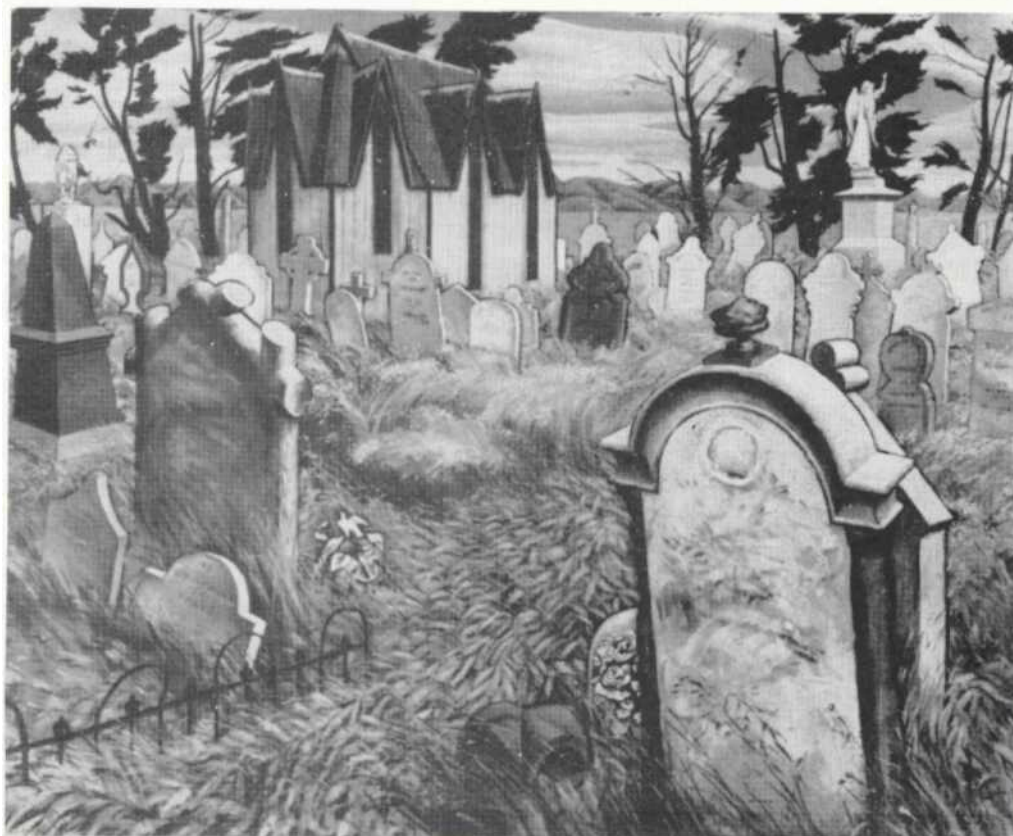


AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

QUARTERLY



Nor'wester in the Cemetery

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NUMBER EIGHT — SPRING — 1959

EDITORIAL

The last quarter of 1958 will be always recalled as a memorable period. Due to Government restrictions on overseas spending and the delay caused in achieving a partial lifting of the total ban on overseas exhibitions and works of art, we had to cope with three exhibitions in seven weeks. Rembrandt, the Hiroshima Panels and Picasso lithographs. However the hard work which this entailed was rewarded by a total attendance of 30,000 for the seven weeks.

STAFF

Mr C. McCahon returned after four months visit to Art Museums in the United States. We would like to thank the staffs of those galleries who were so helpful and hospitable during his visit.

GALLERY ASSOCIATES

At its Annual General Meeting Mr John Stacpoole was elected Chairman to succeed Mr T. Bolster.

On November 11, Miss Ngaio Marsh, the novelist, gave an excellent lecture, *Perspectives: the New Zealander and the Visual Arts*. This was the second of the annual lectures sponsored by the Associates.

This Issue

We have devoted this issue to twentieth century New Zealand painting. Recently we pur-

chased a number of paintings by artists of this country, so this seemed a suitable time to review eight paintings acquired since 1954.

W. A. SUTTON (Born 1917) New Zealand (see front cover)

NORWESTER IN THE CEMETERY

Oil on canvas 59 x 71 ins.

Signed *W. A. Sutton '50*

Purchased 1954

William Sutton was born in Christchurch and educated at the Christchurch Boys' High School. He gained his Diploma in Fine Arts at the Canterbury School of Fine Arts in 1937 and from 1947 to 1949 studied in London. Since 1950 he has been a lecturer in painting at Canterbury.

A relentless realist, Sutton has always been absorbed by, and involved with symbols of his environment. In this he belongs to a school of painting that has flourished in Canterbury since the early 1930's—a school concerned with the physical appearance of the Canterbury landscape and seeking identification with it. Weathered wood and decayed churches, pine trees and dry-as-dust grass, have appeared time and time again in the work of these painters, but it is in Sutton, and particularly in the *Norwester in the Cemetery*, that these objects become distilled into perhaps the final statement of their values.



MAY SMITH A RCA (Born 1906)
 CHARACTERISATION IN COLOUR
 Oil on Canvas 30 x 24 ins.
 Signed and dated May *Smith* '41
 Purchased 1958

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May Smith was born in Simla, India, arriving in New Zealand in 1921. She studied at the Elam School of Art, Auckland, from 1924 to 1927 and then from 1928 to 1931 at the Royal College of Art, London. The next eight years were spent in England, painting, and designing textiles. She returned to New Zealand in 1939.

At this time painting in New Zealand was almost entirely drably realist in approach and dark and sombre in colour. May Smith's painting suggested a different outlook, it was gay in colour, light in tone, her realism was of patterned shapes rather than carefully illusionist and her paint directly and simply applied as against the pervading tight scumbles of Auckland painting. Historically this painting and other works by May Smith of this period stand at the beginning of a movement in New Zealand painting which is only now gaining strength and some few good painters around it.



T. M. WOOLLASTON (Born 1910) New Zealand
 PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S WIFE
 Oil on paper 18 x 16 ins.
 Signed *Woollaston*
 Purchased 1958

Tosswill Woollaston was born in Taranaki of parents who were dairy farmers there. He worked as a young man in orchards at Nelson, and it was here that he first met people who shared his interest in art.

Woollaston has been one of the very first (and is still one of the few) New Zealand painters whose work revealed an understanding of the momentous developments in art in Europe during the late part of the last, and the early part of this, century. Acknowledging the influence of Cezanne, he painted landscapes and figures in a manner at striking variance with the merely picturesque or descriptive works which the majority of his contemporaries were doing. A picture such as *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*; conspicuous as it is for its maturity and restraint, surely has an important place in a representative collection of New Zealand painting. An earlier work by Woollaston was acquired by the Gallery in 1954.

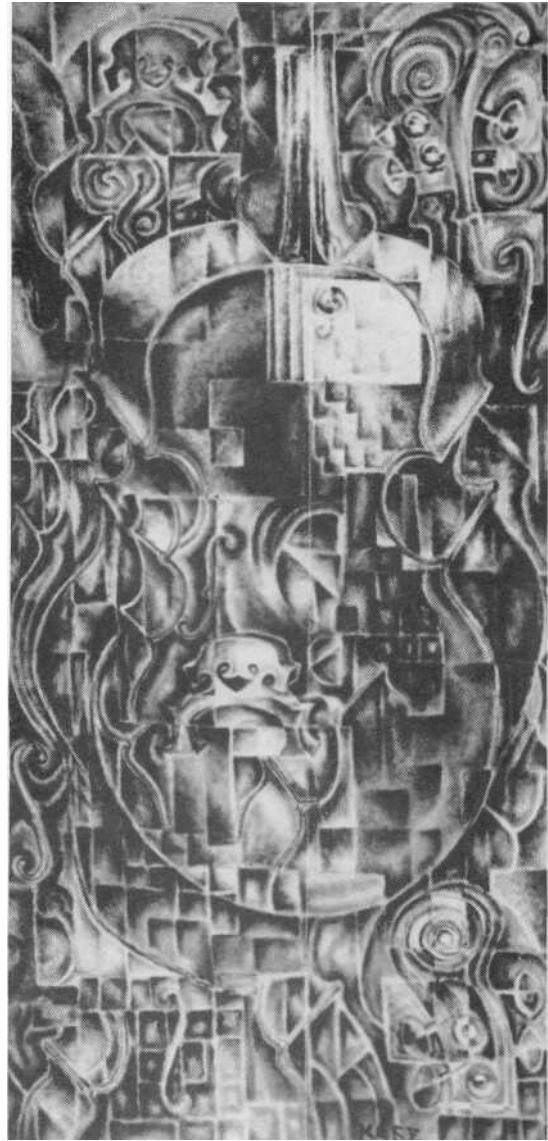


MICHAEL NICHOLSON (Born 1918)
 SELF PORTRAIT
 Casein Emulsion 35 x 22 ins.
 Purchased 1958

Nicholson studied under Coldstream and Pasmore at the Slade and was teaching at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London before he came to New Zealand. He has been in Auckland for four-and-a-half years and is on the staff of the Elam School of Fine Art in Auckland.

The most constant influence on his work would appear to be Wyndham Lewis and some of the ideas of contemporary architecture. His painting demonstrates his intellectual approach to his art for it bears an atmosphere of exacting analysis. Although Nicholson is mainly concerned with architectonic abstractions he de-

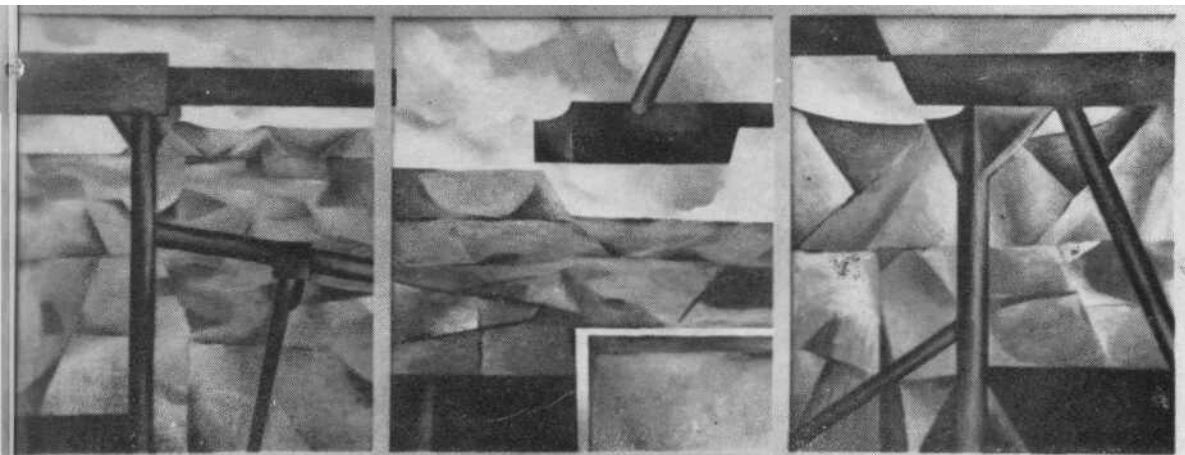
parts occasionally to landscape and composition of figures. In this self-portrait he achieves a real synthesis of himself the intellectual analyst, and himself the man.



KASE JACKSON (Born 1926) New Zealand
 BASS

Oil on Hardboard 71 x 35 ins.
 Signed *Kase*
 Purchased 1958

The painting *Bass* by Kase Jackson belongs to the same movement as May Smith's work,



COLIN McCAHON (Born 1919) New Zealand

TRYPTICH. ON BUILDING BRIDGES, 1952

Oil on panels: each 42 x 36 ins.

Signed and dated *McCahon July-Sept '52* and *McCahon Aug Sept '52*.

Purchased 1958

New Zealand, with its small population, has

being highly decorative both in design and colour and making use of, but not imitating the actual fact of a bass. The colour is predominately blue green and red, sharp and almost metallic and from the point of view of realist painting in considerable disagreement with the subject, but this is not the bass of the classical orchestra but of modern music and the jazz quartette. Jackson was born in Auckland in 1926, has had no formal art school training but spent some time studying architecture then working as a radio technician, and now as a milkman in Auckland. Jackson's first paintings of any real interest appeared in 1953, large, free watercolours of Waiheke Island, an amalgam of topographical landscape and comic book illustration, followed by a series of small oils of urban scenes and still life, Jackson's own variations of and explorations into the cubist idiom culminated in three large oils, *Chair*, *Ferry Boats*, and *Bass* and a small and very beautiful *Flowers in a Cut Crystal Vase*. More recent work has been almost entirely non-figurative and experimentally tachiste.

only a proportionate output of serious painters and many, like Frances Hodgkins, depart never to return. Therefore those who have stayed may be rated almost as phenomena. There are two distinct schools of painting in New Zealand — one an English inspired romantic movement, and the other a Cezanne-Cubist element which has concentrated on examining and discovering the elemental forms of the New Zealand landscape. McCahon belongs to this group.

He has been painting seriously since 1935. All the phases through which he has passed have shown the artist in constant search for painterly symbols. Now living in Auckland, he spent many years in Dunedin, Canterbury and Nelson, and it is in these areas that he worked until 1953, extracting the essential qualities and spirit of the South Island landscape.

In New Zealand, with its precipitous gorges, the bridge is not only a means of communication but a symbol of human contacts.

In McCahon's painting of the North Canterbury landscape seen through the trusses of a bridge there seems to be a very real and compelling symbol. As well, of course, there is the contrast between the man-made and natural forms and how in time the man-made form becomes part of the landscape. The landscape itself in colour and form, and its conjunction with the boundless Pacific sky, is here extracted and put down as a clear, evocative statement in paint.



JOHN HOLMWOOD (Born 1910) New Zealand
LANDSCAPE WITH A SAW MILL
Oil on millboard 29 x 48 ins.
Signed and dated *John Holmwood '52*
Purchased 1953

John Holmwood's landscape of the back country, both in its subject and its manner, finds a place in the school of New Zealand painting whose best known representative is Eric Lee Johnson and which includes all those painters who have been moved by the romantic elements of the New Zealand scene — the lonely

countryside, whose vigorous contrasts and rich colours are at times relieved by the rather melancholy charm of old colonial buildings, beginning to fall into decay.

Holmwood's range of subject is wide however and he has painted people (*The Gardener, 1956*) and urban buildings (*Hospital Facade, 1955*), as well as a brief period of non-objective paintings. But in *Landscape With a Saw Mill* we probably see him at his happiest: the freely composed picture has a gaiety which makes its appeal without any great demands for an effort of the intellect.

GIFTS

PETRUS VAN DER VELDEN (1834-1913)
New Zealand
PORTRAIT OF A LADY
Oil on canvas 27 x 19 ins.
Presented by Mrs R. Jones, Christchurch.

WALTER WRIGHT (1866-1933) New Zealand
A LANDSCAPE
Oil on canvas 16 x 24 ins.
Presented by the Auckland Workingmen's Club..

MILAN MRKUSICH (Born 1925) New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND LANDSCAPE 1955

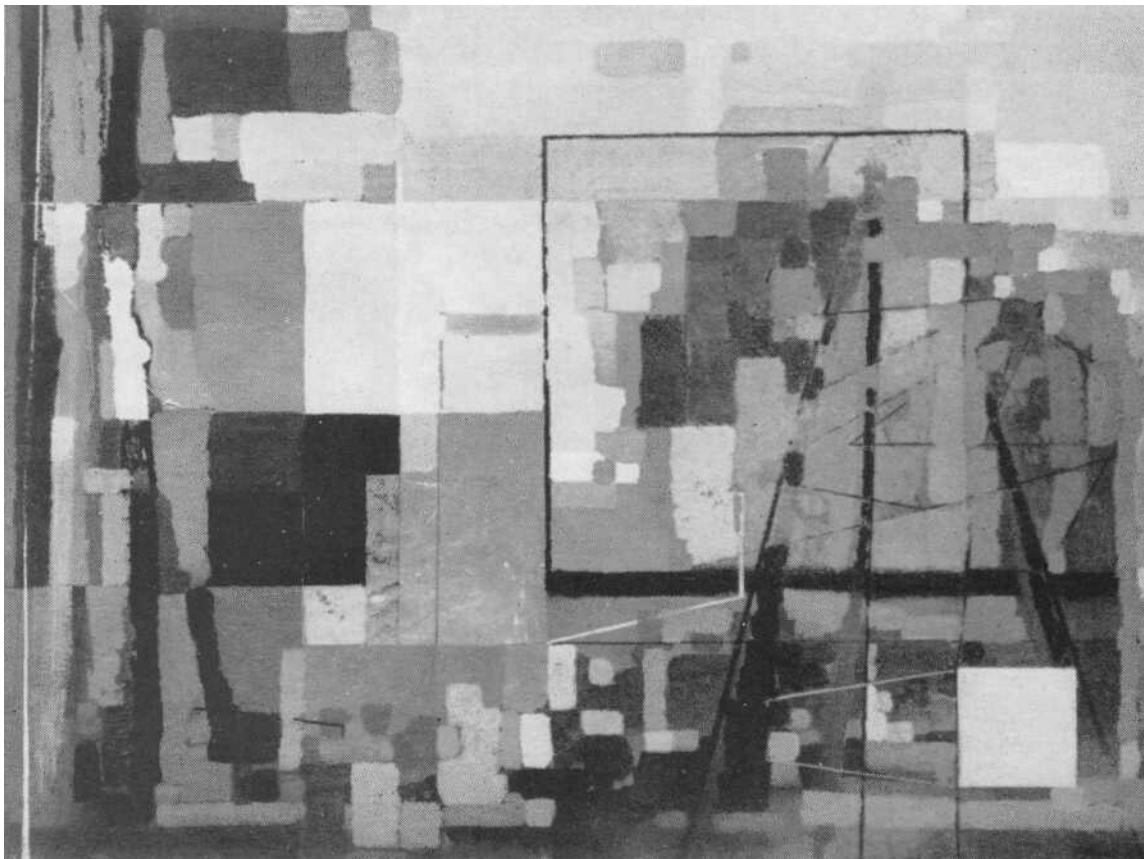
Oil on Panel 20 x 26 ins.

Purchased 1955

Milan Mrkusich was born in Dargaville in 1925 and has received no formal Art School training. From 1949 he has worked in Auckland as a designer and colour consultant.

Mrkusich is one of those painters responsible for the revival of the abstract idiom, which has

taken place in Auckland since 1950. His painting is mainly concerned with the formal elements of design and colour and related to the architectural aspects of his environment. In *Landscape 1955*, however, these constructions begin to resolve into slightly more organic and less easy harmonies. From its realist beginnings the urban subject in New Zealand painting, with Mrkusich, matured into abstract symbols.



KARL KASTEN (Born 1916) American (West Coast)

FRAGMENT OF AUTUMN

Oil on canvas 30 x 40 ins.

Presented by Colin McCahon, Auckland.

T. A. McCORMACK (New Zealand)

LANDSCAPE WITH WHITE CHALK CLIFFS

Watercolour 11 x 15

Presented by f. F. S. Briggs, Esq. Whangarei.

T. A. McCORMACK (Born New Zealand)

CLOUD SHADOWS

Watercolour 11 x 15 ins.

Presented by J. F. S. Briggs, Esq. Whangarei.

STEFANO DELLA BELLA (1610-1664)

EMBATTLEMENTS AND SEASHORE

Engraving

Presented by Dr. W. S. Auburn, Auckland.

exhibition calendar

1959

Although the Gallery will be seriously hampered by a lack of sterling funds, there will be a variety of Exhibitions. No dates are firm yet but the following are arranged: Estorick Collection of Twentieth Century Italian Art, Old Masters from New Zealand Private and Public Collections, Japanese Contemporary Art, Israeli Contemporary Painting. New Zealand painting will be represented by a watercolour exhibition of early Auckland — a show of Van der Velden (the early Christchurch painter), eight New Zealand Painters III and probably an exhibition of contemporary New Zealand drawings.

We are also arranging a continuous programme of contemporary New Zealand artist's work in the First Floor Galleries.

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