Denys Watkins. Catalogue.

- Paintings from Private Collections in New Plymouth** 22 Mar - 8 Apr 1979
Including 6 drawings, 7 prints, 2 sculptures, 3 reliefs. McCahon, Driver, Woollaston, Smither, Weeks, W.S. Wallis and others. Catalogue.
- Historie de la Photographie Francaise Des Origines a 1920** 22 Mar - 8 Apr 1979*
- Australian Crafts** 12 Apr - 29 Apr (13 May?) 1979
Organised by Crafts Board of the Australia Council in association with the Crafts Council of Australia
- Vasarely - His Predecessors and Contemporaries** 9 May - 20 May 1979
Organised by French Embassy for NZAGDC (also given as Metropolitan Museum of Manila.) Catalogue.
- Fiona Clark and Alistair Grant: Photographs** 9 May - 20 May 1979*
Catalogue.
- Taranaki Schools: Paintings of People** 23 May - 3 June 1979
School student work. Catalogue.
- Huhsien: Peasant Painters** 7 June - 24 June 1979
Organised by Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, PRC. Catalogue.
- Computer Art From Germany** 7 June - 24 June 1979
- Don Driver** 28 June - 15 July 1979
30 works. Organised by Govett-Brewster to tour to Sarjeant Gallery, Manawatu Art Gallery, National Art Gallery, Suter Art Gallery, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Wairarapa Arts Foundation, Hastings Cultural Centre, Rotorua City Art Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery, Waikato Art Museum. Substantial catalogue.
- Taranaki Review** 19 July - 5 Aug 1979
Selected by Colin McCahon, Ron O'reilly, Pam Walker and Don Driver, with Lyn Spencer for ceramics. Catalogue.
- Tsusumu: The Japanese Art of Packaging** 9 Aug - 26 Aug 1979
From arts council collection, toured by Waikato Art Museum.
- Owen Merton** 9 Aug - 26 Aug 1979*
Organised by the Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, Maine with the National Art Gallery. A4 sheet catalogue.
- Crafts Invitational** 30 Aug - 23 Sept 1979
Organised by Govett-Brewster and its Friends organisation. Catalogue.
- Diane Arbus** 27 Sept - 21 Oct 1979
US photographer. Toured by Auckland City Art Gallery. Typed A4 catalogue.
- Parihaka: Selwyn Muru's Paintings** 24 Oct - 18 Nov 1979
Same as the Dowse exhibition. A4 sheet catalogue.

Billy Apple (Not his Staircase work, which opened 20 Feb 1980.)	31 (21?) Oct - 18 Nov 1979
Robert McLeod Catalogue.	1 Dec - 16 Dec 1979
Max Gimblett: Paintings From NZ Embassy, Washington. Catalogue.	1 Dec - 16 Dec 1979
Works from the Permanent Collection	19 Dec 1979 - 20 Jan 1980
Len Lye: Kinetic Works Blade, Fountain and Trilogy.	20 Dec 1979 - 20 Jan 1980

Index of name changes of galleries listed in this thesis

Name at 1970	Name at 1999*	Name at 2006
Auckland City Art Gallery	Auckland Art Gallery	Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki
	Fisher Gallery	te tuhi – the mark
Waikato Art Gallery	Waikato Museum of Art and History	Waikato Museum of Art and History Te Whare Taonga o Waikato
Rotorua Art Gallery	Rotorua Museum of Art and History	Rotorua Museum of Art and History Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa
Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre	Gisborne Museum and Arts Centre	Tairawhiti Museum Te Whare Taonga o te Tairawhiti
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery	Govett-Brewster Art Gallery	Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum	Hawke's Bay Museum	Hawke's Bay Museum
Hastings City Cultural Centre	Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre	Hawke's Bay Exhibition Centre
Sarjeant Gallery	Sarjeant Gallery	Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua
Palmerston North Art Gallery	Manawatu Art Gallery	Te Manawa – Art
Wairarapa Arts Centre	Wairarapa Arts and History Centre	Aratoi – Wairarapa Museum of Art and History
	Page 90 Artspace	Pataka
Dowse Art Gallery	Dowse Art Museum	The Dowse
	Wellington City Art Gallery	City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi
National Art Gallery	Te Papa: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa: Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
Bishop Suter Art Gallery	Suter Art Gallery	The Suter Te Aratoi o Whakatu
Robert McDougall Art Gallery	Robert McDougall Art Gallery	Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu
Aigantighe Art Gallery	Aigantighe Art Gallery	Aigantighe Art Gallery
Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) Gallery	Canterbury Society of Arts (CSA) Gallery	Centre of Contemporary Art (CoCA)
Dunedin Public Art Gallery	Dunedin Public Art Gallery	Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Invercargill Public Art Gallery	Anderson Park Art Gallery	Anderson Park Art Gallery
Southland Centennial Museum and Art Gallery	Southland Museum and Art Gallery	Southland Museum and Art Gallery Niho o te Taniwha

* Date of first printing of thesis. Non-1970s galleries only listed where name has changed since 1999. A number of institutions that started out as art galleries have merged with museums.

Fig 10.1

Bibliography

This bibliography is divided into three sections. The first part is a select bibliography. Not included here are some items already referenced in the text but which have little relevance in themselves to the themes of the thesis. The second covers specific New Zealand galleries and includes all published and manuscript material consulted, though not all is necessarily referred to in the text. The last section, headed Unpublished Sources, lists interviews and archive material. Newspaper sources are covered here since they have been searched via press clipping collections.

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