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THE KIM WRIGHT COLLECTION OF NEW ZEALAND PAINTING

ITINERARY

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth/May - June, 1974

Auckland City Art Gallery/June - July

Gisborne Art Gallery & Museum/August - September

Hawkes Bay Art Gallery & Museum/October

Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch/January, 1975

Sarjeant Art Gallery, Wanganui/March

Waikato Art Museum, Hamilton/April-May

New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts, Wellington/May - June

Cover Illustration _13/PORTRAIT OF KIM WRIGHT, 1971 by Pat Hanly

ORGANISED AND TOURED BY THE
GOVETT—BREWSTER ART GALLERY
WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE QEII
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND

PREFACE

Kim Wright's collection, which is catalogued here, shows a strong, personal and discerning taste. The collection begins with the works of the pioneers of contemporary art in New Zealand, Colin McCahon, Rita Angus and Toss Woollaston and takes us through to the present. Although the works were not chosen with a historical continuum in mind, the collection remains a good reference to New Zealand contemporary art. Though minor gaps are apparent and the majority of works tend towards an intimate quality, the collection stands as a portrait of the collector; a physical manifestation of his unique character. The collection has not remained static; it has been shaped and refined through sales and purchases and is a living collection, for Mr. Wright is free to constantly re-define his taste and thus his collection.

The Kim Wright Collection was placed on extended loan to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in 1970 shortly after the gallery opened. Being a young institution, with a limited budget, it was a most welcome gesture which added greatly to the depth of the gallery's New Zealand collection.

I have asked two figures in the New Zealand art world to record their feelings and impressions about Kim Wright and his collection. A long time friend and associate of Kim Wright, Mr. Barry Lett has written a personal and moving dialogue that I have printed in its original form to convey its direct and personal quality. Mr. Hamish Keith, New Zealand commentator and art historian, discusses the aesthetic aspects of the collection.

I would like to express my great appreciation to Mr. Kim Wright for placing his collection on extended loan to the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery and especially for his generosity in allowing it to tour the country. I thank Mr. Barry Lett and Mr. Hamish Keith for their contributions to the catalogue and the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand for their financial support towards the exhibition. Thanks go to my staff for their able assistance in the preparation of the exhibition and the catalogue.

Robert Ballard
DIRECTOR

INTRODUCTION BY BARRY LETT

(1)

25 MAR 1974

Europe,

Kim Wright was born in 1938. On leaving school he went shepherding first on the East Coast of Hawkes Bay for two years and then in the King Country. In 1959 he travelled overseas and for the next two years lived and worked in England, Canada and the USA. He arrived back in New Zealand in 1961, attended Lincoln College, University of Canterbury. He graduated in 1963 with a Diploma of Valuation and Farm Management and from 1964-1966 worked for the State Advances Corporation as a farm appraiser in the Auckland area. He became increasingly unhappy in this position and in 1966 he resigned and went to Australia. There he worked in a variety of jobs in sugar plantations, farms and in the main cities. In 1967 he turned his hand to manufacturing and bought into a run down factory in Auckland which specialised in small scale precision engineering. In spite of having no experience in this field he gradually built up the business into a going concern and sold it two years later. In the next two years he worked from time to time as a truck driver, a taxi driver, a wharf labourer, an attendant at the Auckland City Art Gallery and on Hawkes Bay cropping and fruit farms. In 1972 he again set out for overseas and lived mainly ~~for~~ⁱⁿ the South of England where he worked as a chef in Dorset and later at the Campden Arts Centre in London. He hitch-hiked across North and East Africa and then through Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia. Since then he has worked as a carpenter's assistant and is using the skills he has learnt to renovate an old house he has bought in Auckland. Already he is talking about another overseas trip.

This itinerary of his wanderings, this record of his constant need for change not only reveals a man of restless spirit and adventurous outlook but also a man in search of something that he has not yet found. Almost as if the golden egg is always beyond the next horizon.

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All those who have known Kim Wright for any length of time finally come to one inescapable conclusion. He is a man of many parts and it is not possible to know him totally. This is so not only when we consider his unpredictable, ^{non-}linear life style but also in his basic attitudes. He is the most gregarious of men and yet also a solitary figure. An articulate and generous man who retains a silent and private core. His interests and achievements are wide ranging and if there is one salient feature we can put our finger on it is ability to adapt his attitude and his energies to meet new circumstances. This is not to say there is no central core to his character or that his character is diluted by the many directions his life seems to take - far from it- each new twist and turn in his life is pursued with great energy and commitment. He is an explorer and adventurer with a restless desire to travel away from known situations. Once something is established in reality, or in his mind, he quickly tires of it and becomes interested in that which he does not know or that which he has yet to unveil.

I first came across his name in 1964. While visiting the ~~Ikon~~ Colin McCahon 'Waterfall' exhibition at the Ikon Gallery I noticed in the stock room a wrapped print standing against the wall bearing a red sticker and his name and address. I was always on the lookout for possible clients for the struggling Uptown Gallery and I did not hesitate to borrow this information and add it to our modest mailing list. This proved a most fateful move for some time later he visited the gallery and purchased a small painting - the first painting in his collection. This meeting also proved to be a happy event in terms of Friendship and later, when the Barry Lett Galleries were established in 1965, in terms of business association - he became a third partner in 1966 and has since worked behind the scenes or on deck for short periods.

To start with Kim Wright had no conscious desire to form a collection of New Zealand Art. He was simply interested in the visual arts generally and in ~~developments in New Zealand~~ current developments in New Zealand art in particular. Initially the taste and direction of his purchases was limited by the availability of good works but even when the the number of

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exhibitions increased in the late sixties he showed no ~~sign~~ great eagerness to purchase a representative selection. The work he bought had to be of particular relevance to him. A personal choice. He acted on instinct rather than information. At a certain point he realised he had enough paintings to have them qualify as a collection and since then has tried to expand the directions that were already apparent or fill in gaps that had appeared.

Barry Lett

Dear Bob,
 Sending this from home.
 Cut it up and put it together
 again if it is too long or if
 you see some improvements. Took
 for grammatical errors etc.
 Sorry its late.
 Barry

INTRODUCTION BY HAMISH KEITH

"The moment the picture comes upon the easel it is received with loud clapping of hands, repeated as often as the bidders outvie one another in their advances of perhaps a thousand guineas, and when the hammer falls at last to a lumping sum, there is a perfect uproar, just as the crowd roars its delight when the Derby is run, for the Christie audience revels in high prices simply for money's sake, though of course some of the applause is meant for the picture."

The London "Graphic" September 1887.

"I have begun two small studies with the sea in them for Monsieur Choquet, who had suggested them to me. They are like playing-cards, Red roofs against the blue sea"

Cezanne to Pissarro, July 1876.

With some small changes those two quotes could well represent the extremes of collecting in New Zealand; at one end the polite saleroom applause that greets the daring of the amateur who has pushed a Goldie or Lindauer portrait to yet another "record" price, and at the other the kind of close personal relationship between painter and collector represented by Patrick Hanly's *PORTRAIT OF KIM WRIGHT* (No. 13, illus. on cover) in this exhibition. The extremes are not only those of taste, but of attitude. In his own terms, no doubt, the proud owner of the Lindauer has made an "investment". Whatever qualms he might feel as he signs his cheque are brushed away with the happy thought that he cannot lose on his purchase. (It has not occurred to him, of course, that his investment can pass through three more sales, double in price and not make a cent for anyone other than the auctioneer.) A collector like Kim Wright, on the other hand, is not really concerned about investment. He does not measure his acquisitions in terms of profit or loss. He buys because he must—because an image has become so much part of his

THE PLATES





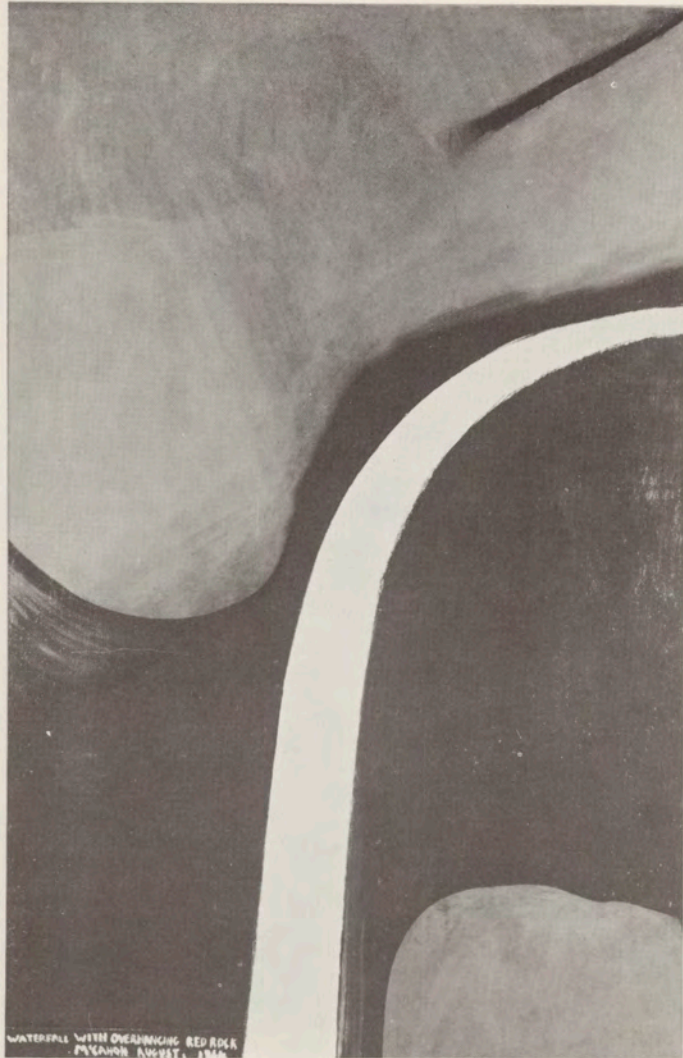
3/TARADALE, HAWKES BAY by Rita Angus

2/SHEDS, HAWKES BAY by Rita Angus

27/MARGE AS THE VIRGIN MARY AT MAPUA, 1946 by Colin McCahon

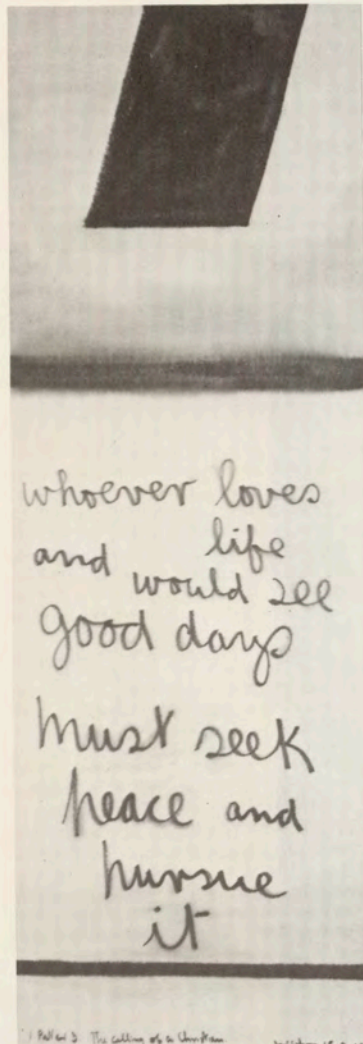
52/ERUA, 1961 by M. T. Woollaston





WATERFALL WITH OVERHANGING RED ROCK
MCCAHON AUGUST 1964

37/WATERFALL WITH
OVERHANGING RED ROCK,
1964 by Colin McCahon



Painted by The calling of a Christian William 1969

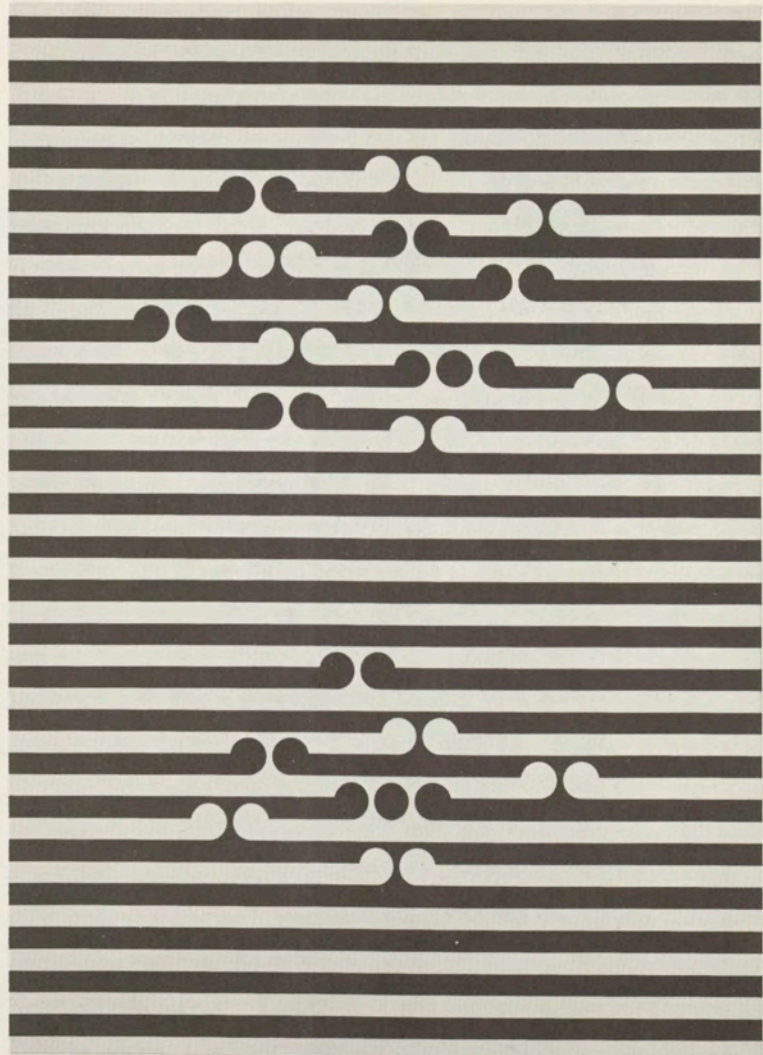
34/THE CALLING OF A CHRISTIAN, 1969
by Colin McCahon

10/FIRE SERIES, 1960 by Pat Hanly

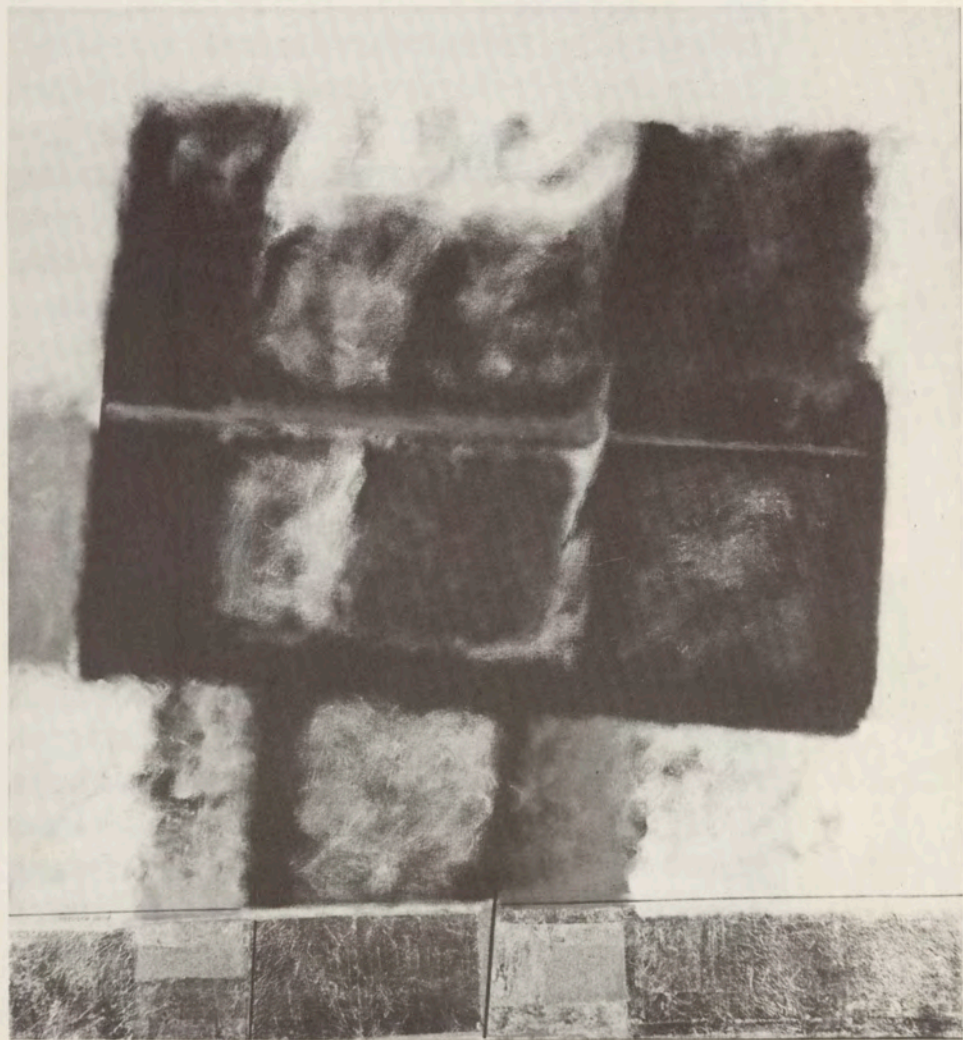




8/FIGURE IN LIGHT,
1968 by Pat Hanly



47/HIWI,
1966 by Gordon Walters



49/GENERAL ASPECT, 1969 by Brent Wong

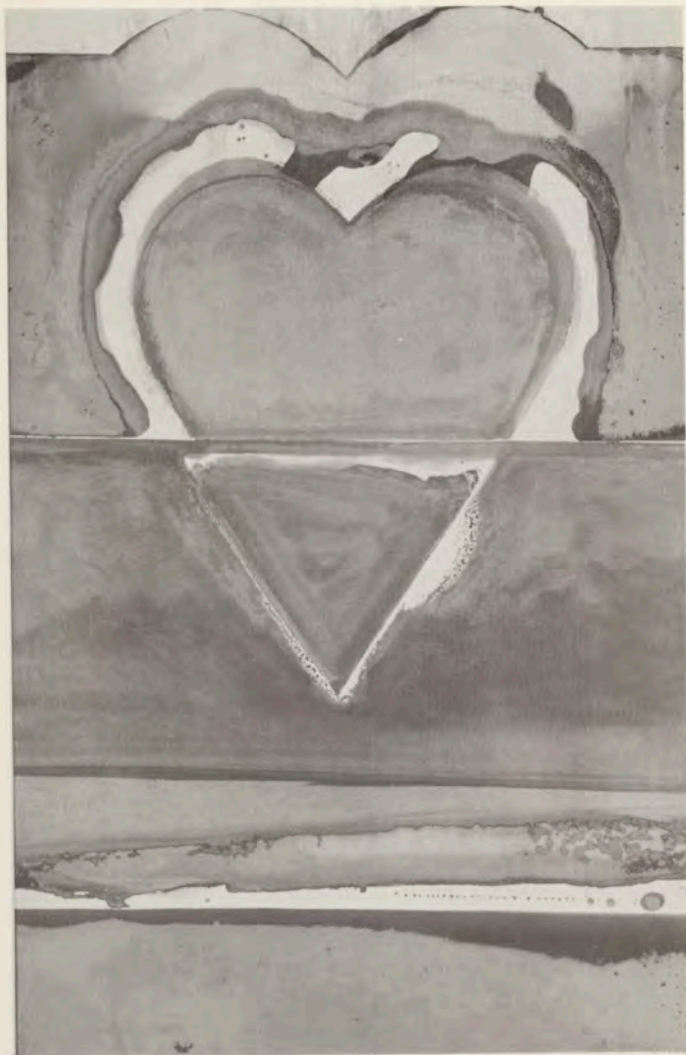




44/FAT CORD. 1969
by Phillip Truttum

23/TAWERA WITH ISLAND, 1967 by Michael Illingworth





42/PAPALAGI
(CLOUD PIERCERS) NO. 6,
1972 by Geoff Thornley

imagination that he feels compelled to make the original a tangible part of his life. Each of these paintings is an element in a whole experience. Their total can be seen as the imaginative environment of a singular individual.

The collector understands, perhaps far better than a critic or museum curator, the levels on which any particular work of art may be approached. He has refused to settle for the brief and fragmentary experience of art offered by an art gallery or an exhibition. Anatole France described criticism as "a souls adventure among the masterpieces". While we might reject the grander implications of that description, it comes close to describing the joys of the collector. For their owner, the experience of these works is a constant adventure. They continue to enrich his life. Piece by piece they reveal their meaning to him. He can approach them in all moods, under all circumstances, and the best among them will always have something to offer. Even the least will have those occasional insights to reveal that only familiarity with them can provoke.

For some curious reason, it is widely believed that a painting can give up what it contains on the briefest viewing—that a label level dash around an art gallery can offer riches and enlightenment. The approach of the collector to a work of art could not be further from that. He understands just how much contemplation, application and effort needs to be given any reasonable work of art before its meaning becomes clear. Even then, the collector senses that like an onion the painter's imagery is layered, skin upon skin. The McCahon's in Kim Wright's collection are a splendid example of that. At first sight the small POHUTUKAWA (No. 35) from the Titirangi series might seem simply an uncomplex and joyful rendering of a familiar tree, but only seeing that painting in many states of mind can really bring the viewer close to McCahon's own intention in that series. Their concern is with the immediate response to looking and seeing. The fresh morning eye on the landscape, which McCahon himself has described as being like "the blind man in the Bible given sight, who saw 'men like trees walking'." Having possessed another of these paintings since 1959, I can well understand the constant joy this small work must be to its owner.

And how enriching it must be to be constantly made aware of a truth, like that burnt into the pale landscape of McCahon's THE CALLING OF A CHRISTIAN, (No. 34, illus.) "Whoever loves life and would see good days must seek peace and pursue it". Or to understand through contemplation in your own environment, what McCahon meant by the koan "as there is a constant flow of light we are born into the pure land", inscribed on some of the key "waterfall" paintings.

There is more than the pride of ownership involved in possessing such fine images of the landscape as those in the three Rita Angus paintings. Much more than art history must have motivated Wright to follow so patiently the development of

Errata:

Illustration caption "8/FIGURE IN LIGHT, 1968 by Pat Hanly" should read "9/FIGURES IN LIGHT (8), 1964 by Pat Hanly"

Illustration caption "10/FIRE SERIES, 1960 by Pat Hanly" should read "10/ESCAPE TO PARADISE, 1960 by Pat Hanly"

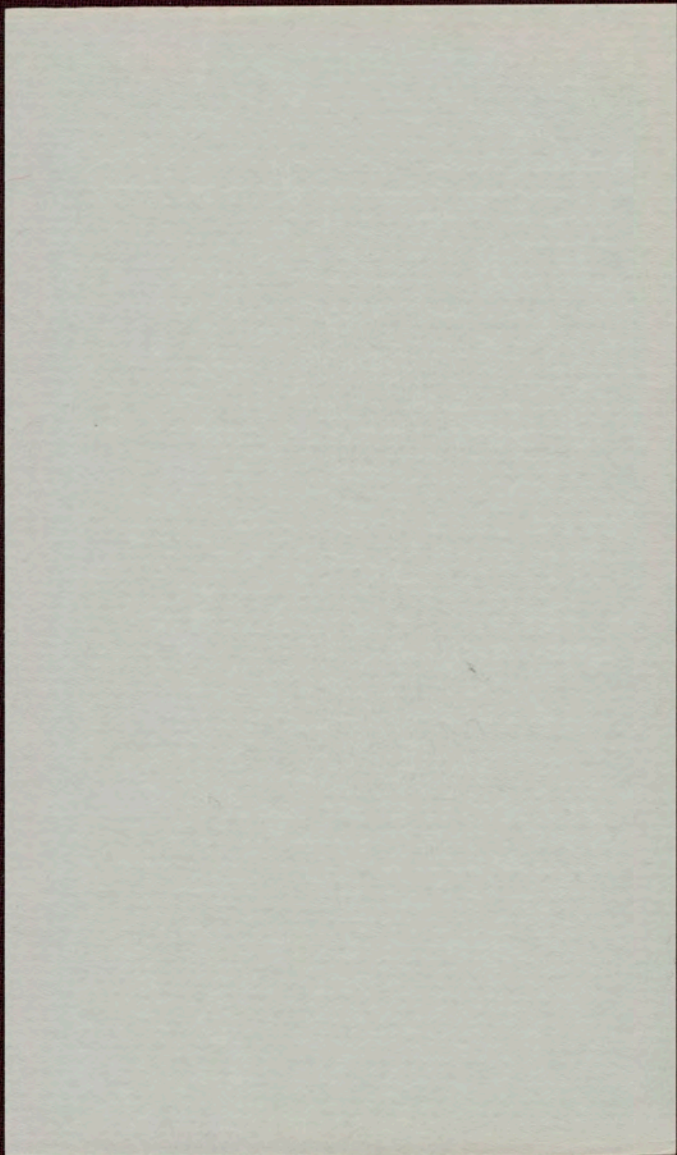
Opposite illustration "49/General Aspect, 1969 by Brent Wong" is "40/Painting, 1962-64 by Milan Mrkusich"

Illustration caption "44/FAT CORD . . ." should read "44/FAT CHORD . . ."

Illustration caption "42/PAPALAGI . . ." should read "42/PAPALANGI . . ."

Catalogue number 14 delete . . ."er, 30/40" at end of entry

Between catalogue number 51 and 53 should be "52/ERUA, by M T. Woollaston 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 14, Ink on paper."



Michael Illingworth or Patrick Hanly. Imagine, if you can, what delight there must be in always being able to sink the mind into the rich and slow musical movements of Philip Trusstum's FAT CHORD (No. 44, illus.) or travel the stark and patient landscape of Brent Wong's GENERAL ASPECT (No. 49, illus.).

Any provincial art gallery would be proud to house this collection and even major institutions might find that works in it filled significant gaps, but with few exceptions these are not museum pieces. They are the kind of painting which operates best on a more intensely human scale. Each of them represents not only the experience of the painter, but in a real way the experience of the collector as well.

Sadly, seeing these paintings in an art gallery environment, we can only guess at the quality of that particular experience. No doubt many of these works will not be to the taste of those who see them in this exhibition, but one thing is certain, they are the taste of their owner and a taste developed with considerable care and love. It represents one man's belief in and commitment to the vision of his fellow New Zealanders. Few of our public collections would merit that description and it is a mark of Kim Wright's belief in what he has collected that he is willing to share it with us, however briefly.

When I look at this collection as a whole, I keep returning to Hanly's portrait of the collector. It sums up, I think, just what the collection means to its owner—a life in which real values are measured by the imagination, in which works of art represent experience not investment.

Hamish Keith

DIMENSIONS IN INCHES. HEIGHT PRECEDING WIDTH

THE CATALOGUE

- 1/DANNEVIRKE by Rita Angus (b 1908-70)
15 x 21 $\frac{3}{8}$, Oil on hardboard
- 2/SHEDS, HAWKES BAY by Rita Angus
23 $\frac{1}{4}$ v 23 $\frac{1}{2}$, Oil on hardboard, illustrated
- 3/TARADALE, HAWKES BAY by Rita Angus
23 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{4}$, Oil on hardboard, illustrated
- 4/VERACRUZ, 1968 by Don Binney (b. 1940-)
15 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{3}{8}$, Gouache on paper
- 5/COTTAGE MIXTURE, 1969 by Pat Hanly (b. 1932-)
47 x 48, Oil on hardboard
- 6/DANCER AND GENTLEMAN: SHOWGIRL SERIES, 1961 by Pat Hanly
31 x 24, Oil on canvas
- 7/EVERYMAN AWAKES, 1973 by Pat Hanly
20 x 20, Mixed Media, 3/20
- 8/FIGURE IN LIGHT, 1968 by Pat Hanly
16 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$, Silkscreen Print on paper, 9/10 illustrated
- 9/FIGURES IN LIGHT (8), 1964 by Pat Hanly
40 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$, Oil on canvas, illustrated
- 10/ESCAPE TO PARADISE, 1960 by Pat Hanly
29 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$, Oil on canvas
- 11/GIRL IN LIGHT, 1964 by Pat Hanly
19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$, Lithograph, 5/6
- 11a/GIRL'S HEAD, 1972 by Pat Hanly
22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23, Oil on board
- 12/INSIDE THE GARDEN (17), 1968 by Pat Hanly
21 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 23 $\frac{7}{8}$, Watercolour and crayon on paper
- 13/PORTRAIT OF KIM WRIGHT, 1971 by Pat Hanly
18 x 18, Oil on board, illustrated
- 14/RAINBOW OVER MT. EDEN, 1972 by Pat Hanly
19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20, Silkscreen print, 30/40 or, 30/40
- 15/SELF PORTRAIT, by Pat Hanly
10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12, Ink on paper
- 16/TAMARILLO, 1969 by Pat Hanly
20 x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$, Mixed Media, 4/14

- 17/THE KITE, 1971 by Pat Hanly
20 x 20, Silkscreen print, 1/10
- 18/BLACK PAINTING IV, 1970 by Ralph Hotere (b. 1931-)
70 x 28, Acrylic on canvas
- 19/DRAWING FOR PINE AND POEM BY BILL MANHINE by Ralph Hotere
22½ x 14¼, Drawing/watercolour on paper
- 20/CITIZENS OF THE POLISHED CITY, 1963 by Michael Illingworth (b. 1932-)
25⅞ x 21⅜, Mixed media on canvas
- 21/SOLOIST, 1960 by Michael Illingworth
10½ x 14¾, Mixed media on canvas
- 22/STILL LIFE, 1968 by Michael Illingworth
10¼ x 12½, Oil on canvas
- 23/TAWERA WITH ISLAND, 1967 by Michael Illingworth
30 x 36, Oil on canvas, illustrated
- 24/THOMAS P.Q., 1961 by Michael Illingworth
13⅞ x 9½, Oil on canvas
- 25/UNTITLED, 1971 by Michael Illingworth
10 x 8, Oil on canvas
- 26/BATHERS AFTER MICHAEL ANGELO, c.1955 by Colin McCahon (b. 1919-)
14⅞ x 22, Oil on hardboard
- 27/MARGE AS THE VIRGIN MARY AT MAPUA, 1946 by Colin McCahon
11⅞ x 9, Watercolour on paper, illustrated
- 28/THE CRUSADER, 1943 by Colin McCahon
7¼ x 10¼, Ink on paper
- 29/NORTH OTAGO, 1967 by Colin McCahon
21 x 31¼, PVA on board
- 30/No. 4 FROM THE GATE SERIES, 1962 by Colin McCahon
23¼ x 19, Oil on hardboard
- 31/PAINTING FROM NORTHLAND SERIES, 1961 by Colin McCahon
23½ x 17⅞, Oil on canvas
- 32/RELIGIOUS DRAWING, 1941 by Colin McCahon
9½ x 11⅞, Pencil on paper
- 33/STUDY OF KUROW HILL, NORTH OTAGO, by Colin McCahon
28 x 42½, Watercolour/acrylic on paper
- 34/THE CALLING OF A CHRISTIAN, 1969 by Colin McCahon
61¼ x 21¼, Pastel and wash on paper, illustrated
- 35/POHUTUKAWA, 1957 by Colin McCahon
19½ x 18½, Oil on board
- 36/VISIBLE MYSTERIES, No. 5, 1968 by Colin McCahon
47½ x 23¼, PVA on hardboard
- 37/WATERFALL WITH OVERHANGING RED ROCK, 1964 by Colin McCahon
53½ x 35½, Oil on board, illustrated
- 38/AND GOD DIVIDED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS, 1966 by Milan Mrkusich (b. 1925-)
34½ x 108, Oil on canvas
- 39/BUILDINGS, 1955 by Milan Mrkusich
24⅞ x 28½, Oil on board
- 40/PAINTING, 1962-64 by Milan Mrkusich
35 x 33⅞, Oil and collage on canvas, illustrated
- 41/LINEAR SERIES NO. 15, 1967 by Don Peebles (b. 1922-)
65⅞ x 60¼, Acrylic on canvas
- 42/PAPALANGI (CLOUD PIERCERS) NO. 6, 1972 by Geoff Thornley (b. 1942-)
42 x 28¼, Coloured inks on paper, illustrated
- 43/THE RETRIEVERS, by Teuane Tibbo
23 x 35, Oil on hardboard
- 44/FAT CHORD, 1969 by Phillip Trusttum (b. 1940-)
72 x 48, Oil on board, illustrated
- 45/NO, 1965 by Phillip Trusttum
30¼ x 22¼, Oil on paper on board
- 46/UNDERGROUND, 1965 by Greer Twiss (b. 1937-)
7½ x 9½, Watercolour on paper
- 47/HIWI, 1966 by Gordon Walters (b. 1919-)
47⅞ x 35⅞, PVA on canvas on hardboard, illustrated
- 48/WATER TESTERS IN A STRUCTURAL SITUATION, 1972 by Dennis Watkins (b. 1945-)
14¼ x 19¼, Watercolour on paper
- 49/GENERAL ASPECT, 1969 by Brent Wong (b. 1945)
27 x 36, Oil on hardboard, illustrated
- 50/COLIN SIMPSON, 1963 by M. T. Woollaston (b. 1910-)
23 x 18⅞, Oil on hardboard
- 51/ERUA, by M. T. Woollaston
14⅞ x 10⅞, Ink on paper, illustrated
- 53/UNTITLED, 1961 by M. T. Woollaston
12 x 15¼, Watercolour on paper

Credits:

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